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He Being Dead yet Speaketh

He Being Dead yet Speaketh

AND

OTHER SERMONS

BY THE LATE

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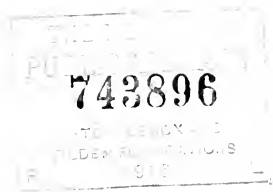
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“HE BEING DEAD YET SPEAKETH.”

I.

“HE BEING DEAD YET SPEAKETH.”

He being dead yet speaketh. — HEB. xi. 4.

THE writer refers to Abel; he says that the right doing of Abel, though he died when the world itself was young, “yet speaketh.” So it seems the dead may have a lasting voice, long sounding through lands and ages. I do not say that they always have; perhaps the noblest voices of the whole world our ears may never have heard. God hears them, — not we. But for a time, and in certain ways, all dead people speak, — the good and the bad; they all speak at least of one thing, — of mortality. There is power in every dead body, at every grave. I pass through a graveyard, and read epitaphs touching from affection, or silly from extravagance and vanity, but a power comes from all of them, solemn, tender, and inexpressible. If the life has been of the common routine, or if it has been good and sweet and helpful, or base and criminal, no matter, all speak beneficently to the heart. In fact, the dead, whoever they are, can only speak in one way: they are forbidden to speak otherwise. Even the poor creature never inspired while he lived is inspired in his dust; and it would be well that the living laid

to heart this voice of all the dead, visited oftener the place where the dead speak, not as frightened children, but as thoughtful men.

Of other ways in which the dead speak, consider the case of those who literally speak in their remembered words and writings. It is a mysterious thing, and brings our limited spirits into some likeness to the Creator, that a man, say he is called Plato, and lived in Greece, or the man called Confucius, in China, or Zoroaster, in Persia, or Moses, living in Egypt, or in the wilderness, or in Syria, — that these should be heard to-day, should reign and dominate in ideas, in institutions, in laws; that the weight of their consciences and words should be a part of you and me; that old philosophers and poets, not merely in their wisdom, but in their wit and jest and eloquence and verse, should live, and their music sound upon the air, — a power gone forth never to be revoked, yes, irrevocable as the light of those stars long dead (dead since the creation of the earth), yet whose image and light still illuminate our nights. From these great dead let us pass to the lesser dead, who speak through their influence or acts. I shall speak, in the first place, of specific acts or works. A man has made a discovery, he has invented a machine, he has effected an improvement, he has established something, — say a foundation of learning or charity, such as Oxford in England, — through all of them he, being dead, speaks. But of all these acts of the dead there is one which I

shall single out, as an allusion to it will come home to so many people, — I mean that act so significant, called a man's last will. This act, in which every man is powerful, by which every man speaks, it is worth while to ask how it is performed. It is always a solemn, and often the most influential single act of a man's life.

I believe it is often the most inconsiderate and selfish of a man's acts. "Inconsiderate," I say. From a silly or a superstitious fear, or a weak putting off, it is left unthought of and undone, until at last, in some dash or flurry, sometimes thousands, or even millions, are disposed of with less consideration than is usually given to a month's or a year's expenses. Obviously it is an act which should be done most thoughtfully, and not postponed, but done at once, and often reviewed.

I said also that it was often done "selfishly." That act of a man which takes effect just as he goes out into the presence of God is often an act deliberately rancorous, vain, cruel, and selfish. When I consider, on the one hand, the disputes and heart-burnings caused by hasty and inaccurate, or ill-judged, ungenerous, and spiteful wills, and when I think, on the other hand, of the opportunities to benefit and bless which are worse than thrown away, I say the dead speak in their wills; but they often speak banefully, and their voices, which should always be solemn and just, sound harsh and passionate, as in a quarrel in the market-

place. What, have I not the right to do what I will with mine own? If we mean legal right, — yes; but we have no right to do anything in this wise which is not considerate. Do we not see that sometimes whole families are turned into nests of demons, that sometimes unnecessary wealth is proudly lavished upon a few, spitefully withdrawn from some, and heaped on those who evidently were not formed to make any but the poorest use of it, while public and permanent charities are forgotten? Do we not see that while within the scope of every man's knowledge there are half a dozen, twenty, or thirty people, some of them friends, known to be poor, known to be of those to whom life has been cruel and the "world unjust," yet not one penny is dropped to them? I am aware that there is among us a great moral mistake, which does not even recognize such a thing as family selfishness, which has no suspicion it can be wrong. I am aware that from the strength of family affection, and from the hardening influences of the world, many men gradually narrow their hearts to that little circle of home, and forget, or at least disregard, the claims of all outside. It is not human or Christian to do so. If, then, any act should be done in reverence and with a sense of the just claims upon a man, it is this; if any act should be done, not revengefully, not fancifully, not ambitiously, it is this. If any one reflects while he does this act, "being dead," this sheet of paper will yet act balefully or benignly,

he will be apt to make his last will a wise and merciful will. It was the old custom to begin the will as a solemn act of religion, professing faith and committing the soul to its Redeemer. This is well; but how much better if the man at the same moment does no act incongruous with faith, and with the spirit of his Redeemer, which is a spirit (we need not be told) of love and wisdom. As we read the solemn page, the departed man comes back; we see his face, and feel the honor and tenderness which were at the bottom of his heart.

Consider now the influence of a character as long as that character is remembered. What tenderness, what penetrating power, come from our remembered dead, no one need be told.

But if that were all, that would be short. Influence, however, lasts when the source of it is all forgotten. When the man's remembrance is gone, his power lasts, for his spirit has passed into other spirits, and will go down from soul to soul, and stop, I know not where. Perhaps the influences which are shaping our hearts to-day have come from people we have never seen, or remember no more. From each man, dead or living, remembered or forgotten, flow streams of good or evil, of which the head and fountain are often as undiscovered as the once mysterious sources of the Nile, — just as there are afloat this moment in the atmosphere, germs of dark disease rising far off in the marshes of unknown lands, or airs of health breathed from the

unknown spaces of distant seas. Influence does not know how to die; the dead live in it and speak in it. No matter what becomes of us personally, we may become permanent powers of good, and save ourselves from becoming permanent powers of evil. This is the highest and purest purpose in living. The common desire for personal remembrance is instinctive and comparatively selfish; but when we are totally forgotten, as we soon shall be, we may yet live on, purifying and solacing the coming generations of men. This is the most sublime destiny known to man. Yes, and the best way of saving ourselves at the same time. If a man paid no attention at all to his own immortality, — to saving his soul, — and just thought of doing that which would save others, — just thought of speaking loud and long, of acting powerfully for Christ his Master, — then his own salvation would take good care of itself. Clarkson, it is said, was so interested in freeing and solacing the slave that he had no time for the affairs of his soul; but his soul was well cared for. If a man really designs to save others, he can never fail to save himself. There is but one appropriate ambition for man, — that whatever becomes of him, he may yet speak for God; that he may add something to the virtuous forces that are in the world; that his power may a little break down evil. This is the very work of religion, and this is the work of the children of Christ. Yes, that I may live so sweet and noble a life that a good may go out of me and pass on forever;

that I may make self-denial and mercy to others seem more beautiful than morning light, that so other hearts may grow into the same beauty; that I may present some aspect of the image of Christ fresh and new in the world, that I may make it seem the only nobility; that men and women may gaze after it and say, "We have found the image of Christ!" and go rejoicing after it. Or, if I cannot do this, that I may invigorate some work of Christian benevolence, — plan something of my own, or labor for something not my own; to erect or finish or set forward some lasting thing that will stand like a fountain of fresh water in a great and heated city. Well, then, whether from the good of some benevolent work, or from the divine charm of Christ transfused into human hearts, we may, being dead, yet "speak" — yes, even after death — with a voice stronger and finer than the accents of life. Being dead, the self-denying and gracious life will be seen as it is. The Lord knew this as to himself; he saw how poor and limited were the fruits of all he did while he lived, and so he longed for the baptism of death, and felt straitened until it was accomplished. He welcomed suffering, and said to himself, "being dead, I will speak;" and so he died that he might speak, and died in that way that he might speak loudest. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." It gave a solemn satisfaction to his end to know that death would tell something to the human heart that nothing else could tell, — that

once his head was covered with its bleeding crown, that then he would at last be heard, and the ends of the earth would melt and mourn for him. "He saw of the travail of his soul, and was satisfied." What an expression! — "the travail of his soul," — that is, he saw the soul truths which would spring from his laboring heart, and "was satisfied." His satisfaction was that of the dying mother, who rejoices that through her martyrdom the child is born; this very feeling, purified and enlarged from the special and half-bodily instinct of the mother, into a universal desire and aim of this great motherly soul, — this was Christ, this was he! And our true purpose in living is that we may share a little in this spirit, — that, like him, "whether we live or die," we "live or die" bearing fruit unto God; that we live or die sending into the world new honor and justice, new mercy and tenderness. We, in this scene of shadows, and shadows ourselves, may be converted into realities, into sons of God, and may live a life so like to Christ's that, like him, being dead, we cannot be holden of death in any sense, but even our memory and acts may become a perpetual element of purification and solace to men. There is nothing else worth living for.

There is a legend that the grave of the great magician Merlin sang, — that a musical hum, as of bees, a wild and wondrous and celestial sort of music, filled the air as with the fragrance of spring, — and that there forever, from out that grave, by day and by

night, the song of Merlin continued to be sung. The grave of every child of Christ is the grave of a magician greater than Merlin, and from thence forever, sweet influences flow out, and the work of the Lord is done. Though the eye is shut, the attentive ear hears heavenly airs which give delight and hurt not, — dead, yet forever speaking.

II.

NO FORM NOR COMELINESS.

He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. — ISAIAH liiii. 2.

WHILE in the ancient and more modern books of the Hebrews there is an evident imprint of some future man, it is a figure of confused and wavering outline. Sometimes a young and conquering prince comes in with the sound of trumpets; sometimes a poor man, powerless, ill-used, down-trodden, led to prison and to judgment. On this page there is a splendid phantom, rising like a sun, proclaimed by heralds on the tops of mountains, taking his seat as king, issuing his law to the islands, making his judgment to stand fresh and welcome as a new day; while on the reverse there appears a figure as a servant of servants, alone and unobtrusive, disfigured and broken, the astonishment of all (“many were astonished at thee”), a victim led to death meek and without resistance, — “brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.”

Whatever the belief may be, no one can, without a sense of awe, read these accounts, see these diverging

lines magically converged and centred on that one man who went out towards the Hill Calvary, bearing his cross, and who now is the acknowledged King of the human race. In this man the substance of all the old anticipations is made actual, — “All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen.”

I will confine myself to one trait in these ancient descriptions of the future man, the trait of homeliness, — “He hath no form nor comeliness.”

The early Christians foolishly understood that merely the body was meant, — as, for example, the earlier fathers, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Clemens of Alexandria, and Origen. These gloried in the thought of the uncomeliness of Christ. It was because they thought that his self-sacrifice must extend to all points that they came to believe he was humiliated even in his looks. But later, Jerome, Chrysostom, and Augustine thought not so; they exhibited his person in the most glowing colors, “believing assuredly,” as they said, “that the splendor and majesty of hidden divinity could not but appear.” This last belief prevailed, and accordingly the art of the Church for ages aimed to find the highest ideal of the appearance of Christ, — the attempt reaching its perfection, perhaps, in the conceptions of Michael Angelo and Raphael.

The fact of the entire silence of the New Testament as to the appearance of the Lord, and of the absence of the slightest traditionary hint as to it, is certainly one of the most singular things in history, and I can

only account for it, not from any design or reason on the part of the evangelists, but by a fact as curious, — namely, that they were so impressed by him, by his ideas, were so thoroughly carried up into the new and amazing world he opened, that they had but a faint interest in these lower facts so interesting to us; and I take this to be a gauge or measure of the transcendent effect of the spirit of Christ upon their spirits, rendering them somewhat as he was, singularly indifferent and even insensible to things earthly. “The flesh profiteth nothing.” The story they tell gives not the slightest sign of interest in any external and personal details, which yet the writers well knew. They instinctively omitted all these, and severely and without exception adhered to what they felt was higher.

Therefore, if we wish to know the profound impression of realities on the first disciples, we can realize it in the fact that no description of Christ or of one another is alluded to, and that from the earlier Christians there is literally no tradition as to these things, — a simple blank.

Whatever the fact may have been as to the merely physical in the appearance of the Lord, it is strange enough that there could be any doubt as to the impression his presence gave. Such a spirit could illuminate and transfigure, at least to those who knew it, any form, as the evening light in the west makes things rare and strange out of any dull and shapeless

vapors which chance to gather there. To any eye which knew the heart of the man Christ Jesus; but indeed it was so, in a degree, to all, and particularly at certain times. I think there are signs of it in the gospel narrative again and again.

For example, the account Saint John gives as to the arrest of Christ. When the officers and soldiers, with torches and weapons, came into the garden to take him, and penetrated near to the spot where he stood, "Jesus went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. As soon as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground." And he was obliged to repeat it, and to assure them, before they had force enough to take him. I think, as to this, it was simply the prostrating power of such pure personal loftiness as eye had never seen before. Could the most unusual of beings look other than unusual? Could this singular spirit of wisdom, purity, beauty, power, fail to look wise, pure, beautiful, powerful, — that is, enchanting or regal? If we remembered this, we should see with more insight than we do what the Gospels mean in many of their brief stories. For example, we should understand the demeanor of Pilate during the examination of his prisoner; we should see in him, to be sure, a mixture of many feelings, but not the least of these were fear and awe. The silence, the strange dignity, the singular apartness of Christ, the whole look of the person,

so rose upon him at last that he was struck with superstitious dread; and breaking out as if he saw a phantom or an unrecognized god before him, he said, "Whence art thou?"

The real intention of the words, "He hath no form nor comeliness," was but to express the general fact that the front the Christ should present to men would not be attractive. How true! When he first struck the eye in Galilee or Jerusalem, perhaps no man now can fully realize what a common and every-day look the whole matter wore. If it were to take place now, and I were to describe the village, the street, point out the house where he lived, and give full particulars, we would see at once how hard it was for the Jewish imagination to be pleased with him. To be sure, he was a beautiful, simple Teacher; he carried the dazzle of miracles about him. But then they did n't want a teacher at all, but rather a king; and though his earnest, deeply beautiful, and picturesque words would sometimes strike and hold them, yet much that he taught was against their prejudices, and all was against the moral taste of any but the simple. As to his miracles, he made them as little splendid as possible; they were just as humble and obscure acts as their evident power would allow them to be, and not at all the "signs from heaven" — dazzling things on the front of the sky — which they expected of their Messiah. They were merely quiet acts of mercy, done so simply that they scarcely seemed miracles at

all. On the whole, he was unimposing in all things (which the world thinks imposing), just the opposite of what they thought high and great. Christ was the pure glory of God within, and they wanted a glory not pure, not of God, and with a splendid outside; and so to their whole moral tastes he was without form and comeliness. He was divine to the pure heart; but to the proud and worldly imagination, delighting only in the outside, he was not divine: he was a homely and unattractive figure.

He being such as he was, and they being such as they were, he must have looked homely to them, and without form, as really high things of any sort must always seem strange and disagreeable to low tastes. This is true in literature and art.

It has become a maxim that the purest beauty in literature and art is never obvious at first; it is a beauty which lies under, which slowly gains and wins, which we come to know by the improvement of our own eye.

So in our historical tastes; the highest style of men are only slowly appreciated. Why, even yet, there are a thousand people who genuinely admire Napoleon, the selfish man of force and blood, to one who genuinely admires Socrates, the genius and martyr of virtue. The Pantheon of the earth is even yet filled with gods of a very low sort. Even yet adventure, blood, and war, however capricious and cruel, and such heroes, however selfish and contemptible, delight the

savage and the boy and the crude man, while a maturer feeling admires the wise and benevolent arts and sacrifices of peace, and the nobler heroes, who, whether they be of the battlefield or the sick-chamber, are marked by self-sacrifice.

Judge, then, how Jesus Christ, the top of all divine beauty, a picture of such singular and transcendent coloring and design, a being so peculiar, — judge, then, how he must appear to half-barbarous hearts, then or now; for he, like all great masters, must change the taste of the world before he can be received by the world; he must create the light in which he is to be seen. In this sense, then, it is essential, apart from any design, that Christ should be an unattractive figure. What was true of the God in the Old Testament is true of the Redeemer in the New: “Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself.”

Over and above this essential opposition between Christ and the world, there seems to be, besides, a divine purpose to present the Christ, the image of God, in that shape and look which, while really the divinest, would be most spurned. A compromise might have been made, perhaps, and Christ come forth as a youthful King, holy and yet charming to the eyes of the nations. But the design seems to have been that the highest spirit should walk on the earth in the poorest circumstances, and that all the fulness of grace and beauty should so appear as to allow the proud taste to be shocked. In respect to Christ him-

self, this opened the way for the deepest humiliation and purification of himself; and in respect to man, the design seems to have been to present — in the form of these people who persecuted him off the earth, these priests, and the aristocracy of the temple and nations, these Romans, representing the imperial power of the earth — such a spectacle of the grandeur of the earth in its true character, so high-looking and so mean, — to confront it with a being, an outcast, with no place “to lay his head,” yet so transcendent, — to place these, I say, front to front, as if God said, “Look. See these with all the glory of earth on their side; see their cruelty, even to blood, when their prejudices and interests are crossed; see them growing uglier and meaner and belittled in their meanness; and see him, this simple man, in the naked majesty of holiness, mercy, patience, growing higher, through all his degradation and contumely and scorn and blood, and ever ascending and enlarging until ‘he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.’ See this; and by this sight let all the race of men forever know the nothingness of that side and the unspeakable greatness of this, and so let them cast ‘down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself.’”

Christ came into the world to show in himself, and by contrast with others, that grandeur is in the spirit; and so he came to change the world’s ideals. Is that a mission unworthy the Son of God? I may express the same thought in another way, and say he came

into the world to change man's deepest inward sense of what is highest and best. It is the ideal of the world as to what is grandest which sways and masters and shapes it, all its hearts, all its civilizations; so that he who changes that, even in the least, becomes so far the master of the world. Give any man, any nation, a new sense of glory, and henceforth you dye everything in that new color; make any young man to know, all through him, that not in wealth and its splendors, not in the applause or votes of a silly crowd, not in luxurious ease, not in the finest life of the senses, but in the noblest, the Christ-like heart, lies all good and all greatness; that honor and immortality are in the tone of the heart and nowhere else,—convince him of this, and you have made him over; henceforth, though you clothe him in rags, though you steep him in poverty and shame to the very lips, he is "a son of the Highest," born anew to God through Christ the Lord.

That correction of the heart which began in Judea, and chiefly upon the Hill of Calvary, was the dawn of day for the earth, when the human eye began to see, when it was forced by this awful sight to see, where divineness really was and where it was not; when it saw in the form of an outcast, despised and rejected, a man associated with publicans in his life, and thieves in his death,—when in him, the one without comeliness, it saw, because of the heart that was in him, a sight as if heaven were opening, a new vision of the

inexpressible charm of pure love, a vision of that noblest self who forgot self, who humbled self, who sacrificed self, through all woes and buffetings and blood; and, this seen, there was a cry heard in the earth: "Behold, behold the Lamb of God!"

The ideal was changed. Talk of revolutions, of eras of advance, — that was the one unique revolution, God's revolution. Henceforward that vision of Christ will never leave the heart; this formless Being becomes "the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valley," "fairer than the children of men." Henceforward mere outside greatness is becoming emptied to its shell. Nay, the splendors of human genius and the force of human will, the heroes and darlings of history, tested by the heart of Christ, and in so far as they do not share the magnanimity of Christ, his pity, his condescension, his self-forgetting, his purity and love, mightier than all temptation, stronger than death, so far as this soul is not in them, they seem more and more, to all true taste, poor and mean, and tainted all through with common selfishness.

The work of changing ideals, the yielding of false ideals to true, is the one difficulty in the advance of man. But the world moves. At the hour of the death of Christ the antagonism between the world's ideal and that of Christ seemed forever irreconcilable; and from that hour one might describe the history of Christianity in the world as the history of a war, — a war, that is, of the deepest ideals. But

Christ is the Master. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." The attraction grows. The One without form seems beautiful to-day, and more beautiful to-morrow. That simple voice which said, "Come unto me, all ye," quiet and without a cry, grows more powerful than all the trumpets, and waxes louder and louder, until I do believe that all men will hear it and will be drawn upward. I believe that the age may come when there will be as passionate an admiration for self-sacrifice as there was once for mere power and splendor, — an age when the passionate admiration for Christ and those who follow in his spirit will sweep the world away. This is quite possible; there are some signs of it around us.

If I were to say that all gratitude conceivable for benefit at another's cost, and by another's blood, is felt, and that the whole homage of the soul is due to Christ from us sinful and dying men, in that he lifted us up and brought our "life and immortality to light," and if our hearts go with this, then I say we begin to feel the whole round of the glory of Christ.

The question, then, is, "What think ye of Christ?" No matter what we profess; is there here something which thrills our hearts with its highest admiration and love, or not? If not, then deliberately understand that we are blind, for "There standeth one among you whom ye know not." For it is all there, "the fulness of the Godhead;" and if we see nothing, judge we of the inferiority of our hearts, for the degree

of our admiration of Christ will measure exactly how admirable we are. On this judgment day and on all judgment days to come, "What think ye of Christ?" must be the test of judgment.

Conscious of my sins and ignorant of the future, do I fall down before him who has redeemed me, and say, with a passion of gratitude, "My Redeemer, my Lord, and my God"? Then, be sure the covering of homeliness is all gone, and we know him whom to know aright is life eternal.

III.

THE DIVINE MISSION.

The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. — LUKE xix. 10.

“THE Son of man.” This designation of himself was the favorite; it is an assertion of his humanity, but eminent and singular, — the one eminent in humanness. It was his humility and his love which led him to choose it. It is quite consistent that he whose description of his own heart was, “I am meek and lowly,” should feel it more congenial to call himself the Son of man than a King or even the Son of God. It was a disposition ever to descend. When we think of the titles of history, of the elaborate lists of heraldry, — the Assyrian heraldry, the Persian, Egyptian, Greek, Roman, or of modern Europe; nay, when we come down to think of ourselves, to whom high titles are so extravagantly dear, so that to many eyes, when a prince passes by, a lustre fills the air; then let us remember that his title of choice was *man*. He passed through the treasures of the Hebrew prophets, where all resplendent descriptions of the Messiah lay thick like heaps of stars, — thrones, dominations, principedoms, — and he found there in the

prophet Daniel this one, the least of all, but which expressed his heart the best.

The feeling of this act was just an affectionate claim to be one of the family, — a family endeared to him by his own love to them, by his sufferings for them, and because he belonged to them and they to him. Never was such honor put upon the human race as when Christ not only belonged to them, but *claimed* to belong to them, and constantly repeated that he was one of them. “The Son of man,” claiming that he was not the son of the Jew, though the Jew seemed to be the sole heir of the promises; not the son of the elegant and spirited Greek, nor of the Roman, nor of the barbarian, but the Son of man, belonging to each household of the earth.

One other thought about this title. I do not think he ever uses it merely as a general description of himself, but also to exhibit some precise suitability of a person of that description — the Son of man — to the matter he is then speaking of. He had just been in the house of Zaccheus the publican, and had won him to himself, and blessed him; and we know how the Pharisees would feel in regard to such treatment of a publican. So he says, “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

We see the connection between who he was and what he was come to do. And now what was he come to do? To save the lost, he says. The lost? Who are they? All are lost, and have wandered from the

right way. Yes; and he came to recover all. But here he means those specially lost. Yet there are two sorts of these: there are those who have no special excuse for their degradation, just wilful, hardened, brutal sinners, and these were not the persons he had in mind. It was another sort, and I should describe them first, as people who had some special excuse; second, those who were also specially sufferers for their faults.

I say people who had some special excuse, whose guilt had much of misfortune mixed with it. Placed and surrounded badly, their sin was in some measure a fate, a pitiable fate, rather than a choice. And if to this we add that they did not go wrong merely from a wrong heart, but partly from many better feelings, — oftentimes rich affections and rich imaginations entangling and abusing and ruining them, — then we have before us the people in the world who seemed most to interest the Saviour of the world; for he saw them not only pitiable in their sin, but, if possible, more eminent as sufferers than as sinners, for society and law make few nice distinctions as to the hearts of men. There are a few great faults which, no matter what the history and character of the person may be, the world visits (and which many say the necessities of the world must visit) with irreversible and hopeless condemnation. Yet, whatever the world thinks, these are the lost of his Father's flock whom he came to seek and to save. I believe I am correct in saying

that just this is the class; for I believe that just these and such as are similar to these would be likely to attract the attention of such a Being as he was. They never did attract the world's best and wisest, for none of them were high enough for this; but they attracted Him who saw, through his perfect heart of justice and through his perfect heart of love, what no other eyes could see.

I say, then, his special interest was in these, and his hope also. To philosophers then and always, these were of the hopeless classes, to be swept into the refuse heap of the world. *He* saw better; he was hopeful of them because he saw under the sin and suffering and outside hardness and repulsiveness; he felt that they retained amid such debasement a germ of the better life, something which seemed small, "even as a grain of mustard seed," something which had retired far into the centre, and perhaps was lost to the consciousness of the heart itself, but he knew that it was there and counted on it; he knew that it was the very principle of goodness and love, though in hearts grown bad and hateful, and he knew that sympathy alone could call it forth. So he went among them and ate with them, and was called their friend, and with a deep and solemn pity — not a philanthropist's pity for the race at large, but a tenderness and interest and hopefulness for this man and that woman — he aroused new life in the guilty and hopeless heart; and so the outcast woman we find washing his feet even with her tears,

and we find the chief of the sordid publicans cries out, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold."

When this wonderful Being once said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth," do we suppose he meant that vulgar thing we call power, — material force, thrones, and what not? Not at all. He knew what power was; he felt that the charity, faith, hope, within him were not figuratively, but literally divine, and that there was that in human hearts which, if the charity of his own spirit but touched them, would break into conflagration; he knew that there was a principle of order, of holiness, of love, at the bottom of all this chaos, which would stand forth when the power of his charity and hope touched it.

Before and since Christ many other methods have been resorted to. Lawgivers, moralists, men of the world, have all, either from a mere one-sided sense of justice, or from a mere one-sided feeling of pity, or from a moral indifference, or from a hopelessness as to the transgressor, — from these causes, felt incorrectly as to sin, and so dealt as to it in a manner both bungling and inefficient. Now if I knew nothing of Christ but of the justness of his feelings here, and the power of his treatment, I would suspect something beyond human. Did the severity of others — or, as they call it, their justice — crush the springs of the spirit?

The bruised reed he did not break. Did the weak pity of others enervate and deaden the conscience? His holy mercy aroused the conscience most, even when most he soothed it. Did contempt and Pharisaic separatism keep the upright apart from the sinner? To him the outcast was never an outcast. Did hopelessness keep good men from efforts to reform him? Not so he. He, being the very spirit of charity, and believing all things, and so confiding even in the outcast, and so hoping, — he gave hope, and touched and aroused the sunken heart. Did others sacrifice justice to pity or pity to justice? But not he. While he forgave, never was there such a depth of condemnation; while he condemned, never was there such depth and utterness of mercy. Who ever were abused by his free forgiveness so as to make light of sin? or who ever were abused by his awful sense of sin so as to despair of mercy? None. Listen one moment to his simple, divine method of dealing with sin.

On the one hand, he placed his calm and majestic purity by the side of impurity; his humility, patience, disinterestedness, by the side of conceit and selfish hardness; his solemn depth by the side of the frivolity of all that is human; and there they stood together, and so the light revealed the darkness, and all susceptible hearts were convinced of their sin and condemned.

Yet, on the other hand, as he bent down and said, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost," the unfortunate and humble lifted up

their heads at the strange sound, and saw a face which, while touched as it was with an infinite sorrow, was yet full of mercy and hope and a sort of divine consideration of them; and so then the heart melted and broke within them.

Now, ye princes and wise men, philosophers, ye holy men, founders of religions, come here and learn of the Son of God a foolishness wiser than men, a weakness stronger. So when he reaches forth his hand and lifts the down-fallen and says, "Go in peace; neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more," a new sense of holiness abases, a new sense of love and hope uplifts, new life and power fill the soul; the lame leap; the tongue of the dumb sings. This is the theory of Christianity as to the restoration of the human soul, of all souls.

He knew, it seems, or he felt, and he alone, the precise spot where this ruined being could be touched, and he touched him just there; and the dead soul felt it had become a living soul, and from that living centre a divine leaven worked out through all the lump. One spark of such gratitude, adoration, hope, kindled was a literal resurrection of the heart, "according to the working of his mighty power." Now just this is the new birth, the germination of God's image under the atmosphere of Christ's kindness, — a birth ever repeated in us, from high to higher, forever.

This is Christianity at its top. The Bible has given us several ideas, it presents several aspects, any

one of which, if vitally seized, will quicken the soul. Law, for example, its holiness, the charm of its obedience, — that is one; the soul's possibilities, — that is another; the soul's free access to and dependence on God, personal loyalty to a Being who is the express image of God, — such as these; but there is something above all, when the feeling of the soul is "de profundis," when the feeling is of an outcast soul in the depths of conscious sin, feebleness, ruin, then made aware that it is reached down to by the One who sacrificed himself to reach it "with strong crying and tears." The experience of that is Christianity at its top. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

There are people who have a sense that all is not right, perhaps a sad sense of fault; people who are sinners indeed, but not proud sinners, who hear the offers of divine mercy with a heart not altogether insensible, who, though they daily do violence to the Spirit of grace, which is always pointing them to the better way, yet are not at peace, but at times, in view of what they ought to be, in view of death, in view of the goodness which has created and kept them, and at its own cost redeemed them, yearn towards the good and right way. Such people are in some measure conscious that they are of that which is lost, and the Son of man is come to seek and to save them.

He has come, then, to every soul, no matter how hard and stony it is, how unbelieving and even scorn-

ing, if it reflects wisely for one moment. Then I put to them these three questions: Is it not possible that there is a God? Is it not possible that the soul is immortal? Is it not possible that the habits of good and evil begun now in the soul will be continued, will be fixed and expanded?—that is, is there not essentially some sort of heaven or hell impending before every soul? If these things are possible, who is ready for death? Who does not wish light, aid, assurance? Who does not wish to hear of a God, — such a God as Jesus Christ represents, who “is come to seek and to save that which was lost”?

Then that crown of thorns becomes to our eyes the golden round of universal sovereignty, and the sneering “Hail, King of the Jews!” becomes the announcement to our ears of that universal “All hail!” when “every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,” when all creatures shall cast down their crowns before him, and say, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.”

IV.

“A FRIEND OF PUBLICANS AND SINNERS.”

And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. — LUKE xv. 2.

IF we fix our attention upon anything concerning our Lord which was a matter of peculiar reproach and contempt through his life, we shall find that thing, whatever it is, now regarded with peculiar honor, and just in proportion as it sunk him in the esteem of that generation, it elevates him in the reverence of mankind through all periods. His poverty, the simplicity of his life, the companions he chose, the seeming splendor of the destiny he rejected, the seeming plainness (and humility) of that which he assumed, the lowliness of his temper, the scorns and foul degradations put upon him, the low associations connected with him, from birth to death, the trough or manger of a stable his couch on his first day, lifted on a cross between thieves on his last day, and between these points living in the obscure house of a carpenter or wandering about homeless,—“The foxes have their holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head,”—all this, I say, is now transfigured into lustre and glory, so much

so, indeed, that I believe it is almost impossible for any one to think of the mean circumstances of his life as they were when everything has suffered such a lustrous change, such a dignity has his character attached to every point of his condition. There is a deep significance in all this for all men; let them know, from this great story of the Lord Jesus, that the true life is ultimately the splendid life. Good, just, holy living, cover it with oppression, degradation, and deformity, if we can, must be brought forth at last with the lustre of light and of noonday, and will cover every object about it with regal coloring. As the light in the pure and beautiful water turns the most homely objects seen in its depths into things rare and strange; as the heavy, dank vapors of the earth, so soon as they are drawn around the sun, become like very curtains of the Temple of God,—so can all things, mean or common, in the lives of men be changed, controlled, exalted by the excellence of the spirit that is in them. It would be worth our while to remember this. Men wish to enlarge their sphere; they feel their circumstances too mean and contracted for great actions. We are small men, they feel, because our sphere is small. How we mistake! our greatness is not without us, but within. Just that life now and here which we live (I care not how petty its circumstances) has in it all the elements of the grandest success, and it only waits for us to call them forth. Perhaps I may say that every man, however low, is born into a condi-

tion fitted for immortal results, and may cover that condition with divine effulgence. Let the meanest know, though his dwelling be a hut, he may make it a spot which the invisible angels will delight to visit, and that he may go out and in as a king and priest unto God. We can imagine how the plain, familiar faces and homely Jewish clothing of Peter and James and John were changed and illuminated on the Mount of Transfiguration into the beauty of princes of a celestial host; and in this we behold in figure the grander transformation which God has put in the power of every man. Jesus, "the friend of publicans and sinners," was once the most contemptuous epithet that age could select, yet now, of all the wonderful titles, I know of none more sweet or of a more divine dignity.

The publicans were a notorious and infamous class among the Jews. If they had been mere collectors of the odious revenue due a foreign government, that office would have made them hateful enough; but, besides this, they were usually a very unprincipled, oppressive, and base set of men. As the revenue was farmed out to them, it was their interest to grind the face of the poor, to lay the tax exorbitantly where parties from weakness or ignorance or fear would not dispute it. Besides, the most of these publicans were no doubt Jews; and as a Jew who would accept the office of tax-gatherer for the Romans would be ranked as a renegade or traitor by his own countrymen, he

must have been of the very lowest sort before he came into the office. When in it, he no doubt would sink lower and lower from the very nature of the business, but chiefly from the contempt and hatred he met with; for nothing is more true in human nature than that men tend to rate themselves very much as others rate them, and on this account alone it is prudent, for the sake of the effect on his own character, that a man never allow himself to be in a position where opinion may act injuriously upon him. Considering, then, the general character of the Jewish population at that time (which was by no means high), and considering that a publican was at the lowest round in social rank, we will not be likely to form too low a notion of him. These underlings of the revenue were *ex officio* outcasts, and are always ranked with sinners, and even criminals. Such, then, was the publican. But who were these sinners? They were openly bad livers of all classes and sexes, — profligate women matured or in apprenticeship to wickedness, undetected thieves, the people to whom there was no law or check but fear of public penalty. Now these were the people of whom Jesus was called the friend. “The friend of publicans and sinners:” there was truth in this charge, but there was falsehood in it also; slander rarely gives either its malicious truth or its malicious lies singly or purely. He was, indeed, the friend of the publican and the sinner, in that the outcasts were dear to him, in that he desired to save them from their sins, and for

that purpose went among them. But the charge meant more than this, — namely, to intimate indirectly that he was somewhat of the same character; that these were his chosen companions. No man could accuse that spotless Being of sin, but something of the sort could be surmised by a hint as to his company. Thus it ever is. Goodness may be misconstrued even when engaged in its holiest offices; and he who hopes to escape detraction must cease to act in the society of men. But perhaps the most of those who made this charge did not mean it in so bad a sense. One thing, however, was meant by all the Pharisees and the whole of the higher class of the nation, — namely, that in keeping the company of publicans and sinners, and addressing himself to them, he forfeited all claims to respect. First, because these people were of the poorer or lower order; second, as they were transgressors. The higher class of the Jews was, I think, the most intensely and offensively aristocratic class ever known. With all of them it was an aristocracy of prosperity, and with a large portion of them (I allude specially to the Pharisees), an aristocracy of righteousness. As to the poor or the unfortunate, the prosperous held them in peculiar contempt; they had an opinion that whoever flourished was worthy to flourish and had the seal of God's favor, and that whoever was afflicted was justly condemned. This opinion took its warrant from some things in the Mosaic system, and was besides a belief widespread in the East and of great

antiquity. There is a strong expression of it in the ancient book of Job; and as it has some base in truth and human nature, we shall find it in some degree everywhere and perhaps in every bosom. "I know," said a great statesman after a life's experience, — "I know that misfortune is not made to win respect from ordinary minds; I know there is a leaning to prosperity, however obtained, and a prejudice in its favor." With men at large but a prejudice; with these Jews, a matter of religious faith. They regarded themselves, then, as accepted of God, and those below them as in a sense rejected. As a consequence, they looked for the Messiah as a Messiah to them of their class, a prince to give dignity and honor to Israel, and to the rulers and nobles of Israel. We can imagine, therefore, the intense contempt in which they held a teacher who, neglecting them, associated himself with those whom God had refused. Now, in addition to this aristocracy of prosperity, the Pharisees were an aristocracy of righteousness, and on this ground cast out and hated others. Though a most hateful and enormous self-complacency was at the bottom of the Pharisee's feeling towards the sinners, yet as it was a religion with him, he set no bounds to his contempt and hatred. Thus the publicans and sinners became by a double title contemptible both as unfortunate and wicked; and he who was the friend of such was of course swept into the same class with them. Here, then, are the meaning and the force of the reproach:

he is the "friend of publicans and sinners;" he a teacher who instructs them, — such a Teacher! he a prophet whose mission not only embraces these, but prefers them to us; above all (ineffable insult), this is the Messiah who comes eating and drinking with publicans, and who neglects and repudiates us, the princes of the congregation. Such a Messiah! Christ, then, could only be the friend of the wretched at the expense of the friendship of whatever was powerful or honorable in the State. It was thus a most costly act of charity to face, for the sake of these poor creatures, the intense, uncompromising prejudices of the time; and if the dignity of virtue is to be estimated in proportion to its cost, it was an act of the noblest dignity. Besides, Christ came to establish himself as the Messiah, and to secure success to that was the one dear and sublime purpose of his heart. But, judging him as a man, he risks the whole of his destiny, because he would not neglect the sinful and the poor, and because he would make no compromise with the powerful. Moreover, by this course, he vindicated, in the face of all temptation to the contrary, the true idea of God's Messiah, the true idea indeed of all religion; and what is that? To meet the real wants of mankind, and not the fancies of a party; to give happiness to the afflicted; to give holiness to the sinful, — that is, to be "the friend of publicans and sinners," for they represent all those who truly need. Setting aside with fine elevation the desire to please any artifi-

cial class or to build up the vulgar greatness of an external reign, he came as the curer of the ills of human nature itself wherever the heart is made sensible of them, and to establish his kingdom on the broad base of the common human heart, as wide as its wants and its woes. When, therefore, with divine humbleness he stooped to company with the outcast, he appeared to the world an exhibition of the profoundest idea of what should be the religion of a world. But, apart from all general views, what a world of love, of brotherly pity, of tenderness, of long-suffering gentleness, rises up before us when we think of Jesus as "the friend of publicans and sinners;" Jesus, the holy and the undefiled one; Jesus, whose soul was peace and dignity and love; Jesus, standing in the midst of the corrupt, the abased, the unhappy men of his time, as their special friend. "He came to seek and to save that which was lost." The dark, forsaken, discouraged heart whom conscience and man and God forbid to hope, is met by this new messenger with the good news that there is yet hope. He stoops to us not to judge us, but to save. There is no despair where he is; the light of hope goes with him; he will not break the bruised reed.

V.

THE CHOOSING OF THE TWELVE.

And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named Apostles.—LUKE vi. 13.

WHEN the Lord began to teach and to preach, he naturally attracted some susceptible souls, for the morally susceptible soul, wherever it sees moral elevation, longs to go after it. Others he called to follow him. The result was that he not only taught the people at large, but carried with him a college of learners, of men training in a heavenly school. Of course, not all these always literally followed him, but they called him "Master," were special scholars and servants of his will, and were often with him.

From these, after he had had some experience of them, he chose an inner circle of twelve, — a more manageable body, who could always be near him and under the full impression of his character and teaching. From that moment the work of Christ, while he scattered truth and goodness, seems to have been chiefly the training of twelve men.

There was this reason for it. When he first announced the kingdom of heaven, all good Jews he felt

might follow him; but as his divine peculiarities came forward, as his un-Jewish truths and spirit were seen, a winnowing process began, the mere Jews dropped off, and he felt, amid the general coldness and desertion, that a firm few must be made ready as foundations for his future church. He knew that there was a moment coming when, unless his likeness was deeply seated in a few hearts, the very memory of him would vanish, or sink in ignominy, and his image — even his — be covered with darkness.

