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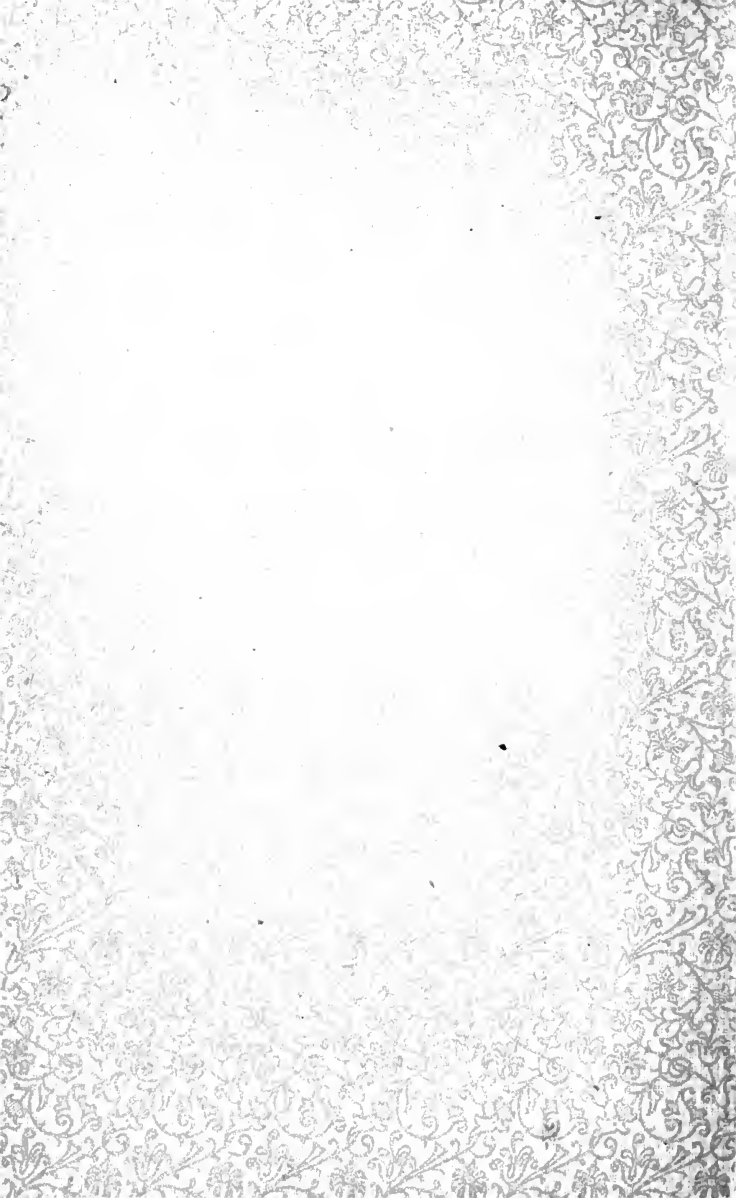
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THE
BROOK
in the
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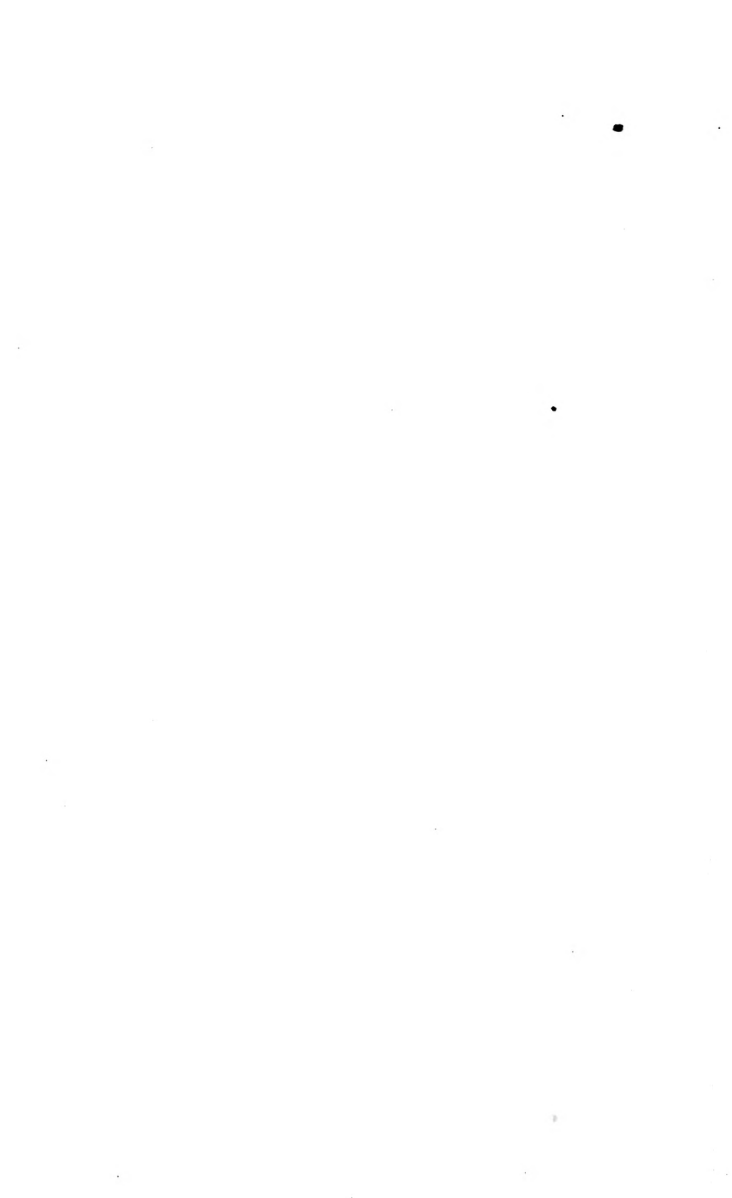






Hoyt

N. L.



THE BROOK IN THE WAY

BY

WAYLAND HOYT, D.D.

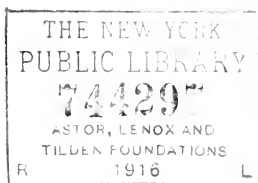
AUTHOR OF

HINTS AND HELPS FOR THE CHRISTIAN LIFE; PRESENT LESSONS FROM
DISTANT DAYS; GLEAMS FROM PAUL'S PRISON; ETC.

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TO MY WIFE.

*I*N the one hundred and tenth Psalm there is a picture, somewhat dimly drawn, of a warrior in hard fight, covered with the dust of battle, and fainting beneath its fierceness. But just there, in his way, there runs a brook. The warrior stoops to drink of it: its waters heal his pain and chase away his weariness, and, with fresh vigor, he lifts up his head to renew the conflict. It is just that — a Brook in the Way — I prayerfully want my little book to be to somebody. If, for any warrior fainting, or for any warrior slothful, in the fight of the noble life, it shall bring even momentary strength, impulse, clearer vision, better purpose, I shall be devoutly glad.

WAYLAND HOYT.



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THE BROOK IN THE WAY.

THE BROOK IN THE WAY.



HOPE IN GOD, NOTWITHSTANDING.

I WAS climbing in a rail car, the other summer, through what is called the "Marshall Pass" in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado. Upward the train pushed itself, and upward still, vanquishing the mountains, until those heights which just now had seemed almost to pierce the sky were beneath us, and had become subdued into piers and platforms for the daring and unconquerable railway, — the Rio Grande. At this altitude the horizon was very wide, and the prospect was very grand. Far below were the valleys out of which we had come. But we were delivered from them; we had escaped them. We were in the empyrean.