So he chose twelve; and who were they? Intellectually they were not perhaps superior people; superior people are not very common, and his choice was limited at the time. But I am not at all sure that he wished to choose what we should call the best. He did not want great men, who would naturally set up themselves and their ideas; he wanted men who were little children, so simple and receptive that they would take into their hearts the full image of himself, — men who were his echoes and his other self, reflecting him to the world. For Christianity is not a doctrine: it is a Person, the man Christ Jesus; and whoever most fully received and re-presented him was his best apostle. They were, then, just plain men of Galilee, and most of them taken from a little circle of fishermen whom he happened to know on the banks of the Sea of Galilee.

There was a world's work to do, yet he chose the workmen simply on the ground of attachment to him-

self; he chose them by the one test that they chose him, — that they were reverential, receptive hearts. But this cannot be, we may say, for there is nothing more marked than the fact of his choosing and calling them: “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.” If any wish or act of Christ is distinctly marked, it is this, — that he wished to call and did call, as if regally, certain persons, some of them apparently strangers, and said, “Come, I have need of you; follow me;” and they followed. Yes, this is true; but still they chose him, for at his first word they responded to him unhesitatingly, they left all, they followed him.

Others to whom he gave the same command hesitated or declined to follow. Even those who called him Master, and were much moved by him, stopped when he said, “Leave all; follow.” The rich young man, so good a nature that he had a charm for Christ, hesitated, and went sorrowing away. Another, an ardent soul, burst out, “Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest,” but he soon made excuses, and failed. Multitudes failed; but these apostles gave the true apostolic sign for which he looked, — namely, a prompt and complete stripping of themselves and going where he went.

He seems scarcely to have looked for any other sign. This being given, he seems to have meant to show what can be made of the common man, — to exhibit the triumph of what the world calls ordinary,

the triumph of mere heart. It was not only that they were poor and unlettered men; they were also men of plain minds, slow, sometimes even obtuse, and to them their Master's quick and deep imagination and fertile thought were always confusing and perplexing, his words enigmas, he himself an Enigma. We see no signs in any of them of even special strength and boldness of will (Peter excepted), — that is, no great power of initiative. He took, then, common men with real human hearts, and made out of them the corner-stones, not only of the purest civilization, but of that church which in its idea means the very kingdom of heaven.

Here, then, in this fact of his choice of twelve church princes, Christ showed more perhaps than in anything else the value he set on men who have hearts in them, — their value, both as organs of truth and as organs of power. And if any man would know whether he has been selected for a place and leadership in the kingdom of God, let him ask himself if his heart leans promptly to Christ's voice or to any high voice, — leans promptly and surrenders itself wholly.

So Christ called his apostles. Now how did he treat them when called? We are first struck by his patience with them and his noble constancy. Having adopted them, though he found not once, but daily that they were almost hopelessly ignorant, weak, trying men, yet he never gave them up. "Having loved his

own, he loved them unto the end." He dismissed none, made no other choice, bore with them, and carried them through. He found Judas, for example, after he came to know him, a much lower man than he had seemed at first, — a very low man indeed, I presume, all through, — but the Lord never thought of giving him up; he trusted that his mercy and long-suffering would win them from their poor selves; he trusted that his unchanging kindness would touch and expand their affection for him until it filled their whole souls, though the change was as slow as the growth of a plant.

The education he gave them was wonderful; by a sort of family intercourse he led them into his spirit, into his quiet and simple truths. It was but two or three years, perhaps but one, yet one year altogether with Christ. I wish we could think of it naturally. Most of us think of it as if they went about feeling that they were with a supernatural person, a sort of angel, or at least the Messiah; but in fact, and for a long time, they thought of him only as a great Rabbi, a modern prophet, a new teacher and purifier of the people, and their intercourse with him, while it was generally reverential on their part, was quite simple; and so he naturally influenced and formed them, as one man would another. His spirit crept into their hearts as a bright dye colors a garment. Then, besides, he knew each of them so well that he not only corrected in a general way their false notions, forcing

their low hearts up to higher feelings, but, better still, he finely adapted himself to each, as the prophet stretched himself upon the dead child, imparting to the cold clay the warmth of his life.

Never was there a body of men chosen by a finer eye, better tested and trained and more nobly clung to than these. And now the result. What was their career? In my honest thought, it seems to belie their choice and their training. Most of them do nothing or next to nothing,—that is, so far as we know.

Here are the names, — the original list of the apostles: “Simon, (whom he also named Peter) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alpheus, and Simon called Zelotes, and Judas, the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot.”

Now if we except Peter and John, we know little of the lives or acts of any of them. Matthew, indeed, gave us the inestimable treasure of the sayings of Christ; and of James we know something, but in him we have an apostle who, though earnest and of a strong character, seems to me to have done as much as in him lay—without intending it—to misrepresent and defeat the spread of the real spirit of Christ.

Here, then, are ten apostles, most of whom did nothing, so far as we know, and one worse than nothing; and one other was Iscariot. Nay, so obscure were they that we are ignorant even as to the characters of these men; they are not at all individualized

on the pages of the New Testament. The great painters, such as Leonardo, have made them individual enough on canvas; but except for our knowledge of the one trait of honest disbelief in Thomas, called Didymus, the rest of the eight are to us very much as men whose faces are covered with thick veils.

And of their work, as I have said, we know nothing. How shall we account for this? Possibly some of them worked in directions from which the record could not come; or some worked eastwardly, in places where there was less chance of success, — in regions which were in the line of decaying civilizations, — for the world even then was running west; and so what they did gradually faded out. I repeat, the work of some of them was not in the line of life and advance; and if so, there is a lesson here as to missionary work in this day. Since the dawn of modern history, working eastwardly has not been as fruitful as working westwardly, following the path of the sun. For a man's work to live, it must be done in living places and take hold of a life which goes forward to the future. Possibly these men were unfortunate in some other circumstances. Some of them may have died early, or been slain, or their work usurped by more pushing people. Or perhaps the truth is that they were simple souls, who made no great noise, but carried quietly the story of Christ to places aside from the more public arenas. Whatever the truth may be, it is quite possible that each of them did a great work, and

yet have sunk entirely out of sight in a generation or two.

We must not judge much by the obscurity of their history; for, strange as it looks, the same thing is true in other cases where the persons at the time must have been conspicuously prominent. Take Mary the mother of Christ, for example, and all his early friends. Consecrated as they must have been, dear and sacred as associated with him, — they, with Mary Magdalene and the other women, being among the very chiefest actors at the resurrection (the greatest event of the world), — all pass away at once out of view, and not a glimpse of them is seen any more. But all remain known and illustrious to God.

And so probably it was with the obscure apostles. All laid some great stones in the foundations of the church, though their work was afterwards covered by the illustrious names of Peter and Paul, for men like the illustrious name. But in the great ages of eternity each man's work shall be made manifest. The unknown laborer in the vineyard of his Master should remember that if he be quietly faithful where he stands, he belongs to the band of the eight obscure apostles, and that the work unrecognized by history will be acknowledged by the Judge, — "Well done, good and faithful."

But, be the facts as they may, one thing is sure, — Christianity was spread and established, well established; and even the mistake, as it would seem in the

choice of Judas, was, in fact, of grand result. For I believe the dark treachery of Judas, that black figure at the side of Christ, has added a singular color to the scene, revealing in a new light and just as by a sudden and brief darkness in the daylight, — revealing by contrast that face of love and mercy which Judas betrayed. I believe that even the love of John has scarcely more unveiled the Lord of glory than has the treachery of Judas Iscariot. “The foolishness of God is wiser than men.” So on the whole, and viewed in the coldest historical spirit, the choice of these apostles was made not fortuitously, but in the clear daylight, and the undesigned words of my text seem to have a fine significance, — “And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples, and of them he chose twelve.”

We have seen in the choice of the apostles God’s estimate of what is highest and most powerful in man. Wealth and refinement are good gifts; eloquence, knowledge, thought, are splendid gifts. But “though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. Though I understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, I am nothing.” There is a point, a centre, far within, which is the real and only seed of the kingdom of God, — that is, of the highest and most powerful in man, call it affection, reverence, child-like obedience to that which is above us; that feeling especially entertained towards the Being who

is the express image of God; the knowing him (for the sheep know the voice of the Great Shepherd); the heartfelt response to him, — “Master, Redeemer, Lord, I know thee who thou art; I follow,” — this is the only apostolic elevation, the real apostolic power in man. Simon Zelotes and the rest, I don’t know how they looked, what manner of men they seemed; but what made them the Lord’s apostles I do know; and Christians are simply men of the better heart; the Christian Church is the order of the heart.

There is a Roman Catholic order called “The Order of the Sacred Heart,” — a beautiful title, apart from the grotesque legend out of which it grew. It professes to be an order of people whose bond is the most sacred and bleeding heart of Jesus. In essence it is to that order we must belong, our souls responding to the high and bleeding heart.

Let us remember what it was that consoled the heart of Christ. It was that, among the lowly and simple, the heart was left sound. Amid the inequalities and bitter injustice of the world, he was thankful that after all the better part was given to these children. I know the feeling that was in the bosom of that beloved Master when he saw the prosperous and proud and learned pass by with a sneer, while the simple and good hearts listened readily. “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.”

I reiterate one thing, and let it dwell in our memories, — that we rate high, choose as our portion, the apostolic heart; that we aspire to it for ourselves; that the mother teach it to her children; that the object of all education be to have hearts tender and true; that, amid all the apparatus and hubbub of education, the child and the man live listening to the eternal voice, — as the boy Samuel listened at midnight in the silence of God's temple. From the listening, obeying heart, all light and all power come.

The noblest miracles have not ceased; the apostolic heart still bears all the apostolic fruits, — for him; for others. The simplest man who has in him a depth of passion for Christ — nay, a depth of passion for any lofty object — renews, repeats, on this ground to-day, the wonders of the apostles, and moves forward the kingdom of God upon the earth.

VI.

THE LONELINESS OF CHRIST.

And he that sent me is with me. the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him. As he spake these words, many believed on him. — JOHN viii. 29, 30.

I DO not know why, except it were the evident divineness in his manner and words. I wish now to speak solely of the solitude of Jesus Christ, and of the thoughts which grow out of that. I distinguish in the first place between solitude and solitariness, between aloneness and loneliness. First, of his solitude, or aloneness. I do not mean the solitude of place, that Jesus Christ was reserved or retired “from the cheerful ways of men;” for of all the eminently holy, and specially of all those claiming a mysterious character, he was the least alone, and borrowed the least of his power over the imaginations of men from the solitude of distance. Nor do I mean either the solitude of a superstitious or ascetic or stern nature, — such as that of Elijah and John, whose souls were mountain solitudes as inaccessible as that of Ararat. “He came eating and drinking;” and so his statue, the image which truly represents the character of Jesus Christ among men, and those of his holiest

ones, should not stand in quiet and awful temples only, surrounded by unstained and sacred air, but high in the midst of the open ways of cities, in the forums and market-places. Silent in the noise of the world, aloof in everlasting sanctity from all the corrupted currents of life, he must of course stand; but let him ever stand near to men, and the actual lives of men, — “the Son of man” among the sons of men. I mean, then, not ascetic retirement or ascetic reserve of spirit when I speak thus, but I mean simply the aloneness of pure superiority, the solitude of a nature made peculiar and made unknown, not by its mere difference from others, but purely by its elevation above others. All of us are in some measure cut off from the sympathy of our fellows, each according to the peculiarity of his character; but he was cut off by the immense peculiarity of his superiority; and hence it was and for no other reason that “He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.” In heart, in character, in thought and designs, the perfect man, the altogether enlarged and uncorrupted soul, was of necessity a stranger to the little and corrupt children of the world. Though he was far from being barred out from us by wilful or stern reserve, and though he sat down in our midst even as a simple and affectionate child, and drew nigh to us and broke down every wall of partition which divided the lofty from the low, still the great gulf remained, and he passed through his life in the

most profound solitude ever known to man. No one not in some measure acquainted with the great religious and mysterious characters of history can for a moment appreciate in how simple and easy a way he offered himself to the companionship of man. Not as king, as priest, as philosopher, sitting "far within," environed with superstitious dread; not as some half-natural and awful mystagogue; not even as one of the prophets; but as an unpretending friend or inmate of the household, he entered and stayed here among the dwellings of men; but still, in spite of all, "the world knew him not." Nay, the more familiar he made himself, the less he was understood, for the people always wish a great person to present himself as they think a great person ought. His heavenly order of greatness was all reality, all of the spirit, and adorned itself with nothing factitious and nothing of the world. So it was that while he put aside all those things which usually make a distance between great persons and the people, and stood bare in the simplicity of humanity, yet in fact the people could not come near him. Yes, mighty as were the separating facts, I mean that he seemed bent to overcome them and to make a union with man's heart even from the furthest distances. As to his holiness, for example: though it was as the word itself means separation, and though his holiness was an endless separation; though he was "separate from sinners" and "made higher and purer than the heavens;" yet he joined such simplicity,

such lowliness, such mercy with his awful purity that the attraction seemed almost to draw the poorest heart into unison with him, at least into some recognition of him. And so for a time, to be sure, here and there, the people did seem to see a glimpse of him; but for a moment, and then again he walked an unknown figure among them. However thorough he made his union with man, there remained a celestial aloofness from all evil, a celestial difference in the whole being, which left him far more solitary than even the stern separation of the Hebrew prophets. So that after all, one of the spectators, one who had transcendent insight (I mean John the Baptist), said: "There standeth one among you whom ye know not;" for though he was (if the figure be allowed me) as the image of an illuminated man shining in a dark night, yet most strange to say the darkness was not aware that this was light, which fact is noticed in that wonderful description of Christ, — the beginning of the Gospel of Saint John: "The light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." Of course the same thing is essentially true now and of all men. To-day and here which of us know him? Though forever talked of and ever believed in, in the world, yet who sees him as he is?

My second thought is Christ's loneliness. There may of course be much solitude and no loneliness; for loneliness is not merely separation, but is the sad sense of it. A man may be shut out from the pres-

ence of others, yet a sense of their love and sympathy may make at any moment company and support for his heart. But to be misconceived and still more estranged from those we love, that makes the truest solitude, and gives it its bitterness. And this it was that made the life of Jesus Christ the loneliest life, so far as man was concerned, ever known on earth; for a heart can feel lonely just in proportion to its power of sympathy. A hard nature can never properly be alone, while affectionate souls can scoop out a bottomless depth of solitude; and of all affectionate souls, his was unspeakably the deepest and highest and noblest. Had he been less a brother in sympathy and love; had he been merely a being transcendently exalted in the might of faith and holiness, and not also a being filled with purely human yearnings, the solitude of his spirit would have had no loneliness with it; he would have fed upon his own thoughts and lived upon his own actions. But as it was, here was the most sympathetic spirit without sympathy; I may say totally without it where he most gave ground for it, — I mean in respect to those ideas and that work which were his life. Continually seeking to be united to his few poor friends in his feelings and his thoughts, he was continually checked and disappointed. “O ye of little faith, how is it that ye do not understand?” “O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?” Continually eager also that his message

of mercy and freedom should be heard by an afflicted and enslaved world, he was yet always either altogether rejected or accepted only to be betrayed. "He came unto his own and his own received him not." Was there ever a statement like that? His best thoughts, such as it seems filled heaven with rapture ("which things the angels desire to look into"), treated with contempt; infinite sacrifices of all sorts made for a being who presented the meanest and most ungracious aspect to his eyes; such sacrifices as might melt rocks instead of hearts yet met with new outrages, as if humanity endeavored to convince its Lord that they were not worth redeeming. Yet, under all this, though occasionally he broke forth into impatience and even indignation, yet he did not feel one touch of bitterness or contempt. All great men know that natures not kindred to theirs, natures which are closed against the noblest ideas, and closed too with indifference and contempt, they know that the sting of that more than all things calls out a responsive scorn and contempt of the heart. But I find nothing of it here. Whatever difficulties there are in doing so, I conceive of the man Christ Jesus on the side in which I am now regarding him as perfectly human, and I never willingly allow my belief in the higher aspect of his mysterious nature to impair or empty any of his purely human qualities. And so, thinking in this way, I believe the loneliness of his heart would have been so constant and so keen that

this alone would have destroyed his life on earth, had it not been that shut out from one sort of sympathy with man, — a sympathy which gave him something, he divinely submitted, and divinely lost himself in another sort of sympathy, — the sympathy which gives. He made up for the want of sympathy towards himself, by the sympathy which he gave to others; he became a father to those who would not be to him as a brother; and in the mercies and cares of a fatherly heart, he lost the sense of his own great solitude.

I have fixed attention upon this view of Christ, because we are all destined to much solitude of the heart, — nay, it is the very state of man. Think of the crowd of peculiar natures cruelly misunderstood; of the prejudices which rise like a cloud from the pit, to shut man from his brother; to make even the good man turn away from the good man, because some base prepossession has seized his heart; and which makes the ill-treated man shut himself up in his own bosom and bar the door with iron. With these is the keenest sense that they are alone. So solitude is universal; if not from the superiority of nature, at least from the individuality which marks us. We are unlike, and there is much in each which cannot be readily understood, and this separates us from sympathy and gives the sense of loneliness. Or if not from this cause, then from the faintness with which each one conceives of the real experiences of every other, from the poor-ness of all mortal sympathy, we are alone even as to

those nearest us in heart. It is surely so in the great experiences of life. These profound experiences, at least in their profoundest moments, always separate us, husband from wife, mother from child; and the whole weight falls upon a solitary soul. The heart then knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger (who then is not a stranger!) doth not intermeddle.

We can understand the real solitude in which multitudes spend their days when we remember those moments of real society sometimes accorded to them, when the dull and saddened heart meets in some quarter the acceptance and welcome it pines for.

So far as I can understand God's purpose in this matter of the society and solitude of the spirit, it seems not to be designed that we should ever live without company and sympathy; but it is meant by separating us from man to give us a nobler, more lasting, more satisfactory companionship, — for if any sincere man, from any cause, in any way is alone, let him rest in God and walk with him. "I am not alone, for the Father is with me." Dare then, weakest of mortals, in this assurance to stand alone. Let us be true to our convictions; and though father and mother forsake us, the High One will take us up. If faithfulness to any truth, if loftiness of living make us singular and alone, and turn every face cold to us, there is another countenance in whose favor is life. "Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward." But when I ask you to stand alone, do I

ask you to be, as men say, self-reliant, self-sustained? I mean no such thing. That I regard as one of the mightiest mistakes, one of the largest fragments of merely heathen, merely human morals, which is now left in Christian civilization. It did very well for Romans, and was very grand in its way; but the true light now shineth and reveals a way more excellent. The Christian solution of this great problem is doing the will of God, — to rest on the companionship of God; to stand aloof from false supports of others or of myself; and to rest full and square as a tower upon the true foundation, — independence of man high and vast, but only through a just and absolute dependence upon God; not self-reliance. There is not a word in the life and character of Christ which warrants the stoical idea of human nature, which is still left among the ideals of the world. In Christianity there is no such thing properly as self-reliance; it is God-reliance all through. Even he who claimed to have “life in himself” (which, as I understand it, is the highest expression of the right of his own proper being), he always is in the bosom of the Father, resting there with his whole weight of cares, of sorrows, of doubt, and gathering all his life from the absolute perfection of his dependence, and his spirit of sonship.

“The Father hath not left me alone.”

VII.

THE FUTURE CONDITION OF THE BELIEVER.

Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am. — ST. JOHN xvii. 24.

PERHAPS there is no passage in Scripture which gives more light as to the future condition of Christians than that which I have just pronounced, — “Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am.” I say there is most interesting and impressive evidence as to the future condition of believers in the great fact here intimated, that they are to be with Christ.

Had such a fact in no way been breathed in words, we would have been assured of it from other things that we know. If the spirit hereafter is to exist in any nearer communion with God, it must in some way be brought nearer to Christ; for, as he is the image and representative of the divine nature, all the elevation and all the heaven it can ever reach must be in being brought nearer to him and being with him where he is. In this view all created intelligence and virtue must be with him, as he is the eternal and full-orbed representative of God to all being, the sublime medium of spiritual as of all other influences; from

his face all orders of creatures draw their light as this great planetary system draws its day from the fountain of the sun. He is the King of all heavens, present through all as the one great spirituality in whom all fulness dwells.

But we are to be peculiarly present to him from his peculiar relation to us. Through love he was with us here on earth, on this low seat, became in a peculiar sense our brother, instituted a deep, finished fraternity with us in all things but sin. Will he then be absent from us when our souls shall have been purified into his divine image, and our vile bodies changed into the likeness of his glorious body? Shall that union, begun under such dark circumstances, be broken at the moment when its real and splendid purpose shall just commence to be realized? This is made more clear if we attend to one point of our union with him, —namely, as our Redeemer. The nature of this union, though we know it in part, is yet immeasurably above our comprehension. The only other relation with which we can compare it is the relation which we hold to God as our Creator. The intimacy of the union between creature and Creator is such that the more it is reflected on the more astonishing it appears. Indeed this union is so intimate that there is nothing in which mere reason so completely fails as in attempting to draw a line of separation between God and his creatures, for our very substance, motion, life, is of, with, and in him. Yet it is certain that, near as

this union is, it is not nearer than the mystic oneness of the redeemed and the Redeemer. What the Son of God as Creator is to the natural being of man the Son of God as Redeemer is to the spiritual being of man.

This union must be closer, when once effected, between himself and spirits fallen and depraved than the union even with the angels who kept their first estate, for this reason and upon this universal law, — namely, that our sense of unity is in exact proportion to the extremes of disunion which are brought into harmony. The more discordant the sounds the more divine their unison, if indeed the skill of the artist can once effect that unison. Spirits which have known what sin is must know, if he calls them back to him, in a far deeper sense than others, what holiness is, what justice is, what pity and mercy are, — that is, they know God better and have profounder ties to him. They are the prodigal children of the household, and as such they have, on the one hand, drawn out more of the Father's compassion, and on the other, they have an entirely new and deepened appreciation of his goodness; or, to express this great spiritual fact in very simple language, to whom much is forgiven the same love much.

I say that from and out of the separation and hostility of men to God, God in Christ reconciling the world has formed the very deepest union conceivable, — a union, perhaps, far more beyond his ordinary rela-

tion to spirits (whatever their intellectual or external dignity may be) than we are used to think. This is true. It is true further that such a union formed with the spirit gives strong guaranties to the fact that wherever in all height or depth that spirit is, Christ will be present to it; nay, such a union, if we understood it, implies in its very essence this mutual presence where nothing foreign intervenes. And what foreign can intervene, what creature, spirit or matter or order of things, can separate, where such a union is formed? Where he is, there emphatically they must be also. That is the law of their destiny.

Reasoning in this way from what we know, I might go on to add proof, for there is no fact as to our future condition of which there is more evidence than this. But this, though a just way of considering the fact, is by no means so simple and affecting as when we think of it as resulting from the desire of Christ. So I pass from this method of proof to the direct evidence of the text. "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am."

"Father, I will." I do not remember anything like this expression in Scripture. It is a wish, a prayer; but it is something more,—it is the language of a prince or ruler stating a decree, with the sweetness and under the form of a filial wish, a son's desire. Considered as a wish, the certainty of the thing could in no other way be more touchingly assured to us. It is the wish of Jesus that he and the children God had

given him should never be separated. "Father, I wish." His wish, with which God is ever well pleased, the wish of the only-begotten, the wish of the obedient child who was just now to offer himself up to death according to the paternal pleasure, — a wish that God will do what God will of himself delight to do, for it is just his wish also, and not less pleasing to him who hears it than to him who utters it.

Had he no power, what wish of that Being could be refused? His wishes all nature hears with joy, and could she move she would rise up from all her foundations to meet them. The wish of the holiest, the truest, the most pitiful, — if that be unfulfilled, then power has deserted God, and sympathy with the divine has escaped out of the laws of nature and out of the hearts of spirits.

It seems to me (knowing but a little of what Jesus Christ is) that, at the sound of that "Father, I wish," if the scope of the wish had been the destruction, or the new birth of all that is, on the very moment of the wish all that is would have "melted like breath into the wind," or stood up new-born through its deeps and heights. If it seems so to me, who know but a little of Jesus Christ, what must it seem to the Father, who knoweth him? "for no man knoweth the Son but the Father."

But it stands written, "Father, I will," in spirit filially and humbly asking, but in reality declaring

a decree, for all things are put under his feet, and he is the head over all things.

From all views, then, it becomes as certain as the existence itself of Jesus Christ, that those whom the Father has given him shall be with him where he is. "With me where I am." Mark the affectionate repetition, and so repeated, I think, to give us the sense of reality and perhaps of place, — no shadowy or visionary presence of a spirit, but with him and in the place where he is. He had taught his disciples that wherever his spirit was he was; that through all their afflictions and desertion in the world, wherever two or three were gathered together, "there am I in the midst of you." But this was another presence for which he prayed.

I said that I did not know how in any way he could have given us such knowledge of the future as in these brief and childlike words, — "that they may be with me where I am." To be with him, no matter where he is ("no matter where, if he be still the same"); to see more clearly his heart; to know what is the depth of those words, "the holiness of Christ," "the humility of Christ," "the compassions of Christ;" to go through those deeps; to feel with celestial satisfaction that we are redeemed into the same image, — that all this is ours; that towards us it bends in eternal love; that we may speak out our whole gratitude to him, and may act out in noble, angelic works the whole content of our love, perhaps imitating his divine com-

passions somewhere on the plains of creation in new devices, or it may be sacrifices of love, and bringing from far to his feet the offerings of our unspeakable tenderness. This is enough for my thought of what is "that better land." But it has pleased him to give us more; not only to be with him, but with him where he is. And where will he be? Perhaps, it may be said, in the centre of whatever the heaven of heavens can afford of glory and riches and powers; for he hath passed up through all heavens, and is seated on the last height. Where he is — who, being the highest by inheritance, hath repurchased Godhead by sorrows and love — where he is, there is the secret spot of all blessedness, beauty, power.

Who shall speak of that place? Thrones and palms and star-paved heavens are but our poor and weak parables by which we set forth the dignity and power of spirit and its absolute regency over nature. But how the affections and thoughts and acts of the Highest will clothe themselves and appear in the redeemed and triumphal era, our mean images can hardly give us a hint of. This only we know, that where he is must be in the "very bosom of the Father," and that where he is, even there must his own be with him, that they may behold his glory.

It must seem to others, it certainly always seems to me, whenever I speak of such things, as if I were a dreamer trying in my sleep to utter some splendid dream, and which the actual world, the common day-

light, puts to shame; and I only assure myself when I open the Bible and find it is all as I have said. In the indescribable plainness, seriousness, soberness of this book, I find there is no exaggeration; it is all so as it is written. And if so, gracious God, what lives are we leading? "Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me" — those only! And am I of them? Is not that the only question for a human being? Are we as men given to him, our spirit, our life, yielded as a living gift to him? For there is nothing capricious or arbitrary in this matter. As the destiny is so the spirit must be. And for such a destiny the spirit of Christ, a spirit holy, humble, and leaning altogether in affection upon him, that spirit which conceals under its simplicity the germ of all that is divine, — that spirit must be formed in us the preparation, the hope, the heirship of glory.

VIII.

THE CENTURION'S APPLICATION.

And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him. — ST. MATT. viii. 5.

WE know the position of a Roman centurion, or captain, and his usual character, — a machine of war. But war, while it brutalizes the inferior, sometimes ennobles and even softens, where the elements are such as not to give way; and it is in this an emblem of the world itself as a state of discipline. A noble, affectionate, and religious soul seems to have been formed here, not perhaps from, but in spite of its trade. The elders of the Jewish synagogue in Capernaum described him as one who loved their nation and had built them a synagogue.

It is a matter of doubt whether he may or may not have been what was called a proselyte of the gate, — namely, one proselyted to the seven Noachic precepts, or the principles of natural religion contained under Judaism. But he was certainly one of a class who at that day had risen above the superstitions of the popular religion, and, attracted by the purity and solemnity of the Jewish faith, had followed it without coming under the ceremonial observances.

Among these, this centurion stood distinguished by devotion and munificence. A man, it would seem, of particularly tender affections; for if this were his servant who lay "sick of the palsy, grievously tormented," the feeling shown here by a Roman officer for his slave was very remarkable. We can well believe, however, anything high of the character of this man when we come to the style of feeling he showed toward Christ. We are not told what he had known of Christ, — he knew him only through public rumor, perhaps, or at most, as the multitudes; but here in him was a nature which seemed to turn promptly at the voice of the new Master. Here is the record: "There came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof, but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me, and I say to this man, Go and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard it, he marvelled and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." His conception of Christ seems more wonderful the more it is reflected on. "I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof", — that is, unaffected awe.

“Speak the word only,” — no nearness, no touch required, no media, no sense of weakness in the power. Beyond this, see the illustration he uses: “For I am a man under authority,” etc. He seems to have imaged Christ as standing at the centre of the flights of ministering spirits, despatching and recalling them, or as if all the multitudinous diseases of the world, and of course all its other evils, and much more all its good, nay, its facts and powers of whatever sort, — as if the whole moved at his word as the clouds of the whole heavens move before the wind; and of this he seems to have been as confident as if it were a sight before his eyes. His words indeed show a peculiar sort of certainty and confidence. “When Jesus heard it, he marvelled,” for there was, as he said, no such honor done him even in Israel, the country of faith, the seed of faith, the children and the ancestors of all the best faith of the world; for if they believed at all, how slowly, scrupulously, grudgingly! And how meagrely they mounted from what he did to what he was! There are only two grounds on which this can be accounted for. The Jews inherited from their traditions a restricted and carnal conception of the Messiah, and they themselves liked this sort of Messiah. So, as Christ did not suit them, they never construed anything in his favor, and underrated the noblest evidence. In a word, mean prepossessions abased them.

But the pagan, standing at the gate of the Hebrews,

fed only by its great conceptions, and less narrowed by any of its littlenesses, was far better prepared to receive a new messenger from God. He, if there were in him "the good and honest heart," would judge the Lord by truer measures, and by the spirit rather than by the traditional conception of the Christ or of his wonders. So it took but little of these external signs to convince such a heart, when once prepared to recognize truth in its lovely and authoritative features. The miracles he saw or heard of drew and fixed his eyes upon the Being, — upon the way he worked and lived, looked and spoke; and looking thus with open heart (this is all that is ever needed) the spirit within him rose up to the recognition of the fact that here indeed was one from God. Nay, the might of the impression made was such that power he felt was natural to Christ, and not measuring what was possible to him by what he had seen or heard only, he measured the possible power by what his own pure heart taught him the Being was. Here was the secret of the difference between the rude but natural and manly heart of the Roman and the belittled Jew: The one looked up at the sight with something of the round wide-open eye of the child, the other with an eye pinched down to a mere slit, "peering and prying," as if afraid to meet any new and grand object; and this difference is marked through all the early progress of the religion into every land where it came.

Having seen the depth of this man's reverence, it

is scarcely worth while to notice distinctly that with this ingenuous reverence for Christ there went a deep consciousness of his own unworthiness in such a presence, for reverence and humility are but two sides of the same thing. So he says, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof."

I find from this account that the following things may properly be said. First, we are struck, here and elsewhere, with the superior readiness of the Gentiles for the reception of truth; and the explanation of it is that all knowledge, even religious institutions and traditions so divinely founded as those of the Jews, unless the essentials of the spiritual heart keep their right place and subordinate them, will stand as barriers and blinds to the mind.

It is so in the history of all religions. True religion is simple in its origin, and appeals directly to the soul. But as men do not like the convictions and life of the soul as their religion, religion soon comes to be interpreted and discriminated and drawn out into a system which not only does not feed the heart, but stands in the way and clogs all the more spontaneous life and light of the heart; so that when the new face of the truth is once more presented to them they either don't know it or are uneasy about it, and in either case are willing to reject and crucify it.

Observe how, at this moment, the Lord, discerning all this and seeing how it would be worked out in after history (not merely as between Gentile and Jew,

but as between any church and the paganism outside of it), said then, — and how solemnly said! — turning from the Roman soldier (as an image of the nation), “Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness.”

Perhaps the tendency most to be guarded against is the overlaying of the simple truth and heart of religion with an exterior mass which withdraws regard from the centre, — a building upon the foundations of religion “wood, hay, and stubble.” Where this is done, the few great religious acts and feelings founded on the few great truths are *gladly* deserted and got rid of, and the whole religious life is then made exterior and human.

Accordingly, the heir of the promises is cast out, while the poor soul from the outside (as this centurion), left to nothing but itself and God, is nearer to the perception of the kingdom of heaven. The Pharisaic Jews, with the fumes of their religious conceits and opinions rising in clouds, made a low, dull sky of their own, which shut out the tender blue of the real heavens, and did not discern the sunrise; but the simple soul whose atmosphere was filled with none of the vapors and obstructions of opinion and pride, saw the Sun of Righteousness, saw “the heights of the heavens, how high they were;” and so, “I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof.”

Again, I find here that that large class of persons who, in respect to Christianity and Christ, stand altogether on what they call proof, are very like to these Jews, and I find that this centurion represents not only the true heart, but the true philosophy, which judges religion by the light of the soul in combination with the inferior light of his understanding. It degrades the name of proof. The petty discernments of the head, named with the spherul discernments of the soul, is but a good torch, or say even a great light set up under the boundless cave of the night; while the light of the soul, if it be not a sun, is the northern star, which trembles but is steady, which, though a spark, is eternal, and sends its single beam through all the spaces to guide all wanderers.

The mere judgments of the mind are fatal, whether they be more or less refined, whether they be, "Search and see: no prophet can come out of Galilee," or the more exalted objections of modern thought. I wish my mind to be consulted, to be sure; but the unspeakable assurances of my soul drown all the noises of the objections. Nay, if it reaches to the last analysis, it may be found that in everything but merely intellectual fact it is the heart that makes the understanding. But make it or not, certain I am that what suits my spirit, when my spirit is pure, is my truth, and whether I can make it consistent that the Christ can come out of Galilee or not, it is Christ still. What did this centurion know or care for the objections?

I find also here in the affecting history of this man how beautiful a position of the human soul it is when it comes into the true relation to Jesus Christ. This entire confidence and reverence in what is altogether worthy of our confidence,—in him who, we may see if we look honestly, is the Son of God; the rendering him the unbounded honor which is his due, and with it that just consciousness of ourselves that we are not worthy that he should come under our roof,—this, I think, every ingenuous heart must feel is just the true and beautiful place of a human spirit, did we know nothing of redemption; and ah! how much more when we do!—its true and beautiful place, and its place of unbounded success. “And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee.”

And as he believed it was done unto him; and as I believe it shall be done unto me. And if I would measure how much shall be done unto me, I must measure it according to the greatness of my belief; and if I would measure the greatness of my belief, I may measure it by that of this Roman captain, which is authenticated by the author and finisher of faith himself, as larger and nobler than any of the faith of Israel: “Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.”

IX.

THE CHRIST-LIKE SPIRIT.

And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us, is for us. — ST. LUKE ix. 50.

He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth. — ST. LUKE xi. 23.

IT is difficult to reach the full intent of these passages. The critics explain substantially thus: The man who is mainly right, though in some degree wrong, I count as for me, for he is not against me. And on the other hand, the man who is not mainly with me, I count against me. That makes a very good meaning. It is as if Christ said, "I don't make much of nice points and inferior matters; I look to the central thing, and I count that the man who in the main is right, is for me, for he is clearly not against me." And a most encouraging thing this is to remember, that though we go wrong in opinion, in points of creed, and even of practice, and though we are people of whom even the Apostle John might say, "Forbid him, for he follows not with us," yet, the main state of the heart settles it after all, and that only. And this explanation makes very good meaning on the other side also. He that is not really and

mainly with me, though he believes a great deal and professes a great deal, is still against me; a very solemn warning to be sure. But this explanation, though good as far as it goes, does not go far enough; it does not tell us what that main thing is which settles the matter. If we do not know that, we have no real guidance. That, however, is indicated in the passages from which the texts are taken, if we attend to them, and it is well worth while to try and get the real meaning in so important a part of our Saviour's teaching.

On one occasion, John saw a man who did not seem to recognize Christ, yet was using the power of Christ's name against a devil; and so John said to his Master, "We saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us." Jesus answered: "Forbid him not; for he that is not against us, is for us." The Lord thought that at any rate this man was a fellow-workman against the kingdom of Satan, and so could not be against him, but for him. He seemed to think that the work a man consciously does is the main thing, and so he declares, without knowing his opinions, "that man can't be against me." Besides, the man used the power of Christ, and so our Lord adds (according to Saint Mark), "There is no man which shall do a miracle in my name that can lightly speak evil of me." He had faith that the man who worked with him and used his name to cast out devils, could not be in heart

against him. "Forbid him not; for he that is not against us is for us." So much for this side of the matter, — the first text.

The second text occurs at the end of a remarkable passage, which I wish first to explain.

When Christ, on a certain occasion, had been doing a mighty work in the dispossessing of devils, his enemies maliciously gave this account of his power: "He casteth out devils through Beelzebub, the chief of the devils." The Lord answered: "Beelzebub would hardly act against himself, and if I am the agent of Beelzebub, I would hardly spend his power in breaking down his kingdom, — in casting out his devils. If Beelzebub goes on in this way, he'll soon rid the earth of himself and of his spirits. A kingdom working against itself, 'a house divided against itself, cannot stand.' So it is clear that these works of mine are done, not by or for Beelzebub, but against him, and that these works must be done through divine power, — 'by the finger of God;' for there are but two powers, two kingdoms, — light and darkness, — and it is not less clear that if God, acting through me, is the stronger, then 'the kingdom of God is come upon you.'" This is the meaning of the passage. Now Christ ends it with this lesson: "As I have shown you that I, in not working for Beelzebub, am against him, so likewise, he that is not working for me is against me; he that does not operate for my kingdom, is against my kingdom. The test of a man is his work for or against

the kingdom of God. If it goes to overthrow Satan, it is for me; if it goes for Satan, it is against me."

So you see, that in both the texts it is indicated that the work a man does for or against the kingdom of light, is the test whether the man is for or against Christ. He says, "I find one man here following not with me, but really working for me and against the devil; that man, being surely not against me, is on my part. And I find another man who, under delusions, or pretence, seems to be working for me, but is really working to sustain some falsehood or wrong, — that man, being really not for me, is against me. 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' I look to the work. He who works the same work I do, though for some reason he does not acknowledge me, is yet for me; and he that does not work with me, no matter what he says or seems, is against me." So we see a beautiful harmony in these opposing texts, I repeat. The Lord says, "I do not look, as my disciple John does, for unity in everything before I acknowledge that a man is with me; if he is not against me in his real work, I mercifully take him on my side, — he is with me. Where I can, my spirit is to include, not to exclude, embrace and not to reject. But if any one, be he pope or patriarch or bishop, whose real work is against light and for darkness, that man is against me, he gathereth not with me but scattereth." In the light of these remarks we are now able to judge how superficial and injurious is the judgment of the cele-

brated Renan on these passages, when he says, "Here are two rules of proselytism altogether opposed, and a contradiction brought in by a passionate partisanship."

These views, if they be correct, settle some of the most important questions which have disturbed and injured the Christian world; but at present I can only speak of two or three things which I learn from them.

The first is this: I think they give us a glimpse into the spirit of Christ. We know, if we are attentive to the New Testament, that no being could have insisted more upon the importance of his own personality. I mean this. If he were not divine, we all know that his sense of himself was such as became a divine thing, — that he evidently considered himself as the natural Regent and Leader and Saviour of the world, and that he exacted the recognition of himself, the deepest trust upon and devotion to himself, as the beginning and end of the life of a disciple. To be a Christian was just this, — to "follow him." He knew that the only powerful allegiance of the human heart was not to virtue, for that is too abstract. We love and owe allegiance to beings, and not to things or qualities. He knew that God himself, as a pure and infinite Spirit, was too unknown and distant an object for the human heart, and would constantly become more so, as the mind of man progressed. So he knew that the sight of the divine man was the real desire, and demand, and necessity of all nations. Hence the

magnificent prominence he gives to himself; he erects himself as the sight for every eye. Now, in view of this, how natural it was for John to repudiate the man who "followed not with us;" and how astounding that Christ also did not repudiate him! But, although the recognition and acknowledgment of himself was vital, there was one thing he knew not how to reject, — namely, the heart that loved, and worked for good; and he risked what seemed the very foundation of Christianity, rather than exclude a man who worked for the kingdom of the light. He hoped, to be sure, and trusted that the man who cast out devils in his name, would not lightly speak evil of Him, — that, at least, he would not array himself against Him, and, perhaps, that hereafter, if not now, he would openly and fully acknowledge Him; but that was only the beautiful trust of his heart. However, whatever happened, one thing he could not do, — namely, forbid the fellowship of any one who was really co-working with him.