And yet, we could not wait there on the grand summits, with the continent beneath our feet. Soon the train, having passed the most lifted portion of the way which had been forced through the mountains,—a magnificent triumph of engineering skill,—began descent. Steadily as we had been climbing upward, so steadily were we now going downward. Higher and higher rose the peaks above us, on which but a little time before we had so proudly stood. Deeper and deeper did we sink, until—how soon!—we were at the very bottom of the lowliest valleys, with their vast and enclosing walls of rock; with their narrow, meagre prospects; with their shadows dense and constant.

Well, no man's life is a level plain; much less is it a lifted level plain. There are summits, perhaps, of high victory and exhilaration; landscapes of successful endeavor open widely; the man feels he has in a great measure attained,—business prosperous; home healthy and happy; much of the struggle of life behind, much of the triumph

of it around. Beneath the man are the valleys; above him is the sun; about him are beckoning prospects. Then, almost imperceptibly to himself, or perhaps with a sad suddenness, he begins descent. Somehow the man must leave the shining heights. He looks about and wonders that he is so soon in such a valley. Here are stone walls of obstacle; dark shadows of disappointment; biting mists of bereavement; lagging energies of failing health; heart-sinkings; numbed faith; sometimes the light of hope almost utterly obscured. Not that the man must dwell in the valleys; nor that often such descent is not more in internal mood — in the discouragements and despondencies which come to all of us — rather than in external fact. I am thinking only of this general truth in life, that it does not always keep the heights conquered, that its path dips often into the low, close valley.

Down there in the valley, — what then? What help?

I am relating a true history. It was more

in mood than in external fact; but the mood was very terrible the young man had fallen into. To him it seemed as though every hope and prospect were shut off. The way was stony for his feet, the walls of rock pressed very close upon him on either side, the patch of sky above him was of gloomiest gray, deepening to black. His heart sank. He could do no more than drag weary and discouraged steps. Then one whom the young man knew and loved and trusted came to talk with him a little. He did not say it *was* all dark and sad. He had no need to tell the young man that. The young man knew that already, well enough. Nor did this friend scold the young man, and berate him, and taunt him with unmanliness, and harshly bid him to forget his sore heart when that was precisely the thing the young man could not do. This was a wiser helper. As he walked by the young man he simply told him how again and again the path of his own life had dipped into very rough and dark and lowly valleys, but how, even down there,

though it was very hard to do it sometimes, he had never forgotten to hope in God, and how always, surely, the good God had led him out and up on to the heights again, enriched with rare and real experience.

It was what the breath of spring is to the chilled earth, — such help from this helper. So the young man began to say to himself, “I too will hope in God; I too will go on trustfully; I will expect the sunshine and the better chance and the wider outlook and the breezier heights.” It is needless to say that the young man soon found himself among them. Ah, my friend, there is no help which one man can give another in this difficult world like the sympathizing help of a personal experience.

Now it is for just this reason that the succor the Bible yields is so valuable, and so valuable for all times. It is for just this reason that the Psalms have been so persistently precious to the hearts of men. I remember some great words of Thomas Carlyle about these Psalms: “David, the Hebrew king, had

fallen into sins enough, — blackest crimes; there was no want of sins. And thereupon the unbelievers sneer, and ask, ‘Is this your man according to God’s heart?’ The sneer, I must say, seems to me but a shallow one. What are faults, what are the outward details of a life, if the inner secret of it, the remorse, temptations, true, often-baffled, never-ended struggle of it be forgotten? Of all acts, is not, for a man, *repentance* the most divine? The deadliest sin, I say, were that same supercilious consciousness of no sin; that is death. David’s life and history, as written for us in those Psalms of his, I consider to be the truest emblem ever given of a man’s moral progress and warfare here below. All earnest souls will ever discern in it the faithful struggle of an earnest human soul toward what is good and best. Struggle often baffled, down as into entire wreck, yet a struggle never ended; ever with tears, repentance, true, unconquerable purpose, begun anew. That his struggle *be* a faithful, unconquerable one, that is the question of questions.”

Well, if you are ever weak, with heart sinking, and down in the valley, turn to the forty-second Psalm and read it. I am quite sure, having looked quite thoroughly at it, that it is right to assume that David wrote it. I think it belongs to that sad time in David's life when he fled from Absalom. It is one of David's songs when he was in a valley of the deepest sort; and its key-note, it seems to me, is this: "Hope thou in God, notwithstanding."

Hope thou in God, notwithstanding troubles *external* and troubles *internal*. Hope thou in God, notwithstanding the trouble of *hard circumstances*. "O my God," sung David, "my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar."

You know the deep gorge of the Jordan, with the tortuous and rushing river flowing through it, divided the land of Palestine into two portions, — that to the west of the river Jordan, and the section to the east of it. It

was the western part that formed for the most of the Israelites a home. Here in this western portion towered Jerusalem and the main cities of the country. Here the hills of Judah heaved their rounded ridges, and the plain of Esdraelion opened its fertile bosom; and farther northward still, Lebanon drew the mantle of its snows around its stalwart shoulders. Also in the region to the west of Jordan, chiefest of all, in the most holy place within its sacred tent, there, in Jerusalem, in David's time, gleamed the shekinah of God's special presence. But the east of Jordan was thinly peopled, was given over to wandering shepherds with their flocks, was distant and little travelled, — was, especially to the favored dwellers in and about Jerusalem, the place of exile. Those expressions, "land of Jordan," "Hermonites," "hill Mizar," refer to this isolated country to the east of Jordan, and to some mountain ridges, whence, looking backward, the wanderer could see, would get his last glance at, much of the pleasant prospect lying to the west of Jordan, — Jerusalem, with its flashing

towers, and the clouds of smoke making holy canopy above the holy place as the sacred sacrifices were being offered. But between the wanderer and his home was the wide, deep chasm of the Jordan, — the river with its winding rapids, “deep calling unto deep,” dashing on between himself and all his heart held dear.

Now it was in such exile David stood when he sang this Psalm. He was down here in this troublous valley of sad exile. He was in the east of Jordan. But even here, in this external trouble of hard circumstance, he will hope in God, notwithstanding. “O thou my soul, hope thou in God,” he sings. Ah, me, we get into the east of Jordan of hard circumstance too, perhaps not seldom. But hope thou in God, notwithstanding.

So if you will follow through the Psalm you will see that in various external troubles of insufficient resource, and the bitter, biting words of others, — like those of Shimei, who, you will remember, cursed and taunted David

when he was on that gloomy and hurried march to exile, — David is constantly bidding himself, “Hope thou in God, notwithstanding.”

And David is in terrible *internal* trouble, too. Much as he tries to hope, his hope is failing. “O my God,” sings David, “my soul is cast down within me.”

So, too, there is for David the internal trouble that there is left him only the memory of past joys, — “for I had gone with the multitude; I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise.” Yes, David had gone, but he could not go now.

So, too, there is for David the internal trouble that he has lost the comfort of faith. “Why art thou disquieted within me, O my soul?” he asks. That word “disquieted” means *tossed* and *agitated*, like an angry sea. Surely David is in the valley! — but still keeps the key-note striking, “O my soul, hope thou in God; hope thou in God, *notwithstanding*.”

I wonder if any one whose eye may fall upon these lines is in the valley, — is to the east of the Jordan, is desolate amid troubles

outward and troubles inward. Well, do as David did, — hope thou in God, notwithstanding. God did not disappoint David's hope, nor will he yours. Anyway, anyhow, hope thou in God.

THE DIVINE SYMPATHY.

JESUS has come from Bethabara, beyond the Jordan. He has met the weeping sisters. He has asked, Where have ye laid him? He has gone on with them to the tomb. But glance at Jesus for a moment. Mary is weeping. Well, how sad it is. Four days Lazarus has been lying in that tomb. Putrescence has claimed him. But will you look, to see *that the face of Jesus is also wet with tears?* JESUS WEPT.

How needless such tears, we would say, knowing what was in the thought of Jesus. There was a mighty miracle in His purpose. In a moment now, for these loving sisters, there shall be the oil of joy for mourning, and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness. You and I would not weep if we could do what Jesus can and will. There

would be on our brows the light of triumph. There would be in eye and mien the consciousness of power. The heat of our victory would burn our tears away. We should exult. As monarchs, proudly would we go forth to dispense our largess.

But no; Jesus weeps. And who is Jesus? He is the effulgence of the Father's glory and the very Image of His Substance. He is the Word made flesh come to dwell among us. And yet He weeps with the weeping sisters, — and that, too, on the very threshold of stupendous miracle.

Well, was ever revelation of Divine sympathy more certain or more exquisite? Divine Power does not dry up the streams of the Divine sympathy. With us, in our utmost trouble, is the sympathy of Him who came into our nature to tell us the meaning of our heavenly Father's heart.

How much we crave sympathy, — of the real sort which goes to the thirsty roots of our soul's needs, and bathes them with its nourishing and soothing waters! How do we long

for this, and how do the withered leaves of our lives put on fresh greenness when we, in the least, find it!

And yet how difficult it is for us to find *just this* which we often want so sorely. There are barriers between us. Other people are differently constituted from ourselves. Our troubles do not trouble them. Other people are in different circumstances. Other people have not had our kind of trial. Other people are so engaged with their own matters they may have neither the time nor the patience to understand us, even if they cared. The rarest, the most precious refreshment in the wide world is a real sympathy, the healing consciousness that another soul really meets and matches ours.

But this which is so hard to find, this for which many a thirsty heart goes on thirsting through all the weary years, is to be found, for all of us, in the heart of Him who is at once our Lord and our Elder Brother. He did not misunderstand these sisters when they said reproachfully: *Lord, if thou hadst*

been here. He did not chide them for faltering faith. He did not misinterpret their sorrow. He understood it all. And *His Heart* melted, too, at the fierce fires of their great grief. *He wept with them.*

My friend, others may not understand you; you may feel yourself a lonely soul; your heart may be filled with an incommunicable bitterness; gay you may be outwardly, yet so sad and alone inwardly; Lazarus may have died; your best beloved may have gone from you into the shadows. But there is One who feels with you; there is One who interprets your tears so thoroughly that He Himself joins in them. Jesus wept. "If you only knew what I suffer," we often say, or want to say. Perhaps those to whom we speak or want to speak cannot know. But there is *Divine* sympathy. Jesus can know and feel. Jesus does.

THE MUNIFICENCE OF THE MASTER.

THAT miracle in Cana is singularly suggestive of the largeness of our Lord's help. Our Master is regal in munificence. At the most moderate computation, the six water-pots overbrimming held much more than enough to meet the emergency of the wedding-feast. The supply overflowed that momentary necessity and enriched the family for many months. The abundance of the answer far surpasses the need whence sprang the prayer of Mary. The wine failed for the wedding feast, but now the feast cannot consume the affluence of the supply.

How often does life thrust us into the extremity of these wedding participants. How often do our supplies fail. How frequently do we consume the precious wine of strength,

foresight, skill, until every drop is drained. Yet, though the wine had failed, the wedding was not done; and so for us life is not done. There it is confronting us, and we stand before it with energy consumed, with shrivelled wineskins of useless plans, with faded hope. Who of us has not had to come with Mary, saying, "Master, we have no wine?"

The babe had flown away, and the house was dark. Times were hard, and the future was full of gloom. Expectations were like those carrier-pigeons they sent from Paris during the Prussian siege; but yours lost their way, and baffled, could but fly back to your own bosom. You were in deep extremity and trial. You wondered, like Mary, if you could not get at least enough assistance for your present need. "Master," you said, "I have no wine."

Well, were you not answered? As you look back upon it now, do you not find that there was ministered to you affluent reply? Life went on, but life did not overcome you. The crisis struck, but somehow you found

yourself prepared. All things have been working together for your good. Even the empty cradle has been a preacher of truer trust. You were not forgotten as you feared. You were clasped in a benignant love.

So, too, if any one be in spiritual extremity, with the wine of goodness drained by the demands of God's great law,—consciously sinful, consciously helpless,—Christ will do for you exceeding abundantly more than you can ask or think. You shall be justified in Him. You shall be sanctified in Him. You shall become a son of God in Him. You shall be joint heir even of His glory. Christ gives, and gives with largeness. "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you."

LIFE BETWEEN ALTERNATIVES.

IT is the old town of Gloucester. There is a bishop's palace in the town, in which for many years a holy man has lived; preaching lovingly the truth of Christ, doing quietly and constantly Christly deeds, binding to himself all hearts by the strong bonds of Christian love. But now, at the time of which I write, the palace is empty of its good bishop; the holy man is a prisoner in the sheriff's keeping.

These are dark days for England. Bloody Mary is on the throne. Everywhere throughout the kingdom the headsman's axe is flashing down upon the necks of men and women stretched across the block; and the flames are wrapping others in their fierce and deathly shroud. For the truth of God is bet-

ter loved in England than the pleasure of the Queen, or life. And she, poor woman, imagines herself doing God service in hacking her subjects to pieces, and in burning them at the stake, because they cannot—and for the life of their souls dare not—think about the pope of Rome as she does. So the knife and the fire go on cutting and burning, and Queen Mary believes herself but the bigger saint the more she cuts and burns her people.

Now this good bishop here in Gloucester loves Christ, but not the pope. He in his soul believes that the pope is anti-Christ; and like the true, brave man he is, has said so. Thus it comes to pass that on this night he is a prisoner guarded by the sheriff, rather than a free and honored bishop in his own palace. He has been carried up to London to be tried. There they have found him guilty of heresy. Queen Mary has signed his death-warrant. He has been ordered back to Gloucester, that his execution, under the shadow of his home and in the presence of

his fellow-citizens, may properly affect them, both with the guilt of heresy and the awful danger of it. But the bishop goes to sleep in the strength of faith, and cheerful with the serenity of a quiet conscience. He sleeps soundly until the early morning, and then, rising, passes the hours in solitary prayer. In the course of the day young Sir Anthony Kingston, one of the commissioners appointed to superintend the execution, expresses a wish to see him. This Kingston is an old acquaintance, the bishop having been the means of bringing him out of evil ways. He enters the room unannounced. The bishop is on his knees, and looking round at the intruder, does not at first know him. Kingston tells his name, and then, bursting into tears, exclaims: "Oh, consider! Life is sweet, and death is bitter; therefore, seeing life may be had, desire to live, for life hereafter may do good." But the bishop answers: "I thank you for your counsel, yet it is not so friendly as I could have wished it to be. True it is, alas! Master Kingston, that death