The next thing learned here is, that we have found a test to judge the Church and the world by. The Church, — is its motive love and its work love? Then, even if heretical, it is still for Christ. Not, of course, for him as it ought to be, not for him as if its belief were correct, — still the divine decision is that way. Or, is its motive and work not love, but the uphold-ing of what it thinks a true and ancient church, while it is not at all working out the central spirit of Christ,

— love to God and to man, then, though it stands in the same field with Christ, it is not as one of his angels who are gathering the sheaves with him, but as the dark man treading down and scattering.

Apply the same test to the world. What is to-day called the world may be split into two classes: the true world, — namely, those who are governed by sensual and selfish interests, or made respectable by prudence and outside good conduct; and next, that which is falsely called the world, — namely, men who, though not ranked among the churches, yet revere God and work for man; men who are willing to act for God and against the kingdom of Beelzebub.

Now of these two classes the first—the world properly so called—is against Christ, for much of its work and all of its motive are not his. But no just man can so regard that other class, who, though not of the Church, still belong to it in some great essentials, and who are really helping forward the kingdom of light, as against the kingdom of darkness. What shall we say as to them? I should say, “My brother, I differ from you greatly; I specially and deeply regret that you follow not with us, above all, if you have gone so far as to forget the adoration due to that name ‘which is above every name;’ but I, for my part, will never call you an infidel, or any other harsh name, so long as you are true to your own heart, and are aspiring yourself to all light, and helping up your brother in all charity. God forbid! I will believe

that, if the face of Jesus Christ could be truly seen by you, I am sure you would adore him; but while it is hidden, so long as you work in the light, so long you are no infidel to me. But yet, I pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to him, and accept him as the natural leader of men, the natural 'way, and truth, and life.'" The churches will have it that there are many parties, but, as I understand Christ, at bottom there are but two, — there are two camps the army which makes for good, and that which makes for evil.

On the one side, the men who, in some shape, differ vastly, according to their conscience, temperament, taste, and powers, but all of whom are on the better side, and who will sacrifice something for that side, and who stand with the Great Being in nature in his work, — who, in effect, stand with Christ in his work, and are bent against all falsehood, all silly pride, against whatever is corrupt and low, with sincere effort aiming to dispossess the demons from human life, "good soldiers of Jesus Christ," whether they follow with us or not, — these on the one side; and the showy and bad world on the other.

A Christian soldier is he who is (barring weakness) for everything good he knows or will know, and against everything evil he knows or will know, whether it is in his own heart or in the world. And I take it that the Christian soldier is also a believer, — that is, tending to, if he does not start with, all

those beliefs which naturally and in due time recommend themselves to the good heart, to all those beliefs which are suitable to its just development and growth, to all those beliefs which fill it with the spirit and the power of God, — and we should congratulate him for what he is, and point him up higher. If we do this, we will be acting in the spirit, not of John, who forbids, but of Christ, who accepts. Just so certainly as Christ is true, will all they who have his spirit come finally to him.

X.

CHRISTIAN PRIVILEGE.

Ye are the light of the world. — MATT. v. 14.

NO reflecting person can fail to see in the New Testament and to be constantly awed with the loftiness of the consciousness of Jesus Christ, specially when he uses such expressions as “I am the light of the world.” But this consciousness is still more impressive when, as in the text, the feeling is betrayed that even those who were lit at his light, though they were but poor tapers, were yet so exalted by sharing in his splendor, that they became also as if fellow-lights in the firmament of heaven, “for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and for years.”

No doubt he addressed his ignorant and obscure disciples in this way to give them such a mighty sense of the value of their light that they would feel their responsibility in using and publishing it. No doubt also, that this way of speaking of them, — “Ye are the light of the world,” — was his generous way of estimating those who had even the least share in his holiness. He tells them that they are that which it was his hope they would be; he sees their hearts as if he were looking at the sun under an eclipse, and

though but one faint ray of light is seen on the edge as yet, he hopes, he believes, and as if sees already the whole orb cleared and resplendent. His faith in his friends and his faith in man are quite as generous and characteristic as his faith in God; and this faith, like all faith, created the thing it believed. This way of treating the human heart is the way of the Bible throughout. So Saint Paul often speaks, and our liturgy follows in the same spirit. This is also the way of God in nature, — namely, to expect and believe great things of man, and so to call forth great things, which is one of the secrets of his divine education which we might imitate in the education of the young.

But such a hopeful estimate of such men would be madness, unless we understood that he rose to such an estimate, by seeing in them that element which he calls “light.” If we seek for the sublime, look at this. He selects some half-disgraced or utterly unknown characteristics of human nature, — humbleness towards self, exaltation of God, — and says that the man who is of this sort is of the nature of the sun and will light the earth. What a new valuation of the light and powers of the earth! What a sense of the primacy of the spiritual heart among all powers and grandeurs! how unawed by all that is established, — authority, thought, might! He just said: “I take this little un-gainly seed and plant it here; it will shoot and uproot the world. I stir up this blaze in the foundations of the soul, I illuminate this dark transparency, and it will

become an ineffaceable splendor, an attractive magic of light to the earth." He said it, and thus it came to pass. This sublime estimate of the power of his light is become fact.

But who are the men to whom this light belongs? "Ye are." I would make this "ye" as broad as possible. The announcement is made to every Christian man who has the first line of light in him; nay, to every man, so far as he is true to his true humanity, so far as that light of honorable instinct which he had from his birth still shines in him. Man as such, so far as he is man, — that is, so far as he is true to the light in himself, — is in some sense Christian, to some degree a light in the world. I address all as children of the light.

Except in matters of science, or in the technical professions, men, even from their early and crude youth, seem to feel that they know already that they are lit, and, unlike Paul, are as if they had already attained and were already perfect. The word "teachable" describes very few people except young children, and hence the Lord finds the image of the kingdom of heaven nowhere else but in them. "Simple childhood's ready ear" is what is wanted. To be a pupil before you are an authority is a simple rule; yet who sits before man or before God as a pupil? Who daily sits at the feet of Jesus Christ, the heavenly Teacher and Master, to hear what he says, to correct our hearts by his heart, as we correct our timepieces by the sun?

No, every man feels that he keeps time like the sun himself. Feeling in this way, of course we have no conscience about the great duty of reaching truth. Perhaps many never made it a matter of conscience in this high affair to guard themselves from their pride, their distastes, their inclinations, their interests; to lay their ear humbly and watchfully to catch that low voice which refuses to be heard in the jarrings of our passions. If you would ask a man about the duties he has neglected, perhaps it would never occur to^d him that this was one of them; yet it is the highest of all, and the hardest, — to get right ideas, to get at fact and truth in religion and life. We are under the wonderful mistake that we take in truth as we breathe in air. And yet every man of us is covered thick with prejudice; prejudice is the fashionable colored glass we wear on our eyes, — yes, and place in the windows of our churches. Prejudice is like a slight cloud in a precious stone, much debasing its quality.

But suppose we are real searchers for truth, and search freed from prejudices and assumptions, how shall we reach this light? By mere study? by thought? Never. There are natural lights of the heart, divine glimpses, whose radiance grows as we live in it, enlarging religious light coming out through enlarging religious life. We must grow pure in heart, in the temper of that high and holy spirit, for in that life is the light.

If so, what must we think, then, of the unspeakable presumption of men, creatures filled with nothing but the spirit of the earth, and judging only after their eyes, sitting in high judgment upon the affairs of God — matters so different that the winds might as well give their opinion of the waters; matters so much higher that the darkness might as well describe to us the day.

Every one has observed that people usually refuse to have any more light when youth is over. It is so as to all truth. As every one knows, great discoveries and inventions are usually rejected or looked coldly on after a man is forty or forty-five. In fact, the settling and narrowing tendency in man is so great that we take occasion from everything — from country, party, from our place, our age — to narrow ourselves and to refuse any more light, to stand fixed in what is reached. It was said by Plato that in his time the pictures and statues then made in Egypt were in no respect better than they were ten thousand years before, and this is quite true now of China, India, and Japan. What is this but an exaggeration of the same facts which I have been stating as to each of us? The early and crude ideal becomes fixed and sacred; and religious truth above all truth settles and narrows. So that I regard humility as to the present, hope and aim for the future, a keeping ever open a vista out of all possessions into the unpossessed, as the master-thought of all who are “the children of the light.” Just in

proportion as we get the heart of Christ will we get the eye of Christ, and know all things.

If ye have the light, spread the light. There are two ways in which a man may diffuse the virtue which is in him; one is unconsciously, the other consciously and of purpose. The first of these is the most effective. This happens where a man's convictions are all made into his life, so that every one who sees him daily sees not abstract and dead truth, but truth in the shape of a living soul. The Lord said, "I am the truth," and all who, like him, have worked truth into their blood and bones may also in their measure say "I am the truth." And the sight of this, as it has made that life of Jesus Christ the most influential thing ever seen on our globe, to which the influence of the mightiest is but for a moment, so also with the least of those who truly follow him. This it is which makes that wonderful power called influence.

A Christian man, without being solicitous, should take some care of his character; he should not let his good be evil spoken of, husbanding and cherishing himself for the Lord's sake. Those are the worst of suicides, who, if they can help it, will suffer others to put out a light which their Master has commanded to be set on a hill. Our truth should be accommodated to man as we find him, so far as the demand for purity will allow. Paul was all things to all men, that he might save some; but in doing this, remember that we may smooth religion away into nothing. It is the

sad fact as to most of the better spirits in history that, beginning with high aims, they have gradually and finally forfeited them in the necessity of compromise.

This was not Christ, who came eating and drinking, who accommodated his highest truth into children's stories, who said, "Ye cannot hear it now, but hereafter ye shall be led into all truth," and who yet with all this sweet graciousness stands uncompromised, the pure and express image of all truth.

I remember there was once a dying man, a pure and lofty soul, to which a certain truth, — namely, the truth that God is actually near to us, even as "a man to his own friend," and communes silently but most intimately and always with our souls, that we may walk, as Enoch walked, with God, — to this man, I say, this great truth had been singled out, and it grew upon his mind as a single star emerging from a heaven of clouds, and it seemed so exceedingly precious and fruitful that his dying words were, "Preach it at my funeral, publish it at my burial, that the Lord communes positively with man." He wished to use even the solemnity of his death to impress his chosen truth on the hearts of men.

Some such chosen truth there is to every heart. Let what truth there is in you come forth of you, not only by announcing, but in all ways. There are many. I shall name three, — the pulpit, the press, conversation. Mighty engines, but who works them rightly? The pulpit is a noble place, and if every

man who mounts it had much truth in him, and if his object were simply to speak it to the glory of God and the benefit of man, the echo of it would soon be heard around the world. But alas! how weak is it, partly from his fault, partly from the fault of those who hear. For the hearer of truth has a vast deal to do with the speaker of truth, and too often shapes him like clay in the potter's hand.

The press as a speaker is rising and is risen above the pulpit, and he who has any truth to speak would do well to take notice of that fact. I once heard a powerful but unwise preacher declare from his pulpit that the press was to ninety-nine parts out of a hundred the devil's agent. That is far from the truth, though it is on the records of the House of Commons that twenty-nine million copies of pernicious books were published in one year in Great Britain. The year was 1851. Still it is far from the truth. But yet how much of the merely earthly, besides the bad and mean, is poured through the press upon the world? while a mass of honorable, not to speak of Christian people, never dream of seizing it and turning it into the chosen organ of honor. Knowing it as much as we do, we still persist in underrating its power. Napoleon, I think it was, said (it is in his manner) that he feared three newspapers more than one hundred thousand bayonets. In view of its power what mean those who are the light of the world in standing aside from it? If there is anything we can correct, if

we can abate a bad usage, if we can appeal to a noble sentiment, if we can defend the right cause or the right man, go to the press in some form and do not shrink.

In England I was much struck with the ease and willingness with which educated men went to the press to give a simple fact, a correction, an advice, and so up to the formal book. There is little fastidiousness and fear in the use of this great influence. With us it is the restless, energetic man, perhaps an average man, perhaps a competent one, perhaps a weakling, but he it is who freely uses our press, while the men of light brood and are silent.

But if we cannot speak or even think, we have money and influence to give. Give it to encourage an honorable press, and count every penny spent on that as spent effectively in the right direction. Make yourself, according to your power, fairly and candidly a judge of the good and evil, and act on your judgment, for, I repeat, the printed page has become the edict of the world.

But, last of all, conversation, private intercourse, next to character, is the greatest source of influence for most men. The divine gift of speech, ever giving out, if I may say so, one spirit to another, how is it misused, — not giving even the best of what we are, but our poorest and most trifling! How much of our conversation is a commerce or exchange of trifles; and who, even in soberer interviews, seeks to

know of the best things and to give the best of what he knows? Two things strike one specially in conversation. At one time we sacrifice other people's light to our own darkness; and on the other hand we sacrifice, from the same selfishness or from timidity, our light to their darkness. I say we sacrifice other people's light to our own darkness — that is, we don't listen with care to those who deserve such attention. If most people once got familiar with the wisest man they would prefer their own poor twaddle to anything he could say. Or if we do listen, we listen under some narrowing prejudice, or with a mind "made up," as we say, and so let in just as much light as our own darkness will permit, and are like people who keep their window-shutters closed in full daylight. And, on the other hand, I said we sacrificed our light to their darkness. I mean that because we are cowardly or too nicely delicate, we go about the world assenting and saying, "Yea, yea," when "Nay, nay," and with emphasis, would do much better. Indeed we act much worse than this. Many a man's best and clearest feelings are overawed and shamed by the powerful influence of others, and he yields up, for example, the high and pure ideals of his youth to the coarse sneer or to the practical wisdom, as it is called, of important people, unconsciously sacrificing his elevation to their lowness, the light of heaven to the darkness of the world. Yield your opinions if you will; but your sacred sentiments, the life of your life, permit not one

of these to be touched, for thus it comes that the grandest life of the world is sneered away or awed down as visionary.

Last of all, be very courageous in behalf of all that is high and against all that is low. Speak the truth in love and unshaken firmness. We are here to be witnesses for the truth, — that is, to stand for the noble and just thing, whatever it be. There are times when even the office of condemning is allowed us, — of broad, clear, unflinching condemnation. Christianity is not without indignations genuine and deep; only let us be sure we have the right public heart in us.

“But the manners of good society will not allow much of this.” Good society would be better society if more of this were done.

There is a cost in all this, I grant it; but all virtue is worthless if it has no daring and no sacrifice. These things always stand together. “Many shall be purified and made white and tried.” And is not the result worth it? To scatter the purities of heaven upon a dark earth, “to convert the soul from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God.” Not counting the cost, then, let us be of the beautiful company of the wise, “which shall shine as the brightness of the firmament,” and of them that turn many to righteousness, who shall be “as the stars forever and ever.”

XI.

THE LAW OF SPIRITUAL LIFE.

Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. — ST. MATT. xiii. 12.

IN the sayings of Christ every one must have remarked the profundity of the matter and the simplicity of the form. Many of his statements are of such a nature that the humble peasants who heard him thought, no doubt, they comprehended the meaning fully, while, in fact, those very statements have a depth in them hitherto unfathomed; and we must wait, I think, for the spiritual life of the race to be developed much further yet before their full meaning can be caught, much less exhausted. I believe — to give one instance — that the teachings of Jesus Christ as to the nature of faith, are not reached up to as yet by any means. If they were held thoroughly now they would be thought fanatical, and they would be fanatical unless the whole spiritual condition of the race was far advanced beyond what it is. Any reader of the New Testament must have observed how much our explanations, our comments upon Christ's meaning, dilute the strength of the original statements.

Although this is sometimes demanded by the idioms of the language he spoke in, and for some other reasons, still in many other instances I have no doubt our interpretations bring down and narrow his meanings, simply because we cannot rise so high or expand our thoughts so wide. I do not know that all have observed the extreme boldness of his statements. If we did not know who he was we might be tempted to think that the bold way in which he scattered from his hand the most perilous truths amounted to a sort of magnificent rashness, just as to many Nature also appears to be thoughtless, rash, in the way in which she scatters her rocks, throws up her great mountain-ranges, or sinks her valleys.

The truths of the New Testament are the mighty seeds of revolution, not of one revolution nor of a thousand, but of endless revolutions to the end of time. Yet they are thrown upon the world without system, without modification, without compromise, and seemingly without solicitude. With a sublime confidence in truth the great Sower of truth went forth to sow, and, unalarmed at results, looked for the harvest somewhere, sometime through the great year of God.

This boldness, too, he exhibited, even where the moral aspect of the truth he uttered might seem dark or ungratifying. Here we might think — here at least — he would be extremely sensitive and most anxious to explain and “vindicate the ways of God to man.” But I cannot say that I see any signs of such anxiety.

He just stated the great truth or fact, and left it; he came not properly as an explainer or expounder or defender of truth, but (as he himself said) he came simply as the witness of the truth.

These remarks as to some of the traits of Christ's teaching have been suggested by the text. But without further preface let us proceed to the subject in hand, — the statement that “unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away.”

Here is set forth a fact which the rudest man or the mere child realizes in his own limited experience, and which yet, I think, is one of the most profound and comprehensive of all the facts known. Taken in its most general sense it is this, — that under God's government possession of anything is the pledge of its increase, a defect in anything is a pledge of its decrease.

We see the fact through inanimate nature: the greater has the tendency to be enlarged, the less to be diminished. The great suns of the universe draw into their control, and gather, as if into their bosom, the lesser worlds; the planets in their turn subordinate their moons; and the same thing is true of all matter.

Rising to organic life, we see the vigorous plant gathering life from everything, turning even its obstacles to advantages, and drawing away the nourishment and life from the weaker shoot near it, which, on the other hand, the weaker it grows, is exposed at

every stage of its decrease to more and more mischances.

So among the tribes of animate life. The weak give way to the strong ; the puny in health and vigor taking evil from everything, while the vigorous gather increase. But stop one moment with man and human society. In how many ways do we see the operation of this great principle? How wonderfully do superior intellect and will and all qualities bear fruit to themselves, while what is inferior loses or perishes! Social power and wealth, — what a marked and rapid tendency have they to increase by every increase! Those who have the least observation observe at least thus much, — that wealth comes to the rich and power to the powerful; that man must always struggle to get a little of anything, but when he has much he will get more, whether he will or no. The rule of nature is, gift for gift. That sturdy little band of robbers who made their nest at Rome, gradually mastering the world, gathered the best valor of all nations into the valor of Rome; their best genius, arts, were all named Roman, and Rome shone with the glory of the universe. In short, the great Donor of creation when he gives one gift never makes that, as we do, an argument why he should not add to it; but always, on the contrary, when he has once given he is willing to increase the gift, and every increase is with him an argument for a still more enlarged increase.

So strikingly is this the case that the great philoso-

phical naturalist, Mr. Darwin, actually accounts for the existence of man, and below him for all the living creatures as they now stand, by the gradual triumph and ascent of the best and strongest life over the inferior, and this not merely as between individuals, but as between tribes and races, the whole history of living creatures and of all of them, through all inconceivable ages past, being just this, —

“That they should take who have the power,
And they should keep who can,” —

that “unto every one that hath shall be given.”

So far as we have spoken of this fact it presents, I acknowledge, a dark side towards us. To account for some of the apparent partialities of Nature some of the ancients supposed that the present was a state of penalty or reward, in which the whole creation was recompensed for the evil or good of some former condition. Brahminism makes the whole living creation, from the insect up to the largest animals, one vast purgatory, one vast “penitential mechanism,” referring back to a previous state whose inequalities it is intended to correct. But whether we try by this strange though grand theory, or by any other, we cannot account for it, — that is, it is not according to the fashion of our ideas. Let us not quarrel with it, but remember two things: First, a great balancing and rectifying law in nature, — I mean the law of compensation; and secondly, that, mysterious as it is, it is only a part of the same plan that has conferred on one

being a limited and abject animal life, and given to another a power and glory and continuance like that of a god.

I have now taken the words in the most general sense, in which they state a law which actually marks the world. The special meaning of the words, however, is: He that uses moral light shall have more of it, and he who neglects to use what he has shall have less.

Dark, as the fact may be elsewhere, here it becomes full of light. Here it means no more than this: Unto him who doeth well shall be given an increased power of doing well; unto him who doeth ill, upon him shall the curse and the power of ill be increased. Here in the region of the will a man's havings are his doings.

In whatever else, then, the God of Nature may appear to be partial, we see on the top or crown of the creation the moral soul, to which all else is subordinated, — that there he vindicates himself, and shows clearly, whatever blind Nature says to the contrary, that it is his wish to render to every creature, not according to the gifts with which he is born, but according to the use he makes of them.

The particular application is as to hearing the truth. He says to those listening to him, as the preacher might always say to those before him, "Whosoever has a hold on what he hears, shall have more; but he who hears and lets truth float in and out of his

mind, without laying hold upon it, from him shall be taken that which he had;" or, as Saint Luke more correctly reports the words, "from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have."

Most of our truth lies upon the surface of the mind, as the seed sown by the wayside, — that is, on the hard, baked highways. It rattles as it falls, and the fowls of the air come and devour it up. The soil does not open to receive it, and so it bears no fruit.

But of course this is true of all our moral acts, and not of hearing truth only.

Glance at that old lower fact in our nature which is called habit; it is one of the greatest and most curious facts in the constitution of man. What is it? We find that whatever we have felt or done once is felt or done with a greater facility the second time, and that by every repetition an increase of the facility takes place on to an indefinite degree, — in other words, there is an increase of power to do anything by having once done it. How it is that there is thus an increase of power, we can by no means understand. For aught we can see it might just as well have been the contrary. We can go no deeper than the simple fact that God has made our natures so.

We can see something of the way in which it operates. Let us then see how, through the operation of what is called habit, or the law of God in our hearts, abundant increase is given to him that hath, while from him that hath not is taken away even that which

he seemed to have. As has been said, we find the repetition of an act, or indeed the experience of it but once, to give a susceptibility to the recurrence of the same. If in one case we have given way to the seductions of evil in act or thought, and have hardened and braced ourselves against the checks of conscience, this once done has begun in us a dire facility which increases with every step we advance.

Now this strange facility is brought about, not merely through the will, but through every one of the faculties of our spirits, through the intellect, taste, imagination, etc.

As to the increase of the thoughts of evil. Once accustom the mind to any set of thoughts, good or bad, and those thoughts gradually become associated or connected with all the other objects of our thoughts, so that any thought or any object whatever can call up good or evil to our view. The thoughts of evil by repetition become inwoven or associated with the whole mass of our thoughts, until every object on which the mind can rest will serve to call up ideas of malice, or envy, or impurity, or selfishness, and so color and corrupt, if I may so express it, the whole mental scenery of the soul. Like a flash of electricity the mind passes from the most various and distant points back to the one favorite spot. You must have seen this exemplified in instances where men have had some pet idea or project. In such cases almost every thought in the whole range of the mental vision comes

to minister as a handmaid to this one. In this sense, then, in what abundance are thoughts of evil given to him who hath evil? And this result takes place very speedily, too. No single thought passes into the mind alone, — “they come not single spies, but in battalions,” — it goes always in company; and every time it comes in again it comes in fresh company, and forms a wider association with our thoughts. And not only this, but just in proportion as the idea is a vivid one, just in proportion to the vividness of the impression, or its excitement, will be the ease with which it establishes a vital connection with the other thoughts, just as bars of iron at a white heat can be welded into one. So that easily is this thing begun, rapidly and effectually does it go on, until in time the man who has indulged in habitual iniquity has settled the remembrance of sin as a centre to the widest circumference of his ideas; sin has penetrated and passed through the whole body of his knowledge, and the mystery and power of darkness is shed through and settled in every region of his consciousness. Portentous indeed is such a spectacle; for the soul of the man seems then to be caught as in an inextricable web of sorceries. How can he think good when evil is still present with him? The whole universe is turned to him in one fatal aspect of temptation and guilt; the Lord must deliver him by a new power, for he cannot help himself.

As the growth of death so is the growth of life, —

from strength to strength. To him that hath either of them, that is, comes by use into a real hold upon either, the increase is abundant, either to the right hand or to the left.

Now nowhere do I hear the voice of God — nowhere, not even in his sacred word — spoken with more startling effect. It looks as if the Divine Being were actually present in our souls, dealing out now, every day and hour, to evil and good, the full recompense of their reward. What says he to us by the action of this great law in our hearts? Many things. He says: "Avoid the beginnings of evil, for, evil once in progress, thou knowest not whereunto it may grow. In general, alterations for the better are much to be misdoubted. So, also cherish the first startings of good, for soon thou shalt have, and have abundantly. Labor as if for your soul to possess, to have some little capital of good, and its revenue shall be more than the revenue of silver and its increase than of choice gold; and labor no less to break down and sweep clean out the startings or germs of evil, and that fatal harvest shall never grow." The least effort at the beginnings of things is worth the greatest when they have somewhat advanced.

God says, also, that he regards good with such love, and him who seeks to do right with such favor, that he will not only reward him, but heap rewards; and that evil is so hateful, sin so sinful, that he thinks it just to treat it with a severity, to recompense it with

a fulness that, if we did not see it actually before our eyes, would seem incredible.

People doubt as to any such thing as future rewards and punishments; but there is enough here, I think, to make a sober man more sober. I see, at least, that there are present rewards and punishments; I see them, too, not casual, but systematic; not transient, but carried steadily on until man disappears from our sight. Nay, I see that rewards and punishments are not so much things given to me, laid upon me, as that they grow out of me; I see the necessity of them laid in the very foundations of my nature, and that I must change the nature before I change the facts of rewards and punishments; I see that man may be described as a self-punishing and self-rewarding being, — nay, that this is so regular that he may almost be described as a self-punishing and self-rewarding machine. What need have we to discuss the existence of rewards and penalties future and unseen? The present teaches me enough of the future. I know enough of the world beyond, if we but continue the same economy and carry forward the same souls into it.

Here in the heart, then, I say, is a world of reality to which all heights of heaven or opposite depths are but as shadows. What need we think of external blessing or bane? Here within, in the laws of my own soul, in the great fact which my Lord and Teacher has taught me, — here is that which I contemplate with unspeakable awe. I find nothing so

justly to be apprehended as the operation of law. The dreadful names of Orcus or Hades or Hell itself, if they speak of something outside of me, alarm me not like this quiet, deep terror within me.

“All outward strength and terror, single or in bands,
 That ever was shown forth, —
 I pass them unalarmed. Not Chaos, not
 The darkest pit of lowest Erebus,

 Can breed such fear and awe
 As fall upon my heart whene'er I look ” —

Where?

“Within the soul of man.”

“Whosoever hath to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.” In that statement I see written the history of spirits wherever they be, here or elsewhere, in time and in eternity.

These are the thoughts of the subject. If I were addressing entirely the young, I would stop here; but most of those I address are beings of formed habits, and many of those bad. This is a very melancholy subject, but I do not mean to close it so. Bound in irons as we may be, spirits in prison, I preach to you the Deliverer, who gives liberty to the captive, the opening of the prison, the breaking of every bond. The new law — “the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus” — shall make you “free from the law of sin and death.” Nature can do nothing or little. A man

may seem in chains and under darkness, reserved to judgment; but, once touched and constrained by the love of Christ, the old man becomes new, the fixed and fettered soul born again and like a little child.

Bring, then, your enslaved spirit here, burdened, careworn, and, as in a moment, trusting, affectionately confiding, all burdens will fall off, and you will rise up free, forgiven, purified, and mount up with wings as eagles.

XII.

USE AND DISUSE.

And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound.—

ST. LUKE xix. 24.

Take therefore the talent from him.— ST. MATT. xxv. 28.

THE Scriptures have a peculiar way of speaking of God and his doings. What we call a law, they call a person; what we conceive as gradual, they speak of as done at once. This, though the more childlike, is the real and high view, and like the deep and wide glance of an angelic spirit.

To the eye of any one who could see behind all the machinery and springs of the world, there could be no notice taken of any causes but God; and to an eye to which “a thousand years are as one day,” the delusion of gradualness, if I may so express it, would disappear, and the judgments of God would seem to follow at once upon offence.

So Christ saw. The world to him was actually his Father’s house, and all going on there transacted by the head of the house, and second causes, as we call them (which are really but local habitations of the divine power, starting-points behind which it lies concealed, hiding-places of his power, a cloud be-

tween us and the real power), were as if swept away from before him, and he saw nothing but the face of God's throne. To him also that gradualness, that slow time, which to us hides his judgments or destroys their impression, was as if forgotten by an eye that saw through and on to the end. So there is absolute truth in what he says, for he looked at things as God sees them, and as we ourselves will see them when we shall have mastered the delusions which the element of time and the thick clay of the world have raised up between us and a true view of fact.

In this modern scientific age we all of us have been put to the great spiritual disadvantage of a special familiarity with Nature. To know how things, — events in our lives and business, etc., — come about, and what results will take place, occupies us. Our whole intellectual life is in judging and looking at processes and causes and results in man and society and the earth ; and so we not only naturally forget the One, but by a natural instinct this very earth, myself, other men, come to seem to have the power in themselves; and so, although we have gained Nature, we have lost God. We have come into such a state of mind that the Bible could not be written now and here, no matter how great the force of inspiration, unless man were changed or entirely superseded.

Of course, we think ours is the true mode of thinking and call the Bible way the religious imagination. It is the religious imagination if we mean a special

organ of truth inspired into us, but it is just the contrary if we mean fiction. The Bible says "God," we say "man:" the Bible realizes his judgments and forgets time; we are so beclouded by time and slowness and confused events, as to forget his judgments. Which is the true? The value of this book, then, in its simple, real ways of seeing things, though great to all men, is greatest to a scientific eye or an age intellectually busy. We should, therefore, in religion, habitually exchange our way of seeing and speaking of a fact for God's way.

The word "talent" or "pound" has no religious origin, as it means a weight in the scales, hence anything of weight in the scales of life,—that is anything valuable. But though the word sprang from the market-place, yet the talent is so spoken of as to make it something given or taken away by a master. So, elsewhere in the Bible, the whole of this is expressed by simply changing the word "talents" into "gifts," "graces," "trusts" (that is, favors),—that is, some act of a person. Now we call such things "possessions," "qualities," "abilities," something which has no reference to a giver or a master; and though our language has many words formed or once used to convey the Bible thought, yet while we have the words still the meaning cannot be kept up, because we think differently. For example, we still use the old language, "gifts," "endowments," "graces;" the words belong to us still, but they never express more

than just the thing possessed, not whence it came, or who gave it. When our fellows confer a kindly token on us we call it with distinct meaning a gift or a present, for we know that to speak of it merely as a jewel or a book would give us an idea of the thing, but not of the best part of the thing; namely, whence it came and why, — the love and the meaning which made it unspeakably more than a jewel. Now language is a vital affair; its words and forms not only indicate a state of opinion and feeling, and not only do their changes indicate the history of feeling, but the language of a people reacts back upon their character, and forms it most powerfully.

I say, then, it would be our greatest gain if we could habitually exchange not only our ways of thinking but the meaning of our words and the form of speech, and bring them back to the simple and religious and only real Bible way. But, on the other hand, in an age so unbelieving or at least so unrealizing as this, it is a great advantage to reverse the process, and to find the meaning or substance of Scriptural statement in our very bosoms, in what I find going on in me and around me. I mean this: Thousands of men who will pass over Bible language without interest and but small belief, when they find it to be but a statement in its simple forms of what they would call the great laws of life, will listen. And all of us, if we can see those doings of God which the Bible speaks of, and which after all seem far off, strange,

unlike the things of our experience ; if we find the hidden meaning of these Bible statements going on here, now, moving in us ; if we can see the very God of the Bible pass by in the world of things we do know and which we are sure of and pride ourselves upon ; if we can hear the decree spoken in our language ; if, in short, we can find these laws of life, facts of experience which are the gods of the modern mind, — if we can hear them speak of the Bible God, we are awed, and we recognize Jehovah as a reality, and religion as a thing of to-day, a fact of life, and we bend the knee.

Our talents are not viewed in the text as merely possessions, or even as gifts ; our talents are not possessions, but trusts. The feeling that we are our own is just atheism of the heart ; it is in fact not merely atheism, but even a worse thing, — a sort of substitution of one's self for God. Every man who does not look away from himself, who practically feels no reference to a higher, who has no feeling as to himself but that he is himself, and no feeling as to the good things he has but that they are his, is not only "without God in the world," but is taking for granted that he stands on his own foundation. Now, to stand on his own foundation, to have life in himself, is the incommunicable glory of Jehovah, who alone has life in himself. The acknowledgment, the deep feeling that there is one only Source and Giver, and that I am all his gift, that, while it is the humblest and sweet-

est, is the most becoming and noblest feeling of man as a creature conscious of his creaturehood; and in proportion as this is felt, as it makes him in his consciousness of himself more conscious of God, more conscious of the bosom on which he rests, so it makes him more receptive of God, and he becomes not only aware of God, as if face to face, and not only receiving consciously of his fulness, but a creature who, though a creature, is such as takes, shall I say consciously drinks, its life out of the river of God, and so through conscious, loving reception it partakes of the divine nature. It is a vast thing, then, to become aware that this body, soul, mind, and all which I am heir to, have come down and are coming down from above from the Father of lights.

But what talent is referred to? All, but specially of course the highest, our religious endowments. We are splendidly furnished through all the regions of a complex and wonderful nature, body, soul, and spirit; but if a talent be something of weight in the scales, something of moment in our nature, then the talent for religion is, of course, the incomparable talent of man, the talent which he shares with angels; and it is of that I shall speak. But what is the talent for religion? It is that in us which first knows, loves, and gives us up to what is good, specially a good being; it is the ascending talent of the moral heart. The religious talent is, first, the moral heart; then an endless ascension in knowing, obeying, loving, and receiving

God; and the instinct and want of knowing him better, which leads the race up from a god of sense to the Invisible One, from a being weak and inferior to the All-Holy, All-Powerful, — which leads and will lead the race from a fear of him, from an interested service, to a seraphic love and obedience.

It is sufficient to say that the religious affections and will are the religious talent of man. Now the statement of the Bible as to it is, that though it is the link which connects us with God, a mere disuse will destroy it, and that it shares this treatment with the meanest gifts of our nature. Every one knows that the health and the development of everything depends on its use. Each organ of the body is well and strong only if it has its proper use, otherwise it shrinks or is diseased; and this is one of those laws which seems, if I may so express it, a favorite idea of the Creator, and extends everywhere through the bodies and spirits of men. Fishes and certain other creatures found in the waters of deep and sunless caverns (Sir H. Davy found some of them in a lake in Italy) become eyeless, and in moles and ferrets the organ is shrunk and gives but a glimmer. It is the same if we disuse a muscle of the arm, or disuse our memory, or reasoning, or feeling; everything goes that is not employed. This law seems a universal and stern reprehension of neglect, and a universal instigation to action and to an appreciation of the things given. “Take, therefore, the talent

from him" sounds solemnly all through Nature. "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" Live or rot! And it is very serious to reflect how equally and unflinchingly this is carried out in respect to the awful gift of our religious nature. Consider its results. Look at the young. See what a keen and living moral sensibility, what a fine touch the young have sometimes; then take the very same moral sense at fifty or sixty years, and see how it has lost most of its quick; and how? Chiefly by disuse. With most people the faculty of religion is left to perish while still only in germ, a mere possibility of the heart, the seed rotting under the clods. And so it is, not only with what I have called moral sensibility, but with the will, with what I may call yielding to the good in firm adherence, — namely, obedience to good rules; the action, I repeat, of the will. As, in the former case, the sensibility, what I may call the touch of the heart, dies, so here the energy of the will dies. What brace and nervous power of the soul comes out in every vigorous doing of what I ought to do! what feebleness and crumbling of the will where I am accustomed to yield and melt to my inclinations! Everybody knows this.

And so I say as to all the blessed image of God in us, when we look round at the mature and aged and see what they were made for and what they are, when we raise our thoughts to their possibilities, — "sons of the morning," — and see what they have actually come

to, it seems as if the splendid flame had turned into the soot of the chimney.

There can be no bare disuse of our talents, but at the same time there is an increased use of something else, and a different part of our nature comes in and takes the place of the other. If you do not see to it that the life of the grape-vine goes to the grape, it will go to wood merely. The soul is like a fair room, whose nature it is to be furnished, and the only choice left to us is, what sort of furniture? I may carve it like a temple and fill it with statues of angels, but if I do not do that, a crowd of statues of devils will spring up from the floor and take their place. This is another of the great laws found everywhere. Begin down among the animals. Bring the dog into the company of a higher being, — man, who is a sort of god to the lower nature, — and he will become almost human, almost human qualities will spring out of him; but leave him prowling in the woods and he is just a wolf, — that is, only the dark side of his nature lives in the shape of mere appetites and ferocities. As you can raise a dog almost to the society of men, so by a contrary process, if a man, who by the favorable force of his situation usually finds his humanity solicited and drawn out, — is usually necessitated to use his head and heart; if he, on the contrary, has only his lower nature appealed to, if he is socially sunk, like the field-laborer in Europe, or like the English operatives in manufactories, or if, taking an extreme case, he is

left like the more solitary and debased savages, alone in the woods, struggling to live, depending on his senses and instincts only, you can reduce him thus to become a cunning animal by the loss of all his nobilities.

And the same law of disuse on the one hand and use on the other, in calling out and fixing a certain character at the expense of the nature, is seen in the astonishing fact of partial cultivation in civilized societies or individuals. Whole races for thousands of years, not merely told of in our histories but living before us at this moment, have expended themselves with astonishing effect in doing a certain set of things, in feeling a certain set of feelings, in thinking a certain set of thoughts, while they seem to lose all capacity and idea for anything outside of that. Think of the Chinese, for example; in less degree, the Japanese; in still less, the Hindoo. Being heirs to the whole palace of humanity, they live crowding in some of its outhouses, as I have seen a family of miserable beings living in a cell in one of the mighty ruins of a feudal castle. And, in truth, the same fact of one-sided or small-sided development, the same fact of crushing out the most valuable by the diseased expansion of what was least valuable, has marked most of the civilization of the earth.

This is a scientific age, and exhibits the phenomenon of many individuals growing merely into head, — that is, the exclusive action of one talent disusing and

finally destroying all other parts of the soul as an organ of truth. Yet pure ignorance of this simple fact — that this is a one-sided development, and that our whole nature is the only just instrument of spiritual truth — gives an authority to scientific men as judges of spiritual truth which is quite unwarranted. People, for example, speak of the intelligence of sceptics or of the disbelievers in some great point of spiritual truth, and it shakes them. Why, they might just as well take the opinion as to Nature of a man who had his eye and ear seared out, because, forsooth, he had an excellent touch. The man of mere understanding is in the very lowest rank of authority in such matters. If the Scriptures speak contemptuously of anything it is of the “wisdom of the wise,” of the “scribes and disputers of this world.” What sort of persons do they mean to rebuke? Just such as these. Their divine contempt is poured upon all who overrate or exaggerate mere thought, when the great ideas and feelings of religion are left out, and specially upon those who do this, being puffed up with a vain conceit of wisdom. He that sitteth on the circle of the heavens shall laugh them to scorn.

Some who fritter away their religious capacities, nevertheless go on expecting that they may become religious, as they express it, any day. I know there are merciful flashes sometimes sent into the deepest darkness, but this is rare, and it is rarer still that this flash turns into a fixed irradiation.

You may have seen an imprisoned eagle, old and worn and tamed, quite out of his eagle nature, but

“ When his plumes
The sea-blast ruffles as the storm comes on,
In spirit for a moment he resumes
His rank 'mong free-born creatures that live free,
His power, his beauty, and his majesty.”

It is, however, but for a moment, and he shrinks down in his prison and folds his broken wings, and the dull, poor film covers his fine eye. And it is but for a moment that the degraded and enslaved eagle, man, dead through years in all his better life and alive through years only in mean and wicked propensities, — it is but as a sad and rapid flare that he resumes his lost and violated soul ; it is, alas ! but the upflaring of the expiring light.

Yet, sad to say, these momentary revivings constantly delude us as to the practical possibilities of our case. We spend our lives in emptying out the right and taking in the wrong ; we educate ourselves out of life and into death by a busy education, which lasts every day and all day, and we allow ourselves in all this because we have the silly hope which some transitory flashes keep up in us, that when moulded and rigid as a statue in iron some miracle far more transcendent than raising the dead will recast us. O fatal delusion ! We know not that a dreadful law is upon us, and that we are bound in its chains in darkness.

If all this be so we need a special conscience formed against neglect ; a sacred dread, not of guilt only, but of the lapse and sliding of our nature ; an unspeakable fear, founded upon this fact, that the Creator through Nature destroys neglected gifts, and that even the Redeemer, whose mission is benignity, brings no relief to this fact, but announces in the text that the reprehension with which the Father of lights removes every candle from his place that will not burn becomes an unspeakably greater reprehension where there is neglect as to the powers of the soul, so great that the power for immortal life is itself withdrawn when unused. This is God's estimate of the guilt of neglect. "Because thou didst it not." In this parable of the talents there is no fault found with anything else.

Oh, then, that the almightiness of God would come forth, at any cost to us, to make us sensible to these facts! The world deludes us, and we delude each other; we are the mere creatures of each other's opinions. Because the soul is not thought much of in the streets, I do not think much of it. We lose our immortality chiefly because other people have thought so little of theirs. If this talent is the immortal part of us, the organ of eternity, and if it is subject to the law of perishing by disuse, why not either reject the fact that I am immortal and lie down with the beasts, or else, in defiance of the fatal folly of a foolish world, awake, and through the power of

the Holy and Eternal Spirit begin to live in the immortal part of me ?

But one word as to the future. The Scriptures have a doctrine of the future as to such spirits as have gone in the wrong direction which we all shrink from. We will suppose, then, there are no Scriptures. What are the probabilities of the case from what we see? Judging from what we see, if man is just to be continued after death, and the idea of punishment put aside, if you will, entirely, the conclusion certainly would be that he steps into that next state either entirely unfurnished of higher powers, — the eye of the soul as effectually out as the eye of the fish in the cave — or those powers are materially impaired, so that he must either go into a lower rank of being, or if he goes into a higher and spiritual world he goes with a nature unfitted for that world. Unworthy of eternal life; “take, therefore, the talent from him.”

XIII.

THE FUTURE LIFE.

*It is sown a natural body — it is raised a spiritual body. — 1 COR.
xv. 44, first clause.*

THE most interesting thought for man is this: “I shall live hereafter.” “When these scenes are past there shall be new scenes, and I — I shall live in the midst of them. I shall be there thinking, and feeling, and acting.” And if this be true there is not anything more important than that we should see it clearly and assure ourselves of it. Reflecting men in all places and from the beginning of the world have anxiously sought for light here; but very much in vain. They could get no certainty. The human heart is full of instincts, indeed, and hopes, which point to Immortality; the reason also can produce many probabilities for it, but still there are painful appearances against it. The spirit, for instance, often seems to be impaired or lost with the changes of the body, and at death it seems to sink away and go out, as a flame when the oil is spent. And when we stand over the awful ruins of the body, dreadful suspicions will come that all now is over, — that this is the end. If, too, a man glances his eye over the vast genera-

tions of men, which appear as the leaves in spring and depart as the leaves in autumn, it looks as if the human creatures were in mournful fellowship with everything about them, — that the same law of birth and destruction governed all. In accordance with this, we can see that in the best thinkers of antiquity, after they have drawn out their finest and most eloquent pleas for immortality, earnest and anxious for such noble hopes, there still lurks a secret and gloomy distrust. Indeed the subject does not admit of such proof as human nature demands. Every competent thinker, if he be candid, will tell us this. There is not, perhaps, an argument which the wit of man can devise to the end of time, which was not used long ago among the heathen philosophers. Some one was boasting before Dr. Johnson of the great proof there was for the Immortality of the Soul. He replied, "I wish it were greater." However strong proofs any one may bring, there is still a painful, distressing uncertainty left. And what matter is this for a man to be uncertain about? Uncertain whether he shall lie down with the brutes and rise not, or shall outlive the stars and be clothed forever with life, and joy, and unspeakable honor; uncertain whether his being may not perish by the pettiest accident, or whether it be indestructible and shall live, and must live though the universe perish from centre to circumference. That is an uncertainty indeed; and when we contemplate it we may know how to thank God aright that he has

taught us, and has brought, without doubt, "life and immortality to light by the Gospel." If, indeed, he had taught us nothing else, — if his revelation consisted simply of this one word "immortality," and of the sentence, "Man shall live forever" — that itself, I think, would have been a Gospel worthy of God. But it is not barely and barrenly announced; the New Testament is full of it. I do not mean that it is always asserting it, but if we look through it we shall see that this present life is diminished, is made nothing, — that everything points forward, that the future is all. Time and the world appear there but as the scene for doing a certain task; the apostles and early Christians seem as workmen doing a day's labor, and looking eagerly for the setting of the sun, — the great, real unshaken future was their all; they lived, "looking for and hastening unto it."

But the Gospel has not only thus made immortality a reality to us, but it has also shown us in an important degree its nature. It may seem strange that I should assert this. It is generally supposed that Christianity, while it has revealed clearly the fact, has told us very little of the nature of the future; but in my judgment it has taught us much more than is supposed. We know, or may know, something of what heaven is; and it is my purpose to show this. In doing so I shall take just a single fact which it has given us, — the fact that there shall be a resurrection of the body — and shall attempt to show that this alone contains

much information as to our future state. The Church celebrates the amazing fact of the rising of the body of Christ. "Sown a natural body, raised a spiritual body;" this body retained and yet made immortal and incorruptible, — that is the fact which, I think, is so full of meaning. Two things — a body, and the same body.

There is to be a body, — that is, we are not to be mere spirits, doing nothing but feeling and thinking as spirits. We are to have a lower nature also, possessing its own faculties and enjoyments, — a nature corresponding to the higher nature, like as our bodies now correspond to our souls. I do not say that the fact that we are to have a lower nature implies of necessity that it will be a body in the sense in which most people think of a body. It may not have anything like the personality, size, or shape, or powers of the present body; but one thing we may rest on, — that we are to have a lower nature, and one that converses with external objects, for that is the essential idea of a body as contrasted with a spirit. We are, then, of course, if we are to have such a body, to have a state of being suited to it; we are to have a world as our home, adapted to the new bodies. A real world this is to be, and entirely distinguishable (though not distinct) from that world of truth and holiness with which our spirits will commune. This much is as certain as that we are to live hereafter at all; yet there are few persons who seem to know it. Heaven

is thought of by many merely as a sort of spiritual vision in the presence of God; our future nature is reduced to a sort of mystical act of contemplation. Such a notion is false and injurious. We are to stand embodied in some species of external world, and whatever it may be, as real and solid as this. "We look for a new heavens and a new earth." The Scriptures give us not only the fact that there is a body, but that in some sense or other it is to be the same body in which we now are. This is something well worth our notice. What is it for a body to be the same? It is not that the same particles of matter continue, for we all know that the whole substance of the body changes every few years, and yet the identical body is left. The same matter, then, is not necessary: but this at least it must be, — that the faculties and figure of the resurrection body be like our present bodies; that in its powers it remain similar; and that in its appearance it remain similar, so that it be capable of being clearly known and recognized. I state the matter at its very lowest. If the body is to be the same in any sense, it must be in this sense. If we deny this we deny the resurrection of the same body altogether. The nature of the world which every being inhabits must be adapted to its faculties; and as our faculties there are to be similar to those we now have, it necessarily follows that there will be a similarity between the world to come and the present. Our great epic poet represents that this world in several particulars

is a sort of gross copy of a higher, and says in one place, —

“What if earth be but a shadow of Heaven?”

This fine imagination, so comprehensively stated, seems to me sober reality, — an undeniable teaching of the Word of God. What a range of conjecture is here opened, in that simple fact, that there is to be some essential resemblance between earth and heaven, between man now and man hereafter.

So far, then, we have certainty ; and now that God has taught us the fact, we can see good reasons why it should be so, — we can see, for instance, that important moral purposes may be answered by such a plan. We know that the next state, as a state of reward or punishment, is to refer to this as the ground of everything found there. Whence it might be asked, in eternity, “Whence are there such rewards to this immortal being? whence are there such penalties to that? It is the present scene, the present body, the present soul which are to explain and justify all that will be met with there. There is, then, a sort of necessity for carrying the present forward. In proportion as we would make a state of moral reward or punishment more complete, we must make the whole circumstances of the past sin, or the past righteousness, more vivid. By God’s plan of reproducing in a higher form the same body, and to some extent, as is probable, a likeness to this earthly scene, the present

may be carried forward in a wonderful way, with all its remembrances and associations, into the future, and thus vividly explain and exhibit, at the most distant point of time, God's government and the actions of his creatures through the whole past range of their history.

Other reasons for the same thing might be presented. Take one other. It seems especially important to the interests of the universe itself that the identity of the human race should be preserved. Among us, it would seem, has been done something, — the most mysterious, largest, and most divine of all transactions since the birth of the ages; something which the angels (the most ancient and highest order of creatures) desire to look into. "In a man's form appeared that one whose goings forth have been from everlasting." In this figure he lived on this earth, exhibiting the holiness and love of the invisible God, as perhaps it has never been seen elsewhere in any scene, in any shape, in any time. Now, to preserve and to give the utmost impressiveness to the memory of all this, is an object worthy of God. So we find that in this form Christ passed into the heavens, to remain as a man amidst those awful shapes of loveliness and power; to remain a man, that with inexpressible significance he might exhibit through eternity that earthly history of the glory of his humility! Now we find that as he is, so shall his redeemed be. It is promised that when he shall appear we shall be like

him. Wherever appears in any region that peculiar human form, there the whole history of the earth and its Saviour would be felt at once. And then what nobler monument can we imagine built to the honor of the creating and redeeming God, than a race thus kept peculiar in its characteristics of body as well as spirit, and standing with all its wonderful memories and lessons full before the eye of all intelligences? So that wherever one human form shall appear, with the lustre of the redemption, it shall flash the whole wonderful story, and the Redeemer, as Saint Paul says, "shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe."

But dismissing all such reasons, it is clear enough that whatever God's purposes are, there is to be a likeness between what we now are and what we shall be hereafter.

It seems, then, to be a probability that we shall be clearly recognized in that world; this we may infer from the fact that our bodies are to have a sameness of look and character. It is conceivable that we might remain the same and yet have quite forgotten each other and all the past; but if our faculties remain, and if they are strengthened, we could not forget. And then, the whole of the purposes of a resurrection require a recognition, so that we might state it as certain that we shall stand before each other as intimately known as at this moment. Another probability is, that there may be a far more near

and startling likeness between us now and then than we suppose. A general or vague similitude does not seem to fill out the meaning of the expression "the same body." I think a just interpretation of this would be that in everything not inconsistent with the idea of a vastly superior refinement and elevation, we are to be not merely like, but so definitely so as to be the same. The impression left on me from what the apostle says is this, — that the next state, while it is to be a beginning anew, is yet not an abrupt beginning but a gradual advance from this. God in all his works, so far as we know them, forms a regular gradation between his creatures, every species standing a step in advance of some other. It is highly probable that he takes that method in respect to the advance of the same creature; every stage of its ascent being not at too abrupt a remove from the former. Christians adopt this view in respect to a man's spirit; they say "it advances gradually in its ascent." Why may not the same be true of our bodies, and of the external state in which we are to live? There is just as much proof of the one as of the other. Where did we get our idea of the gradual advance of our spirits?

I hold, then, that on the same authority and the same proof we should conclude that our state there in all particulars may be closely linked to our state here. We must see, then, around us, in this our present home, the germs and normal forms which we shall see enlarged hereafter. And in our own nature we are

no doubt conscious now of many acts and movements similar to those which shall mark us hereafter, — just as the bird makes with its wings the motion by which it flies and soars, before it has yet its feathers.

Again. If there be such nearness between the two states, we may suppose that most, at least, of what is excellent in the present will be retained. When God makes a creature of a superior rank, he always, so far as our observation goes, carries up the main perfections of the lower rank into the higher. I believe, therefore, that much of what is valuable now will be preserved; I believe, for instance, that the skill we have acquired in the use of our bodily and mental powers will not be lost. As there will be similar senses it will give occasion for the exercise of much the same skill; much less will there be any faculty lost. The fine sense of beauty which God has here so largely provided for, will not be left out, but enlarged.

I do not suppose that anything innocent or beautiful may be lost; I suppose that with a similar nature and similar scenes there will be similar ties and affections. I do believe that the human heart will be left there. It is to be the same body, but it is to be unlike no less than like. “Sown a natural body, raised a spiritual body” — raised, refined, and elevated to a degree we can now hardly imagine. In that higher pattern of the human nature everything shall be left out which weakens or debases, and mighty gifts shall be added. Many have such a low idea of what is

called matter, that they will not hear of such views as I have been giving; it must all be spiritual. They know not what they ask. Matter is only a less mysterious thing than spirit. "No eye has yet seen and no ear heard" what it is susceptible of.

What a body might be I will not venture to say; but it is easy to conceive of a body worthy to appear among the sons of God when they come into the presence of God. Think of a power of vision which, looking through a finer medium than our light, could see and make the man as if present through almost endless ranges of beings and worlds; think of an ear which, hearing through a finer element than air, could catch the distant hum of a star, or the low cry of distress from the deathbed of a human penitent; think of a power, of a motion, which could come and go with the lightnings, which could run side by side with the rolling of a planet, the glancing of the light; or which could flash through the universe on an errand of mercy and joy swifter than the swiftest of the elements. The highest notion which some people have of spirit is lower and more gross than what the body may become. Sir Humphry Davy remarks that all the analogies of gross matter fail when applied to light; and may not the body be made of something not only as spiritual as light, but compared with which light itself may seem almost gross?

Hear Saint Paul's sublime expressions. "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is

sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power." Who is so exalted that he disdains such a body? Who so spiritual that he thinks the vehicle too gross? What enjoyment when its sublime organs, its pure, rich sensibilities feel, if I may say so, the image of God imprinted in the beauty, and order, and joy of his infinite works; when the love and worship of God shall be one undivided act with the natural expression and feeling, with every glorious sight, with every thought and deed! It will all be religion; it will all be a temple, — no sun, as now.

These views, expressed most imperfectly, are yet important. Nothing seems more misunderstood than the Scripture idea of the future. The resurrection of the same body stands in the New Testament as an eminent fact, yet I ask if there is in the Christian church any peculiar impression from it? What are, or have been, our ideas of heaven? Most shadowy, vague, unnatural! Scarcely better in physical respects than the heathen idea of the place of shadows. No wonder that the thought of heaven is so little dwelt on; it is not heaven we are thinking of. A Christian man should live immersed in rich foreshadowings of the world to come. There is a place prepared for us, fitted for us, poor, sinful, suffering creatures, "where God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the

former things are passed away." "Where we shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more." "Where the flesh shall be fresher than a child's, and he shall return to the days of his youth." Though we descend in gloom, "he will ransom us from the power of the grave." "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

XIV.

AT HIS APPEARING.

Beloved, now are we the Sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.—

I ST. JOHN iii. 2.

WHAT a magnificent point of departure is this in the effort of the mind to search out its coming destiny! “Beloved, now are we the Sons of God;” that is the foundation already laid. “And though it doth not yet appear what we shall be,” though in many points that future condition must be undetermined, yet one thing we do know, that being now “Sons of God,” our advance is to be in that direction, towards a nearer, nobler likeness to God; sons now, we shall in a higher style be sons then. Whatever uncertainties there be, this one thing we know, — that “when he shall appear we shall be like him.” Progress in the likeness, or, which is the same thing, in the sonship of God, is the one sublime certainty in the coming history of our spirits. To know our coming history is no less a legitimate demand of our nature than to know the past. It is profoundly fit that every man should ask, “What am I to be?” and I

think God has fully answered that question. Not, indeed, when regarded as a question of curiosity, but as an inquiry springing out of our spiritual wants. Man is to grow in the sonship of God, — that is, in the whole likeness of Christ in body and spirit. That is the whole of the revelation given us as to the future. The wonderful idea of the resurrection of the body is but a part of the larger thought that the sons of God are to reappear in the image of Christ; for the image of Christ is inclusive of their lower as well as their higher nature. We are to be like God the Invisible in and through a perfect likeness to God the Visible, — that is, the Son of God who himself is the “brightness of the Father’s glory and the express image of his person.” This one thought I regard as a grand revelation of the substance of the whole future. This future is usually thought of as general and vague; general it is, but not vague. Whatever be our best and most vivid conceptions of what is divine, whatever our highest ideas of beauty, power, holiness, whether we catch glimpses of them from the universe of God without, or from the Spirit of God within, — all this we know is but a fragment and shadow of Christ; and so, if we are to be made like unto him, all this is to be inherited and lived in our beings hereafter. What knowledge can be more distinct? It is only the trifling, the circumstantial, the accidental of which we are not informed. If I can settle it as the most certain of facts that my whole nature, lower as

well as higher, is to pass through birth after birth, of rising likeness to the first beautiful, the first powerful, the first good, — that is, Jesus Christ, — there is nothing left through all the awful days of eternity that I care to be informed of. “I pass them unalarmed.” Is it, indeed, the destiny of man to grow like God? That is the only point on which I intensely wish to be assured. The Scripture is full of manifold declarations of it. I shall only attend to the special evidence of it given in this most beautiful text; it is twofold. First, as has been mentioned, “Now already are we the Sons of God,” — which is an appeal not only to the assurance of present consciousness that our spirits have already taken a certain direction as a matter of fact, but a depth of spiritual persuasion felt through the whole being that this is the unspeakably true and right destiny and direction of our beings, and that the most sacred promises of God are in it. But there is yet another and very striking reason given for our likeness to God hereafter. “Beloved, now are we the Sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” There is a profound meaning here, but it is not obvious. We see and know many things which we are not like, — we are not like the characters around us, for example, yet we understand them. Nay, the devils know God and tremble. Still the reasoning of the apostle is just. Here is one of those glimpses into the very heart of

things, found so often in this wonderful writer. It will be seen, if we reflect, that we can know nothing to which we are not in some sense like; and that the degree of our knowledge is in proportion to the degree of our likeness. I know the external world of matter only as I am mysteriously brought into a certain fellowship with it through my body. I know the animals beneath me, only in so far as there is a certain likeness between their nature and mine; and where that likeness stops the animals are like a sealed book to me. In respect to my fellow-men, I know their passions and character merely by their likeness to something which I have experienced in myself. Were I wanting in the seed of malice in my heart, I could never know the meaning of murder. Were I wanting in the seed of holiness, the life of a good man, or of Jesus Christ, would be utterly an enigma to me. In short, I can by no possibility know anything in other beings of which I have not the rudiments in myself, and the more perfectly I possess any characteristic of another the more perfectly do I know him.

Thus Shakespeare's breadth of knowledge of man was based on the breadth of his co-naturalness with men. Then the more I am like God, the more can I see him as he is, on the very same principle that, all other things being equal, the wicked man best understands the wicked and the good man the good. To be sure, a certain degree of knowledge of God all men have, but this also depends upon likeness to God; for

this likeness may be (even where all moral likeness is lost) in the intellectual nature. We are now ready to see the depth of Saint John's meaning when he says that the Sons of God shall be like God, for they shall "see him as he is." "Now," says Saint Paul, "we see through a glass, darkly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known." Speaking of children the Saviour says: "Their angels do always behold the face of my Father." And above all in force, perhaps because of its simplicity, is the saying: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." If this be so, then, Saint John argues, we shall, we must be like the Being we see. I would not venture on such expressions were I not warranted by this revelation from God. The utterness of knowledge the spirit is to have of God, it is not possible to express more strongly than the Bible does. If it be, I repeat, from the consciousness of what is in ourselves that we know others, then it is implied that we must be ourselves godlike to know God as he is. His nature must be in our nature. I am astonished at the boldness of the Scripture declarations. In our mouths they would be blasphemy. It is obviously meant that we should regard our destiny as reaching and transcending the very highest point which is possible to our imaginations. Was there ever such sweet grandeur, such tender and lofty promises, in any words as these: "Beloved, now are we the Sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we

shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." If this be so, what can be so beneath his own claims as man, with such a title in his hand, choosing for himself the portion of a mere earth-worm, deliberately judging himself unworthy of eternal life?

It seems to be clearly true, both from what we see of the latent possibilities in the soul of man, and from the outspoken word of God, that such a future is possible to man. Yet behold the race perishing from morning to morning as if it were but an immense herd of animals. We are in a dream. Beloved, hear the word of God. For a brief moment we are passing through an obscured and animal condition, but soon there is to be a revelation, — an unclosing of the Sons of God, — when the whole creation shall with us be delivered into a glorious liberty of the sons of God. It would become us to awake, then, to know that — as much by false humility as by false pride — we are deceived. The world of sense clouds us and dupes us; but there is deep mercy. We are, indeed, of an unspeakable sort of being, of unspeakable hopes; and every man that hath the beginning of these hopes in him knows that there is eternal life in him, and so, as the apostle says, "purifieth himself even as he is pure." Let him then cast off the works of darkness and assume more and more that nature of pure indestructible life to which he is called. I know not how to speak of this when I look at what we are losing on

the one hand and gaining on the other. I say soberly, but with profound earnestness, that we sleep, that the true life is unknown to us, and that unless we become conscious of it, — conscious that “now are we the Sons of God,” — it must be that when he shall appear we shall not be like him or see him, — that is, we shall have a future without God.

XV.

THE STRAIT GATE.

Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able. — ST. LUKE xiii. 23, 24.

THE curious Jew who asked this question is not alone in his curiosity. The whole world has asked it, from the first-born man to the present day; and at every new burial the mind peers into the dark and asks, Is this one saved? No answer; but this at least seems probable, that there are many who are not. That many souls perish would seem probable if the Lord had never told us.

Whether a man believes that to perish means annihilation or means a living death, whatever sort of failure he may think it to be, — for there are several destinies possible to perverted souls, — in any case failure of some sort seems a fact possible and probable, for we see that failure marks a large proportion of everything which attempts to live, — seeds, animals, men. Besides, from what we know of the men around us and of our own souls, we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that deterioration, decline, and other than

improvement and growth, mark many people. The fact is so sad that it fills one with gloom to mention it, but it is so.

There are those who believe in what is called universal restoration. Hopeful natures would naturally think this. I am willing to allow that such hope is sometimes founded on a strong confidence in the goodness of God; and most gladly would I believe it, but the facts before us and the facts within us seem to unite in solemn concord with the voice of Christ that there are many who shall not be saved. Various may be, will be, the destinies of unascending, unsaved spirits, and I dare say Christian people conceive all the circumstances of this subject very foolishly; but that there will be many who will not enter into life, the Lord declares, and it also looks terribly probable in itself. More than that: according to our Lord's teaching there are many who seek — that is, wish, and in some measure aim — to enter into life, who are not able. "Many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able;" for the gate is strait. This simple, homely figure of the strait gate is used more than once; it is the same thing, essentially, as where he says of the rich man, that "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

Christ felt that the entrance into life demands pushing and struggling, and that a man, if he gets through, must strive through; or, as in the original, agonize

through. "Agonize to enter in at the strait gate." A man must contract and crush his inflated self to enter; he cannot expect to enter by idle wishes.

The disagreeable truth, then, is that a man may know whether he is entering life by this, — that he is in an agony. The new creature is born into the natural world and into the spiritual world usually through an agony of travail. And the fact is nothing strange, and not at all peculiar to this matter. For example, the man who loves truth agonizes, through a mental world confused and dark, towards daylight; the man who has the shadow of a beautiful idea in him agonizes to fix the shadow into form. It is all a sort of divine ascension, and to ascend is always hard.

To be a good citizen a man must be in an agony. Even those things which seem very easy and natural — to be a good husband, a good father, a good friend — have each at times their agony. But where you ask a man, half an animal, a citizen of this earth, to be a citizen of an unseen world, to be a companion of spirits, to be a lover of God, to hear sounds and see sights and trust in facts of which there is not a whisper in this atmosphere, — then, of course, for such a man to reach such a great change is agony.

Some kinds of so-called great things are just imposed upon us, but all really great things are born from within, through a striving out from our own centre. It is literally spiritual creation.

It would be an injurious calumny on this great crea-

tion or ascension of man into the image of God to speak of striving as its constant and painful mark. Religious success has just the same history as any other success. Earnestness and striving must, to be sure, lie at the bottom of all good achievement. I look at the boy mechanic and see how hard a thing it is for him to handle his tools or to calculate his work; but when he becomes a little older, though there is earnest strife with his work still, yet what healthy ease and enjoyment there is in it! So of the business man; and so of all work up to the highest. The apprentice must strive, but the master-workman, though a workman still, is a *master*-workman.

In moral life how hard it is for little children to stand on their feet, to walk straight, to tell the truth, to do anything logical and in the way older people desire; but when they learn these things what delight in doing them! How hard it is for many mature people to say "No" to wrong things and foolish solicitations; to resist the bent to say a disagreeable thing about people they dislike, or to sit and hear such things said! how hard to do almost any moral thing! But when they have striven and done it repeatedly, the doing soon has in it a robust pleasure.

I know some persons who, though their range of moral duty may be very confined, yet have got such ease and sureness within that range, that they may be said to be masters in the art of right living. So it is as to resisting all wrong; so it is as to the confession of

sin. This is a thing hateful to be heard of; but the child who has overcome his pride. and does it with sobs at his mother's knee, and the larger child, man, who has overcome his pride and bows before the all-merciful Father, saying, "I have sinned; pardon my sin," — both come to find such confession easy. So of the whole range of obedience to God, and love and trust in Christ our Saviour. At every point there is an agonizing necessary to enter into life, for, of course, as we have grown so crooked, it takes a hard wrench to set us straight; but we must make this wrench, or we shall be crooked forever; we must enter with pain the strait gate, or we shall be outside forever.

Observe that the Lord in this place makes no other penalty, but simply this, — the remaining outside of the good life. I see the same thing every day as a present fact of the heart. I see that because we hate to struggle into good habits, we grow more and more unfit and unable to enter; so we are self-ejected, and every day farther and farther ejected, and are giving up ourselves to a deadly luxuriousness, our wrong souls growing fixed as iron; and I see that if we are just left in that way we are self-determined, self-doomed to be outside of life; and I know that to be outside of the good life must be, whatever name we give it, bitterness and death.

What punishment do we want worse than the bad or poor heart left to itself finally, the body stripped off,

the comforts of sense gone, and the spirit doomed to the perpetual disappointment of seeking and seeking without finding, doomed to the perpetual pain of its own bad company in regions where God is less and less known; where, finally, the soul is not kept away from God or life at any moment by any external power—that is, a blasphemous view of God,—but is forever kept away by its own bad choice, seeking its life in the sphere of death, and too utterly enervated to arise and say, “There is still a Father’s house.”

Yes; to remain outside will be the perpetual choice of the spirit; its hell is its own selection. Does this seem impossible? Alas! have you never seen in others, or have you never felt in yourself, this awful anomaly of a course chosen, yet at which your soul sickens? Have you never known a besotted man who chose ignominy, and ruin, chose to tread under his feet the bleeding hearts of those he still loved, chose a diseased body, chose death, rather than agonize and break away and enter the strait gate? That is a fact of human nature now before us, and that fact makes the real dread which impends over the future career of every spirit which will not now strive while strength is left it.

Some will point to the free gift of life, purchased through the striving and agony of the great sacrifice. I can also say, “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.” I well believe and know that the mercy of

God, as seen in Christ, does to every heart which feels it, — make hard virtue easy, gives wings for feet. But striving is still the necessity of man. We must purify ourselves as he purified himself, through sorrow, through striving; not now, however, through gloomy but through glad striving, ascending a hard road, but singing, — a new song put into our mouths; for, with mercy and love over us, “Wisdom’s ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.”

XVI.

RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT.

Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment. — ST. JOHN vii. 24.

HERE is the maxim of all science, of all justice, of all charity, of all religion. It stands opposed to the great maxim of prejudice in all spheres, which is, judge according to appearances.

I do not speak of formed malice or of deliberate hostility, but of those ungrounded or excessive distastes we are apt to form as to persons and things. Society suffers enough from formal enmities, but not more, perhaps not so much, as from prejudices which, though not so deep, are diffused over a far wider surface. Not only are the occasions of great enmities fewer, but, as they are felt to be decided evils, both the conscience and the prudence of men guard against them; while prejudices are allowed free way, and creep unconsciously into all bosoms.

We are little aware of the wide and darkening effect of prejudice. It is as if a low, black mist were diffused over the surface of the world, blearing and distorting everything; and not until this low, black mist is lifted will the real earth and the heavens and all

that is in them stand forth as they are in the bright, shining atmosphere of truth.

We call this prejudice, and it seems no great matter; but could we see the whole scope of mistakes and aversions which come out of it, — first night, and then monsters of the night, — it would seem a horrible agent, breathing a malign dark out of the mouth of the pit and spreading upon the face of the world. Begin with the hereditary prejudices of races, which date back — some of them — to the first ages, through which great divisions of the population of the earth have almost or altogether lost the idea of their common humanity in monstrous caricatures, bred wholly out of their distaste and ignorance. If the feeling which the different races of the world have of each other were written down as a description of man, the world would be known as a place inhabited by fools, beasts, dogs, and devils. Think of four hundred millions of men holding such notions of all other men as the Chinese do! Nay, think of us in our feelings towards them, as if the whole of China were a great farce, that awful mass of immortal creatures, nearly one third the race, one of two or three of the large oceans of life on this planet, — that most ancient race, looked at by us with a sort of laughing contempt, all the depths of humanity there lost in our sense of the national peculiarities.

The prejudices of nations, too, — look at them. History is a record of mistake and the silliest animosity, from the traditional hates and feuds of tribes

and clans, founded on nothing, up to the vast prejudices which separated the little Greek or Roman nucleus from the whole world outside, and which led the most renowned teacher of them all, even in teaching the highest morals, to allow that war could be justly made against all men, because all were barbarians. Think of that!—the highest moral authority of the world for centuries teaching that subjugation or destruction was fit for all, on the simple assumption that the perpetrators were higher than all.

These distastes of races and nations, though of a higher type now, still in the nineteenth century stand as walls of partition between the most Christian peoples of the world. Then there are the prejudices of systems or principles, — such as forms of government, religions, etc. Constantly all the good is with us and all the evil with others, and these feelings attach themselves even to their names; and after the division is made and the name has been fixed, it then matters little what the system is or how much it may change, or whether it loses much that was objectionable, — for ages the same names will carry down the same hates, for names and words rule the world.

Let us look only at the views of Christian bodies around us as to one another now, at this moment. Some of them differ mainly in that they are divided and worship under different roofs, and yet the mere facts of separation and of strangeness allow that selfish imagination to act which pictures all things different

from us to be worse and strangely worse. Here is this unspeakable spectacle of folly at this moment among those who stand in the lead of the leading civilization of the world. Or, when the differences are real, what absurd phantoms are conjured up! Calvinism, Arminianism, — why, once huge masses of people in the world had the most dreadful ideas of other huge masses of people as if they were scarcely human, only because these names were called over them. And large fragments of the feeling are left.

Then there are social and personal prejudices. Of social prejudices let me name but two, — those of rank and wealth. Rank, family, position, — there are communities where the whole social fabric is founded on such distinctions; but even these are not without their use, so long as it is an honorable pride in the real merit of one's race, and a high conscience to keep one's own life in noble accord with a noble standard. But when this feeling becomes so debased as we sometimes find it, when persons assuming some fiction of excellence sit to arbitrate the claims of their fellow-creatures, and looking round, with weak and foolish eyes, cannot even see anything outside of their own frivolous set, what shall we say? You had an ancestor who did well, perhaps; and do you on that account — you who do ill or do nothing — dare to judge and rule out other people, to measure yourself with the man who now, to-day, is doing well and approving himself to God and men?

There are prejudices of wealth also, — the prejudices between the rich and poor, both sides judging according to appearance, and neither of them a righteous judgment. Separated widely, neither sees into the true heart of the other. In this country the people without fortune are often envious and discontented at the happier lot of those within their sight, who, working no harder than they, are much above them. The necessary decorum of their demeanor and associations, prejudice will call pride; the necessary decorum of their style of living, prejudice will call ostentation. If they give much, their charity goes with many for mere selfishness and show; if they conceal their gifts they are niggardly.

The prosperous men of this country, considering the sort of life and habits which usually must be formed in getting wealth, and considering the temptations from its possession to conceit, to luxurious or avaricious selfishness, have done and are doing as well as any other class. I know that, in view of all the possible mercy and bounty and nobleness that money might effect, one always must ardently long that the responsibilities and true grandeur of wealth should be better felt. Would to God, and for the sake of Christ, they were better felt! But what right have we to judge our fellows by a higher mark than we set ourselves? Let us not by harsh misjudgments harden hearts which are quite as good as ours. It is fit that they as well as all men should be solemnly reminded

of their high duty, and should by right authority be solemnly rebuked for their failures; but it is even more fit that they should be led back to the divine beneficence of Christ by gratitude for the good they do, by cordial greeting and affection, when we see one from among them rising above his powerful temptations, and with all the bulk of his impediments passing through the eye of the needle into the kingdom of mercy to others and of heaven to himself. All honor to him who reaches this, and honor too to him whom we can see but beginning and leaning towards it! May there be in honest hearts no unmeaning admiration of riches irrespective of the man who holds them; still less that cruel prejudice which allows for nothing, misinterprets everything, and is almost enough to turn into stone a heart willing to begin a career of beneficence.

On the other hand, and if possible with deeper feeling, would I conjure the refined and prosperous to draw nigh the poorer men as brothers. At a distance we misjudge all. Within the sad deformities of poverty, or an unrefined life, is the wonderful soul of a man. Imitate the wide and divine sympathies of the blessed Master of us all. If there be indolence, falsehood, dishonesty, ingratitude, pity the man who through the misfortunes of birth, of education, of intercourse, has been led into the profounder misfortunes of the heart; pity and judge mercifully "the brother of low degree."

Let us from social prejudices pass down and clear our hearts of those personal distates and misjudgments which are constantly forming themselves in us, and which fill the world with wrong.

There are two ways of looking on our fellow-creatures. One is to find what is congenial to a certain fancy we have, and then to let feelings of dislike go out upon all persons below this or different from it. The other is to look earnestly for an aspect of good in persons at first distasteful. Take the former course and we shall soon narrow out, and with a high hand condemn the whole world; take the latter and we shall enlarge our hearts until we find a jewel even in the head of the toad, and the whole world will come in and take a place in our interests. As in foods, acquired tastes often become the most vivid and permanent, so is it here. Nay, the best in all departments of truth, of beauty, of persons, is often the most hidden to the first glance, — an angel un-awares. Often

“ It is retired as noontide dew,
Or fountain in a noonday grove,
And you must love it ere to you
It will seem worthy of your love.”

But people, as if it were a virtue, pride themselves on the narrowest narrowness they can reach, and say, in effect, “My present taste and judgment are perfect, and all merit is to be measured by them.” Now this is a grave moral delinquency, and it operates far

more poisonously, where we imagine or receive some slight.

We owe it to our fellow-creatures to judge them not at all in this way, to judge not after appearances, but to judge righteous judgment. This slight distaste is the seed of hate, and hate is the seed of murder; it is the first but decided note of a discord which runs out to a hell. Practically such feelings do more, I think, than all others to darken life and to unchristianize it. Many, indeed, acquire a sort of habit of hostility: the first thoughts and feelings are something more than indifferent.

Could we meet everybody, no matter though there be a real personal provocation, with a determination to judge others justly, at least, — I will not say generously, — we would do much for the kingdom of Christ in the world.

We will find our account in this mode of just feeling and judging; for if I am conscious of a prejudice, I must either become a hypocrite and a coward in concealing and feigning, or I must show my dislike and produce hostility; and so at last, in either way, reap into my own bosom the bitter fruit of my miserable feuds. It is an honor to human nature that it cannot be happy under such feelings. The consciousness of the feelings of others towards us infuses its tone through all the hours of the day. Even when we do not think, our spirits carry along with them their bright or dark atmosphere. If I know of an enemy or

a friend in any quarter of the globe, I am the richer or poorer by it.

“If I be dear to some one else,
Then I should be to myself more dear.”

Resolutely resist, then, the first risings of prejudicial feeling. Let us judge honorably in our own soul of every man we meet; let us not start on the supposition that all excellence takes its shape from our taste; let our judgment-seat within be as spotless as the ermine of the public magistrate.

The most important of our prejudices are those in respect to religion. There is something intrinsically disagreeable in Christianity at first, however fairly it may present itself; absurd prejudgments of what is excellent bar the way to its reception. Yes; though it vary and adapt itself, though John come from the wilderness, austere, in camel's hair, it will be said “He hath a devil;” or though the Son of man come in the dwellings and social feasts of men, genially and affably eating and drinking, he will be blamed as “a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber.” Religion pipes unto us, but we will not dance; it mourns unto us, but we will not weep. In whatever guise it comes this innate prejudice dislikes it, and the celestial truth is reproached and cast out. Still it seems to me that its friends are answerable for no little of this distaste. To what eye hath the naked and accomplished beauty of Christ and his faith, just as it really is, ever come? Half-monstrous shapes have been for

long ages roaming the earth as the very Christ, libelling God and confusing the human heart. Many thoughtful men of refined tastes, seeing Christianity blended perhaps with much that is false or exaggerated and absurd in sentiment, stand at a distance, and though they may not definitely disbelieve, yet in their hearts they decline to accept Christ as their Master and Saviour. The whole ground of religion is a distasteful region, — a sort of Nazareth, — and they say, “Can any good thing come out of it?”

To this old question I repeat the old answer: “Come and see.” Judge not of this vital interest by its appearance, but judge righteous judgment. Here is the very face of God shown in Jesus Christ. If we will but put off the coverings and draw near, we shall see, and our souls will be lifted up and saved out of the sin and death into which they are gradually sinking, and in his life they will find life. Only “come and see.” Learn the great wisdom to distrust appearances. God mysteriously allows false looks to cover the true, the holy; and thus is tested the ardor of our soul in seeking it. Distrust prejudices.

In this spirit learn we to-day to judge all persons and all things, and especially the things of Christ. We are here on earth for this purpose; we are disciples of light, to know the truth, that the truth may make us free; and in his light may we see light. Thus, finding truth, we shall find in it holiness and peace towards God; and charity and brotherhood towards man.

XVII.

THE BOOK OF GOD.

Search the Scriptures. — ST. JOHN v. 39.

IT is doubted whether the Caliph Omar burned the great library at Alexandria (one of the most calamitous events in the history of literature); but he is reported to have said, in defence of the act, that these books contained either what was found in the Koran or more than was found there. If they contained anything new or additional to that perfect book they must be false, — if they contained just what it contained they were superfluous, and in either case might safely and justly be destroyed. This places in striking contrast the narrowness of the Mahometan faith with our own; for though we have a book as rationally sacred as theirs is, yet in the spirit of God's word there is the profoundest incitement and encouragement to thought. "The Christian faith," says Lord Bacon, "as in all things, so in this, deserveth to be magnified; holding and preserving the golden mediocrity in this point between the law of the heathen and the law of Mahomet, which have embraced the two extremes. For the religion of the heathen had no constant belief or confession, but left all to the liberty of argument;

and the religion of Mahomet on the other side interdicted argument altogether. The one having the very face of error, and the other of imposture." Indeed we are not conscious how divinely Christianity combines its peculiar authoritativeness with a noble liberty, nay, a deep and urgent prompting to thought. So that since the introduction of Christianity to the world every great movement of mental progress seems to have owed its existence mainly, at the least, to the peculiarly arousing power of its influence; and now under and through a Christian civilization look around and behold the amazing extent in all directions to which human thought has reached. Survey the magnificent mass of mental achievement; and yet to get even a tolerable glance at it requires an amount of information few can possess.

But while the Bible is thus contrasted with the Koran, — while it burns no libraries but makes them, and may be called the father, or, at least, the most important fountain of all modern learning, — there has sprung from this very result a neglect of the Bible itself. It is forgotten, superseded, in the minds of many, by the other sources of mental delight and instruction which it has itself laid open. If other books faithfully represented the moral image of the Bible this neglect of the Bible would be less regretted; but this is not the fact, as we know. Indeed it is even astounding to see how little under what I have called Christian civilization, — how little of the spirit and peculiarities of the Bible

are reproduced in other books. Some of our best literature, while it has been imbued and colored with the tone of feeling and thought common among Christian nations, — that amount of the Christian spirit which has been gradually shed through society and which distinguishes it from the social tone of ancient and modern heathenism, — beyond this presents the singular aspect (unparalleled in the history of all thought) of a literature with small signs of a religion. Look into the books of any other than a Christian people, and you will find them full of the signs of the prevalent faith. Not so with ours. Much even of our standard literature is not only naked of all religion, but of all peculiarly Christian morality. Many of the books which fill the shelves of a Christian gentleman are of such a low moral tone as I think, considering their origin, more disgusting than anything to be found in the classics of Paganism, — and compared with which some of the pure-minded heathen seem almost Christians. This, however, is much improved now; it is one of the best tests that we are not falling back but advancing in good, that the books most read at present are usually, on the score of positive vice or error, so unobjectionable. Just now, within a very few years, the most of this beneficial change has occurred, — though the least acquaintance with the past will show that this advance has long been on foot. But while this ought to be acknowledged, still it is clear enough that our literature in no

adequate degree reflects the truths or spirit of our religion; that the main impression of the books read is an unchristian impression, — something uncongenial to the unearthly, holy temper of Christ; or that, where this may not be the case, it is true at the least that the spirit is occupied and absorbed by the world of books (including in the term “books,” daily and weekly, as well as more permanent publications), to the neglect of the one book which contains the pure message of God to his creatures.