is bitter and life *is* sweet; therefore I have settled myself, through the strength of God's Holy Spirit, patiently to pass through the fire prepared for me, desiring you and others to commend me to God's mercy in your prayers." "Well, my lord," says Kingston, "then there is no remedy, and I will take my leave." So they part, the tears on both their faces. So that day wears on, and then another night; and then the bishop is led forth to his execution. The morning is wet and windy; the scene of the execution is an open space opposite the college, near a large elm tree, where the bishop has been accustomed to preach. Thousands are gathered round; some have climbed the tree and are seated in the storm and rain among the leafless branches. A company of priests are in the room over the college gates, looking out "with pity or satisfaction, as God or the devil is in their hearts." The bishop has suffered in his prison from sciatica, and is lame; but he limps cheerfully along with a stick, and smiles when he sees the stake. He

kneels praying, at the foot of it. As he begins to pray, a box is brought and placed on a stool before his eyes. There in that box is his pardon, they tell him, if he will only recant. "Away with it! away with it!" the bishop cries; that is his only answer. "Despatch him then," the authorities reply, "seeing there is no remedy." They undress him to his shirt, put gunpowder between his legs and under his arms, fasten him to the stake with an iron band, and arrange the fagots round him, the bishop helping them with his own hand. But the wood is green and will only scorch, not burn. A violent flame paralyzes the nerves at once; a slow fire is torture. They throw more fagots on and light them. The flames mount up, and singe and scorch the martyr's face, but sink again, — the hot, damp sticks smouldering around his legs. "For God's sake, good people, let me have more fire," he cries out. A third time they give him flame. This time the powder is exploded, but it does not destroy him; there is not enough of it, or it has been badly

placed. "Lord Jesus, have mercy on me! Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" he cries. These are his last words, but he moves, beating his breasts with his hands for a long time. It takes three quarters of an hour to finish him, but at last, Bishop Hooper of Gloucester dies.

Such, as I have gathered it from Mr. Froude, is the story of the heroic bishop's martyrdom. It is well for us to remember that it is by such tortured hearts and hands as these that our precious heritage of religious liberty has been delivered to us. Let us be wisely watchful lest the bloody Popish spirit gain the upper hand again. Where that is sovereign, religious liberty must die.

But this little snatch of real history is capable of a very practical application to each one of us. It illustrates in a signal way a momentous fact for every life, — the *fact of the irresistible necessity of choice*. Kingston disturbs the bishop at his prayers, and puts the choice to him tearfully, appealingly, "Oh,

consider! life is sweet and death is bitter." But the bishop, strong with God's strength, answers, "I have settled myself patiently to pass through the fire prepared for me." There is the stake fixed; there are the fagots piled; here are the royal executioners; there is the bishop kneeling at the stake; by his side upon that stool they place the box which holds his pardon, if he will but recant. "Away with it! away with it," cries the bishop,—choice, the absolute necessity of it, meeting him again; and the necessity is most nobly met, and the choice is most nobly made. Better God's truth and the flame than the devil's lie and life. Bishop Hooper stands between alternatives; he cannot help standing there. It is the doom of life that it be put there.

None the less truly is the life of every one of us in such position. For us life is between alternatives. We may not be obliged to choose with Bishop Hooper between martyrdom and recreancy to duty. But there are on either side of us alternatives between

which we must choose. We cannot serve—that is to say, be at once the slave of—God and Mammon. Here wisdom, there folly; here the fear of the Lord, there the forgetfulness of the Lord; here righteousness, there wrong; here fealty to conscience, there fealty to sin; here Christ, there the world, the flesh, the devil. Between alternatives such as these every human life is set. Between alternatives such as these every one of us must, every one of us does make his choice. One can ask himself no more important question than this, Toward which alternative does my choice turn? For it is another grave fact of life that while we are kings in the realm of choice, we are forevermore slaves in the realm of the results flowing out of choice. If we choose self and sin we cannot help receiving the destruction which belongs to them. If we choose Christ nothing can prevent our inheritance of His own glory. But the eternal blessing or the eternal blight hinges on our choice. Life is between alternatives.

“Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide,
In the strife of truth with falsehood, for the good or evil
side.

Some great cause — God's new Messiah — offering each
the bloom or blight,

Parts the goats upon the left hand and the sheep upon the
right,

And the choice goes by forever 'twixt that darkness and
that light.”

OUR WAY AND GOD'S WAY.

CERTAINLY one of the most stupendous merely human figures, if not the most, who has ever appeared upon this planet is Moses. Historian, emancipator, statesman, legislator, soldier, seer, bard, — his fame is as fresh to-day as when they talked of him in the court of Pharaoh when the Pyramids were young.

Tradition has wreathed his name with wonder, but his authentic history is not less wonderful. You know the story well enough, — of the doom under which he was born, of his strange rescue from it, of his becoming the foster-son of Pharaoh's daughter, of his long dwelling amid the culture and brightness and power of the Egyptian palace, of the lofty family ties he formed, of the resplendent worldly prospects in which he stood.

So forty years had sped away, and then there came to Moses the real and momentous crisis of his life. How it came we do not know. But it came,—the crisis of choice between identification with the lordly Egyptians and identification with his own enslaved people; between the palace and the brick-yards. Thus the choice turned for him: “By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.”

Moses chose for duty and for God, though that choice shut against him the palace and opened for him but the hovel of slaves. So Moses goes forth to take up his duty of emancipation. He will do it at once; he will do it in his own way. The whole trend of the record shows that he will do it in his own strength rather than in God’s. He has fame enough, influence enough, might enough,

he thinks, to accomplish it. Let him but strike the blow, and these oppressed people will rise and gather to him. He will organize revolt; he will meet and master Pharaoh; he will do it. So he goes out to his brethren, to see their burdens. Soon he spies an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew. Moses takes the Hebrew's part, makes the Egyptian bite the dust, and hides his dead body in the sand. He has struck the first blow. Next day he sees two Hebrews striving together. He remonstrates with them. Why should Hebrew fall out with Hebrew? And then the injurer answers, denying his authority, distinctly repudiating his mission: "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? Intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian?"

That speech opens Moses's eyes. He is ready, but his brethren are not. They will not own him; they will not be led by him. That hasty deed of deliverance wrought yesterday cannot be the signal of the massing of the Hebrews against their oppressor. They do not want the services of Moses; they turn

from him. Pharaoh gets wind of the matter. There is nothing but flight for Moses. So the desert of Arabia, the shadows of Horeb, the quiet tending of Jethro's flocks, conceal him there in silence and delay for forty years.

That is one scene. Moses has chosen rightly. There is no more splendid picture in history than that calm turning of his from that future of royalty, the power of it, the chance of it, the magnificence of it, to utter self-identification with a despised herd of brick-yard slaves. Moses has chosen rightly, nobly; but—and this is the point just now—in the carrying out of his choice, in the realization of it, in the turning of his noble thought of deliverance for his people into noble deed of deliverance for them, he has failed miserably. He is hunted fugitive; he is shrinking exile in the desert; he is sheep-tender,—he is nothing more. That is one scene.

Well, forty years more go on. There is Moses in that Arabian desert, learning in the

school of disappointment, in the school of disaster, in the school of delay. Sometimes God puts us to hard schools. Sometimes we must be put into hard schools because it is only in these that we can be brought to the learning of our most needful lessons. Forty years go on. It takes a long time. It is not always that right choice opens into a beautiful garden; sometimes it is introduction to rocks and desert.

But one day, there in the desert, the flaming but unconsuming thorn-thicket arrests Moses. And from amidst it comes the divine call and commission, "Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

But now this Moses of the desert has become a different man from that Moses of the palace. He has learned his lessons in these hard desert schools. He is no more the self-trustful, self-asserting, self-sufficient Moses of the old time. He has grown distrustful of himself; he is not so sure that he can do things as

of yore. But at last, when God assures him of *His* presence, of the girding of His strength, of supply from His resources, Moses takes up the duty and in God accomplishes it. Pharaoh is baffled, not now by Moses, but by God through Moses. And at last, upon the top of Nebo, Moses looks down upon the tents of the delivered Israelites filling all the valleys round, and forward into the wide and sunny reaches of the Promised Land, to the edge of which he has led the delivered people, and dies victor, not because of self, but because of God. That is the other scene, Moses victor through God.

Oh, there is immeasurable difference between that word in the second chapter of the Exodus, "And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that *he* went out unto his brethren," and that word in the third chapter of the Exodus, "Come now therefore, and *I* will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people." There is all the difference between spiritual success and spiritual failure.

This, then, is God's way. Let us not try to live a noble life in our own way. We choose Christ and by faith begin the noble life, and that is superlatively right and wise. But let us not think we can ourselves go on and triumphantly smite down the hindering Pharaohs. The faith in which we begin must be the faith in which we continue. Said Jesus, "Without me ye can do nothing." ⁶

THE TRUE IDEAL FOR LIFE.

IT was not so wonderful that a baby should be born. Birth was already a mystery so common that it had been much stripped of its wonder. Birth—that strange advent of the child out of the unknown into this sad and wailing world—had been taking place since, back four thousand years, Adam and Eve had bent in awe above their first-born.

Nor was it so uncommon that a babe should be born into poverty, and find a manger for a cradle. Caves are not rare in Palestine. Much of the rock of the country is soft and porous, and scooped out easily. It was quicker, easier, and cheaper to gouge out a cave than to build a barn. Caves in that country are sometimes dwellings, sometimes sepulchres, sometimes strongholds, sometimes tarrying-places for the night when no better

inn is by, sometimes stables. So it was no uncommon thing for people to be found abiding in such places.

Then as to the manger, or crib. Dr. Thomson, in "The Land and the Book," tells us that "it is common to find two sides of the one room, where the native farmer resides with his cattle, fitted up with these mangers, and the remainder elevated about two feet higher for the accommodation of the family. The mangers are built of small stones and mortar, in the shape of a box, or rather of a watering trough; and when cleaned up and whitewashed, as they often are in summer, they do very well to lay little babies in. Indeed," he says, "our own children have slept there in our rude summer retreats on the mountains."

So the fact that a babe should first open his eyes in a cave where they stabled cattle, or that he should find for a cradle the manger out of which the oxen fed, must not be thought of as anything so extraordinary that it was never heard about before. It was

something quite usual for life running on the lower levels. It only signified that this child began at the lowest, had his portion with the poorest; that there were no separations of wealth or palace between this child and the lowliest Hebrew baby anywhere in Palestine.

Nor was it such an unusual thing that this life beginning here in this manger at Bethlehem, as it grew into childhood, and strengthened into youthhood, and developed into manhood, should be smitten with much sorrow. I am sure that from the time of Adam's sin down to the birth-night of this babe in Bethlehem, there had never been a human life devoid of sorrow. This babe had but grown up to share in the human heritage. There had been poverty before He came. There had been breaking hearts before He came. There had been eyes blinded with tears before He came. There had been failure of friendship before He came. There had been weariness before He came. There had been scoffs and scorn and bitter words before they fell on Him.

Nor was it an experience altogether so unique that this life, beginning here in Bethlehem, should terminate on a cross and by it. Crosses were by no means uncommon in those days. Crucifixion was a very usual method of Roman punishment. At certain times you could have seen the highways lined with crosses, clasping their victims in their horrid arms. Many a man had hung the weary hours through, while the blood flowed laboringly, while the hot sun smote mercilessly upon the unclothed body and the unprotected head, while fever scorched the brain and parched the throat and lips; while the death, so longed for, seemed so tardy in its coming, — and did not come until at last hunger killed, or the vultures wheeling round and round over the victim's head, waiting for their prey, grew impatient, and, dashing at him, tore his vitals out. Crucifixion was something too terribly common then.

And yet there never was a birth or life or death so utterly uncommon, so stupendously unique, so separate in its infinite wonder, as

the birth which transpired on that night in Bethlehem; as the life which flowed out of it; as the death which found its consummation on the cross. Babes had been born and laid in mangers many times before; but never such a babe as this, over which the Virgin Mother hung in trembling joy and awe. Lives had been struck with sorrow often; but never with such sorrow or for such reason as smote this life. Crosses had carried many victims; but never had cross brought death to such a victim. Beyond all births was this birth; beyond all lives was this life; beyond all deaths was this death.

And if you ask the reason for the infinite separateness between this and every other which had ever been or can ever be again, these verses, in some respects the most wonderful in the whole Scripture, shall declare the reason to you.

“ Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God [that is, deemed not His equality with

God a thing to grasp at], but emptied Himself, taking upon Him the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and, being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross."

It was because that birth was the birth of one equal with Jehovah, yet who did not grasp at such equality; it was because that life was a life stooping from the throne of the Highest to share the sorrow which belonged to men, that thus it might become touched with all the feelings of our infirmities; it was because that death was a death to which the Only-begotten Son humbled Himself, in order that tasting death for every man, men might be delivered from it, — it is this which makes that birth and life and death so unique and singular.

The Creator descended into creaturehood there in Bethlehem. The King became the servant.

And the mainspring of such sacrifice the Apostle discloses in another place: "For ye

know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might become rich." *For our sakes.* These are the words which sounding over the abysmal sacrifice of that birth and life and death, explain them all. The love of self in Deity was nothing; the love of others, everything.

And now the Apostle, in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians, gathers up all this magnificence of sacrificial display in Deity, and moulds it into a reason why you and I should live ourselves the self-sacrificing life. He says to these Philippians, — Be not selfish people. Do not think that everything in the world must gravitate to the centre of the self. Do not care simply for yourselves, and let everybody else go. Do not look each of you on his own things, but each of you on the things of others also. And if you want to know why you should do so, why then remember that you are Christians, and that therefore you ought to have the mind of Christ; and the mind of

Christ was a mind of care for others, even to the extent of emptying Himself of the Divine glory.

A life of Christ-like care for others — that, then, is the Apostle's ideal for the true life. Self last, not first. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.

THE HINDERED LIFE.

“The prisoner of Jesus Christ.”

A SMALL man, so diminutive as to be even mean in presence; stooping, as though burdened with thinking and with care; head bald; nose hooked; beard and skirt of hair around the head sprinkled with gray; eyebrows drawn together, as those of a man who thinks and toils intensely; eyes light blue, with the kindest of radiance in them, but chronically inflamed and weak; a man who in battered frame looks as though for many years he had known hard usage; yet most affable in manner and of the gentlest and most courteous speech, and his whole nature constantly aglow with the fervor of the Holy Spirit, — such are some of the traditions of mien and look which have come down to us concerning this prisoner of Jesus Christ.