What, then, are the difficulties in this matter? The first is the disagreeableness of the truths of the Bible. Where a man is not earnestly devoted to God he cannot desire to read a book which tells him such things as the Bible does, for it is a mirror where a man sees himself stripped of all beautiful disguises. Some of the sublime poetry, the sweet, simple history, the glowing eloquence or the deep truth of it will at times interest all cultivated minds; but so long as they believe it is from God, and yet live opposed to it, they will find its pages distasteful and even painful. The want of interest is the next difficulty in the way of Bible-reading, and, to be candid, this is the chief difficulty. If I were to speak out the feeling of most hearts — even those who hope they are Christians — it would be: “I take little or no interest in reading the Bible; I regret it, but so it is. I find it dull, heavy; and if persisted in insupportably tedious; my mind does not take hold on it. Many other books

or the newspapers fasten my attention without an effort; but here all is labor and dryness. I attempt, to be sure, to go through with a certain portion of it daily, and particularly on Sundays; but were I to tell the truth, I often find it more of a task than anything else I do through the day." I hope this confession would be far from suiting the condition of all minds. Here is a large collection of writings gathered through the space of two thousand years, written by a great variety of men, and referring to the most various circumstances. But, as it is all the Bible, we open it anywhere and read it in any way; and then if it does not by some magic force its meaning upon us and enchain our interest, the whole matter is distasteful and discouraging. Now let me say at once that we must expect no miracles, but must go to work here with the same good sense we use in any other concern. One obvious rule of plain sense is, that we begin by reading such portions as we can understand easiest, and enter into. Acquire in the way that suits each one best a taste for the book, a habit of resorting to it with pleasure, and then one gradually grows into the deeper mind of it, and an interest will arise for what is now quite barren. On taking up any book of Scripture let us endeavor to put ourselves as much in the time, place, and circumstances as we can; and then, and not till then, will the writing have full meaning and interest for us. Recall the times past. As far as we can, live them over again. Is this hard or im-

possible? Every one does it often in reading a tale of fiction, — nay, has done it with such power as to weep with the distresses and laugh over the follies of this world of imaginary beings. Shall all this fine force of imagination be given us only as an amusement to solace our rest or our idleness; and shall we exert none of its wonderful faculty in giving life, interest, and power to those scenes and persons and truths which God, at such expense, and through four thousand years, has prepared for our use, and on the right use of which depends our character and lot at the present, and in the life to come? I can add only one more rule of reading, — read with a personal reference. When a precept is dull, nothing will give it life more effectually than by examining one's self by it. In the scenes and trials of Scripture history (not only in the Old Testament, but through the life of the Saviour and of his followers), conceive ourselves when we read in the same situations, and imagine our conduct there, and the whole history will become at once not only instinct with life, but with the best instructions. Look along that magnificent line and array of holy men who are set in the pure pages of Scripture. Let us examine them, apply our characteristics to theirs, discover our weakness thereby, sympathize with their excellence, and be lifted into something of the same, through “that self-same spirit which worketh all in all.” Read the Scriptures in this way, or in any way that will give them interest and vitality.

Oh, there is an inexpressible inconsistency in all our lives, and in nothing does it show itself more remarkably than in our treatment of the Bible. We say, here is the book of God. God hath spoken to man, and this is the record; and in this record is to be found all that should stir the deepest feelings of human nature. Yet this message of the Most High God, bringing to light life and immortality; this history of Christ, whose page is at once effulgent with his glory, and sprinkled with his blood, is regarded by many with no interest whatever. Many have their family Bible, in which is inserted a register of births and deaths, and the book is surrounded, perhaps, by most hallowed associations. This is really a good old custom; but it is not good to let the book become a mere venerable relic, a fine old piece of furniture. With some the Bible is scarcely opened from one year to another, or only for a few moments on a Sunday, and then quickly got clear of. The world of books are crowded before the mind; but this king of books is lost entirely in the crowd. Some regard it with a superstitious awe, and look with wonder at seeing another reading it, and would be by no means gratified if they were surprised while reading it themselves. Others, if they take it up more regularly, do it under a sense of duty, and a hard duty they often find it. Now just to think of this, to believe or say, as we do practically to God, "You have sent us a message of mercy; but we do feel it the most dull and uninteresting of books!" If

anything could show to a man how far gone he is from righteousness, and from the interests and tastes of religion, it would be the wonderful indifference he has to the holy book of God.

Let us change all this, and begin to look into this matter with enlightened views, and with such interest as becomes a being who has few days to live. Ask what message it is that God has really sent to us. "Search the Scriptures." Amid all the calls upon our attention let us respect this call first. Let us read it by first gathering on its page all the light and interest we can; and may that Divine Paraclete, whose office it is to show all truth, illumine our way. Through reading will come meditation, and through meditation communion with the very spirit of holiness, — and so entering, as it were, through an aperture, we will at last emerge into the widest atmosphere of truth and love, and above our heads will stand the broad firmament of God with all its light.

XVIII.

FRUIT BEARING.

If it bear fruit, well. — ST. LUKE xiii. 9.

THE object of living is results, — to effect something. We are made in the image of God; in his image in this respect among others, — that we are all made to be creators, each man a creator of some small world of good. That conception of the Hebrews, that God was the great workman, who not only made his world but worked six days at it, is more remarkable than we think. It marks the western character of the religion, and distinguishes it from the east; and this model of God the workman comes out fully in Christ, “whose meat and whose drink it was to do,” “who went about doing,” and who said, just as every man is bound to say: “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.”

A natural life which is passive, which floats and absorbs and enjoys, as the jelly-fish, the cool tides passing through its being, or a religious life of mere emotion and contemplation without will or work, — this is not the Christian idea of man: that idea is fruit through work; that idea makes the true distinction of man. He is a creature with tools in his hand, — the

intelligently working creature, — the producer. It has been said of genius, “Genius is productiveness;” the man of genius is the man who has a peculiar power of producing. We will find much truth in this definition if we examine it; and this genius (of course, in less degree) is the character of the race. Ours may be called the race which has genius, — that is, the producing power. So its highest duty is to carry out its nature, to recognize the demand which is upon it to produce. But this definition of genius is not sufficient; there is one more vital test of genius than production, and that is the quality of the production. One half hour’s work of the genius of Shakespeare, or of the heavenly spirit of Paul or John, would outweigh all that whole races and sections of the world have contributed to the common wealth of humanity. I name together the genius of Shakespeare with the heavenly soul of Paul or John; but do not think I name them together to equalize them. Though both are beneficent powers, yet however grand the natural glories of Shakespeare, the prince of the natural world, however unbounded and tropical that fruit-bearing field, yet by the side of Paul and John, and by the side of all the high men of the spirit, he sinks and dwindles; just as the beauty of a flower or a world of flowers, or as the majesty of a mountain or a range of mountains, or as the circle of the heavens themselves, are lost by the side of a soul purified, unselfish, and made over again into the authentic image of God.

I was saying that to produce was something, but that we must keep in mind the quality of the thing produced. There are many grades of work and workmen. I shall name three of them, — the workman of evil, the waste workman, the worker of good. First, the worker of evil. The mass of the Christian Church believes that there is a being called the Devil, — the adversary, whose ends are simply and all bad; who is black even down to the ground; who is a sort of *antagonistes* to God, working darkly through Nature and through spirits to defile and wrong them, and create them over again into his own image. This is an awful conception. But whatever may be thought as to it, the sacred Scriptures are certainly not wrong in thinking that there is an awful power in Nature; for a faint shadow of such a power may be actually seen in human shape; in the man, for example, who wishes or works for real evil to others; nay, even in the man who allows a baleful influence to pass from him into society, — who does not care much whether any soul or the community itself becomes a meaner thing because of him, — who, if not intentionally, as it is called, yet carelessly or selfishly sets in motion “corrupted currents of the world,” which will run through the world as long as it lasts. Is not that to be a shadow of the devil?

But suppose I do and am nothing of this bad sort, and suppose I merely do nothing at all, a producer of waste, — what then? Say you are a person of many

gifts, but have done nothing; say you are a splendid stream rising in celestial mounts and flowing into sands, — flowing not like a Nile to create and enrich an Egypt, but flowing without creating or enriching anything, through sandy deserts and lifeless plains, leaving no grass or tree behind you, leaving behind you no fat levels, no cities, no pyramids. Purposeless lives, powers unused, indolence; or, if not that, if there is action, yet action for trifles in a thousand poor directions not to the purpose. Just as if we were a gigantic and immortal race occupied in building ant-hills. To support life and family is something, and to contribute a little to the decencies of life is more.

I know that much labor, trifling as we may think it, is often the best the man can then do, the best the civilization then admits. Chinese literature, for example, — that world of labor, — or even our own Middle Age or later libraries, contemptible as much of it seems, is perhaps the best that then could be done. Yet as we walk through all this we are lost in astonishment at the waste; yet these, or the enormous folly of the pyramids, did their part in more ways than we think in sustaining that civilization, and were on the whole then and there beneficial.

But after all is said, the waste all through! the oceanic waste of man and his powers! But what is this to the waste of trifling, fashionable life through generations!

Come now to the wise and true workman; how does

he work to be a workman of good? First, he works in that style most suitable to the character Nature gave him, and the position she placed him in; he does not attempt the work other people were created for. The improvement he can effect just there in his place, and that which he has the nature and education to work at, he does, and not anything else. He does that which best tends to best ends; he makes high duties and works stand first, and he subordinates others. That which lasts longest, which is of finest quality, — I mean true and undefiled religion, — that and its works are of vast magnitude to his eyes; and indeed a view to that runs through all his work however ordinary. He is a builder for eternity, and sees much of waste in every labor which does not directly or indirectly go in that direction. I say indirectly, — for indirect work for God is often the best aimed work; not preaching or sending preachers bears the best fruit always. A touching life of humble self-denial, bearing much and still affectionate, — something of that beautiful spirit which was in Christ, — this is influence. If the Christian is a politician it is being honest in his politics, valuing the public money, having a heart for the country, and bringing into statesmanship a noble tone of public Christian honor. Or if he is a Christian scholar and writer, he teaches more Christianity in the human feeling of a novel or in the exalted feeling of a history where Christ is never named, than in any showy proclamations. The

merchant can build up Christianity through humble trade, and the workman through humble work; and a newspaper, when it is susceptible of Christianity, can show it well in the report of a fact or in a discussion of finance. The spirit breathes through. I have seen a man who in some respects is very much a man of the world, — a club man if you will, and generally one of others; but with a real soul under and high standard at the centre. I have seen such a man meet baseness with so hurt a feeling, with so deep a sense of wrong, that it told more among his comrades than if a prophet had stood among them. But whether indirectly or directly, the good worker aiming at the best use of his life puts aside, as if instinctively, the thousand frivolous things which men from custom or the fashion of the day are doing, — casts his eye to the things most necessary for him to do, and does them. He knows the good of leisure and amusement, and enjoys thankfully the life God gives him; but he knows that to make his life an amusement, — why the butterfly, if he could understand the proposition, would despise it. He is, too, a prompt and decided person; he does not stand all his life saying, “I would like to work well, but I can’t make up my mind as to the best thing for me to do.” This is not his way; he does the best thing he can see to do now. “In the morning he sows his seed.” Nor does the good workman say either, “I have not the gifts, or I am not so placed as to do great things.” You are not too young,

for you have now a spring and reach and hope which are priceless; you are not too old, for yours are the soberness and moderation and golden fruits of a soul sadly and wisely experienced. And I hold the opinion that though we have long lived foolishly, if we have suffered and are drawing on to the end, a beautiful religion is then peculiarly within our reach, — a religion of peculiar submission to God. Great things are not demanded of us, perhaps; but if we do what we can, I think that will be great enough. To make the most out of the plainest faculties, or to make the most out of any ordinary twenty-four hours, — that would be a great thing indeed.

Ah! what a life would it be if we ordered each day into some noble system of high work and grateful enjoyment; if we had strength to institute a new, a truly reasonable and elevated life into the waking hours of just one day, and by habit make that day in the main a type of all our days! I do not ask of our nature anything too high for it. I ask only what any man feels he could do if he just made a little effort; and that little effort would take him all the way up from sin and littleness to “honor and immortality.”

I have been speaking as if all good results grew out of strenuous effort to do some outward work; but I must correct that. The best worker is often he, and the worst worker is often he, who is busy and active and noisy; but the best test of work is time.

Let the worker be long dead, and silence settled

down; does the character live? or if not, do immortal fruits grow, though no man knows from whence they came?

Indeed the best is never thought of as work at all; it is in the being something ourselves. In one aspect of Christ he seemed all bent up: "My meat and my drink is to do his will that sent me." In another aspect he seemed a divine child living in beautiful repose. His life, in fact, effected very little, nor did he seem at all solicitous about effects; he simply was beautiful towards God, beautiful towards man; he simply was "that holy thing," the Son of God, and "committed himself to him that judgeth righteously."

If any man will be like him, — will live filially and trustfully and thoughtfully and unselfishly, — let him not be careful and troubled. He has worked the work of God, and it will be found that it will bear the fruit of God, — at last, far off; I know not how.

"If you bear fruit, well." Any fruit that is good, any fruit that will last. Choose well; and choose quickly what you have to do. Work quietly in peaceful trust. Expect hourly failure, and don't take failure much to heart; that is, if you sincerely design well. This above all, — at every moment drop a curtain on your discouraging and belittling past, and open to yourself the better things before you, turning away from the eye and favor of man and looking upon him who is invisible.

When you have done nothing, or when you have

done that idle work which men often think good work, just turn to him and say, "Master, I have wasted thy substance;" or when you have done well, turn and say, like a child, "Master, accept this work. I thank thee if I have done well; make me to do better." So the high work of life will go forward, your ear hearing, every day, "Well done, good and faithful servant;" and every day (not waiting till you reach the distant heavens to find it out), every day you will "enter into the joy of your Lord."

"If it bear fruit, well; if not, then thou shalt cut it down."

XIX.

HEIRS OF THE KINGDOM.

And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them; but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them unto him and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. — ST. LUKE xviii. 15, 16.

SHORT and simple as this little story is, it has sunk down into the heart of the world, and has shaped and will yet more shape the spirit and history of humanity. Not only is there fixed here the position and importance of one class of beings, little children, but in this narrative, I think, we ascertain the inmost spirit of Christ, and through that the inmost spirit of God. I think I learn the spirit of my religion, the spirit which is at the centre of all things, better from this picture of Christ and the little children, better than from any formal examination of doctrine or of the laws of God; and I find that here which gives a new spirit to other more doubtful and more forbidding aspects of revelation. Let us meditate on the words of this narrative in the simple order in which they occur. "And they brought unto him also infants." Sick persons, impotent, the bereaved,

the possessed of devils were wont to be brought to him; the darkest array of the wretchedness and crimes of the world was crowded about his steps. But now "they brought unto him also infants," — a new sight, an innocent and unconscious company of infants. In whose heart did such a sweet conception first arise, to interrupt the steps of that man of sorrows with such a spectacle? Mothers they were, I suppose, or fathers led by holy instinct, which goes farther and higher than thought; led to bring their innocent ones into the presence of him whom they felt to be yet more innocent than they; led by this holy instinct to lay their helpless ones on the bosom of his power and mercy. The sacred narrator does not say what opinion these Jewish mothers and fathers had of Christ, but leaves it to the mothers and fathers of all generations and countries to feel what their hearts must have said of Christ when "they brought unto him also infants, that he might touch them." However outcast the Saviour was, however hated by reason of prejudice and wickedness, yet, wherever the human heart was left free to its innocent impulses, how instinctively and deeply it bowed before him and recognized him! Wherever the human heart was pure it saw the Son of God even while he walked covered with darkness to all the world beside. It may have been a custom as old as the world itself; for it springs directly from our nature, that blessing and cursing also should be done through some species of contact, and as it were by

physical transmission. "The laying on [of] hands," so happily preserved among us in the venerable rite of confirmation, is but one form of this same natural usage which among the patriarchs and at this moment even leads to a touching, and as if transmission of blessing, by the hands.

They brought their infants "that he might touch them;" not in the sense of a formal blessing, but that the beneficent power might descend upon the innocent heads through a vital touch. "But when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them." It was beneath his dignity to be troubled by children; they were not of enough moment to engage the attention of the Messiah, the Prince, — mistaking what children were, and mistaking what Christ was. The feeling of the world has always been that strength and intellect — that which would give an earthly dominance — is greatness; and that all weakness, specially as was exhibited in women and children, was contemptible. The world knew not till Christ taught them, "that the weak things of the world, yea, and things which are not, should bring to naught things which are." It was part of his wonderful mission to vindicate the weak and despised, and to place the sceptre of dominion in their hands.

That children should be specially dear to God no one till then knew. He saw that "heaven lies about us in our infancy;" he saw that to the child was due the reverence of the man, not only for its beautiful helplessness, or for its sweetness, or ignorance of evil,

but also, which was peculiar, for its fresh and positive possession of the greatest truths possible to our spirits, for its new, undimmed faith and reverence and trust, —

“On them those truths do rest
Which we are toiling all our lives to find.”

Christ knew that these were new and unsoiled spirits direct out of heaven, and that manhood, in whose heart the world had gradually become set, was but a darkening of this divine morning of the child. So he turned to the little children as reminding him of his own home, and as a relief to his eyes from the hard and earthly sights of the men around him. “But when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them.” Mere carnal eyes saw naught but the exterior insignificance of these babes, and in the miserable spirit which has kept possession of the world from the beginning, they cast out the latest born of God.

“But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not.” Observe the eager tenderness of his words, — permit little children to come unto me; and then see how beautifully the same wish is repeated, — “and forbid them not.”

There are two things which strike me most in this narrative; the first is the depth of the feeling and appreciation of Christ for children. The more I reflect on the narrative the more do I feel this. Let us try to enter for one moment into the experience

and position of this man Christ, — for as a man we must view him to understand him, — to realize the greatness of the projects which filled his soul, and, as far as we can, the depth of the affliction of that pure soul in the midst of the defiled and malicious beings around him. His perfect heart cannot, indeed, be hardened and embittered, even by such sorrow and disappointment as his, but it can be occupied, harassed, absorbed. With such feelings, when he saw this group of children, he seems to have felt the freshness and relief of their presence, — as if a cool air had fallen upon a fevered face. It seems to me that the eye to see and the heart to taste and feel the beauty of childhood were in him, under such circumstances, something very striking. How wide and deep must that soul have been! No cares made him selfish; no intensity of purpose, however great and all-commanding, could narrow or absorb that heart. He could still consider the lily as it grew, and so feel its beauty as to declare that Solomon, the splendid ideal of the Jew, even in all his pomp, was not arrayed like one of these. He could still, though he saw the world around him perishing in its baseness, though he saw it with an agony that made the water drop from him like blood, and though he felt himself near to be sacrificed, — he could still catch glimpses usually granted only to undistracted and quiet hearts, could still see deeper than human eye ever saw into all quiet and hidden charms. One obvious thing strikes me here, and that is, not

only Christ's instinctive feeling for childhood, but his deliberated judgment as to its character. What an original, bold declaration was this, "of such is the kingdom of God!" How weak, how insane must it have seemed to men whose ideas of greatness were like theirs, who expected such a kingdom of God as they did! "Of such is the kingdom of God." A bolder, more revolutionizing speech is not to be found in the records of the world than to declare, at that place and time, or indeed in any place or time, that the royalty of God was to consist in the hearts of children. Unspeakably bold! Undeterred by the animal helplessness and all the impotencies of childhood, for the sake of its one unspeakable jewel, its new, simple, innocent heart of trust, whose whole life is but one breathing, like his own, "Abba, Father," he deliberately declared it to be at the height of all things and the symbol of his own ineffable kingdom. It is easy enough to follow in this sublime strain after we have once caught the wonderful secret.

Most beautifully a great philosophical poet, not long dead, has taken up this view; he regards all the beauty of our matured life as drawn from the splendid wells of early childhood, —

" For those first affections,
 Those shadowy recollections,
 Which, be they what they may,
 Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
 Uphold us — cherish . . . truths that wake
 To perish never."

Not only this the poet sings, but that from thence our first intimations of immortality are derived, — nay, indeed, almost the surmise that the perfect soul the child is born with has descended into flesh from a freer and purer life before. Listen to the strain which, barring this last beautiful fancy, is not unworthy to be heard in the church of Christ.

“ Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar;
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home.”

I do not know that this refined way of conception can be understood by all, — but mainly it is but expressive of the view which in Judea eighteen hundred years ago, that wonderful being, uniting in his words the depth of God with the simplicity of a child, expressed thus, — “Of such is the kingdom of God.”

XX.

THE GROANING CREATION.

I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope; because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. — ROM. viii. 18-23.

THIS passage seems to me like a dazzling glance of light shot down into the abyss of mystery and sorrow in which we stand. Here, if anywhere in the Bible, the ways of God are justified to man, so far, at least, as that is useful or even possible; for there is, no doubt, something in our condition necessarily unintelligible to us here and now. But as if it were pleasing to the divine mind to leave a dusk or shade even upon the light thrown into this great secret, we find that these wonderful words, grand, exciting, luminous as they promise to be, are still

under a strange shadow, affectingly reminding us at the very moment of revelation that it is ours to trust and not to know, — that we are now the sons of God, not in knowledge, not in power, not in joy, but in sorrow, in hope, in faith.

It becomes us to pray, therefore, as we enter upon such high thoughts as these, that where Thou meanest to enlighten, may we be enlightened, and where Thou meanest wisely to hide thy secrets, may we remember that to submit ourselves and to trust in Thee is our wisdom, our grace, our human glory, — an ignorance full of knowledge, a darkness which at its centre embosoms the dayspring.

I understand this passage as if the apostle had said: Our sufferings are great, but the glory which shall be revealed in us, — not a glory put upon us, honors, or dignities, or thrones, or the glory of that new heaven over our head, or of the new earth on which we shall stand, — no; the glory revealed in us, growing out of that divine seed of holiness and love now in us, when it shall be fully energized by the eternal Spirit who has created it and whose it is, — this glory, thus to be revealed in us and to expand from us, will be of such incomparable sort that all the suffering through which, as creatures, — children of the earth, — we are struggling, will be as nothing.

This introduces the proper subject before us, — that there shall be revealed in us suffering creatures such a glory.

Just here, in this word "creature," centres the whole difficulty of the passage. The word may include the whole creation, or all except the spiritual and responsible soul of man; or it may be so much narrowed as to mean only the creature part, or earthly part, of Christians; or it may be taken sometimes in one of these ways, sometimes in another, in different parts of the passage. Now suppose we look at it as meaning all this universe, including not only Nature but the souls of men, good and bad. Then, while it is true enough, alas! that all these are "made subject to vanity," yet how can it be said that bad men are made subject to vanity unwillingly? — for the very essence of their state is that they are made subject to it willingly. Moreover, how can it be said of them that with earnest expectation they wait for deliverance, and wait for it through the manifestation of the sons of God? — which is the last thing in themselves or others that they are waiting for. We dismiss this view, then.

We will next suppose that the word means merely the creature part of Christians as opposed to that renewed and divine will from which they are called the sons of God. The sense then made is very good, for it represents the Christian man as subject to the confinement, slavery, corruption of his lower nature (and that nature groaning as in travail to extricate itself), and looking eagerly forward to the time when, the divine part of it issuing out in power, the body itself shall share in its glorious freedom. This the

apostle certainly does mean, and it is his chief meaning; but it is not the whole, inasmuch as all the expressions have a breadth too great for this.

Not to mention other reasons, we come, then, to the only remaining view, — that the creature which is in bondage unwillingly, and which eagerly waits for its own freedom through the approaching freedom of the sons of God, must be first and eminently the creature part of the children of God; but must, beyond this, include all the creation which is unwillingly subjected to vanity, all which groans and labors to extricate itself. It will include, therefore, all children of God, whether named Christians or pagans, who, according to their light, resent their bondage to corruption. But beyond and below this there are the large regions of the innocent creation, which are not indeed — for they cannot be — made subject to moral corruption, but are made subject to vanity in their way and measure. The lower creation of animals, even the inanimate works of God, subjected as they all are to mournful change, and subjected as sensitive life everywhere is to pain and misery or death, — these, together as with one wail, complain that they are unwillingly subjected to vanity; and the whole creation seems to lift and stretch out its neck — as the word means — to look for the coming of deliverance. We reach this view not only from the breadth of the expression, but from the suitableness of it to Scripture and to moral hope, which should lead us to enlarge and not to contract the language.

The creature, or the creation, then, the whole universe, if we exclude the bad will in man, which is in no sense a part of the Creator's work, the whole material and form and life of this visible house of God, waits, looks for the time of deliverance. And when is that time? When the manifestation of the sons of God — that is, the redeemed heart of man — comes forth in power and glory; but why, then, and how, shall it be accomplished? The freeing of all seems naturally to be joined with the freeing of the human spirit, since it was for the discipline and probation of that spirit that the universe was made subject to vanity. But how? Why, through the workings of that Spirit of Christ, which, having first overcome sin in the flesh, and made itself perfect through suffering, did then — a much inferior work — overcome the law of dissolution, and so raised from the grave and rebuilt the body in the likeness and according to the power of his Spirit; which eternal Spirit, living now in the hearts of the sons of God, shall in due time redeem their mortal bodies also, and thence pass into the outward creation, recreating all things.

The manifested sons of God shall, I suppose, by the incredible energy of the eternal Spirit working through them, transmute their bodies and the world itself into an image of the glorious liberty which belongs to them. And that these views may not startle, recall this one divine sentence of that high apostle on whose thoughts I am now dwelling: "If

the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." No oracle of God ever spake more profoundly out of the hidden depths of fact; no mortal eye ever sent its glance more deeply towards the centre. The resurrection from the dust of the earth is made to issue from this Spirit which dwelleth in our spirits, and of course worketh through them.

We have, then, the general meaning of this divine passage: that, though in common with all the creation we suffer now, an immense apocalypse, a coming forth of glory is to take place in us, — a "manifestation of the sons of God;" sons before, but their nearness and likeness to God perfected, inconceivably enlarged, manifested, exposed, so that forward to this all the creation looks, especially that part of it so mysteriously blended in the nature of man, our suffering earthly nature, groaning and travailing in pain. It looks eagerly forward to some redemption; but only under Christian light does it learn to fix its eye on the moment and the way, "the manifestation of the sons of God," when the objects for which the creation is subjected to vanity will have ceased, and the sons of God coming forth shall, through the creating Spirit, build anew the temple of the body, and another morning of creating power shall cast a new life and splendor through and over the whole innocent creation.

Let us confine our attention now to the thought that

“the creature,” the creation, “was made subject to vanity; not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope.” Do we not see, as a matter of fact, that all the creation *is* made subject to vanity, or emptiness, — made as if in vain? The frame of the world itself, with all its splendors, — is not that made subject to vanity, emptiness? From the flower to the star, all things emerge and pass, come and go; a great dramatic show, mimicking reality but not reality itself. Then there stands above this first world the great world of animated forms, organized life; and here to the law of change comes in a darker law of death, — the creatures appear like visions of living things, and as in a moment vanish with a groan. He who brought them forth changes their countenances and sends them away. All these ranges of creatures, had they a voice, would say that they were made subject to vanity, but against their will. A sad constraint, silent, but vast and inevitable, is put upon them all; and so, beneath all the joy which reigns through these present kingdoms of God, there runs, deeper than all, a groan.

But come to man; here is a subjection to vanity infinitely more sad. I shall not speak of those who sink their souls down to the level of the vanity of nature, and so present the incredible sight of immortals who willingly make themselves subject to vanity. Of these the apostle speaks not at all, but leaves them in the most awful silence. In this great proclamation

of universal redemption I do not find them included or even named, — passed by as the husbandman passes the chaff in the gathering in of the wheat. The whole creation is called to hope, and I would there were a way to include all living souls; but willing subjects to vanity must, it seems, perish with vanity, and pass away with the idols to which, by a spiritual sensuality, they have already linked themselves.

Leaving these, alas! it will be sad enough to speak of the men who have begun to be sons of God, holding a spark, at least, of this better life; for they also, with Nature, are made subject to vanity, but not willingly. They find a law in their members warring against the law of their minds, the bondage of corruption rising from sense, or from their condition as inhabiting a world of vanity, and with natures in a thousand respects inferior to and acting against that divine will in them which makes them “sons of God.” Such a state subjects to trial, to sorrow, to corruption, their better and redeemed hearts. Imprison an angel, a most pure angel, in a body, and in a state of fear, and errors, and pollutions, and piercing sorrows, and you will know what this wonderful fact is of the sons of God made subject to vanity, not willingly.

Now conceive all this scene of unwilling subjection to vanity in sky and earth and animal and man, if we were left without a reason for it. But the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same *in hope*. The

whole creation stands built, then, on hope. It is allowed for a season, while the Creator resolves upon and looks out for, and prepares better things for his creatures, and things which can be produced only by means of that very subjection to vanity through which they are now passing. Joy!—in hope. We know not the periods of God; but all things laboring and travailing in anguish shall bring forth the new creation, all things are at the first and unhappy stage of a great process. Patience, then! ye creatures of God. Sympathize in the hope of God, and live as if beyond these light afflictions, which are but for a moment!

For the promise is that the creation itself also, — even the creation of body and world, which are but handmaids to the spirits, — even these shall not be suffered to pass away under the shadow that has lain on them; even these “shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” So as to these heavens and this earth themselves; their grave is appointed, and the morning of their resurrection. The dumb suffering of all creatures shall be redressed; for “hear, O heavens,” no voice or look of pain is unmarked of God, and no shadow of the sadness which rests upon the great face of Nature shall be suffered to last; but forthcoming at the head of the sons of God shall be the first-born Son, the Beloved, he on whose head are many crowns; and at the vision of his redeeming face purity shall be shed through all the soil of Nature, and

the new heavens and earth rise up to reflect in color, in form, in power, the splendor of his countenance. And he shall stand and say, "Behold, I create all things new."

Suffering child and heir of God, suffering in afflictions, in temptations, fightings without, fears within, God hath indeed subjected you to vanity, not willingly, but in hope. Lift up your head. This weak heart shall soon bear in it the name and strength of God; this perishing body shall be made like unto his own glorious body. You shall forget sorrow; you shall breathe in love and peace, in worship and obedience; you shall run and fly in divine impulses and errands; through every faculty of body, soul, and spirit you shall "drink of the river of his pleasures," because the promise is that altogether, no part of you lost, you shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

XXI.

MINISTERS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. — 2 COR. iii. 6.

AMONG the mistakes now committed are these two. The Church errs on the side of the letter; many thinking men err on the side of the spirit. First, as to the general error of the Church in the slavishly literal interpretation of revelation. Of this some stupendous instances present themselves at once. The throne of Saint Peter is founded on a single figurative sentence; the sacrifice of the Eucharist and the mysterious virtue and powers of the priesthood are all built on one metaphor; and what a building it is, vast, and reaching towards heaven, and the end of its dominion is not yet! At all this the Protestant grieves or smiles; but a Protestant can be an equal slave to the letter, when, for example, it pledges revelation to a supernatural accuracy for every word and every fact; when it makes a single text, perhaps foolishly construed, a lord of the conscience. But not to speak of such wild cases, consider this. The general feeling of the Church is that

New Testament precepts give the precise rule of conduct to man forever. But, in fact, that is the religious pedantry on which, as it was found among the Jews, the Lord pours out his indignation. For theirs was a religion of small rules, which had lost sight of all the spirit on which the rules and petty usages were founded. Can we think he wished to repeat the same thing under his divine sanction? to set up a Chinese lesson which a Chinese church was to copy? The spirit of the Lord is freedom. He shows us himself; he gives us the sight of the spirit of sonship toward God, the sight of calm but wide and trustful and self-sacrificing fraternity to man. He shows us this, to be sure, through particular facts of his conduct and words, — just as we learn the beauty of a picture through minute lines and tones of color. But when we reach up to his spirit and get that, when we have Christ's principles, we are no longer bound to the letter of his words, but have found the secret which interprets them. He was never so pained by his disciples as when he found them "slow of heart," taking the letter of his words and mistaking his real feelings. "O fools, and slow of heart," — "ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." If he, the Prince of Peace, figuratively commanded them to get swords, yea, "to sell their garments and buy them," they say at once, "Lord, here are two swords," so that he has to say, "it is enough;" and so in many places. But when that promised Spirit reached them they made no

such mistakes as this. Then when they remembered his words they understood them and loved them, and if they were applicable, they used them; but if change of circumstances gave a precept a larger scope, they gave it the larger scope according to his Spirit which was in their hearts.

A father of a family drops many useful words among his children fit for the circumstances of the day, and after he has gone and left them, his children, who knew his spirit, face, and ways, will remember his words and understand them according to his spirit; and if the times be changed since he died, they will know how to apply his words to suit new facts, still retaining his spirit, and so often giving a better expression to it. Just so should we, the children of the Lord. He taught us, for example, to relieve the poor, to visit the sick; we will try to do so, just in the old way, but also, perhaps, in better ways than were then known in the world; and instead of adhering to the letter, as many Protestants do, and as is done in all Roman Catholic countries, — instead of doing just that thing, even when it may be found to be a pernicious thing, and instead of limiting ourselves to the old forms of kindness, if we find out new and better, if we work to prevent poverty and disease rather than to cure, if we adopt all new styles of prevention as well as remedy, and strive in such ways to make society a more wise and benevolent mother to her unfortunate children, — this we know will be a

charity on which the Divine Lord will look with joy, "deliberately pleased;" and thus will be fulfilled the word that he spake when about to leave the world, "The things that I do shall ye do also, and greater things than these shall ye do."

I said that some have now come to err on the opposite extreme, — namely, on the side of the spirit. That fine body of people, the Friends, perhaps are at fault in this. I say, perhaps, for I admire so much their theory of the power of the pure heart, or the doctrine of the Spirit; I admire so much their deep sense of the comparative inferiority of the external and formal, their sense of the slavery of being under a thousand men and precepts, and their passionate devotion to one great truth, — namely, that the very Spirit of God and his Christ inhabits and guides each Christian man, and will guide them into all truth, all necessary truth, — I admire this so much that I must be tolerant of the fact that they have reacted violently from the undue ecclesiasticism and from besotted bigotry to the letter, and have fallen out of the due centre. In their just reverence for the light of the spirit within them they have forgotten, I think, the due reverence for the light which is the "word," and the light which is the Church. But there are others of a very different class. There are just now many thinking men and high leaders of thought, who, not content with casting off the Jerusalem which is in bondage, have ended in casting off the Jerusalem

which is free, and have become discontented with any master, even Christ. Yet who is that master with whom they are discontented? A Being has entered into the world, and his powerful image passes through history; he is a Being fairer than the sons of men and stained with his own blood.

Whatever be the darkness, whether it be of the Jew or barbarian, — whether it be the peculiar darkness of a Greek or Roman civilization, or of modern ages, — whatever be the darkness and need of every human heart, that Being seems to be the natural light and remedy of the world, its natural Saviour and Redeemer. I know that conceit and ignorance and feebleness and narrowness mark the best spirits, — that we need a divine instructor. The soul needs, in the depths of its weakness and fault, assurances of mercy, pledges of forgiveness, and hope, and encouragement, and all the powers of the world to come; all this is in Jesus Christ. Every one, I think sees it, who has sat long enough at his feet, and tried his spirit, and begun to sacrifice self as he did, and caught the charm of his living. Yet, still the enlightened man I speak of does not want him; he has light and strength enough; he has passed beyond the letter of all outside authority, even of an historic Christ, and rests upon his own soul. The culture of the day more and more tends to depend merely upon the soul, and not upon any outward leaders of the soul, — nay, not even a personal God, — but only to

some great, senseless Pantheistic thing. This may seem all right to advanced thinking; but of one thing I am sure, — that it is at the expense and loss of the value of man, of the soul. Just as necessary as the outward world and the world of society are to the development of man, so necessary is the possession or the belief of a suitable outward moral world to our souls. For how can the highest feelings of approval and love be called out, unless we know some highest object of approval and love? There could be no such thing as common duty, unless the duty is felt to some one who ought to have it. How, then, can there be religion, which is the highest worship, gratitude, affection, and obedience, — how can there be this, unless to some person, to a real, personal God? A vague awe and obedience may indeed be felt to law and force; a reverence to the inevitable, an awe before the vast All; but even these vague feelings are not felt without first exalting law and force into a vague personality. Much less can be felt that gratitude, affection, and devotion which belonged to John or Paul, and which nothing but a person, and the heart and love of a person, can excite. The heart must have a heart to worship, or its religious affections must die in darkness and cold, as the vegetation of the earth without a sun. Where there is no real God, there is no real religious soul.

But suppose the man of thought has not gone so far as to give up his God; does a personal but unseen

and impassive God meet all his want? Would a Being who is not only grand and divine, but divine through suffering, whose love acts through blood and sorrow, the divine manifest in humility and in the bitterness of sacrifice, manifest through strong crying and tears; is this not to make God more near, to give us more a God, more a person, more a heart? is not this to be touched where the invisible, distant, unimaginable Godhead could not touch us? Have we no want of such a Being? Who has such a soul that he does not need this divinely human leader? However noble and pure our life is, without Christ we have lost soul. We may be able to spare much of what is called Christianity, we may be able to spare it all, though with deep injury; but Christ, the human heart can never spare. Omit from history that Being, and the race falls back again, even, I fear, from the knowledge of God. Not at once, for his remembrance would long be a power in the human heart; and when even his remembrance had perished, the daylight he had created would still last long after the sun had set. But sooner or later, Christ gone, our humanity must dwindle.

Christ is the Power of God for right living. Any man whose heart is drawn to such an object, and sees so clearly the pure and divine, is so charmed by it, is so possessed by it, that lower things move him less and less, and the power of that object rises higher and higher, until it quite overcomes the world. The love

of beauty in the poet, the love of truth in the thinker, may master something of a man's lower self; but these are trifles to the power of Christ on the spirit that follows him. As it is true in belief, so it is true in life: "if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed." For an illustration of these views I will refer to the chiefest of the apostles, — to the apostle Paul, the "ablest minister of the New Testament." What made him such? The fact that there was a just proportion in his soul of the spirit and the letter. Always obedient to the commands of authority, whether without him or within him, yet he knew how to subordinate the one to the other. His whole career is a history of that. "Wherefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:" obedient all through to every indication of the truth and duty coming from without; but everywhere subordinating the detail to the principle, the form to the heart of the matter, the transitory to the permanent. Do the great apostles, the authorities at Jerusalem, superstitiously cling to the old commands, saying they are directly from God, and asking how can they be done away? Paul, in the strength of that spirit which prefers moral rules to rules of form, the inside to the outside, in the strength of the spirit of Christ, which wished to break out from Jewry to all mankind, — Paul will not be impeded even by sacred commands, for he hears commands far more sacred; and so he cries, "Down with the

walls of partition, in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek."

But why speak of Paul? A greater than Paul is here. Who renounced Moses and the law as he did? Yet, so that at the same moment that he abolished them he called it fulfilling them. But he did abolish them; he swept them and the temple itself away by the breath of his mouth. "Neither in this mountain," he said, "nor yet at Jerusalem, shall men worship the Father. God is a spirit."

There is the Magna Charta of the Gospel of Liberty. Amid the growing infidelity of the world, and the formal spirit of the Church, the impregnable defence and life of Christainity is in the spiritual interpretation of the Bible, there and nowhere else. That place of defence is a munition of rocks. Oh, when shall we all learn that "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life;" and when shall the clergy learn that to be able ministers of the New Testament, they must be ministers of the spirit, and not of the letter?

XXII.

HUMAN DISCERNMENT.

Those who by reason of use have the senses exercised to discern both good and evil. — HEB. v. 14.

ALL men are conscious of a good and an evil in their hearts. There is something higher and lower, a shameful thing and an honorable thing, to the poorest savage. And these two great ideas, two great laws, are not only necessary to, but the fundamental character of man as human. As men advance, their sense of these things improves, and improvement in this sense, call it what we will, — the honorable, the moral, or the spiritual sense, — gives to civilization its very heart and character. With the Greeks it rose to a fine consciousness of a beautiful and harmonious soul; with the Romans, to a profound consciousness of what a man ought to do, — specially what he owed to country or the civil rights of men. With the Jews it rose to the idea of sin and right, which are specially the sense of what a man owes to God. Christianity took up the Greek, the Roman, and, above all, the Jewish consciousness, and said with them, "I ought," but said it more deeply and widely; and added, "I would," — that is, added a love to a deeper duty, and added it in singular power, because that love

was now directed towards more inspiring and awakening objects; towards the whole race of men, on the one side, and on the other, towards a more Divine God, towards the one redeeming as well as creating God, — even the Father. “By reason of use the senses exercised” have come to “discern” and know high things. This is Christianity; and as our age and nation are called Christian, we take for granted that this high discernment belongs to us.