Some dim room somewhere in the world's metropolis, probably in near neighborhood to the barracks of the Prætorian Guard, — not a sumptuous room, for this prisoner of Jesus Christ has no personal means, and now in his imprisonment cannot ply his craft of tent-making, and so must depend for money to pay for this hired lodging on the small gifts of his poor friends, — some dim, bare lodging somewhere in the great city is his prison. It is a vast boon that such a prison can be his; that he is not thrust into one of the damp, chill, black holes gouged out of the rock, which in that hard age were used for prisons. Here in this hired lodging he is accessible to any who may choose to come to him; he may have companions who may abide with him; he may have his parchments and ink-horn and pen, or stylus; he may dictate to some friend who can handle the pen more easily than he can, in the dim room, and with his poorly seeing eyes. Yes; there are a good many ameliorations in his imprisonment. It is not nearly so bad as it

might be in those cruel times,— as it came to be for him, not very long afterwards, when he was a prisoner in Rome for the second time. And yet he *is* a prisoner, hampered, hindered, as prisoners must be. I doubt if, for two years or more, he stepped beyond the threshold of that room, as he waited in it for the laggard Roman court to reach his trial. All his former active, intense, busy, enterprising life must now come to an end in the weary stagnancy of this confinement; he can never be alone a moment of the night or day, for from his wrist goes a coupling-chain to the wrist of a Roman soldier detailed to guard him; and he can make no motion by day or night unaccompanied by the sorry music of this fettering chain.

Yes; he is indeed a prisoner, and very closely kept in prison, too,— this prisoner of Jesus Christ.

Well, what of him? A good deal of him, a good deal of very solid help and comfort for you and me if we will attentively consider him. For it seems to me that though, when

we look at our wrists, we can see no coupling-chain upon them, and though when we choose, we can go out of our front-doors for business or exercise, with none to hinder us, yet, in a very real way, this prisoner of Jesus Christ is a quite close type and illustration of the most of us. For there is no fact in life more certain and more iron than that life has its limitations and boundaries, as real and unescapable as were the stone walls of the poor lodging of this prisoner of Jesus Christ.

I was talking with a soldier the other day, who knew those two brave, pushing men, members of the recent Greely Arctic Expedition, who got a good many degrees nearer the North Pole than anybody else ever had. There they were, away up there, with the great, fascinating, tantalizing secret not much more than two hundred miles away from them, and they looking toward it and peering toward it with their field-glasses; but yet they could not go on toward it and solve the secret. They were too far away from supplies; they did not have sufficient provision

with them; they were too much exhausted; the cold was too bitter; the boundaries of the impossible shut down and hedged them in. It seems a grievous thing that such enterprise should be so balked, — that the great secret should be so near, and yet so far.

Well, that is like life again. You push on and you come to an invincible limitation. You start to go, and a coupling-chain, from which you cannot free yourself, drags you back. On every side there are these boundaries, prison walls, coupling-chains.

There are boundaries of *faculty*. Even Sir Isaac Newton had to say he was only like a little child, picking up here and there a pretty pebble or colored shell on the shore, while the great ocean of truth lay all unexplored before him.

There are boundaries springing out of our *dearest and best* relationships. It seems to me that there is wonderful closeness to life in these words our Lord said to Peter: "When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when

thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." How true that is! As a man goes on in life, he becomes more and more conscious of life's limitations, finds himself more and more wrapped about and entangled by them. Lord Bacon says, "A man who has a wife and children has given hostages to fortune." So he has. It is a very dear and delightful imprisonment, this of the home, and as soon as he may a young man ought to enter into it. But he ought to enter into it thoughtfully and solemnly, knowing that the taking to himself the responsibilities of such intimate and weighty relationship toward others must and ought to restrict him; that he can no longer be the man simply for himself, but must be willing to become the husband; that is, the house-band, — the man who binds the house together for the sake of others. Yes, many times a man must say, "I would do thus and so, pursue this line of work, range through this travel, allow myself this luxury, were it

not for wife and children." He has become the Peter set in a household; and he cannot be so free to consult his own convenience or to follow his own plans as he was when he was the young and solitary Peter not set in a household; and he ought not to expect to be.

Then there are boundaries of real and hindering troubles,—chance small; pay meagre; sickness among those you love; sickness in the self; maladjustment of circumstances; a secret bitterness eating the heart away, which no one must know about but the heart's self; disappointments, infelicities, sorrows, burdens, things that you are so constantly wishing different, but which you cannot make different. Ah, me! while, like the imprisonment of this prisoner of Jesus Christ, there are many and shining ameliorations; while it is most blessedly true that things are not nearly as bad as they might be, who of us cannot, notwithstanding, put out his hands and feel the walls stopping him on this side and on that? who of us has

not felt the miserable drag of the coupling-chain?

But this is also true, and we would do well to remember it. There was a farmer once, who said: "I had ploughed around a rock in one of my fields for five years, and I had broken a mowing-machine knife against it, besides losing the use of the ground in which it lay, — all because I *supposed* it was such a *large* rock that it would take too much time and labor to remove it. So I took a crowbar, intending to poke around it and find out its size once for all; and it was one of the surprises of my life to discover that it was little more than two feet long. It was standing on its edge, and so light that I could lift it into the wagon without help."

"The first time you really faced your trouble you conquered it," one said to him.

Yes, that is true; there are a great many imprisoning hindrances in life that we only think are such, which, if we resolutely face them, we shall find not to be such; but places for easy furrow for the plough of our endeavor.

Yes, that is true. But it is also just as true that there *are* hindering troubles which will not down if you do face them, that really are like the walls and coupling-chains of this prisoner of Jesus Christ.

That prisoner of Jesus Christ is a type and illustration of the most of us. Every life on some sides is a ruggedly limited, imprisoned life. Therefore, for your help and comfort, I want you to look at this prisoner of Jesus Christ. And as you look, that you may get heart and hope, I want you to notice three things about him.

This is the *first thing*: This prisoner of Jesus Christ is a prisoner *by* Jesus Christ; that is to say, Jesus Christ has a hand in his imprisonment. In another place in this same epistle this prisoner of Jesus Christ speaks about being a prisoner *IN* the Lord, that is to say, though a prisoner, still, as such, in the realm of the Lord's activity and direction. Because this prisoner has fallen into prison, he has not, therefore, fallen out of the grasp of the hand of Jesus Christ.

Mad mob of Jews almost tearing in pieces him who is now the prisoner, there in the temple-courts at Jerusalem; rescue from their hands by Lysias, the commander of the Roman garrison in the Castle of Antonia just by; night-journey to Cæsarea; vile and itching palm of Felix, who will not set this prisoner free unless he bribe him, which this prisoner will not do; brave appeal to Cæsar as a last resort; stormy waves of Euroclydon; salvation from shipwreck on the coast of the island of Malta; courteous respect of the Roman centurion Junius, who had him in charge; the mitigated confinement of his hired lodging; over all and through all and directing all, the hand of Jesus Christ. This prisoner is no shipwrecked orphan cast adrift on a rudderless world. He is in the loving guardianship of loving hands, which, overruling, have brought him to this prison.

This prisoner of Jesus Christ is worn with a mighty toil; he *must* rest here in this prison.

This prisoner of Jesus Christ — impassioned preacher of a sect everywhere spoken against

— must be protected from Jewish fury on the one hand, from the persecutions of heathenism on the other. Awaiting his trial here in this prison, the power of the world-wide Roman Empire is pledged to keep him safe.

This prisoner of Jesus Christ wanted to tell his gospel at the world's centre; and lo, from this prison he can do it *most propitiously*, for all have free access to him, and the Roman soldier chained to him hears the great truth from his lips; and, as soldier after soldier is detailed to guard him, and is preached to lovingly by this preacher, lo, you begin to hear of saints in Cæsar's household. The chance he wanted is the chance his prison gives the best.