But this Christian knowledge of good and evil is so high and hard to reach that it stands, even to-day, as a sort of esoteric or secret attainment reached by a few, while all outside that, and the body of so-called Christian people, remain of a conscience quite different, quite dark, — made up, in fact, of classic and Jewish elements, or some fashionable, moral points of the day, tintured or more deeply imbued with certain Christian senses. Moreover, among us, not only is the consciousness of good and evil general, but the conscience of good and evil we do possess is in no small degree made up miscellaneously of incoherent and sometimes inconsistent points of feeling, — such as the conscience of honor among gentlemen; the professional points of honor in the professions; the conscience of commerce and business, — that is, the conscience of an industrial age; the conscience of the points of honor in the two sexes, which are alike in some things and different in others. We foolishly imagine that there is but one right and wrong; but

each sex, and every class and almost every person, has some distinct points of difference. Here, then, in our present society, which is called Christian, there are two general moral states existing; on the one hand, the high Christian conscience of good and evil, and on the other hand, that heterogeneous and inferior mixture which makes up the actual moral condition of most men in society. On the one hand, the creed of society is, that there are certain points of feeling and conduct which I disapprove of, which are against the common interests and against my sympathies; there are certain other points which I feel to be beautiful, and good, and noble. With no reference to principles or system, men have just grown up at random, in certain moral likes and dislikes. On the other hand, the creed of morals of the Christian man is this. He says, "In the midst, and before me, stands the great, pure, merciful God and his redeeming Christ; to that Divine Will I owe all and will render all. I will render to him the obedience of gratitude and love, and the worship of a heartfelt interest in all human creatures." Now this is a creed of vast principles, from which an endless and consistent world of right feelings, acts, and rules comes out; and in these principles a spirit resides, which animates with a divine life and powers the whole world of details. Without these principles the sun has left the heavens, and nothing remains but a confused scattering of half darkened stars through a cloudy sky. I would propose, then,

that Christian society raise itself to actual Christianity, at least in theory; and that it leave its low and half false moral life, and begin to discern that grand life which is above it. And this is to be done, as all moral and other advance is made, when by "reason of use we have the senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

By habitual effort in the exercise of our "senses," using and strengthening our moral discernment, by the effort to open the inner eye, it gradually opens to good and evil. All worlds, all spirits, grow through use, through inward effort. Call it mere law in case of dead matter; call it instinct in animals; call it moral sense in man; every faculty grows in life and in discernment by use. The Bible generally speaks of this enlarging and illuminating the human spirit as the work of the Divine Spirit. And so it is always; but it is most important that the Bible should also speak of it as the work of the soul itself; both which truths are reconciled in other places by this, — that God co-works with us.

But if the human side of this were not here stated, most people would feel that religion in the soul is all superstition, — as they do even now, in the face even of such scientific words as those of the text. First, then, our souls must grow in discernment by the exercise of our moral sense or perception. As the tongue tastes food, or the ear appreciates sound, or the eye color; or as the taste for natural beauty tastes its

objects, so the moral taste, if used, will grow; and if we look more deeply, the sense of good and evil will expand magically, and we will be able authoritatively to know whether the high creed of Christianity is the true and beautiful creed for man. By simply living with good pictures, by the unconscious exercise of the reason and taste upon them, the eye becomes an instructed eye. If a man keeps looking at the classic marbles in Florence and Rome for six months, and then passes back through France and sees French statues, they will meet him with a shock of pain; they are merely pretentious, romantic, and sensational. Suppose the sun were created under an eclipse, and suppose, instead of shedding off its darkness in a few hours, it kept on doing its best at shining all through its long sun-ages, until at last it was quite clear; and you will have a picture of the soul born dark, but through years, by reason of use, by exercising itself in truth, grown at last clear all through its splendid circle. Thus, we must come into the light by the use and exercise of other senses.

Many people object to Christianity because their idea of the truth has been mixed with or made up of low intellectual tastes and feelings as to God. But the mass of minds even yet are abused by a thousand intellectual prejudices. There Christ stands in strange form, speaking a strange language, and they have never penetrated into the meaning; there religion stands, often covered over with foolish concep-

tions and with the grotesque features of half-barbarous ages, — the fanaticisms of the fanatic, the corruptions of the corrupt, — from which Christianity and the intellectual man start back. In order to a full discernment of the truth of Christian ideas, the whole soul must be exercised through ages, — through its various tastes; through its philosophies; through its science; through the things which seem against it, until all the lights of the man are bent in one focus, and the image at its centre is Christ.

I come back to the chief thing, — that moral light comes through exercising the moral heart in the discerning of good and evil. Perhaps this is best illustrated by the natural eye. The child at first knows nothing of the world through its eyes but patches and blotches of color, which seem to be part of itself. By the constant education of every waking moment, it comes to distinguish the vast world as outside of it and around it. And in the same way, a mere living on the earth forces us to use, and at least to a certain degree to train, the moral eye, until it comes to know the things of the spirit of God. Through action, through the will working towards good, does the eye awake to the sight of good. The organ is one thing and the power another.

Our first parents, in their fall, came suddenly by a shock to a sense of good through evil. Use of some sort, the sudden result of a moral act, or the slow intercourse with moral things, — “use” it is, in one way

or another, which "gives a precious seeing to the eye." I call it precious, for the world was built to educate the moral eye. Civilizations rise and fall to carry on the education of the moral eye; and no man knows where or how high the enlargement of the soul's vision is to go, what things it will see. There are epochs when it so expands that it is as if God appeared, and said once more, "Let there be light." All that revelation gives us comes, indeed, from the most high Spirit of God; yet, at the same time, it comes in the way of an enlargement of some man's vision. I see around me the poor animals, who are below us, exercising their limited senses to the utmost, only to maintain life and ward off danger. All the faculties of the robin I watch from my window are in constant vivid use to do two things, — to get food, and to guard from danger. But privileged above all beings are we in this, — that every act of duty, every effort to know the truth, not only sustains our life, but is an enlargement of our faculty, a finer touch, a stronger will.

From this subject we learn several things. First, the wonderful possibility of expansion or evolution of this part of human nature in all men. I know the vast differences of soul; I know that a delicate sense and discrimination is born with some, while bluntness of feeling and literal blindness of eyes is born with others. But the moral soul of all has a greater possibility of development than the other powers. It is a

special subject of gratitude to the Being who has made such differences among his creatures, that in the highest and eternal part of man a comparative equality is found. All are capable of laying hold on eternal life, which never could be done unless through a highly endowed moral nature. None but a few can be men of genius; but every man not wanting feels it within his choice to be in some degree an apostle. Moreover, this spiritual gift, which is intended for all, can be educated; but in such peculiar ways that no man can certainly say whether the moral education of the poor, forgotten man, is not better fit for him than the education of the highest.

Again. We learn here how humble most men should be in moral things, and how reverential they should be to others. There always have been in the world men who, "by reason of use, have the senses exercised to discern good and evil;" and as this is a department where advances seem almost without bounds, with what deference and reverence should the mass of men who decline all moral training look up to the men who are really men of God! This consideration also leads us to the truest ground of authority for the Church. It has other grounds of authority, no doubt, but its truest are that with all its lowness it contains the spirits of the world most susceptible to good, and most conversant with good. This spirit is more largely in the Church than elsewhere; and so, if there were no other reason, there is a decided prefer-

ence in behalf of the Church's teachings; where it leads, the common soul can safely follow. In art, all intelligent people say, "I don't see the singular merit of Michael Angelo where you see it; but I am one of the unlearned, and defer to the trained eye of the artist." There is the same reason for the same modesty in matters of the conscience. If a man has merely enough vision to see two roads in different directions, he may as well go in the one as in the other. But if his eye discover to him wet verdure and crystal waters along the side of that road, and sweet vistas and glimpses of angelic figures through the tall trees, while along this road he sees a desert, and the flight of vultures, and the teeth of hyenas; which way, think you, will he go? It is want of vision that is the matter with us. Let us study the New Testament and read these Gospels in a way to make us feel and think over every page, and so, by reason of "use," our senses will be exercised to discern both good and evil.

XXIII.

THE WILL OF THE LORD.

Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit. — EPH. v. 17-18.

THIS first sentence is a beautiful and profound one: "Wherefore be ye not unwise but understanding." Paul seems to think that "wisdom" consists in one thing, — "understanding what the will of the Lord is." And, in fact, if it is wisdom of a certain sort to know what the will of the Lord is in the motion of a planet, or in all the laws of nature and society, if to know truth (that is, the way the Lord has settled things), to know this even in the small and perishable sphere of the world, — if this is wisdom, then, of course, to know his will as to our relations to himself, to know those laws of the immortal heart out of which are the issues of life, that is wisdom indeed. "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is, and be not drunk with wine wherein is excess." But what connection have these two sentences? The connection is this.

These crude Christians at Ephesus were in large part old Pagans baptized, and with all the old vices so

wrought in that they had no conscience at all about many evil things. They were full of enthusiasm as to Christ, but Christian morals as now known were a slow growth. The great and simple moral law of Christianity was this: "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." But obvious as this seems to us, with whom religion and right doing are very closely united, it was not at all obvious to many of them, with whom religion had very little to do with right conduct. The old gods were not moral. Still the purity of Christ, this new and holy God who was sacrificed for sin, no doubt forced the heart gradually away from sin. I say "gradually," as it took time for these men living from birth under corrupt usages to get a conscience. Their consciences were not, as we say, perverted; they had no conscience. So — astonishing fact it is — we see them in the highest exaltation of Christian faith, — full of love to Christ, ready for death, courting it; and yet, often in point of practice what we should call conscienceless people. And Paul himself, with his high doctrines of justification by faith and abrogation of law, found to his horror that many understood all this to allow easy and careless living. Now, seeing this distinctly explains the singular contradiction all through the chapter. For example, Paul is writing to people whom he calls "saints;" and giving them the most tender advice, as if he were speaking to pure and heavenly children, — for such in heart and purpose

they really were: "Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children, and walk in love as Christ also hath loved us;" but do not continue these gross habits. This is not the way to be a Christian. "Prove what is acceptable unto the Lord." Prove, — that is, bring these practices to the test of the purity of Christ, to the test of your new Christian feelings; see if they are acceptable to him. Go all round the circle of your old life, testing everything. "Be circumspect," — not fools, but carefully carrying the new light down into the dark usages of society, applying the new rule of Christ to everything. It is a long time before this can be done by the mass of men. Convert a Hindoo or a Chinese to Christianity to-day, and it will be a long time ere, if ever, he can be made to feel genuinely that those things which Hindoo mothers and fathers and friends, and the law and usage and priests all allow or approve, can be wrong. A light like a torch had come down into the world of the first century, — it had come as if into a very wide and very dark cavern. It did not come into the cavern like a sun, to light it up at once; but it was rather a candle or a torch, which a man must hold carefully before him and cast its light just before his feet as he walked, and must hold it up to the roof and explore and prove, to get a sight of the place he is in. To get this done, — to apply the Christian torch to the whole of the dark vaults in a man's life and heart, — to do this, we see Paul laboring in all his Epistles, but especially in

those to the Corinthians, — laboring often sadly and with a heart half broken. And in this chapter, after repeating and repeating, he ends by repeating again, “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess.” You see the connection. “Be ye not unwise,” but understanding the will of Christ. Don’t be taking for granted you know everything. Find out the will of God; find out the spirit of Christ; and give up this vice and that vice and the other vice, which are all against it. Find out, understand the will of the Lord, and don’t be drunken, and don’t be sensual, and so on. So now we, in the nineteenth century of the Christain era, are in a much better state, no doubt. But to say that the torch has been carried all round the cavern of the human heart and human life, is to say too much. Our ideas are not yet half Christianized. Our approval of right things, our disapproval of wrong things, is poorly done yet. There are pet virtues, — such as liberality with money, or a soft-hearted humanity, or not saying anything against anybody. These we think a great deal of. There are some vices which are heartily and perhaps extravagantly condemned; but the right estimation is not reached yet. We judge everything by the light of common opinion, and do not carry it to the standard of Christ. And although it is true that public opinion carries much Christian light, it is still full, not only of the darkness of the ages behind, but

of the dark which is always breathed out of the human heart. I look into one circle of life, for example; I find their code of honor, — that is not the code of Christ. I look at that greatest division of the race, — the division into men and women; I observe the moral law of women, what it is they really admire, and what they feel bound by. Then I observe the same law in men; what they admire and feel bound by. To us, then, the advice is not yet antiquated. “Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.” And now I reach the next sentence: “And be not drunk with wine wherein is excess. Drunkenness, I have said, was another of the dark things as to which many early Christians did not understand the will of the Lord. Drunken Christians, who thought themselves all right, was another of the anomalies of the time. And how does Paul correct it? He first tells them simply it is an excess — “wherein is excess.” It is an intemperance. Not the use of the grape of the vine, one of the most rich and benign of the natural growths and gifts of God; not the use of that, no, — only immoderateness. Everything in its degree, in its tone, to its purpose, is the great rule.

But as his smile is over his creatures who enjoy his kindness with thanks and in measure, so at once, the limit transgressed, that smile blackens into threat and penalty. “For boundless intemperance nature is a tyranny,” here and in all else; a tyranny, — a selfish and devilish passion rooting itself in a diseased and

erring body, and overmastering and putting under foot whatever is human in the man, — and all that is dear to him, — God, or wife, or child, or honor. But Saint Paul does not dwell on the long list of horrors which follow intemperance; he just says, with a sort of solemn brevity, “it is excess,” — as if that simple word meant so much to him, laid open such a world of transgression and sorrow. But the advice must not be confined to drunkenness; it is, in its general force, this, — Come away from all the drunkenness of the world, from its intoxicated excitement, to pure excitements, — to the excitements of the aspiring and generous and attached heart, to the excitements which were in Christ, whose drink it was to do the will of God. Here, then, is the second correction of the drunkenness of the world, — namely, by substituting for it the high enthusiasm of the spirit. We say of a man, he is intoxicated with prosperity; we say of certain women that they are intoxicated with admiration, with dress, with gayety. We speak of the infatuation of money-making and money-hoarding, and so on, as to people carried off their feet by any or by all the delusions of life. Now that which all see is true as to a few, sober people, moderate people, see to be true as to the mass. A truly sober man, who believes in immortality and a God, — nay, who believes in no more than death, who simply knows the fact that we are to die, and soon; who is sobered by it, and gets a sober measure of all things from it, — to this man the great world

must seem in an unwholesome fervor, a fever, a drunkenness.

And now as to the apostle's remedy for this great — shall I say universal — world-vice. Other remedies and corrections there may be, — a sad experience of life, a violated duty, a near death, a solemn judgment, a lost life, perhaps a lost immortality; reasons enough. But the apostle's remedy is none of these; it is this, — Be "filled with the Spirit." Under this word, "the Spirit," is included all higher forms of inspiring spirit by whatever names they are known, — all that high temper which shone in the face of Christ and made him the beauty and glory of the world; the peace, the blessed hope of favor with God, and of a heritage of life undefiled and undying. He means all that; he means our unselfish, humane, and pitiful feelings for man, and our trust and adoration to God; he means not only all our realized consciousness of the highest things, but whatever in supreme moments we see above our heads and catch by glimpse, just as we see the blue heavens through the tops of the thick trees, or just as we see a streak of delicate orange in the west, and the flash of a whole sunset after darkness and storm, — all this, and what besides "no eye hath seen." All this is the Spirit, — he means all this; and his command is, instead of low excitements be filled with the excitements of this Spirit! He would withdraw the earthly excitement, but more than fill its place with the heavenly; he does not ask us to be

cheerless and dead, but to be living transcendently. "Be filled with the Spirit, singing and making melody in your heart!" That is a powerful offset to the low excitements of life. Indulge in and be filled with the religion of joy, — such as music and song. It is a plain recognition of the lower side of religion, where it touches upon the body and mingles with fine sensibilities. We cannot be pure spirit; we cannot be creatures of mere abstinences, mere duty and mere struggle. God loves joy where it is not vice. We need to bring in every innocent aid and enjoyment. Of course all excitements need watching; but the Christian Church has suspected and watched those religious pleasures until they have disappeared, and left the Church quite dry and dead. Our high and hard religious intelligence, on the one hand, has banished from the Church its delightful awe and mystery. And on the other hand, our polished sense of decorum has banished what I may call the banqueting spirit of human nature. Our religion is oriental by origin, but we in the cold west have dropped its fine excitements. We must remember that our religion at first had its day of Pentecost, and many such days, — when men seemed to be filled with new wine. Of course it would be stark madness to repeat the excitements of those times; of course the religion of different culture, of different climates, must be different. The religion of George Washington and the religion of the missionary, Henry Martyn, must differ. Still the

element of pleasure and of joyous excitement is demanded by man as man; and nowadays there is not the slightest fear of any excess on our part. If I were to predict a religion to come hereafter, it would be Christianity indeed; but Christianity raised out of deadness or false glooms to a higher power of joy, — in a higher sense, singing and full of song; to whose celebrations we would come with delight, and of which we could genuinely say: “A day in thy courts is better than a thousand.” “I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord.” “How lovely are thy tabernacles, Jehovah of Hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord.”

XXIV.

FAITH AND WORKS.

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? — ST. JAMES ii. 14.

SAINT JAMES thus begins his discussion of the nature of faith and works. Eighteen centuries and a half have passed since then, yet men are still discussing this subject; and to the minds of many much obscurity still rests upon it. Saint Paul stands on the one side, representing the doctrine of justification by faith alone, while Saint James is arrayed on the other as in some sense the supporter of works also, as necessary to justification. Many who think at certain times that they have found clear notions on the subject, become at other times unsettled and confused as to it; because, in fact, they never have been steadily clear in their ideas. It is necessary, therefore, to speak of it, for its importance is such that we should permit no darkness in our minds regarding it. This is not like many of the discussions which have occupied the world, — on mere abstractions, or on something far removed “from the business and bosoms of men;” it is practical and vital to the last degree, and an error on the one hand or the other will inevit-

ably vitiate life and practice. I can easily imagine that the very words "faith and works" have to many something distasteful. But however indiscreetly this subject may have been handled, and though it may appear a mere theological topic, yet no subject can in itself be grander if we estimate its grandeur by its intrinsic importance.

One meaning of faith is an assent of the understanding. Brutus slew Julius Cæsar in the Capitol. One called the Messiah was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod, and was crucified on the hill Calvary, under permission of Pontius Pilate. A mere assent to such things on grounds of reason is one sort of faith, or, as it should rather be called, belief. The other meaning of the word is not a mere assent of the mind, but a trustful love of the heart. Two men believe that Jesus Christ lived, and that the sayings they read in Luke and John were actually spoken by him. Both believe this; but one goes further and loves this Being, and trusts to what he says because he loves him. The mind of the one assents, the heart of the other is moved. Here is the difference.

Now as to works; that word has two meanings. The first use of the word, and the one which is very common with the Apostle Paul, is where he usually contrasts it with faith, in which use it is equivalent to what he sometimes calls the "works of the law," "dead works;" and in this use of it he means actions done out of any other motive than that loving trust of

heart which I have called true faith. Saint Paul taught that we are justified before God by faith only. Saint James says: "Ye see, then, how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." There there does seem a direct contradiction; and it has seemed so strong to many that they have not known what to do with it. Luther, as we know, and others of the Reformers, were so pressed by it that they rejected this Epistle of James entirely, — said that it was not Scripture, and could not be. But it is Scripture, and a most worthy portion of Scripture. That illustrious man, to whom we are all indebted much more than we are aware, was mistaken here and rash. I will endeavor to state the truth. Paul taught that faith alone justified; by this he meant, of course, that works could not justify. This is obviously true of that class of works which proceeds from an inferior motive, and not from love, — "dead works." But as to real good works, he did not mean to contrast faith with them at all; because, what is a good work but faith itself in action? What is good in an act but the state of mind one has in it, — the loving, trustful, obedient spirit in it? There can be no real contrast between the one and the other. Faith itself is a great spiritual act towards God and towards Christ; and every instance of the works of faith or good works is essentially the same spiritual act lived out in the world. All the good in faith is a good work, and all the good in a good work is faith. I repeat, then, that one of

these essentially contains both, and that they can never be contrasted. Faith is a deep, loving, trusting abandonment of the heart to its beloved Saviour, — such a disposition as would infallibly produce good works whenever the occasion would arise, but which, should the occasion never arise, should the man die the moment after he felt its blessed birth in his soul, would alone justify before God, inasmuch as it contained in itself the very essence, the spirit, the fountain of all holy living.

Ask yourselves, ye who underrate good works, is not faith in practice just as good faith as when it remained a feeling only? Should we say that faith belonged to ourselves any less when we were working from its power than when we were sitting still in possession of it?

The apostle, then, meant not to draw any contrast between faith and faithful works, inasmuch as they are but different forms of the same thing. And so he was accurately just when he said that faith alone justified us; because he meant by faith the spirit of love and trust in Christ, whether it was found in feeling and willingness, or in motive and act. Faith, whether it works outwardly or not, is complete in itself. Faith is the source; charity, works, the whole Christian life, are but the stream from it. It is quite childish to talk of true faith being imperfect without charity or works. Saint James meant no such faith when he was speaking of the necessity of adding works. When we

speaking of true faith, to assert that it is imperfect without works is just as foolish as if we should say that a fire, however bright and strong, is imperfect without heat, or that the sun, however cloudless, was imperfect without beams. The faith alone, then, of Saint Paul was no fanaticism. If this, then, be this apostle's meaning, Saint James could not conflict with it; for although Saint James asserts that "a man is justified by works, and not by faith only," he meant by faith here and all through this discussion something entirely different from Saint Paul's faith, for he says that the devils possessed it. He calls it also a "dead faith." A faith which could be without works is unquestionably what I have called belief, — a mere concurring of the mind in the truth. This is the spurious faith he challenges and tests (as well he might) by this great test, — Does it produce good works? if not, it cannot save. "Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works." Here are the two. According to Saint James, faith which acted was the justifying faith, and according to Saint Paul, living faith alone was the justifying faith. Now, as I have shown that the living faith of Saint Paul and the acting faith of Saint James are essentially identical, then these apostles (who have been arrayed against each other for ages) were, in fact, but asserting identical propositions, or the same thing. The only difference, then, between these two apostles (and I cannot too often repeat it) is that Paul includes works in his

idea of true faith, and Saint James includes faith in his idea of true works.

Now it was not merely fortuitous or useless that these two apostles should thus view the same thing from opposite sides; if we look at the circumstances of these two apostles we shall find special need of these two views. Paul was the great apostle of faith; he was called to place himself in opposition to the old Jewish system of works and ceremonies, substituting in lieu of it all faith in a crucified Saviour. This arraying of faith only, as against dead works or mere legal obedience, was constantly forced upon him on account of the Judaizing tendency of the time, — the tendency to revive the old usages of the law, and to make a merit of obeying them. The great and blessed truth of the one mediator between God and man, the one atoning sacrifice through whom only, by a union with him of faith and love, we have life, — this, which is the very soul of Christianity, threatened constantly to be borne down, or at least obscured by the Jewish legal feeling. To rescue these truths, and to present faith in the Lamb of God as the only justification of man, caused Paul to speak vividly and constantly of it. Now from this it became rumored in some parts of the Church, especially in Judea, that he slighted not only the old works, but a holy life, — in his theory, I mean. This rumor was confirmed by the fact that some of the followers of Paul had perverted his meaning so as to permit themselves in loose

courses. This abuse soon became widely spread even in the lifetime of the apostles, and shows clearly how open Paul was to misinterpretation on this point. Luther was placed in respect to the Roman Church in essentially the same position in which Paul was in respect to the Jewish. Luther, animated by the same spirit as Paul, and breasting the religion of mere outward works, which had become the religion of Rome, vindicated in the same heroic way the great doctrine of faith only, not stopping to modify it. "Perish the law, flourish grace," he used to say in his fine, strong language, — language which, however, like Paul's was abused. And the result was, that in his day, just as in Saint Paul's, a reaction took place to the contrary extreme; and the wildest, fiercest sects which ever disgraced Christianity arose in Germany, trampling on all law, divine and human, and asserting the doctrine (monstrous abuse!) of faith alone. It seems probable that James, who was head of the Church at Jerusalem, had credited this rumor in part, and feared that Paul did lean to an extreme here. I say this seems probable, and has been suggested by some of those best acquainted with that time, and with the true spirit of the New Testament writings. Such, for instance, as the late Dr. Thomas Arnold, a man who (having named him) I take the liberty to say stands foremost in late days for the union of the highest intelligence and liberality with a solid, unperverted faith, — for a union of the most affectionate and

humble with a noble and free Christian spirit. It seems probable, I say, that Saint James may have in part feared the truth of this rumor as to Paul (preaching and acting as they did at great distances from each other; and at a period when mere rumor, and not the press, conveyed intelligence), and that this part of his epistle was written with a reference to it. If so, we can easily see why Saint James places so powerful an emphasis on works as the inseparable effect and test of true faith; and records so indignant a warning against that baleful counterfeit of it which proposed to live a Christian without a Christian life. Saint Paul, on the one hand, proclaiming faith only against the Jewish spirit of works, and Saint James proclaiming works, — faithful doing, against a fruitless, lifeless belief. Here, then, is an account of this matter, which I said at the beginning was of the utmost practical importance. Look at Paul; preaching always faith. And how did he exemplify it himself? Not by the faith of contemplation only, but by the faith of good works. When he faced the danger of the seas or the dangers of tyrants for his Saviour's sake, was not the faith of all that as justifying before God as when, at first sight of Christ, he lay upon the earth trembling and astonished, and believed, saying, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" It is but one and the same state of heart.

The Antinomians said, "There is no longer any such thing as good works; I am bound by no law, for

I have faith." For the spirit of faith has no force or obligation laid upon it from without, but itself is the fulfilling of the law, and the fountain of all law; for the spirit of Christ is a free obedience to all holiness. The Antinomian mistake is that of making faith to be no more than what I call belief; and then all the glorious privileges which Saint Paul ascribes to faith, they ascribe to a mere belief, and so get rid of the whole burden of a holy life. On the other hand, the Pelagians said that a mere doing well, though it spring not of an Evangelical faith, is salvation. These sects do not now exist by name, but all these opinions are founded in the human heart. And every main heresy since the world began is repeated constantly, and all false sects have their representatives in some of our hearts. Have we not found in ourselves, or seen in others, a tendency to elevate what is called mere morality into the place of religion? To substitute honest or benevolent acts, for instance, performed out of merely humane or more mixed and questionable motives, for the whole of substantial religion, for the whole faith of Christ?

Indeed, is this not one of the most striking characteristics of the time? Now this is but a form of Pelagianism, annulling not only the Scripture teaching, but all the higher powers of the soul, — its faith, its love. Do not many of us, so we keep honest and respectable, and somewhat charitable, think we are quite safe in forgetting those unintelligible matters of

faith and salvation in Christ? those high things men nowadays call not practical? Why, here is the very soul and centre of all good practice. All remedy for evil must begin within, and the deepest, the most fundamental principle of the mind from which it can proceed is faith. "He that believeth shall be saved."

XXV.

THE END ACHIEVED.

I have finished my course. — 2 TIM. iv. 7.

THESE are Paul's words. He recognized the fact that he had a course, — that is, that he was in the world, and commissioned to do some distinct and peculiar thing; he saw what he was to do, and felt a divine command. If ever there was a man who had ends and purposes, who lived to the point, it was he; and this he shared with all the great servants of God. John the Baptist was as fine an example as Paul; he had his course. "John fulfilled his course."

Now living in subjection to some distant purpose, even though it be a purpose of self-interest, is a higher life than is lived by those persons who simply exist. But it is far higher still to live for the ends man was created for; to feel and act as if we were not born to be butterflies, — not born to be intelligent schemers, but to live for what is highest. This much certainly we know to be the ordained career of each. Let no man say Abram and Moses and Paul had a course more sacredly ordained than mine. Not at all; the call is in each heart to "go up higher." But there is something beyond this; God has intended each of us

for a personal and peculiar career; "there are diversities of gifts." Each spirit is created a peculiar thing, and so fitted to a peculiar career. Now each man is bound to recognize this peculiarity. For some reason or other we do not; but are always imposing, and if possible forcing the model of ourselves, or some general model of what is best, on ourselves and on all people. The thought of the world is, there is but one good, and you must be that, or you are nothing at all. I call attention to the fact that men are different; obviously so as to body, mind, heart. But people deny this in respect of holiness; they see one law, and they think there must be one sort of obedience to it. Let us not forget the pages of the Bible, where sameness is unknown. How vast the difference of Matthew and John and James and Paul! The recognition of this simple fact would have saved most of the bloody persecutions, most of the hatred of sects, most of the calumnies and tyrannies of religious opinion. The recognition of this would have allowed souls to grow up natively. Religious life would have been made sweet and easy and various, where it has been formal, unnatural and forbidding; and souls by myriads saved, where they have been spoiled and wasted. But some will ask, How can I know "my course?" If you mean how you may know the best way for you to live a divine life, I answer, to live it in that way which seems most sweet and natural to you. Enter this sacred world through that aperture which is open to

you, through any good feeling, and live in it as you find you best can. There is a pleasant and holy path beginning at your feet; if you are really sincere before God, trust your own heart and follow; "Make straight paths for your feet."

I think of each man as in himself something more momentous than I know how to speak of. Each life, as it is lived through, how great a passage upwards or downwards! It seems to pass away and leave no record. A few circles of the sun, and there will be even no friend who has ever remembered we were. But, believe me, our biography is written; its records are now in progress, engraved by the steel on the everlasting rock; written in the depths of our own eternally living soul; written in the destiny of all souls, as valuable and lasting as ours; written in the memory of God! Yes, we are important; our little vanities give our little destinies a false importance; but I would that we recognized our real and enormous importance.

There is a life-plan made by God, and we are left to fill it out, — co-workers with God in our own creation, "working out our own salvation." I know of no power which can lift man out of the rut of sense but one, — the living appreciation of certain superior facts, — the fact of God, Creator, Redeemer; the fact that I have a lasting soul which has a plan and a career, and which I am under endless responsibilities not to frustrate; that there is a spirit near and acces-

sible to man, commissioned to aid him. Such facts I must become aware of; they must touch the quick of the soul, or all else is talk. These facts are called by the apostle "the powers of the invisible world." I must feel them or I am nothing; it is the living sense of them, and that only, which can lift me. I may have a sort of fear, and go to work like a drudge, doing a few hard labors; but these so-called good works are but flowers scattered on the surface of the ground, drying and soon dead, as compared with those other flowers which blossom out of great roots lying deep in the heart, — I mean, blossoming out from heart-feelings towards things unseen; out of the sense of God; out of appreciation of Christ; out of a sense of my own needs, and of the boundless mercy which aids me. There is only one great difference between men (and what a difference it is!), — the difference of the men who know two worlds, and those who know only one. This is the whole secret difference of saints and sinners; of the sacred history of one man, and the profane history of another. "Enoch walked with God." "Noah was warned of God, of things not seen as yet." Abram heard and "obeyed, and went out, not knowing whither he went," and in the land to which he came, his own land, chose to dwell in tents, looking for a city. And Moses forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king. Why? "He endured as seeing him who is invisible." So through the whole list, down to Paul, down to some poor woman in back streets,

who, in the starving winter, having but a little meal, takes an unsparing handful for some one poorer still, and then sits by her poor fire, "and builds her hope in heaven." I say, the source of all control in this world lies in the fact that a man sees higher facts, and lives in their presence. Then no might is equal to his might; "he subdues kingdoms, works righteousness, obtains promises, stops the mouths of lions, quenches the violence of fire, and out of weakness is made strong." The greatest boast ever made was that of one who said, "I can do all things." Foolish boaster! No, but true; his soul felt the power, the unlimited strength of an invisible fact, — Christ.

So in this "course" of ours, who can do anything but he who first sees something? If our eyes were open, vigor would thrill through every nerve. Without this, the whole matter is simply an impossibility. Who is he that overcometh, but he that believeth, he that sees feelingly, — that is, has a perception of, an affection for, and a trust in things not earthly? Look at the course of Paul. Mean in appearance, with some bodily disease perhaps; cast out and hated by the whole intense Jewish nation, "going about and lying in wait to kill him;" cast out and hated at first by the new Church, and always suspected and thwarted and calumniated by many Christians; passing through the world in preternatural self-sacrifice, — in perils of robbers, in perils by his own countrymen; scourged and beaten, and, though the highest man of the race

at that moment, "an angel, having the everlasting Gospel in his hand;" the man who wrote the deepest, highest, divinest poem ever written (I mean the chapter on charity); the man with the heart of a mother, and the soul of an unspeakable hero, beating at one moment in the same bosom; the man who said, "I am dead, and Christ only is alive," "I count not mine own life dear unto myself;" the man (I might speak of him forever), — but this man, in the face of himself, of earth, and the gates of hell, went through, established this moral world we now live in, and though dying step by step, behold he lived! Why? Because the facts of the eternal world were flashed through on his career; fear awed him, because "love constrained." At the end of his days, he wrote, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

XXVI.

A WISE PROVERB.

He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it; and he that hateth suretyship is sure. — PROVERBS xi. 15.

THESE are maxims of prudence. Some persons represent the Book of Proverbs as a book of such prudence; it is not so. What is this book? As to form, it is with some exceptions (as, for instance, the sublime descriptions of wisdom in the first part) a large collection of proverbs; much larger than any known to me as the product of one nation. But this is mainly the book of one man, the large part being published by Solomon himself, and a small part transcribed by the men of Hezekiah. The last chapter but one is the word of Agur, the son of Jakeh; and as the book begins with the words of a father to a son, so it beautifully closes with the words of a mother to her son: "The words of King Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him," — a lesson of chastity, temperance, compassion; ending with a simple but unrivalled picture of a true woman and a true wife. The Solomon proverbs have this in common with all proverbs, that they are the homely pith of every-day wisdom. They differ perhaps in three things: Their

form is generally regular, and is a species of the antithetical form of Jewish poetry, — I mean couplets of sentences, the second being in opposition or difference. Then as to substance, there is a sweeping religious or scientific classification of two sorts of persons, — the good and bad, or the wise and foolish; and the book is a series of comments upon them. The third difference, I find, is that the book is a long list of frowns and smiles, of blessings and pains, distributed in detail upon the two great classes of people; and not distributed merely as a fact of experience, but often as direct from God; thus bringing into the book not merely the absolute Hebrew faith in the great moral government of the world, but some direct sense of divine authority in the writers. Proverbs of all nations are just shrewd observations on men and things; but this book is all that, made with a constant look to the issue, the result, and specially the religious result. While it is thoroughly worldly wise, it is the worldly wisdom of an enlightened religious soul; and if any one chooses to regard this as a collection of the proverbs of the Jewish people, I should be still more struck by them in this view, than as the proverbs of the great and instructed king; because then, for the first time in the history of the world, we would see the sight of a pure religion really ingrained in the whole feelings of a nation, and issuing spontaneously in its spontaneous literature. To realize this, compare the moral and religious feeling of this book

with the proverbs or ordinary literature of any other people. Here it appears everywhere, just as naturally as humor or insight or learning appear in any other proverbs.

In this point the book needs to be vindicated. We can easily find faults where we seek them. So there are very pleasant pieces of malice, very pleasant remarks as to the worldly character of the Book of Proverbs; and those who most acknowledge the awful holiness of the other books speak of this book in the canon as if it were the intrusion of a shrewd Jewish trader in the disguise of a priest, into the temple of the Lord. But the fact is that religion brings within its scale of notes a range from the little judiciousness of the hour, up to Christlikeness; it cares for the whole range of man's concerns. But in earlier times, when men had something of the recklessness and wildness of youth, to give the power of religion to worldly prudence, nay, to make prudence a more prominent part of religion itself, accords with the education we give the individual at the same period. So the Bible lays a foundation for religion in the habits of every-day self-denial, restraint, self-respect; curbing the eager, selfish, savage man, while at the same time it addresses his higher nature. Moreover, although this book is mainly a book of prudent maxims, it is not, generally, a worldly prudence that we find here, but a religious prudence; for there are all grades of prudence, from the point where pru-

dence is scarcely more than a keenly selfish caution, up to the point where it blends in itself the sublimest faith and self-denial. The book of Proverbs contains the wisest advices for worldly success; such as the sentences I have used in the text: "He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand; but the hand of the diligent maketh rich." "He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it; and he that hateth suretyship is sure."

Nothing can well seem wider from the Christian tone than the snug caution of this last sentence. It seems to express a spirit just the unlike of Jesus Christ, whom if we were thus to describe, it would be, "He was willing to be surety for the stranger though he did suffer for it; he offered himself in suretyship, yet he was found sure." I mean that by yielding all of his own pity, even for the bankrupt, he found all. A wide enough contrast! But in the face of the discord I assert the hidden harmony. Perhaps even in so generous a character as that of Paul, and in his unworldly circumstances, but certainly in the every-day character and conflicting business of the world, however brotherly in soul a Christian man may be, his brotherliness would be mere weakness, and a quick destruction not only to himself but to all his power for benefit to others, were he not to "hate suretyship;" and to keep a keen watchfulness over every interest. Yet through all this justice and honorableness and caution, a generous, forbearing spirit

will run, if he be a Christian man, even in that which is the most selfish side of his life, — his business; while outside of that he rises to what heights he will. Two men enter their counting-rooms, the business spirit in both hearts, both bristling with business sagacity. But that is all of one; it is only the lower part of the other, while from the higher part come oozing down feelings which correct, moderate, liberalize, elevate the whole work. So he effects a supernatural transfiguration of that grasping, or at least competitive life into which the necessities of our world bring us; and he does it, not by omitting the Book of Proverbs, as the enthusiast would do, nor by omitting the New Testament, as the gross and greedy would do, but by carrying the higher part of the Book of Proverbs into the lower parts, and above all, by elevating the whole spirit of the Proverbs by the spirit of Christ.

So much as to the book. But this leads me to speak of prudence in general. I have lately depreciated prudence, because there is a self-complacent resting in it when we should go up higher. Though a prudent community, we are not half enough prudent; in no one interest is prudence well enough practised. Enlightened self-denial and vigorous care of health, the precious life, the precious means of healthy feeling, thinking, working; we are yet barbarians as to this. In all the sides of our life, how little foresight, attention to experience; how little steady reference

to the results which are a few years off! or with the mass, a positive inability to reject one spark of sensation now, even to seize at a work's end a gem which will sparkle forever. Prudence is an appreciation of the future; and it grows nobler as the future is larger and nobler, which it appreciates. So when I think that most of us have not force enough to live outside of the view of to-day, and are so besotted with the hour, that we habitually betray the next hour, the next day, the next year, and the great next year; I then feel that people who preach and write about sublime Christian virtues altogether overshoot the mark. Let us go back and lay the simple foundations of common sense, and be equal to our rank as earth-men, before we aspire to the angelic or Christian style. I look around; how wasted most of us are, for lack of common prudence; how wasted the world is! So we see, though we speak against prudence where it is substituted for something which is its better; we do not moderate its value, and its present need. And let us understand it, for it has the greatest varieties; and the preacher is often apt to be misunderstood, because the word covers such different things. A man is prudent who economizes his money even where there is a suffering object before him; the man is prudent who, without violating the customs of trade or injuring his own credit, greedily comes in before another, and takes always the lion's share. On the other side, a man is prudent who appreciates the fact of his

immortality and controls his life in time; or, in a higher style, the man is prudent who sacrifices all interests for that highest interest, — a pure soul. All these are prudences; yet you see one foot of the scale touches and enters heaven, while the other rests in the earth. The chief circumstances on which the elevation or inferiority of this virtue depends are these, — nearness or remoteness in our ends; whether we are, or are not, in rivalry with others in the good we seek, for that brings in a separate element of selfish power, antagonistic; then the openness and keenness of that rivalry. Above all, one sort of prudence differs from another according to the nature of the good we seek, more or less gross, more or less fleeting, or pure and lasting. Just in proportion as prudence rises to distant objects and pure objects, though these be sought for self (and so is liable to the charge that all this prudence is but a form of self-interest), yet, while I am not concerned that such divine ambition should be called interesting, I must add that such prudence, which lives to gain pure and invisible objects for self, always rises even above that temper; and, so soon as it can appreciate the distant and pure as to risk all for it, will love it, and seek it for its own sake, and rise to the godlikeness of a holiness which forgets self even in its purest and sublimest form.