This prisoner of Jesus Christ can *send abroad his letters*, if he cannot go to preach his sermons; and he has leisure to write them. And he does write them, and scatters them broadcast; and the written word which stands and stays takes the place of the spoken word which vanishes; and not only those early and struggling Christians, but you and I enter

into the vast and precious heritage of those written and remaining words.

There is such a thing as the *preventive* providence of God. Evil is in the world; but God prevents the evil from coming to its full and natural bloom. God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream of the night, and said unto him, "Take heed to thyself that thou speak not to Jacob, either good or bad."

There is such a thing as the *directing* providence of God. Evil is in the world; but God directs the evil acts of men to ends they are utterly unable to foresee, and which they by no means intend. Said Joseph to his brethren: "As for you, ye meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring to pass as it is this day, to save much people alive."

There is such a thing as the *determinative* providence of God. Evil is in the world, but God says to it: "Thus far shalt thou come and no farther, and here shalt thy proud waves be stayed."

And this preventive, directive, determinative providence had been around this pris-

oner of Jesus Christ, moulding furious mob and stormy waves, and proud and powerful Roman government for the best good of this prisoner of Jesus Christ, and for the best triumph of the noble ends on which his heart was set. Because he is a prisoner of Jesus Christ, he is a prisoner *by* Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ has had something to do with putting him in his prison, and for loving ends.

Now, if you belong to Jesus Christ, as did this prisoner, here is the solidest help and comfort for you. You may not see that it is really so in your circumstances, as they seem just now to you. I doubt if this prisoner of Jesus Christ, there in his prison, could at all know the immense and vast advantage of his imprisonment; but, if you belong to Jesus Christ, these hampering, hindering prison-walls and coupling-chains have been set about you by Jesus Christ and for ends glorious with the riches of his grace. "I have learned," said one, "a new fashion of spelling *disappointment*." Change but a single letter, and the word begins to shine with wonderful

radiance. In the place of *d*, put *h*; and read it *His appointment*; and be sure that what Love appoints is surely best. So when you come to some invincible hindrance, get rest before it by this certainty, that, somehow, Jesus has had a hand in setting it around you, and means by it not a real hindrance, but your truest weal.

But take now a second look at this prisoner of Jesus Christ; and notice that he is a prisoner *for* Jesus Christ. This is what this prisoner says about his bonds in another place: "According to my earnest expectation and my hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed; but that, with all boldness as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death."

You see, a great purpose always controls circumstances; it is not controlled by them; it will turn circumstances to its account. You have a great love for some one; the bloom and test of love is service; if you love, you must serve. This one you love falls

sick; and then immediately your love for him is not baffled by his sickness, but seizes at once every chance to serve him in it. You smooth his pillow, you gladly do for him even menial offices; if you can do no more, you will at least watch by his side to bless him with your presence. Your purpose of love controls the circumstances around the one you love; moulds them into ministries somehow of help for him. So here this prisoner is devoted to Jesus Christ, is consumed by a great passion for him, and though a prisoner, is yet a prisoner *for* Jesus Christ; that is to say, as prisoner he is to do his best at serving Jesus Christ. And what can he do for him? Range the world for him; stand on Mars' Hill at Athens for him; confront the mob at Ephesus for him; found a church at Corinth for him? No, he *could* do that; he cannot now. Well, what can he do as prisoner for Jesus? He can speak to that soldier at his side for Jesus; and he does it. He can write for Jesus; and in the gloom of that captivity bloom beautiful epistles.

He can show how a Christian can endure; and he does it, — even in the night of his imprisonment he is singing songs of joy.

And will you notice, it is absolutely impossible that this imprisonment deprive him of these chances of service. Even the prison comes with its rough hands full of opportunities for service, and cannot help so coming.

And now, if you belong to Jesus Christ as did this prisoner, here again is the solidest help and comfort for you. I read once of one who, both deaf and dumb, yet loved her Lord; she could speak by the sign language, in no other way. Said one to her, through these signs: "How can you serve Christ?" She answered, "I can smile them in." Though she could say no audible word for Christ, she could stand in the vestibule of the church and with kindly welcome greet the strangers. And she did it. Who shall not say that her welcome was often better than a sermon? It is impossible that the narrowest prison be not large enough to hold in itself some opportunity of service. You feel ham-

pered, hindered; you do not have to stretch your hands out very far before you feel closing around you the prison-walls; you cannot take many steps before some coupling-chain tugs at you and holds you back; but even in your plight you can find an open door for loving service for your Lord, if you will look for it.

And now, will you take but one other look at this prisoner of Jesus Christ? He is a prisoner of Jesus Christ *to become like Jesus*. This is what this prisoner says about himself: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect;" and even the great Apostle needs the sculpturing hand of discipline to fashion him into his Lord's likeness. I think, if any one will read attentively the epistles of the captivity, he must see that the great Apostle during this imprisonment grew mightily in his consciousness of the great grace of God.

A prisoner *by* Jesus; a prisoner *for* Jesus; a prisoner *to become like Jesus*. Why, even a prison has its shining side.

Some practical suggestions: —

(1) Get out of your prison, if you can. Paul did; he did not stay in it a day longer than he need; its doors opened and he went ranging on to Spain to tell his gospel. There is no use in tarrying in prisons if you do not have to. When the need for some great hindrance in your life passes, get out into the fresh air as soon as possible, and be thankful.

(2) Get the good out of your hindrances. They all have lessons for you. They may be severe teachers, but they are at heart kindly. Wait before them submissively, that they may teach you what God would have you learn.

(3) Instead of moodily complaining of hindrances and imprisonments, look around in them for the chances of service. They surely proffer such. And when you see the service go on and do it.

(4) In our imprisonments, let us think more of Jesus Christ than of the enclosing walls. It was thus Paul did, and his most joyful notes of praise were struck while he waited here in prison.

UNCONSCIOUS INFLUENCE.

THIS is a fact of which we make much too small account, and yet it is a fact most real.

Mr. Lockhart, in his life of his father-in-law, Sir Walter Scott, gives singular and signal illustration of the strange and continued streaming forth of this unconscious influence. It was in Edinburgh, in the month of June, in the year 1814. Mr. Lockhart, with several others, was dining at the house of a young friend of his. They were young men, full of the flush and gayety of youth. After the fashion of that time, theirs was a carousing time. After the dinner, the weather being hot, they adjourned to a library which had one large window looking northward. There the hours went by in gay revel and free talk.

After a time young Lockhart observed a shade pass over the countenance of his friend and host. He became silent. Lockhart asked him if he were sick. "No," he answered, "I shall be well enough presently, if you will only let me sit where you are, and if you take my chair; for there is a *confounded hand* in sight of me through the window here, which has often bothered me before, and now it won't let me fill my glass with a good-will." So attention was drawn to it and the hand was pointed out to all.

"Since we sat down," the young man went on to say, "I have been watching it; it fascinates my eye; it never stops. Page after page is finished, thrown on that heap of manuscript, and still it goes on unwearied; and so it will be till candles are brought in, and God knows how long after that. It is the same every night. I cannot stand the sight of it when I am not at my books."

"Some stupid, dogged, engrossing clerk," suggested somebody.

"No, boys," answered the young man; "I

well know what hand it is; it is Walter Scott's."

That was the tireless, diligent hand that in the evenings of three summer weeks wrote the last two volumes of "Waverley." That hand wrote the volumes, but it did something more. It changed a life by the lesson of diligence it taught. That young man, learning that lesson, became subsequently a renowned lawyer, — the Honorable William Menzies, one of the supreme judges at the Cape of Good Hope.