I have made these distinctions for two reasons among many: first, that when we hear prudence con-

demned from the pulpit, it is a prudence which can make a man respectable and honored in our times, and which he is thus tempted to think ample for all the purposes of humanity. Remember that this is among the lowest styles of the virtue possible to man; and that it is condemned, not because there is not a good even in it, but because of its exaggerated value, and because it fills the whole horizon of duty to the man's eye, and so stunts his growth, and amid all his grandeur his soul perishes. Did his heart once acknowledge God in the laws of self-interest which govern him, or did his foresight look but a little further forward to death and eternity, then what a deep-cut distinction would take place in his sort of prudence, which, instead of satisfying him with himself, would dissatisfy him!

Another reason for all these distinctions. I hear some of our most enlightened men scoff at the class of motives drawn from heaven and hell, as mere prudence and destructive of religion. What are heaven and hell? I take them to be essentially, the one, the temper of Christ in me, as it may become enlarged and accomplished in the invisible world; the other, an anti-Christ temper in me, as it may become enlarged and accomplished there; these, and what natural issues or fruitage come out of these, I take to be my heaven or hell.

Prudence is but another name for divine aversions for the worst, and divine ambitions for the noblest

objects; but to tell man he is above the great future God has pointed out to him; to tell this to a race, the highest of whom is ready to tremble before visible law, but will have no dread of the invisible, — that fear is unworthy of him! I know that the fears of prudence are less worthy than its hopes; but to tell a race which seeks eagerly the visible and gross rewards, that it is above the invisible and spiritual and spotless; to tell men they have got beyond this, when I see no man whose life is not marked through with discreditable shocks, no man high enough to live steadily in his youth for his manhood, in his manhood for his age! This prudence is not below us. There is but one higher wish than this I could wish for myself, for any other one, the most reverently admired of all my race, of any race that is or can be, — that the Spirit stand high enough to measure its future, and so adore the pure destiny in it, and so fear with awe the impure destiny in it, as with holy choice to adopt and abandon itself to its supreme interest.

XXVII.

A PATERNAL WHISPER.

My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction: for whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.—PROV. iii. 11, 12.

THIS seems like a paternal whisper in a household for the encouragement of an uninformed child, and to dry the hot tears upon its cheek. “It will be well, my child.” And these words, and some others like them, have been whispered through the air for a thousand years; a trickling down from the great fountains of compassion, falling as dews into the sad night of human sorrow, the very sound healing and blessing, and where truly understood, making a sort of heavenly change in the spirit, and turning prisons into illuminated palaces; and the man who felt himself alone and unbefriended in an alien place, where every face turned hard towards him, and he, stumbling forward on dark mountains, puzzled with life, embittered with it, with no real God left him, bereaved of all of earth, and only flat despair or mere endurance left, — such a man, now a sepulchre where an angel might descend and weep, and which seemed closed and sealed forever, suddenly turned into a resurrection

tomb, simply because some such word as this was spoken; should I not say because in these tones, "my son," a presence of God came overshadowing in pity the spirit of the creature he has made, — "My son, whom the Lord loveth he correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth." How medicinal the tones and thoughts of this book of sympathies, the Bible, specially for the diseases which have no other cure! Once heard, the homeless heart is suddenly at home again; everything rights itself; the old house, to be sure, is down, but a new one builds itself as "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

When a man really thinks of the millions of hearts which filled the earth long ago, or which fill whole regions now, where God's words are not heard, and who have not even the consolations of a philosophy, but take the blow and reel into their dark graves, what an unspeakable gift is given to us among whom the true light now shineth? I know that the degradation of the heathen leaves him insusceptible of much suffering, that the deeps of suffering and consolation open together in the divine training of a man as Christian; but so far as a diminution of sorrow is purchased by degradation of the species, it calls for a pity deeper and more solemn still. And so, in any view, thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift, which creates deeper affections and a higher nature, and when through this vaster tribulations enter, gives us

consolation vaster still, and sets up our feet on high, even on the heights of his holy hill.

It was ever accounted one of the wise recipes for grief to make light of it in some sense. "Don't think it much, and it isn't much; new thoughts, new scenes will drive it away." Now it is true where any trouble has passed in part out of moral treatment it must be treated as physical disease. But it is monstrous to let this be the normal and ordinary treatment of trouble. It is not a thing to be forgotten or swept away; to regard it as a blind chance fallen in your way and to be put out of it — that is to underrate it, indeed.

Why, what view of God must men have when He will allow a thing of such infinite cost to come as a chance? Why, if affliction be the light thing many strive to make it, we are of all men most miserable, for then the God over us is something we cannot understand, and we are driven out of the world by an evil which has in it no meaning, and no hope of elevating us.

My son, make not thus light of God's chastisements, interpreting them in so mean a way; for this is blaspheming God, and your own nature as a son of God. You are a child that has wandered far, and the Father hath sent solemn messengers to bring you home; you do them wrong, being so majestic, to treat them lightly.

But if the frivolous soul will deny and make a blank

of all that is deepest in its own nature, and live a life escaped out of all that region of solemn warning and reproving, and will turn the corner of and shut out all this scene of unspeakable heart-moving significance, — if it will, it can despise the chastenings of the Lord, and make out of the deep human soul a mere insane frivolity, — call it business, or amusement, or philosophy.

But a man need not positively seek to forget and trifle with God's discipline. It is substantially to do a despite to these deep and costly experiences merely to let them pass unused, or to be so lost in the sorrow as to forget the hand of God, or to sink despairingly under our blows. I know and feel, and would give the widest and tenderest allowance to, the inexpressible heart-breaks of men and women; but I cannot forget that the only true healing of the heart is when it hears through all the voice of God, and comes humbly and softly nearer to the voice, and asks that he will have mercy, and not lay upon us more than we can bear, but will bring us into deep and sweet obedience to his will, and will make us meet for that inheritance whither we trust our beloved have gone before, and where we will everlastingly rejoice that he hath afflicted us, and brought us out of great tribulation to sit down in the seats of everlasting peace, —

“The rueful conflict, the heart riven with vain endeavor,
And memory of earth's bitter leaven, effaced forever.”

What more can be said to much-trying man to per-

suade him not to despise the chastening of the Lord, and not to be weary of his correction, than just to say in his ear these tender and holy words: "My son, these terrible facts are chastisements and corrections; despise them not nor faint at them, for whom the Lord loveth he correcteth (sets right with sorrow), even as a father the son in whom he delighteth."

XXVIII.

GOD'S POWER AND SOLICITUDE.

What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him? and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him? — JOB vii. 17.

AN ancient man of profound experience expresses in the midst of trouble his wonder that God should make so much of such a being as man. "I see," he says, "that I am an inferior creature, yet I see that God's power and solicitude are busy about me." This is its meaning, though it breaks out strangely in the midst of the boldest expostulations, and expresses the undertone of his consciousness that all this dreadful trial was but the outside look of a noble moral treatment.

Let man's powers be what they may, — in action like an angel, in apprehension like a god, — if they come forth to decline as a shadow, to pass as a wind, the value, the rank of the being is but small. He is at the best but the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals, the tallest, fairest flower in the perishing garden of the earth. What avail the mightiest lights burning within us if they are to be extinguished as a torch lighted one hour for a festival?

Here, then, was one of the profoundest perplexities

of this wonderful man, and one common in some measure to him with the whole of the ancient world. *We* are scarcely able to reproduce the state, for with us the greatness of man's nature is established; the great thoughts of Christ overshadow all of us; a sense of the dignity and duration of man is inwrought even into the souls that have never exercised one act of distinct faith. All things are new.

In this perplexity Job might have said, as almost every creature would have said, "Clearly I am nothing, and this feeling that the Almighty is occupied with me, — that he has set his heart upon me and is trying me every moment, — is all delusion." Or it would have been proper for him to conclude, from the high demeanor which God showed toward him, that he was not what he seemed, — a creature of a moment. But to settle himself in such a conviction was too high a thing for a man then; for sense so pressed her dreadful demonstration of his mortality upon him, and there was no other clear light to lead him, that he could not rise to the height of the thought that he was never to die, and to all the other unbounded thoughts which go with that. So he stood, lost in amazement, sometimes driven that way, sometimes this, but never losing, even against all, his confidence in God, — "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," — and never losing a vague sense of some deliverance. We living to-day have learned through Christ that the importance of man in the eyes of God has no mystery

or caprice about it, but that the simple fact is he treats him highly because he has created and endowed him highly; that he has formed his being to stretch out in a parallel of life with his own, and has formed his nature in likeness with divinity itself; and that thence it is he visits him every morning, and tries him every moment.

Let us consider what it was in the conduct of God towards man that evinced such high regard; that impressed Job so much, and seemed so inconsistent with the fact of man's low and fugitive existence. God evidently magnified man by his position on the earth, as lord of the creatures and possessor of the great material frame on which he was placed; as distinguished also in the look of the body, declaring at the first glance height and supremacy, — a body where earth seemed refined into spirit, and which announced things invisible, to which his blood was more nearly related than to the blood of the animals. And then the consciousness of the spirit within him, which, with such as Job, was grander than he could define or justify, — a sort of existence which could admit the thought of God and the infinite, which turned in that direction with longing and love, evidently related to the greatest and born for it, — a sort of existence which was so high in natural rank, that while it was capable of knowing the first true, the first holy, it was also able freely to become it or freely to oppose it, capable of becoming, as if an independent and

divine power, for God or against God (for all that is implied in a conscience and a free will) ; and so, as the tempter truly said, man is as one of the gods, knowing good and evil. Conscious of such a style of being, and every man is dimly conscious of it, and the more luminous spirits of the race, such as Job's, are clearly conscious of it, and it becomes evident and startling to such how God hath magnified him and set his heart upon him. Not only that he was of such a rank by birth, but that he was educated with a corresponding dignity; not only that he was exalted in the original plan of the creation, but that now these high thoughts towards him were moving through all Nature and through all that ordering of events called Providence, to teach him, to invigorate, to enlighten, and to fill out the whole orb of his being according to the original purpose,—the ancient, simple men who believed in God saw all this far more clearly and far more justly than we do. Not immodestly, but with awe, they saw the whole frame of events and things illuminated; they heard as if the whole chamber of the atmosphere was vocal; they heard from every point voices of warning, of persuasion, of encouragement, of guidance, and felt through all with unspeakable reverence that God was magnifying them and setting his heart upon them.

But after all, it is singular and well worth remarking what to Job was the special point where God seemed most to magnify him; it was in the elaborate disci-

pline of joy and sorrow with which he surrounded him. For years he had tried him with all the resources of joy, and now he was trying him with all the resources of sorrow. The deeper, the keener, the more bitter and intolerable his pains became, instead of suggesting to him that there was no God, or that God had forgotten him, or that God despised him, or even that God was angry with him, they only deepened the precisely contrary conviction, — namely, that God was more and more magnifying him and setting his heart upon him. Noble confidence! deepening as all things shook about him, brightening as the night darkened, — confidence in the reality and character of God, and of the subservience of all things to the moral education of man. Here he stood, the rich man beggared, a prince cast out, suspected and tormented by his friends, the childless father, diseased, with an anguish eating at every point of his comfort, as a dead man dug out of his grave and made conscious of all his death, and eager that his head should sink back into the darkness, — here he was, darkling child in the dusk of time, with all the mysteries of life about him, yet he held fast his integrity, and held up his head and said of it all, in his most generous way of interpreting it, that it all came from the careful and peculiar regard God had for the interests of the human soul. “What is man, that thou shouldest thus visit him every morning, and try him every moment? that thou shouldest

thus magnify him, and set thine heart upon him?" Wonderful!

Let us remember that he held firm to this, even though he suspected that the grave would be the end of him. This indeed gave him an unspeakable perplexity, and even led him candidly and somewhat boldly to complain of God. "Why stretch out thy trials to the tomb? O remember that my life is wind."

This complaint was natural, almost unavoidable in so genuine a soul, and on the whole I see here a nobleness of conception of God and a nobleness of trust which I know not how to admire enough. Had he but seen the face of Jesus Christ, had he but known surely that his life was not wind, had he but known always and clearly that his Redeemer lived, and that in his flesh he should yet see God; Oh, how would he then have triumphed over death and all the power of hell loosed against him! Good and true and generous servant of God, with what touching power do you speak to us, who, knowing what you did not know, — that life is but the porch of eternity, — do yet so selfishly misunderstand God when he afflicts!

Here a man at that era, whose doctrine was that all sorrow was the eminent and costly proof of the solicitude of God towards us; that in this, above all things, he makes us great; that here was the very sign of his presence and of the setting of his heart upon us, — here was a man who stood to this when he seemed about

falling into extinction. And we, we who know the value of the spirit, and know that chastisement is almost the only means of its purification — we: where are our generous interpretations of God, our confidence that the deeper the sorrow the truer God is to us, the more his heart is set upon us? Where are those of us who accept the coming grief as the patriarchs at the door of their tents received and welcomed the high angels of God? Who of us glory in tribulations and say, “I know that the thoughts which thou thinkest towards us are thoughts of peace, and not of evil; I know that whom thou lovest thou chastenest, and scourgest every son whom thou receivest”? And who is there, standing at the grave of the beloved and mourned, standing at the grave of our health and hopes, that is able to say this, even in the immortal light which is round us to-day? Which man of us is equal to this which Job was equal to tens of centuries back, with the curtain of eternity down before him, and his universe darkening and falling round him, all of which shook not his generous thoughts of God; but there he stood, and the sublime fashion in which he interpreted the whole was, “What is man, that thou shouldest thus magnify him? and that thou shouldest thus set thine heart upon him?”

XXIX.

THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS.

What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness. — ST. JOHN i. 22-23.

IN preparing to contemplate the figure of him that was to come, let us contemplate first the figure of the preparer. Always must the heart which passes rightly forward to Christ come up from the wilderness, and from the voice and presence of John. This subject is not a narrow one, and may often be revisited without treading on the same pathway. The outline of his history and purposes we all know. His wonderful birth of a saintly and priestly family as the kinsman of Christ, and set apart from birth as his precursor; his retreat to the wild and mountainous desert adjacent to and west of the Dead Sea, there remaining "until the days of his showing unto Israel;" his silent, stern, and solemn preparation of thirty years; his figure at his reappearance on the borders of the wilderness and announcement of the coming kingdom of the Messiah; his preaching of repentance and preparation; the distinct pointing out of Jesus as the expected one; and then the tragical close of his noble career.

Through all the great historical past, however imperial the scene or the issues, however sublime the actor, his towering head, lit with magnificent light, or erect under the dark and thunderous storms of fate, — looking back through the whole, I see no scene, no figure, which so arrests and awes me as John and his wilderness, his office and his work.

What was this office? What did John come to do? He came like a trumpet to proclaim the instant approach of the Christ, and to call the whole Jewish nation to repent. Not merely on general grounds, but additionally and eminently as the ground of admission to the coming kingdom. Purify yourselves, because of the advent of a pure era; God is coming forward upon the earth! Thus his office was not only to spread and deepen the idea of the expected Messiah, but to correct their gross notions of his reign; and this all done by the simple call, “Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

But not only was he born to say, “Repent, ye Jews, the kingdom is here,” but to answer the great question of that time, and all times, — Where is he? To say, This is he, this one! “Behold the Lamb!” To recognize the true man, and to inaugurate him before the blind, expecting people, is indeed the great want of all time. But what is that to knowing that highest and most hidden one of all, whom all races and times need, and perish while they need? That was John to do, — to rouse the sluggish souls to keen looking

around, by telling them this disturbing secret: "There standeth one among you whom ye know not;" and then, when they are awake and ready, "to bear record and say, I saw the Holy Ghost descending like a dove and resting on *him*; lo, this is he."

Such, taken together, was the office of John, — to purify the lives, to arouse, reform, and direct the expectations of the Jews as to the Messiah and his kingdom. And now in what way did he fulfil such an office?

The thing to be done was to impress a whole people with his authority, so as to make his convictions theirs, even against their bent. To do this, he brought with him no miracles. "John did no miracles." He was to lead in an era to which the Mosaic was but a shadow; yet he had no Sinai, — not one of the ten old miracles, to lead the Jews on a harder pilgrimage from a darker and deeper Egypt to a higher and far more distant Canaan. The greatest among the prophets, he yet stood bereft of their powers. John did no miracles; but he brought to work that greatest of all miracles, — a divine and powerful life; a faith that was certainty; a courage which carried a sort of almightiness in it. He seemed something different from a man, or the son of a man; he came up from the desert as one without father or descent, — a voice, crying in the wilderness; he came up as unenslaved to man or society, as an animal out of the forest, — his meat locusts and the wild honey;

covered with the hair of a camel, and with a leathern girdle about his loins, — a figure terrible and majestic as a lion “out of the thicket.” Thus, in those days, “came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea.” And this, to be sure, was impressive enough; but it would not have been enough if it had been all. He came at the chosen moment of a chosen crisis; he came with something to say, which, said as he said it, the Jewish soul could not but hear, — something to say to the depths of the conscience of guilty people, and something to say to the dearest hopes of the proudest nation fallen into a pit of disaster. Repent ye! was the first word; the next, the kingdom comes! He spoke the wanted word. Look first at that preaching of repentance alone. It was a simple and stern appeal to the foundations of the national conscience; a rehabilitation of the few great truths of righteousness; and a master blow, struck at that Jewish idol, set up in the place of all religion, — namely, of the divine favoritism, of their blood relationship to Abram, of their blood relationship to the mercy of God. John, as with the sound of the pure old law, called the souls of the corrupted people back to the truth, “Repent!” The wrath of God was before his eyes; there it stood; it was to come. He saw it with his own eyes, and pointed his finger at it. Yet, severe as his office was, to the common people there was a benignity in his spirit, and he demanded no great things of them. But to others, — to the

selfish, proud hypocrites, the men and the classes who had poisoned religion at its source, and brought on the doom of their country, — to them he came not calling to repentance, but announcing pure condemnation. This grand courage and justice gave him a superhuman look to the eyes of the nation. Was there ever a voice of a religious teacher, unsupported by miracle and alone, like his to the aristocracy and power of Judea? “But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, *who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?*” It was evident that Elijah was here, — the Elijah whom the people expected; it was clearly a power that was present to which dignities and kings and nations were as nothing; and all felt it, and bowed before it.

But the very effect with which he preached righteousness was greatly derived from the authority with which he announced the expected kingdom; each of these two offices aided and gave force to the other. “The watchword was pronounced, the potent sound — Messiah! All the people quaked like dew stirred by the breeze.” Thus it was that, without miracle, John, planting himself on the depths of fear and of hope, by the force of a divine soul, by every sign of truth and nobleness, by a strange and awful life, convinced and awed and led the people.

Let us not think that this great work was done by him because he was of a supernatural birth and of

mysterious gifts. God gave him the sign and leading where needed, but left him then to a soul, peculiar indeed, but human. For example, in his deep sense of law and of purity on one hand, and of evil on the other, increased by the knowledge that the pure one was at the door, and that he for himself and the nation was the preparer of that celestial and regal holiness about to descend, — such thought, dwelt on in the deep solitude of the wilderness, and in the deeper solitude of his own grand heart, was the origin of that life through all its unearthly austerity and height. Let us not think that he led that life and did that work without a natural cost and sacrifice. To think rightly of him, we must think of him as a man. Placed by Divine Providence at an awful post, John took it and filled it with a strong but a human heart, and through the struggles of a human heart. Do you think his flesh was iron from the first? His flesh was as soft as the child's at your own hearth. Do you think there was no conquest in that thirty years in the wilderness? Did it cost the man nothing to contemplate his work, — to rebuke, to condemn, to reappear, strange and uncouth as he was, and arraign a people? Do you suppose this man was at all moments solidly sure of himself, and was left to no doubts, no uncertainties? Let us remember that strange message he sent from his prison, and just before his death, to Christ: "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" Left to languish nearly a year in a

prison, hearing little of the advances of Christ, and that little, perhaps, not according to his expectations of what this course would be, he began to distrust; and, anxious for assurance, sent and asked, "Art thou he?" John's view of the coming kingdom, though essentially pure and far above his age, blended, I doubt not, material, and perhaps regal circumstance and results with spiritual. I suppose also he thought of it as coming more suddenly and powerfully. God had advanced him far, but not yet up to "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation." Observe the answer of Christ. After laying out before the messengers a simple statement of the works of power and mercy he was performing, as he knew they were not of the nature which even the best Jewish minds anticipated, he closes the message with the most significant word: "And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me."

XXX.

KING HEROD AND JOHN THE BAPTIST.

And King Herod heard of him; and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead. — ST. MARK vi. 14.

THERE was a great rumor of Christ in the land, and people mused as to who he was. "King Herod heard of him, and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead." But "others said that it is Elias; and others said that it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets;" for people thought that nothing good or great could be new: it must be the resurrection of something old. But Herod would not hear to any theory but his own. "It is John," he said, for he had a special reason; "it is John, whom I beheaded; he is risen from the dead." His conscience broke out; for to the old Jewish conscience the holy and the wronged must rise. The hereafter is so vague, the injured and abused cannot be righted there; so they must rise here.

This was Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great. He had been married for some years, it seems, but had deserted his wife for his niece, Herodias, the wife of Philip, King of Arabia Petrea. This sin John could not endure, though he was in a manner friendly

to Herod. So he who was terrible to Pharisees and Sadducees in the wilderness and at the Jordan, was faithful also in the King's palace, and said, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife;" which so incensed the new wife Herodias, that she "would have killed him; but she could not, for Herod feared John." But, as a compromise, Herod put him in prison.

Then Herodias watched for her time; and it came. It was on a great occasion, when the grace and beauty of her daughter Salome enraptured the weak king, that Herodias skilfully seized the opportunity, asked for and got the head of John, as the price of a dance.

In looking at the character of Herod, he seems to me emphatically a man of impulse. The old-time kings, and indeed kings always, are made, by their place, creatures of impulse. Awful as the lives of absolute kings have been, the fact that they have remained human at all is a wonder; everything encourages them to give way to the mob of passions which rise in the breast. One of the greatest blessings of men is, that they are limited and rendered almost powerless, held in on every side, and at least made dependent on opinion. If from childhood we could do freely and always all we would do, we should sink into a race of abjects or of fiends. The fact of the one Ruler, intrusted with infinite power, and using all power justly, mercifully, in forgetfulness of self, — this, when we realize what all power is, — its

infinite seductiveness, — gives a new and strange sense of the beauty and divine heart of God.

Look at this King Herod, and see what a creature power will make of a man who is not good. Look at his marriage. Fascinated by Herodias, he forgets all sacredness of law, of the tie to his first wife, of the law of nature itself, and with a high hand marries his niece, quite infatuated by a fancy, and deaf and dead to all things sacred standing in his way.

But more incredible still, and by far, is the scene of his weakness at the great festival of his birthday. The grace and beauty of the young princess in the dance made the man drunk for the moment. "Ask anything, — the half of my kingdom." It seems a fiction; but no. Such are the possibilities of impulse and power to make a man a fool or a madman!

When the time arrives with us in which, from riches or favor, from beauty or any power, we can do what we wish, then a fearful moment has come. Yet just that state is the aim of all our lives; we are reaching out to be gods without the heart of God, and if we attain we are apt to become criminals or fools or madmen.

God is most beneficent in restraining us, in denying us our foolish wishes, until we have the character fit to possess some good fortune, some power.

Though Herod was the absurd creature of impulse, do not think his impulses were all of a low sort. On the contrary this murderer was a man of strong, religi-

ous nature. When Herodias would have killed John, "she could not, for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly." A most interesting picture. See the awe and reverence, mixed with superstitious fear, of the vicious king for the just man and holy; see the deep deference of the head of a splendid court for a rough man from the wilderness: He "observed him." And it was not emotion merely: "when he heard him, he did many things." Every trait here is of a fine, religious nature; and it was not merely a low, religious fear, as some might call it, but a genuine love of the good: "He heard him gladly." Yes; and all this was not mere sentimentalism, but resulted in actual practice: "He did many things;" which fact is worth note if the luxurious nature and habits of the king are considered, on the one hand, and, on the other, the stern, home-reaching duties which the iron John always demanded. "He did many things;" and we may be sure they were hard things, for John did not demand trifles.

This strong, religious nature in Herod showed itself even in his mistakes and superstitions. When, for example, he saw that the head of John was asked for, a revulsion came, a chill, and he "was exceeding sorry." He would have drawn back gladly, but "for his oath's sake." Strange that he who had violated the most sacred vows had still such superstitious

reverence for his oath that he could not break it. Like Shylock, though all humanity was weeping at his feet, he must go forward; he had "an oath, an oath in heaven."

That was not insincere, however absurd. The awe of an oath was really upon him; it was merely the religion of his nature turned into superstition. But this religious nature is seen most strikingly in that deep conscience of his which, when John was dead, and when, sometime after, all was hushed, he heard a report of the mighty works of Jesus, and said, "It is not Elias or a prophet; it is John, whom I beheaded."

So Herod was not merely a man of common or bad, but mixed impulses, and his great fault was the want of self-government. The higher impulses had not the habit of sway or mastery, but were nearly on a level with the fancies and lower passions. He was worse than a merely bad man; he had the materials of a noble and heavenly nature, ruined.

Having now roughly sketched this character, let us consider his conscience, — its depth and prophesying power. His deed was done; the reeking head of John was carried in. We may judge his feelings when he saw it, though he said not a word, and life went on; and the greatest of the Jews met his fate from the hands of two women, — one wounded and malignant, the other cruelly frivolous.

See the contrast between what was inside that Royal Court and what was outside. There were

living there in Palestine, at that moment, all those men who were soon to be the Christian apostles, — among them Simon the fisherman, soon to be Peter the rock, and James, and the half-divine John, also fishermen; there lived the great baptist, John, and there lived Jesus, the son of Mary, — all among the poor people of the land; while inside the court of the king were Herod and Herodias and Salome. I do not wish to make any comparison between classes of people, the rich and the poor, for each has faults enough; but it would be well if the splendid classes (when spoiled and proud, I mean) would remember how near God, and the highest gifts of God, may be to the children of toil whom they despise. Contrast the scene of the dance in the high palace of King Herod, with the rough and shaggy prisoner John, and with the men just then fishing in the Lake of Galilee. But after a while there is a story current of some great appearance in the land, — the people know not what or who. Then Herod starts up: “He whom I beheaded, John; this is he, come back from among the dead.”

Behold conscience! A licentious man, a king, whose will made law, feels that the dead body of the wronged victim, though you heap a world upon it, will not lie in the grave unrighted. Justice shall come forth. The pure and mighty John cannot die in this way; his foot shall stand again upon the earth; the divine power that was in him will break through;

these great miracles we hear of must be his, they can be no other's; he must have grown mightier from death; his wronged spirit must have come forth with new powers blossoming around his path.

Behold the testimony of the soul to the justice of God! Behold the witness of the heart to the fate of virtue! It must prosper: this is the verdict of the human soul once aroused. It is a just judgment, though it is the judgment of a criminal. Nay, more, — it is a just judgment precisely on that account. Were the Son of God not appointed Judge of the world, the next fittest judge would be the sinful human soul, aroused, through a deep consciousness of its own wrong, to know the honor and glory of the injured sons of God.

We have proofs of science against God to-day, but we have proofs of soul for God; we have nobler attestation for him from that part of the universe which is likest God, — the human spirit. We are under the dominion of a just Being, who finally, though all law, even the law of death, seems against it, will vindicate the right. And to see this is not a power peculiar to prophets, but it is the great prophetic power of human nature, of its conscience. It may err, as Herod did here; but there is always in it an essential right. This was not John, as he thought; but the declaration of Herod that injured goodness must triumph, though we do not yet see it, has a loud "amen" from all corners of the world. It is just the same as when Job

arose and said, "My Redeemer liveth, and he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." "Though worms destroy my body, yet shall I see God."

Herod, then, was among the prophets, — prophesying his own condemnation as well as the triumph of John. And we are prophets also, as good as he, when in every wrong deed we do we hear a faint whisper of a time of adjustment coming; which time must come if mercy and divine pity revealed in Christ do not pardon what our frailty has committed, — especially if we have wronged the innocent; for that is an injury whose blood cries from the earth.

Behind this splendid and bloody scene there stands a majestic figure, — John. Catch but one sound of his voice and one glimpse of his presence. The sound is, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife;" and as the result of these sublime words we see the head of John, blood-bathed and borne in upon a charger. Such is the awful providence of the world: the man who protests must die. Yes; and the beautiful Salome will not care, but will dance still; Herodias will sit a queen, forever free from ascetic rebuke; and Herod will feel no harm, though the servant of God is slain. But they will see him in the dreams of the night or the visions of the day; and Herod will shake at every whisper of his presence, and will himself affirm, "John! he has come out from the dead!" and all creatures will join him.

At that moment, in that country, there was preparing another scene, to be witnessed about one year after; a scene like this, but to which this was but a shadow, — the death and rising of Jesus Christ. John and Christ, two martyrs of righteousness, — the servant and his Lord; dead, but triumphant! And be sure that though our life be lived in sorrow and gloom, misunderstood, a failure, if it be lived in obedience, it will not sink like water into the ground; for the law of God is, and the deepest law of the world is, “Glory and honor and life to the righteous!”

XXXI.

THE RENEWAL OF THE EARTH.

Thou renewest the face of the earth.—Ps. civ. 30.

Thou hast set all the borders of the earth : thou hast made summer and winter.—Ps. lxxiv. 17.

ONCE more we see around us the face of the earth renewed by the hand of God. If we are bound to give due regard to every good or wise or beautiful work brought under our notice, with what earnest examination and solemn respect, with what gratitude and admiration, with what private and public rejoicings, should we celebrate this great work of God now before us, fresh from his hand!

The earth, no matter when we view it, is always, if I may so express it, replete with God; his character is transfused through it. But at this season it seems as though he made special effort to exhibit his character and to secure our attention to it. It appears as if he had here made preparation to elicit our wonder and gratitude in spite of us, to force some spark of feeling from his dull, torpid creatures. For this purpose he makes a sort of re-enacting of the first scene of creation. The suddenness, too, with which all these effects are produced, their vastness, their youthful

freshness, is a beautiful imitation of the morning of creation, a repetition of that first transaction when "God said: Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit after his kind."

The season of spring seems intended to startle us out of the stupor of custom, and to present before the eyes annually the great and affecting fact that there is a Creator, and that the earth is a new work from his hands. It is enough to shock any serious and intelligent person that all this should pass on before the eyes of so large a part of mankind without exciting anything like thoughtful attention. If I can stand within this wonderful theatre and ascribe no glory or thanks to my Maker, if, sunk in bestial oblivion, having eyes I see not, it were far better if God had not given me eyes, better that he had made me lower than the beasts of the field.

It may be that the time has passed when we, according to the poetic idea of the first parents, can stand, as every evening falls or every day arises, and unite with the earth in a lofty hymn to the natural Lord of the day; but at least in the opening of the great annual day it does become us to sing aloud to God our Maker, to "take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery."

One of the first things which strike us in this scene is its affluence. Everywhere over the fields, through the forests, in places known and unknown, in populous

cities and in wildernesses which no eye has seen since the world was made, — everywhere, from the green rim of the river up to the tops of the mountains, the same fresh, perfect works. Examine that wild flower, or that splendid weed, which one may gather even at the door; it is wrought as well as if that were the only thing ever made, and as though it was meant when finished to be exhibited to the world.

The profusion is wonderful. God, who is the most rigid of economists in his mode of producing results, seems to be even unaccountably lavish of the results themselves. Full measure, heaped up and running over. How little must his thoughts be as our thoughts — this is the natural reflection — or his ways as ours! O Lord, how manifold are thy works! Thou hast sent life as a flood of waters up over all the lands, clothed the hills to their tops, even to the highest part of the world.

In the first grand exhibition in London of the world's skill and industry, the architect wrote upon the arches of the temple which held the multitudinous and precious works, this inscription of praise: "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." To any who walked through that magazine of the world's work, how grand and benign did it seem, this vast creation of man, doing honor to a creature who, formed in the image of his Maker, builds, too, like his Maker, a world of his own, and no mean world! But the curiosity and awe felt in that scene does but

reproach and rebuke a world so dead through custom that it walks dumb and blindfolded through such a scene as this spring day, made by God; so old, yet standing as fresh and strong as when "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy."

Again: consider the attention to beauty which appears at this season, for the Creator's attention to beauty seems to be co-ordinate with his attention to utility. The design to make things gratify the taste seems to run side by side with and to be not less than the design of making them useful. The common grass for the animals looks as if it were made for nothing else than beauty; and something of the same spirit is poured out even upon things noxious and vile. I see marks of the same hand from the garnishing of the heavens down to the form and colors of the serpent. The universe seems like a picture, and wherever a touch of beauty could be laid in, there the pencil and the colors of the divine artist appear.

From this universal attention to beauty, it seems to me that there is just the same proof that God wishes us to discover and enjoy the loveliness of creation as that he wishes us to discover and enjoy its comforts; and that if we are refined enough we will praise him as the God of beauty, exalting our souls with his glory, hardly less than we praise him as the God who maketh the food to grow. I believe that a proper appreciation of Nature will not only increase indefi-

nately the happiness of any man, but soothe and purify him.

I know very well that there have been men who united in themselves great depravity with exquisite sensibility to Nature; but this union is by no means a natural one. I appeal to any one who has ever felt the calm delights of rural places, — the deep forest, the gurgling sound of a brook, —

“Which to the quiet woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune,”

whether there was not something there which refined and bettered his heart. When I see that God has given so much attention to beauty I am persuaded that it must have a high purpose. The purity and innocence of Nature expel with a gentle but powerful influence the corrosion of malice, the folly and noise and grossness of a weak and sinful and silly life.

“I have known men,” says one, “who, by continual disregard of duty, had learned to turn a deaf ear to the earnest remonstrances and the silent sorrows of their friends, to the exultation of their enemies and the withdrawal of public confidence; yet perhaps a walk in the country on a summer morning, a look around, has called up in the apostate heart the thought of that infinite mercy which does not withdraw its blessings nor the capacity of enjoyment from him who has forfeited all by disobedience.”

Again: this season has followed and risen out of the midst of winter; it has come forth like a living

form out of the grave, in the splendor of its resurrection-garments. Now why should not all have been left dead as it was? Suppose God had not looked this way; suppose he had not said, "I will bring this world to life again." It is not of course that it lives again, but it is "because the Lord has not forgotten to be gracious." A sight of more helpless dependence cannot be imagined than the races of men and animals in the winter. "These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest send forth thy spirit again and renew the face of the earth; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That thou givest them they gather; thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good."

But this beneficent advance from winter to summer is striking in more respects than this. In this change the earth seems intended to rehearse before the eyes of man, its natural head, his own great history; to rehearse it before him, to teach him and to console him. For when winter comes on, if it were our first winter, we would certainly think, "Here is the end of the life of the world; death has gone gradually but thoroughly through the whole frame, and it would seem highly unnatural that it should ever be revived." Just so with the death of man himself. We see the powers and freshness all gone, and because we have in this case not seen the spring, it seems strange and improbable; we are like the prophet: "Son of man, can these bones live?" Then said the Lord unto him, "Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and

say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." So "the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army."

Yes, as the Spirit of God has breathed this wonderful life through Nature, so shall it breathe with power upon us; and the dead generations of men, each man in his place, shall stand up upon their feet before him, "an exceeding great army." And he that sits upon the throne shall say, "Behold, I make all things new."

"Sin-blighted though we are,
We, too, the reasoning sons of men,
From our oblivious winter called,
Shall rise and breathe again,
And in eternal summer lose
Our threescore years and ten."

Some people think that when a man says his church is in the woods or in the open scenes of Nature, he is little better than an infidel; and I grant you it is bad enough if he means, as many do mean, that that is his only church or his best church. But let the revelation of Scripture teach us to decipher the revelation of Nature. Come into this peaceful presence, into this beautiful and pure presence; feel the impurity and deformity of all iniquity and meanness. Standing in the actual presence of his munificent love, let us bow our souls to adore him who gives all, who will do all things wisely, and to whom and to his redeem-

ing mercy as revealed in Christ we can commit our souls when this scene is closed, sure that he will open through the grave new heavens and a new earth so pure and satisfying that the old will no longer be remembered, neither will it come into mind.

XXXII.

IDOLATRY.

That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find him. — ACTS xvii. 27.

WE are so accustomed to the Christian idea of God that it seems one of the easiest and most obvious of our conceptions. But in fact, it is an idea which men reach to, and hold with great difficulty. So that it has always been necessary as the first great labor of Providence, not only in the History of the Jews but in all history, to teach this idea, and implant it, to cause men to know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, the simple but most grand truth that “there is none besides Him,—that he is the Lord, and that there is none else.”

Of the fact that the idea of God has not been properly conceived by men, there is no need of proof. The human race might be described as a family of idolaters. Of the dense masses of men which have covered the face of the world for thousands of years, the worshippers of a true God have been not only a small portion, but as it were, a slight exception; that is the fact. I propose to account for this wonderful fact, and I shall do it, simply on the ground of the difficulty of the idea. I

shall begin by accounting in this way for idolatry in general, and then attempt to account for some of the more prominent forms of idolatry which have been found in the world.

The first point is then as to idolatry in general, that is, the worship of a false God. There is a more strict sense in which idolatry is the worship of an image; but I use it now in its more general meaning, namely, the worship of that for God which is not God.

In accounting for men's false ideas as to the Supreme Being, I refer first to the intellectual, second to the moral difficulties of the idea. Our idea of God is not, as we think it, something so dear and near that the mind reaches it as if by necessity. It is common to find in books the assertion that the idea of God is universal. Now, if it be meant that the God of the Christians, or of the Hebrews, or of philosophy is naturally attained, there is nothing further from the truth. There is an idea of God to which all reach, — the idea, I mean, that there is something superior, something above us, which awakens awe or fear. This is what many reasoners mean when they say that the idea of God is universal, that no people or tribe have been found without it. But it would be much more proper to say that all men have an idea of something that stands for God; since to call that God which some savages worship would reduce the Deity to a very low character indeed. The truth of this matter is that the human mind necessarily goes *towards* some idea of God; and finds the beginning of

it, but no more than that. To reach the Christian idea of him, is another thing; the advance to that is full of difficulty. Indeed, so great are the difficulties, that if the mere intellect were the guide, I believe man never would, never could know God. Take first the mass of human beings. Not that mass we see around us, each of whom inherits and holds and even takes for granted truths which even the highest minds of antiquity could not reach; I mean the mass of the simple, rude children of nature. Take these minds, and what idea will they form of God? They cannot ascend through a series of abstract reasonings to one great cause, for though they have the rudiments in them of this sort of reasoning, it is as imperfect as are their monstrous images and paintings, when compared with the perfection of civilized art. It is a bare impossibility that through mere reasoning they should rise to the idea of one Governor of affairs, and more so that they should rise to the mysterious and sublime thought of One Spirit who creates as well as arranges and disposes all. If at any time, through some happy fortune, a glimpse of this idea was reached and held by some tribes, it was but a glimpse, and was obtained, no doubt, more through the moral than the mental nature.

But if the mass could not reach the idea, there have always been high and cultivated men, perhaps, who could attain to it and diffuse it among their fellows. As a matter of fact, I know that there have been refined and noble speculations on the subject,

particularly among the Greeks. But not to speak of the want of assurance which marked all their conclusions, the bare idea of a Creator, for instance, in our notion of it, was very rarely, if ever, reached. The idea of matter absolutely made from nothing by the will of a Spirit, was pronounced an absurdity by Aristotle; and Aristotle, it appears to me, was most properly and eminently the scientific mind of all men the world has known. He was the representative of the power the mere intellect has to find out a God, — and he did not find him. Plato came much nearer to it; but it was not through the intellect strictly, and it is of that I am now speaking. I do not wonder that Aristotle or any of his class could not reach the idea; I think it is not possible they should. Not to speak of the other characteristics of his nature, but merely of that which seems to fall most naturally within the sphere of the intellect, his character as Creator, I think it impossible that the mere efforts of the understanding could conclude that there is a Creator: I mean a Creator of substance, not a contriver or arranger or modifier. The proof of this cannot be entered into here; but it is sufficient to say that through the mere process of the intellect, not one philosopher ever *has* reached the idea.

So far then as the intellect of man is concerned, in his lowest or highest condition, it is not strange that his notions should be so false as to the great object of his worship.

Consider, in the next place, the *moral difficulties* of

the idea. The notion which any individual or people form of God is in a great measure a reflection of their own character, though of course enlarged and elevated in some particulars. A man's God is naturally an image of the man's self, in large size and with some modifications. But suppose men refined their notion of God so as to raise it much above themselves; still it is clear that in their conceptions they could not transcend certain limits imposed upon them by their own moral conditions. If we single out a heathen of low, confined moral nature and leave it to him to frame a God, he cannot make him, he will not even dream of him, as perfectly holy, pure, merciful and unchangeable. Now these two classes of difficulties, — the difficulties in the mind and in the heart of man, — these together shut him out from the true God, and leave in the place some false idol — that is, some idea, more or less degraded. But apart from these common difficulties of the idea, there is one which I wish to mention by itself. We will suppose that some one or few minds could rise above most of the difficulties in the way of others; that some natures of pure, moral insight, and commanding compass and power of thought, would conceive of God in a very lofty style, as Socrates did, and as Plato did, — men who approached as near to the truth as is possible for the unaided human powers. Socrates for example, uttered that profoundly wise saying, — “I do not know what God is, but I do know what he is not.” There is, as I conceive, a class of difficulties in the way of such minds which they never would sur-

mount. To make what I mean clear, let us reflect a moment on what the revealed idea of God is. It is this: A Being who on the one hand is infinite and inconceivable in all his powers and qualities; a Being "without parts or passions" as the definition expresses it; a Being of such awfulness that the Jews wrote, but counted it sinful to utter his peculiar name; a Being who is called the Invisible, whom no eye hath seen or can see;—this referring not merely to his being removed out of the range of the bodily eye, but quite out of the range of the widest mental vision; the Being of whom we have heard only as it were the faintest whisper, while the thunder of his power is inaudible or incomprehensible. This, on the one hand. On the other, the Christian's God is, if I may say so, thoroughly comprehensible; not only so, but he is called the Father of men,—*our Father*; representing himself to us as one kindred to us, who sees, who feels, who cares, and who is altogether such as our weak human hearts need. He numbers the hairs of our head. His ears are open to our cries. In fear or trouble, we hide ourselves beneath the shadow of his wings. In prayer, we may speak to him as a man speaks to his friend; and things which would be indifferent even to the ear of a mere mortal will be heard with interest and solicitude by him.

Here is an idea of God which I cannot think human nature under the best circumstances could ever reach. Here are two views of the same Being which I think no

man would dare to bring together. It may be that in either of these aspects the mind could work out as just views as those of Revelation,—but who would ever venture to bring together and hold together such mighty opposites as God the Invisible and Eternal, “without parts or passions,” and God the true and thorough Father in heart of us all. If these are not contradictions to the mere understanding, they are at least views which, judged by the intellect, can never be reconciled. The human mind has never dared to hold them together. If it reaches out to the greatness of God’s character, it loses the sense of him as a God whom we know, and who is capable of sympathizing with us. Or if it takes this last view, then it denies or merges the majesty of the King Eternal and Immortal, and makes him in great part such an one as we are. This I say, has always been done, and I suppose from the nature of the human mind it always would have been done, even by the noblest class of men; and I conclude that without a revelation, the Christian idea of God never would have been adopted through all ages. And that idea of him, though its aspect appears irreconcilable, and though it would not have been received, is, now that it is made known and authoritatively established, seen to be by far the most just idea we are able to form. On the one hand, his nature *must* be inconceivably high and lifted up; “as the heavens are higher than the earth, so must his thoughts be higher than our thoughts, and his ways than our ways.” Yet he who made us *must* be a Father to us. What-

ever differences there are, these two things *must be*, if we wish to form the most ample, the most interesting, and the most suitable idea of the divine nature. If he were not at once both these, — if he were anything less or different, he would be a God less perfect than our idea of him.

I have now shown some of the difficulties in men's thoughts of God, in order to account for idolatry in general. The mind and heart of man both being given, the depravity of one, and the weakness of both, it is very easy to see how such a being would form just such religions as he actually has formed.

I propose to inquire whether those very causes which prevented men from forming just notions of the Deity, do not now operate after Revelation has given them the idea, and produce more or less distortion of it. It would be interesting to inquire how far this has been the case through the whole period of the Christian Church, and what effects it has produced upon theology, worship, and piety, and indirectly upon all the interests of man. How far do *we* in our usual thoughts of God, misconceive and distort? How far do we falsify his image, even when it has been so perfectly delineated before us! Take first his two great moral attributes, his mercy and his justice. In the divine nature, as the Scripture reports it to us, both of these are perfect. Yet in our conceptions, they are either habitually brought down and measured by the imperfection of our own nature, or, on the other hand, they

become so vague that they are hardly realities at all. One cries, "God's justice can do this or that." Why? Because he squares its quality and extent by his own nature,—yes, even when in his own nature the quality of pure, moral justice may hardly be developed at all. I do not mean that our own sense of things is not to be used in conceiving of God. Without that, we can have *no* conception of him. But the fault is in making that the measure and compass of all that God is, instead of enlarging it, and still enlarging it, that it may take in thoughts more and more worthy of him. The same remarks may be applied to our ideas of God's mercy. But if we should happen to think rightly of him either as merciful or just, we will very likely fail in thinking of him as *both* merciful and just; we are so one-sided, that one view well realized indisposes us to the other.

Take the two aspects of him of which I have already spoken; his greatness and his nearness. Let us examine our own consciousness, and see if there are not some great defects here on the one hand or on the other. His *greatness*,—Do we think aught of his Wisdom, Power, Omnipresence? Do we think aught of him in the Invisible? His *nearness*,—Do we think aught of his human interest in us,—of the minuteness of his providence. Do we feel that sort of relation to him which Abraham felt, and Enoch; and this, without abating that awful reverence which they felt? "And Abraham fell on his face, and God talked with

him." God talked with them as a man with his fellow, yet they took off their shoes from off their feet.

In these particulars, and others which might be enlarged, if we examine we will find a defect. All our weaknesses tend to this effect. We do not seem ever to know that it is a hard thing to think rightly of God. We make no study of it. All Christian minds are in some degree idolatrous; there is some falseness of conception; some hint or feature or expression of an idol is left lurking in the idea of the true God. And with the majority, this idolatry is no small thing.

The importance of realizing right conceptions may be understood when I say that the whole of a religion is the impression which the worshipper has of his God. Just according to its perfection felt and realized, is the perfection of the worshipper. And every misconception or distortion in the object worshipped is a fruitful and comprehensive cause of mischief. Therefore, in the one great divine act of religion, "seek the Lord, if haply you may feel after him and find him; for he is not far from every one of us."

XXXIII.

GOOD ARISING OUT OF EVIL.

As Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. — JOHN ix. 1-3.

THE Jews had been taught that good and evil were accurately dealt out to each man now and here; and so they regarded all special disease and calamity as implying some special sin. But as they found many difficulties in such a view, for example, in the cases of innocent children, they tried to bear it out by another opinion, which the Pharisees had adopted from the Greek or Eastern philosophy, — that of the transmigration of souls. It was easy thus to justify any affliction, even to a child, and though it began with the birth, by referring it to the bad acts of a man in some preceding stage, when his soul had lived in some other body.

The question of the disciples in this case seems to take for granted that Christ as well as all others admitted this, and it seems to have been merely a curious inquiry. Or it is as if they had said, "Here are two

doctrines, either of which is full of difficulties: one, that special ills may be brought on a man on the parent's account; the other, that there is such a thing as a passage of souls from body to body, and that the sufferings of this body may be referred to the sin of the soul in another body."

Here meets us, in this little story, the oldest and the newest puzzle of the world, — how, namely, to account for the state of God's creatures here on the assumption that God is perfect in goodness and justice; for it is wonderful how the heart of man clings to the idea of the perfection of God, whatever may be against it. It is a curious fact that, though the passions darkening the soul do always gradually corrupt the idea of God, yet no other force, either of persuasion or conviction, that the world has to offer can make a sincere heart yield up its perfect idea of God. So dear is this idea to the intelligence, and to all the depths of a human being, that nothing but the corrupting of his own nature can force it or win it away. Hence we see Pythagoras and his doctrine of metempsychosis, — a strange-looking doctrine, to be sure, at first, but still an ingenious plan to quiet the mind, as to this greatest of disquieters, — suffering without guilt. It was the best the philosopher could do, and it was the best the Jews could do; and it deserves at least this praise, that it allowed the Jew to hold up pure and untouched the idea of a perfect God.

The difficulty in these old times was not as to the

origin of moral evil, for that, it was felt, begins in the centre of a man's self, and can have no other explanation than that we choose it and strictly originate it ourselves. Their difficulty was simply as to cases where there could clearly be no guilt, but where yet there was calamity, as in the diseases and death of children. Now it may have been an unproved, and at first a strange, but not quite an absurd view of this, to say that the creature suffered for what it did before it came here. Only these philosophers seemed to forget that suffering without a consciousness of crime can answer none of the ends of punishment, and as a moral regulation is not worthy of God.

Still, imperfect as was this view, it was incomparably superior to an attempt which we have seen in our own day, to account by this very theory for the origin of sin itself, — a philosophical feat exhibited here in New England a few years since. To account for that at all, as I have said, except by our consciousness that we choose it, is absurd, and argues essential defect of higher insight in the mind attempting it; but to explain it by saying that we began to sin in another state before this, is just to push the question back into the past, and there to leave it as mysterious as we found it.

The Jews, to account for the suffering of the innocent, had still another view, more ancient than that I have mentioned, — that the child suffered for the sins of the parents or ancestors; and their Scriptures seemed to give countenance to this theory. Indeed, so much

so that the view is still held in large portions of the Christian church to this day, and a complete system of theology is built upon it. It is most undeniable, and one of the most common of facts, that children inherit the diseases or suffer from the indolence, ignorance, viciousness, or imprudence of progenitors. Alas, how much so! And one must often think that, if God did not secretly interfere and refresh the springs of life, the world of men would soon dwindle and die out.

This fact in the world, then, is not only not to be denied, but we should keep it before us as one of the most awful of realities, that we stand so related to those who descend from us that upon their heads come the issues of our acts. But, acknowledging with profoundest awe this fact, who has told us, where are we told in Scripture or in nature, that this way of proceeding is reckoned just by God? Nowhere in Sacred Scripture, I think. We are, to be sure, repeatedly told there, and we read Sunday by Sunday in the Decalogue, of the general fact of the visiting of the sins of the fathers upon the children, even to the third and fourth generation; but this, wherever referred to or repeated by prophet or apostle, means no more than the dread fact which all must admit and of which I have spoken.

But upon all these statements we have the beautiful commentary of Ezekiel, — that, though the mysterious fact of evil descending from the father to the child does exist, it is the soul that sinneth that shall die. And viewed in reason, what a miserable delusion is it to account for

something unaccountable, — the birth of a blind child, — by a fact as dark as the one we are explaining, — the transmission of evil! Does not this, instead of throwing light upon anything else, need itself to be cleared up as much as anything we know of? A most signal thing it is in the history of human judgments, that men, having one fact to account for, will often resort to another just as inexplicable, and attempt to explain one piece of darkness by another piece of darkness.

The process of reasoning is briefly this. Here is great suffering where we see no guilt. Now under a just God there cannot be suffering without guilt. So, if there be no guilt in this person it must be found in his parents, who, having a sort of physical union with him, may by the imagination be regarded as having also a moral oneness with him, so that in some vague way the guilt of the parent may be regarded as the guilt of the child. Alas, what a theory!

There is one general, but I think important maxim, in judging of God's works. Better a thousand dark facts unexplained than one bad explanation. A bad explanation clears up one fact by another, which other it takes for granted is according to God's mind, but which is not any more than the first, — and thus it fastens wickedness to the very throne of God itself; while, if the same facts were left as dark mysteries only, there would be no imputation upon God, and no outrage upon our own moral sense, and we could wait, even to eternity, for our explanations.

Let us, then, be impatient of all systems or theories which, bent on explaining, will do it though at the expense of God and man. Let us rather leave all our dark facts buried in darkness, and bow down in ignorance, in the depths of this night of nature, and with our hand upon our mouths confess that there is truly a horror of great darkness, but yet that God is true, that God is light, that in him is no darkness at all, and that perhaps he may ordain in some future era that in his light we shall see light.

These two explanations of the innocent suffering in the world are brought to our Lord, and he is asked which of the two is the better. "And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth." Seeing him it is probable the compassionate Saviour stopped to look at him and think about him, and the disciples, observing this, asked him, saying, "Master, who did sin, this man," in some prior state, "or his parents, that he was born blind?" Through the life of our Lord, as I think, there was no more difficult question asked of him. But here is the answer, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

The superiority of this answer, like almost everything in the life of Christ, cannot be easily realized. "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents," puts by at once, as if they were child's playthings, both the great theories which had occupied the minds of the sages and thinkers.

Merely to think one's self out of these opinions was a mighty spring for the genius of a Jew. But here was not merely an opinion,—it was a religious belief; and not that merely,—it was a profound social prejudice. The poor, the specially afflicted, had come to be looked on somewhat as one of the officials of the Holy Office looked on the heretic, even in the tortures of the stake,—not with pity, but with a sort of hatred; so that suffering, instead of melting, hardened, and gave to aversion a point and keenness.

Christ must rise at once above all this and more than this. Just according to the reverence with which his disciples looked upon him, they expected that he could have no sympathy with those upon whom the smitings of God had set a mark as secret criminals. It was a shock, therefore, to his friends to see this Holy One apparently taking part with criminals against God, when he seemed to sympathize with them, and declared their innocence; while in other cases of calamity, where he did not declare their innocence and yet sympathized, the shock must have been greater still. But this Being dared to be just, though in doing that he seemed to be doing sacrilege, and he dared to be merciful at the expense of justice itself; and thus set up a new rule and a new heart for God and for man, which, exalting mercy, ends in exalting justice also, and, revealing a new way of feeling on the part of God and Christ, teaches a new way by which the heart of man may rise through more mercy into a purer justice towards others.

All this was not so much taught as lived, out before men, in the feelings Christ showed to the sinful and distressed. At his own cost he put aside all theories and all feelings which were against these classes, and introduced the new light of a better justice where they erred in that respect, as in the case before us; and in cases where mere justice might have had right, he brought in the new light of a mercy which triumphed over it at first, though it exalted it at last.

“Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents.” How bold! how merciful! All the old thoughts are put aside then. And now hear his own view of the matter: “but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.” Let us give this answer the breadth that belongs to it. No word coming out of those divine lips can come more home to us; for have we not all the deepest stake just here? To know that in this state, or in states beyond, we are not in the hands of mere power, or of a goodness doubtful and mysterious, is for us children of pain and sorrow the finest piece of knowledge.

“That the works of God should be made manifest in him,”—that is, to account for the blind eyes and all such sad things visited upon the innocent, we must not look back but forward, to the results they are intended to produce. They are means or occasions by which God shows us himself, his wisdom and goodness. In other words, the evil is here that good doings may be drawn out by it, that the works of God may be shown,—“first and now by me, as I proceed to cure this eye,

and to give light, but in general in all the ways in which it draws out good. This case of innocent evil is here that I might heal it, and that thus this man's blind eyes should be the occasion of exhibiting the power and goodness of God, and my mission. These cases are the rude material out of which I am to set forth a new redeeming creation, and to show myself as the Deliverer of nature as well as of the spirit. These are the opportunities by which the power and mercy of God, which now act through me, are livingly shown to the world." And so he gives light to the blind eyes.

This is the primary meaning. The general meaning in these words I take then to be this. Having simply denied and protested against the inference of sin from the presence of calamity, — he declares that all we need to know about it is that it is to manifest the works of God, — that is, a designed occasion of bringing forth good. But as all evil, according to its kind, gives occasion for the manifestation of good, so this has its peculiar way of bringing it forth. The defeat and wrong and suffering of the innocent are here, in order to draw out and show in manifold ways the works of God.

This is one part of that awful truth, whose reach is so vast that no eye can see through it, — namely, that all evil, sin itself, is permitted as the occasion of the manifestation, the necessity perhaps of the existence of good, in one or another of its forms, as justice or as mercy. But the sorrows and penalties of sin manifest or bring out the character and works of God in one way,

while the sufferings of innocence do so in far different ways.

The most direct and obvious way is in the awakening of sympathy and mercy in the world, which is the work of God manifested through all his compassionate children, — to create a deep-toned brotherhood of humanity, and thus through mystery and sorrow to build the world into a family of love. If there be a sight which draws the heart of man to his fellow, it is that of undeserved suffering; and any miserable theory or prejudice which connects the ills of the unfortunate part of our race with some imaginary ill-desert, as was the case with the Jews and generally, or which simply feels a sense of inferiority towards the unfortunate and down-trodden, or a distaste towards them, or any emotion but divine pity, is among the worst remnants of the savageness of man. This sorrow is before us that the works of God may be manifested by us as to it, — that we give it justice, and pity, and succor, that thus in our hearts, in the institutions or reliefs of society, and in the effects upon the sufferer, we manifest the works of God, and surround this black spot with a golden circle.

But there are many less obvious ways of eliciting good from these evils. For example, a species of defect in a being may be the best means of giving him a higher perfection. Physical evils not only may lead to unspeakably precious gifts in the spirit, but they seem naturally to do so, to such a degree that it may be almost doubted if ever — certainly only in exceptional

cases — an eye is opened to God which is not first blinded to the world.

Not only the afflicted learn to possess what remains by the loss of what is lost, but those undeprived learn to know what is held by them only by what is withheld from others. How pain reveals ease and pleasure; deformity, comeliness; disease, health; a blind ball, without expression, the beauty and power of our vision!

The great work of God is faith, and whatever mystery calls up the spirit to the highest confidence in him, if it works out that confidence, it breaks into light at once. Was it not, then, a necessity to the human spirit that just that amount of defect, of dark, of ungodliness, should be seen in nature and Providence? If not, the peculiar spiritual excellency of man, as no doubt of all rational creatures, the uplifting instinct of rest upon an unseen Father above us, would be, must be, entirely wanting. There must be something in my life which says to me, "Wait," and I must answer, "I will wait." The cloud of my life, though black with tempest, will change into gold and flame at some point of its passage through the heavens.

All evils but wait, as this blind man, the moment when the Lord appears. The hour comes when they shall manifest the glory of God, as the clouds about the east, expecting through a long night the moment when the sun shall smite them with his light.

God's wisdom and high interests in regard to human-

ity are shown in evil, in that he has here afforded to man the noblest spiritual work and victory. He has allowed and prepared for man here a share in a work of creation, nobler than that of the "days," — the creation once more of the emerging moral heavens and earth. Man is set forward into a chaos if you will, with the work to do of manifesting God through himself in the conflict against evils, and in removing the injustice of nature. Man is God's agent in the mighty advance "against chaos and the dark."

I suppose evil necessary to the revelation of God. I take it that all revelation of God must first make us sensible of wants, and then we can understand supply; and in every department of being, for a finite soul to learn anything there of God, there must be first a felt evil and then a remedy, and it all consists in this.

We have seen the false views once prevailing in the world as to evil. Is nothing of this left? Many of the improvements in our feelings as to religion arise from our indifference. Did we see clearly the present hand of God it would be something to preserve correct views. But what will our views prove to be if they are examined? How often does the child of misfortune or guilt, the poor diseased wretch, in addition to the heavy burden nature has laid on him, endure the far heavier one of the contempt of his kind, or, far worse, their superstitious horror! What immense injustice!

I reserve to the last this, — that this blind man, in common with all the diseased, gave occasion to the

work of Christ. These representative works were done to show us that in all evil the same Workman manifests the works of God now on every occasion. All evil is meant to call forth the spirit and power of goodness. But not in God only; in Christ, to whom we are to look. And not here only, but to call it forth in us also, who are of God; to call forth power, but also, and chiefly, to call forth the same spirit of affectionate brotherhood which is the highest manifestation of the works of God.

XXXIV.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS WITHIN YOU.

The kingdom of God is within you. — LUKE xvii. 21.

IF it were necessary that the Jew even in respect to so spiritual a matter as the reign of God should be reminded that “the kingdom of God is within you,” not without you, it is not to be wondered at, that man in his search after great things and happy things must always be reminded of the same fact. On the whole history of men, of every empire and of every civilization, is written, “the kingdom of God is without us.” That is the world’s thought, or, what is deeper, its feeling. Here is the one grand mistake and failure of the race; they do not know where lies that grand expected good which each heart goes after. The Son of God appeared and taught the secret, and said, “The kingdom of God is within you.” And after him all who take up and repeat his messages to the world are bound not to forget and never to let men forget where the kingdom of God is. Hear this grand instruction of the Son of God to the soul of man.

Perhaps there has been no age, and no place, which have so much needed this message as our own at this time. Men are all agreed that our prosperity is tran-

scendent. The glorious days of the world seem to have commenced. Since the beginning, the condition of the world never promised so much, and never were men so apt to mistake where the kingdom is, as just now. What a magnificent prosperity, splendid, various, vast! The world presents to every man very much such a vision as was opened to the Son of God in his temptation. "And he shewed unto him the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them: and said all these will I give thee," etc. I say that to us in this age and place everything around speaks as loudly as a thousand trumpets, "The kingdom is without you!" This above all ages is under the great world-temptation of substituting and worshipping the creature for the Creator. Never was the human heart under such an overpowering dazzle, and most fatal delusion. What is all this we are so infatuated with, and which we call improvement and prosperity? Improvement in what? Improvement in the ground we till, in transportation, in the clothes and furniture and houses we make, — and for the sake of these improvements in our modern science, if I count myself as an immortal soul with eternity waiting for me, I shall not be so carried away by the poor glitter which belongs to wealth. Machines are improved; is man improved? We are rich in gold and silver and iron, the wide lap of the earth is heaped with gifts; but where are the treasures of the spirit? Man was not made for the earth, but the earth for him; his last purpose was not to improve this planet,

but through its improvement to elevate himself. If he have lost sight of this and enriched the earth to the neglect of himself, no trick played in a mad-house could be more fanciful than that now played by the active part of the human race.

What a fact! That the finest and furthest future is here, is inside of this mortal breast. Do we not see it? Is there not something in a Christian's spirit which seems native to other regions than this; something familiar yet remote, which breathes a mortal's breath, yet finely scents the air from purer places? I mean not to traduce the just merits of the age or to cast contempt on any outward good. That would be weak or hypocritical. By so much as I think industry is good for man rather than idleness, by so much do I value this age above all others. By as much as I prefer peace and its arts to the barbarous and brutal business of war; by as much as improvements in governments, and improvements in the machines, and arts, and trades of life give more men hope, give more men work, and self-respect the means of education; and by so much as I do desire on the one hand to see the primitive command fulfilled, "Subdue the earth and possess it," and on the other hand as I desire to see the spirit of man refined, invigorated, and raised in all its powers, — by so much I value this time above all others. Men have a right to congratulate themselves. Let God be thanked for every hand and head cunning to work with iron, and to detect and extract and put in managed action the

mighty powers in the earth and air, in the fire and water. The planet of which man to-day is the possessor is an inheritance as much richer than the planet which belonged to the men of three hundred years ago, as the Sun is richer than his satellite Jupiter. I am willing to acknowledge all that can be said in this way. No thanksgiving to God, though it sounded daily from the great seas to the great continents, and from the continents to the seas, could praise him enough for the blessings of work, of bread to the poor, of liberty to the prisoner, of instruction to the ignorant, of hope to all. Nay, in a higher view, no student in the affairs of men or the ways of God can fail to see that in the sort of improvements taken together which distinguish this period, there is laid a basis, there is provided a way, there is begun an education, certainly the best ever known for the future elevation of the species in its highest and most solemn relations. Take as an example the ocean telegraph, that submarine nerve in which the earth stands organized to-day as one body to the common spirit of humanity. I think that is a shallow and faithless spirit which can see nothing in the age but what is called Utilitarianism. Certain I am that all our prosperity is susceptible of a high and grand utility, and not merely of what is material. Still, what it is susceptible of and what it is are different things. The reproach of Utilitarianism does not belong to this time and place, and not merely in the limited sense of absorbing our attention in what is material, to the exclusion of the

more generous tastes, but in that far larger sense of narrowing our whole idea of what is good to the kingdom without us, and shutting out all thought of the kingdom within. This tendency has become enormously predominant.

Every inch of new dominion we gain over matter, every fresh splendor which money and art shed upon society, makes this outer world more and more the heaven of man's thought, and he labors as if for his life to increase his portion in it. Before the eyes of every one is held up that vision of material splendor, the prosperous man of this age. From our youth, we are led to feel how grand is wealth and its appurtenances, — how desirable, nay, indispensable; or if we do not feel so as to wealth precisely, we do as to what follows wealth, — the power and favor it gives a man. What is it we live and act for? It is the comfort or the grandeur of a better outward condition. Say what we will, this is our kingdom. We admire and think of and talk of how great things the world is doing and individuals are doing, and our days are spent in wishing, longing, working to have a part in this. The creed of the world is that to be respectable and rich is to be saved. Reduce all this glitter of general improvement and prosperity which we worship to a particular case, and examine it. Let us take those who best represent the glory of the age, — those deepest in the work, and highest in its rewards. Has the kingdom come upon them because of this success? A certain kingdom they

have gained. They have a degree of dominion over external things. Such a man can choose a finer site and place on it a better house, and fill it with more pleasing and comfortable objects; he can be better served and have every bodily want better supplied; though he may not be great in himself, he can appear so to others; he can shut out numberless disagreeables, and call for and pay for numberless pleasures. The admiration and respect of people at large he can have, for it can just as certainly be purchased by great wealth as any article in the market. This is very dear to the heart of man. Yet after all I must say that, considerable as this dominion is, it can hardly persuade or exact from outward things a greater amount of real personal service than common nature gives to the poor man. The rich man may not sleep better, though he may command a thousand chambers and couches; he cannot perhaps eat with more pleasure, though land and sea be searched to cull choice things for him. The water and the air and the beautiful earth and sky, and all the great common satisfactions, give him no special service, and often indeed they bate a little of that which they render to a poorer man.

“The smoke ascends to heaven
As lightly from the cottage hearth,
As from the haughtiest palace.”

But let us grant without grudging it that he is the minion darling of the world, that his five senses are

better gratified, though I think the contrary is true at least in the cases of those who have a competence. Let us add in his favor (and this is very important) that his wealth and position give him attention; that he has the sublime sense of power, namely, that he can move so many spindles, build and send so many ships; that the market of money and goods feels the pressure of his presence or his absence.

“ He builds his soul a lordly pleasure-house
Wherein at ease for aye to dwell;
And says, ‘ O soul, make merry and carouse,
Dear soul, for all is well.’ ”

I have said all fairly so far as I know it. Has then the kingdom of heaven come upon this man? “ The kingdom of God is within you.” The kingdom of heaven is that the soul be born again, be bettered daily, be trustful in God, more generous to man, more powerful every way; live for immortality and feel within itself the title to it. Has the prosperity and improvement of the age or of private fortunes done this for any man? Have riches made the rich man to remember more his immortality? Have all his calculations made him more capable of that one most simple but yet deepest of all calculations, — how long he has to live, that his life is but a hand’s breadth, a vapor that appeareth for a little season? Has this splendor given him that noblest of elevations, lowliness before God? Does he know himself better, or has he in some way come to think that all

this fine outward has something to do with the man, that his houses and lands and reputation are a splendor in himself? Does a man gain a greater sense of the poverty of his soul, — that it is poor and miserable and blind and naked, and needs all purification, all strength, and all forgiveness at the hands of God, through the love of a Saviour? Has this glorious man gained a dominion within, — a dominion of wider and loftier value than every star and every sun and the four corners of the unlimited heaven; strength of will for good, strength of will against evil, tender and loving and pure affections? Does the age and its prosperity give him rational and just views of himself, enabling him to feel as a creature towards the great benign Creator, as a sacred one towards his Saviour, as a brother towards his brethren, using his noble gifts to noble ends? Is this his state? I know some such, as they expand without, expanding and rising within; a majestic spectacle! But is this the rule? Do we see no shrinkage within? If so, the kingdom of heaven has not come; the man is passing through a few years of vain show, and the vain world is gaping after him and he is all deluded. A kingdom of miserable shadows is substituted for that kingdom which hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God. We have but a short time to carry out better ideas. The eternal kingdom is near before us. Are we ready? Let us keep one thing every moment in mind, that all true glory is within; that this discon-

tented and morbid striving for what is outward is a madness; that it is within our reach every day to be a true king unto God and Christ, ever reminding ourselves, and ever calmly impressing upon others, that the kingdom is not meat or drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

“NONE OF US LIVETH UNTO HIMSELF.”

For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. — ROM. xiv. 7.

SAINT PAUL meant here that no man ought to live or to die selfishly,—that no man who lives and dies as a man ever does live or die to himself. The object proposed in living should not be one's self, but others. Not that self is not to be taken care of; but Nature so prompts that it need never be the main and proposed object of life. If the whole of our deliberate purpose in life be directed outward, self will still be well taken care of,—not only because it is so strong an instinct that it will work with quite enough force if entirely neglected, or even if opposed,—not only this, but he who liveth for others does thereby, in the end, live for himself in the most effectual way, for his right affections bless themselves. His heart, by the deepest law of its nature, receives into itself just to the degree that it expands outward. “My prayer,” says the Psalmist, “shall return into my own bosom.” Peace, the fruit of joy, that is, the well-being of the man's inward nature, is inseparable from the generous affections; so that

he must, in the highest manner, forward his own interests by looking to the good of others; and no accident can ever prevent this. Being sure, then, that God will take care of us, let us henceforth know that we are born to live to others rather than to ourselves. We are born to imitate God, who is said to be Love, that is, who exists in giving, whose conscious being (if we may speak of so awful a thing) all moves outward, who lives not to himself. We are born to imitate him also who is set forth as the copy of God, and as the model of man; whose entire existence, so far as it has shewed itself in time, was an existence of affection and gift, — offering his very soul a sacrifice for sin, in no thing pleasing himself or ministering unto himself, but in all living unto others. This is clearly the style appointed to immortal men. Propose a life to be lived for others. Exhibit this enchanting singularity in a world of self-seekers! But who are these others for whom we are to give our existence? Let all whose sufferings and whose sins and whose immortal value made them dear to Christ be dear to us also, — to relieve, to purify, to save! The sphere of our objects is wide, beginning with God and ending with the least of his creatures! Let us try how large, how pure, how gladdening life will be lived in giving all to God and to those who need. This is heaven and eternal life. It is just above our heads. Let us lift up our hearts into it. We think there is a great difference between earth and heaven, but there is only a small

difference between what we call earth and heaven compared to the difference between a selfish life and a life of the affections. The one is as much above the other as the spirit of God is above the mere animal nature. And yet we may, by a mere choice of the heart, pass from the one into the other, and escape from an infinite lowness into an infinite and eternal highness! Our nature is an awful mystery; yet we know that what I have said is true.

Hear, then, the majestic simplicity of these words: "No man liveth to himself;" and add to them these others: "and no man dieth to himself." The great concluding act — that too must be given to God. As in the smaller events of life he accepts all things, good or evil, which occur, and turns them into sacrifices to God and gifts to man, so in death, that last event of all, he makes of that a last great offering to others. How? Why, he so dies as to illustrate the spirit he is of, "the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind," — giving, in that awful exigency, an offering toward the invisible God, of the highest trust and affection, and toward man shedding, even out of the darkness of the grave, an indescribable light and power, which is full of immortality. Thus he fulfils his course, neither living nor dying to himself, and in that other state of being to which he goes he shall find that he has not spent his treasures but laid them up, and that all the affectionate offerings he has made, wherever scattered, shall come

back seeking him,—and shall find him out, and shall pour one hundred fold into his bosom. The words have another meaning, which, whether intended or not, is not less true. It is that no man *can* live unto himself whether he will or not. He may forget that he ought to live for others, and he may aim to live only to himself, but it is out of his power. He must, by the constitution of God, live to others.

If we live not *for* others the dreadful necessity is laid upon us of living against them. No neutrality. God imposes upon his creatures that they take a side. We are born social,—part of one august society which has God at its head.

≡ Social power is our very nature, that is, to feel the effect of others, and to make them feel effects from us. This is our destiny, and we cannot evade it. Were we allowed to be solitary, our career would be far less awful; but on the earth, and in the condition above it, as in the condition below it, we must bear power about with us forever. We are creators in a real sense, not of the shape of mere matter, but of the shape of spirits, and if *we* advance eternally, this creating power upon the destiny of spirits must advance with us, and if we call not forth righteousness of light, we must call forth righteousness of darkness forever! If there be anything sure, this is. It is my employment day by day, if stated accurately, to call forth in myself, and others, the divine image, or that image which is against the divine,—

call it the image of the devil or not. I cannot help this. It is not something that I must arise and go forth to do, but it exudes from the life, it is shed about a man as an exhalation from his very being; it falls as the light from his eye, the breath from his lips. What I am, I may try to conceal, but, in truth, God will not permit a man to conceal himself, even in this world of sense, and where our faculties of knowing each other are so imperfect. We cannot, for the most part, hide ourselves. What the words do not speak, the eye will speak, and the lines of the face, and the tones of the voice. What I will not show of myself out of doors, I will show within doors. A power must escape, and go forth from me. My soul must express itself, and hemmed in on one side, it will emerge in another.

My spirit must breathe, and if it breathe it must breathe upon others, and if the breath be vital others will live, and if the breath be deadly others will die. These are great laws, as great as any in nature. "No man liveth unto himself, and no man dieth unto himself."

Gracious God, what a destiny for such a creature as man!

I am establishing the destiny of other spirits every day, and the remotest days in the remotest year of God will feel my power. We are all sowers, gone out to sow. We scatter eternal seed, and the fruit is eternal. And as in the one case we must fill our

bosoms with the sheaves of our good deeds, so there will be a filling of the bosoms of men with the fruits and sheaves of death. To me will come back the latest fruits of my good or evil, or even of my neglect; they will track me back through long generations until they find their source and lay at my feet the long issue of joy or woe! /It is in that sense fearful, this fact, to think that I am creating wrong results, — living to others indeed, but only to curse them; a creator of wrong results. Nay, as if this were needed to fill up the terribleness of death, and make him “king of terrors,” I must add to all the natural affliction of that crisis the reflection that I am even dying to the injury of others, if I die giving no testimony to Christ. There is another way of dying to the injury of others. I doubt whether death-beds of forced and hurried repentance are not often among the worst specimens of dying to the injury of others, — cheating others to the belief that this may make up for all, and that their religion may consist of living sin when they can live it, and saying, “Forgive me” when they cannot.

On the whole, then, as we must in some way live and die to others, let us see in what way we are doing it. In respect to our children, our friends, and all men, what power are we exerting! How are we using our property, and all our gifts of mind and speech? Above all, in what state are we allowing our hearts to be? If we do not purify and sweeten

that fountain, then we are not only living perniciously to ourselves, but with a dreadful power against others. Let us remember two things: that "they who are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they who turn many to righteousness, as the stars, forever and ever;" and then remember that, in that other firmament there are also stars of portentous and malignant light; and these are they who have turned many unto iniquity and death.

XXXVI.

HEAVEN AND EARTH SHALL PASS AWAY.

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. ST. LUKE xxi. 33.

THAT is, all things are fugitive, even heaven, and earth; one thing only is perpetual,—the god-like word. The heaven and earth were a great thing even then; but now they are so enlarged that the old earth and heavens are very petty affairs. Travel and observation, improving geography first, the microscope opening a height and depth below; and then observations, the telescope and mathematics opening a height and width above,—have made the earth and heaven which were but as a *hut*, to be as a *temple*, high and wide almost as God himself. It is somewhat curious to remark here, that before this growth of heaven and earth began, God himself had emerged to the Hebrews; and these little trifles, the heathen gods, seemed but as puppets, by the side of the One God who inhabiteth eternity, and filleth immensity. The Hebrews then had an awful, infinite God, while they still had but a poor and limited heaven and earth to throne him in, until modern science showed a corresponding residence and throne for him. Certainly the disciples of Christ, if they

did not realize, as we do, the largeness of God's creation, and the power of his natural being, realized far deeper, partly perhaps on that account, his spirituality, personality, holiness, beauty; while the greatness of the creation seems to materialize God, and lessen our sense of him as a Being of the heart, having his truest residence not in the regions of sense, but in regions of the spirit. We have learned how great a thing the heaven and earth of which Christ spake really is, so that when we lift our eyes and say heaven and earth, we mean much more than he did.

He meant, to be sure, everything but God; but we realize how vast that everything is. But all this "shall pass away." Have we learned anything more about that fact? He was sure it would all go. What has our thought to-day to say about that? It says, yes, it shall pass; and so much greater as is the earth and the infinite heavens we know compared with the little earth and heavens of the Hebrews, so much vaster the change. Suns, and solar systems, and other systems to which suns are but planets, wheeling around awful and splendid centres, of which the heavens are full; — *all* changes, and moves towards change for evermore. The heavens and earth "pass away."

"But my words shall not pass away." "My words" means in a high sense the expressed heart of God, whether the character of a being expresses it or his words, as they both are the expression of God; and so, are as eternal as God is, amid the ebb and flow of

creatures and worlds. The words of Christ, what he said, what he was expressed before men, are a revelation of spirit, of the divine life, pure and unchanging. He did not only *speak* the word, but *was* the word. His heart, as we catch glimpses of it, is a well, a sea, in whose pure depth God lies imaged. And this "word" will last; every line of it. If God lasts, everything which is like him must last. The holiness and justice of the Old Testament, are they gone? They are here to-day. Will they ever go? They will last when the heavens are "rolled up as a scroll." That last grace and glory of God, Christ, shall not pass away, for he is the image of the divine love at its happiest moment. Creation is nothing: God and the children of God stand. Matter is wind; force, though majestic as the heavens, it is a splendid smoke, and must pass and melt like breath into the wind; but God, the spirit which informs the world, which gives shape, *this*, but above all, the high impulse, the holy spirit, which makes the souls of men and angels, *this* stands. The spirit varies and transmutes, but never changes; decay and death, it knows not. It was, and is and shall be; "it alone hath immortality." Hence it is that we see so many strange expressions of Christ which imply how solid and eternal he knew his spirit to be, amid the shadows of nature. As a man he was as fragile as we are, perhaps more so; but standing in the fulness of his inward life, death, which is so great a thing to other men's eyes, was almost unnoticeable to him. He speaks

often, as if there were no death, not only to him, but to all those who were in the least degree like him.

But to descend from this height of the permanency of the spiritual life of Christ, let us contemplate a moment the permanence of the literal "words" of Christ; of these very words written in this book. "My words shall not pass away."

We have found, as a matter of fact, that they do not pass. They have stood already toward nineteen hundred years, but how much of the words of men have, even since then, *gone*, and how much more of them have lost all value! But these words grow sweeter, and seem more immortal the longer they last; and, I doubt not that just these very words will be taken up and seem beautiful and vital to the almost endless generations of men. Or if the words are dropped, the spirit in them will pass into the souls of men. If we conceive the world changed in some distant hereafter into a world without a God or a religion, though much of the precise words of this book may be changed, the spirit of them, so far at least as they express the humility of man towards what is above him, and the brotherhood of man to his fellow, will forever be the essential law and code of the heavenly kingdom; and they shall last in their spirit, when the earth and heavens have passed away; for, as they express the real and most interior laws of the Holy Spirit, they must last while the spirit itself lasts. When we open this book, then, we come out of the region of our fleeting lives, and enter a gar-

den where everything is immortal. There we hear sounds, and every one of them is sweet, pure and enduring. Listen! "Blessed are the pure in heart." "It is more blessed to give than to receive." "Blessed are they that weep now, for they shall laugh." "I am the Resurrection and the Life." These, and words like these, shall last as long as there is a tongue to speak, or an ear to hear; they are the everlasting jewels of man. And when all tongues are silent, in other regions in the vast worlds of spirit, their meaning shall flame forth, for they speak the eternal laws of all souls. We live in a period of special doubt and disbelief. It is in vain to deny it or lessen it. Within my memory, men of science and doubt have declared themselves an august power. Before that, there was this and that man of science here and there; but now there is a great body and class, and their thoughts move and almost dominate the world. So far as they are true thoughts, let them move and dominate.

But, let me say in the ear of a proud disbelief, "Heaven and earth shall pass away." Forms and details will change, but so long as man is a "living soul," so long must the truths of the soul assert themselves. There is something higher than heaven and deeper than hell; whose foundations go deeper than any plummet can sound. What is it? The true spirit of Christ! Around it everything else is shadow and shall flee as a shadow; so far as the immortal words of Christ and his spirit are wrought into our souls, are we immortal. So far have we become immortals.

“Heaven and earth shall pass away.” We shall not. I do not say that other men who have none of his word in them will not last. They may live in some sense, but Christ does not call it life. Only so far as our hearts have become shaped and vitalized by his words into the same image,—are made tender with their tenderness, are made meek with their meekness, affectionate with their affections, trusting with their faith,—so far have we become *living*, “full of immortality,” as the apostle expresses it. Though dying ourselves and surrounded by death, that is but a circumstance. The man is not touched. “There is no more death.” “Heaven and earth shall pass away,” but all who are illumined by the light of Christ shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.

THE END.