Thus is it true that we are casting moral shadows; thus is it true that there goes streaming forth from us unconscious influence. It starts unbidden. We may control our conscious influence, but that which is unconscious we cannot control. From every point and action of our lives it goes forth constantly like the sunlight, powerful like gravitation. Hinder it we cannot.

Our unconscious influence is in its quality as what we are ourselves. Only the diligent hand can unconsciously teach a lesson of

diligence. We are all of us unconsciously teaching something. How many and stringent the obligations grasping us to *be* noble, that our unconscious influence be blessing instead of blight.

THAT WORD "ACCESS."

THAT is a wonderful word which Paul speaks in the Epistle to the Ephesians concerning our liberty of approach to God: "For through Him, Christ, we both — Jew and Gentile — have access by one Spirit unto the Father."

This is not access like that which the ancient Israelite could only know. That was access under law, this is access under grace. That was the difficult access of ritual, this is the open and easy access of gospel. There in that guarded access of sacrifice, ceremony, washings multiplied, the Israelite was not to go further than the court of the Tabernacle, save as in the Tabernacle he was represented by the priest; and the priest was not to go further than the Holy Place of the Tabernacle,

save as he and the people were represented in the Holy of Holies by the High Priest; and the High Priest might but once a year lift the awful curtain, and fall there, not without blood, before the mysterious gleaming of the Shekinah, and so set forth the fact that there was *some* access, but only of this narrow, hindered, appalling sort, unto the Divine Father for sinful men.

But look; it hangs there before the Most Holy Place. It at once hides it and hinders access to it. It is a veil of many folds, variously colored and massive with embroidery. Behind it, in the ancient Tabernacle and in the eldest Temple, stood the ark of God, overswept by the wings of the golden Cherubim, and upon which fell, like a fragment of celestial light, the miraculous Shekinah. And though from the later temples the ark was gone and the Shekinah vanished, still that Most Holy Place remains, and before it falls the guarding curtain.

It is the third hour after mid-day. It is the hour when crowds of eager worshippers

throng the Temple-courts. Just now He whom the priests have called the troubler of Israel is hanging in crucifixion upon Golgotha. There, within the Holy Place, and concealing the Most Holy Place, the special shrine and residence of the Divine Father, hangs the sacred veil as is its wont.

But listen, look! Yonder on Calvary the Sufferer shouts victoriously, "It is finished!" His head falls, smitten with death. And then the rocks on which the Temple stands are quivering in earthquake; and that thick veil, as by superhuman hands, is seized and rent from top to bottom; and that Most Holy Place, secluded for so many centuries, is flung open for the common light and for the common gaze and entrance.

It is in the presence of that rent veil we are to read these words of Paul. It is of such gracious disclosed access he is speaking. For through Christ we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. It is the free, unhindered access of the gospel; and if you study this word "access," you will find it full of the

most precious meaning. It does not signify a mere poor liberty of approach, — the chance to go in if you want to, but without the music of welcome and the certainty of fatherly favor. It means really introduction, the bringing in to favor. It is access wreathed with welcome. It is the access of the boy returned from a long and dangerous journey, to the father's heart, and to the roof-tree, and the hearthstone, and the family board, and the homestead blessing. It is such access as birds have to the summer, as flowers have to the sunlight, as your lungs have and mine to the invigorating air. It is the peace, and joy, and light, and love, and unutterable blessing of the open arms and the open heart of the Divine Father.

It is such access as that to which the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews incites us when he says, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

It is such access as Polycarp was conscious of when the fierce flames of the martyr-fire

which wrapped him round seemed but as a cool, moist wind, so rapt and caught up was he into the feeling of the close Divine Presence.

It is such access as the mother of the Wesleys knew when, pouring out her heart to God, she said, "If earnestly and constantly to desire Thee, Thy favor, Thy acceptance, Thyself, rather than any or all things Thou hast created, be to love Thee, *I do love Thee.*" Or as when dying she exclaimed to her sons standing round her bed, "Children, as soon as I am released, sing a psalm of praise to God."

It is such access as the rude, blaspheming Thomas Olivers came into when, becoming converted through the preaching of Whitefield, he exclaimed, "I saw God in everything; the heavens, the earth, and all therein, showed me something of Him;" and who in the joy and liberty and mighty mental exhilaration of this access, rose up to write that perhaps most resounding and noblest hymn in our English language: —

“The God of Abraham praise!
At whose supreme command
From earth I rise, and seek the joys
At His right hand.
I all on earth forsake, —
Its wisdom, fame, and power, —
And Him my only portion make,
My shield and tower.”

It is such access as that of which Edwards tells, “which he knows not how to express otherwise than by a calm sweet abstraction of soul sweetly conversing with Christ, and rapt and swallowed up in God.”

Ah, if we would use more this access, if we would tread oftener its open way into the waiting and welcoming heart of the Divine Father, with what refreshed and vigorous souls should we come forth to bear the burdens of our lives and to set strong hands to the tasks given us to do.

WALKING BY FAITH.

THERE was Peter going firmly forth upon the rough and yielding waves. And the way was smooth before his feet; and the waters were rock beneath them. For his eye was fixed on Christ. He was intent only to reach Him. Since Christ had said "Come," he was sure Christ would support him in the coming. Thus by faith he walked in such a wonderful and conquering way.

Yet he sank sadly and so soon. And as Christ reaches forth to catch him, He exclaims, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" and in that word *doubt* we may find the entire reason for Peter's frustration. It is a word singularly suggestive. It means to turn irresolutely in two directions, to waver, looking now this way — now

that. The whole picture of the sinking, failing man is in it.

Somehow between Peter and Christ the waves have dashed themselves. Peter has caught sight of their foaming crests striking at him angrily. He begins to think not of Christ, but of the storm; not of his support but of his danger. Thus he can do nothing but sink. He must have gone like lead to the bottom, had it not been for the outstretched hand of Christ.

Peter's eye wavered on the billows, — that was the trouble. Had he but kept it on the conquering Christ, he might have walked with Him triumphant over all that stormy sea. You see it was not needful that Peter be overcome, even with water for a footway and amid such a storm. Nor can it be needful that we be overcome.

“Yes, you must be,” many say. “You can only be a sinking Christian at the very best. You must all the time expect submerging.”

Why? Suppose I believe toward victory

instead of toward defeat; suppose I keep my faith fastened upon the Master of the waves; suppose by constant consecration I let no blinding spray of trouble, even, hide the vision of my Lord, — can I sink then? Nay, verily. It is possible to walk the waves by faith.

THE VALUE OF MORAL PLAN FOR LIFE.

A MORAL plan for life provides against contingencies.

There are people who live but from hand to mouth. The daily earning is consumed by the daily necessity. Nothing is laid up for a rainy day. Sickness, or loss of situation, or some such contingency, finds them stranded. They have no reserve of pecuniary ability to fall back upon. Such people are in a kind of slavery, sometimes needful, often needless.

Now, what happens on the pecuniary and physical side of life happens frequently on the moral side of it. Moral contingencies spring up; unexpected moral questions are constantly occurring. Shall I do this or that? Shall I enter into this or that busi-

ness? Shall I allow myself in this or that pleasure? Nobody can live long and not be confronted by such questions. The child meets them at its school, the woman in her household, the man in his business. Frequently the decision of the question is difficult. Sometimes one is thrown before them into very distressing doubtfulness. There is a large realm of casuistry lying about each life.

But now, a life organized about a moral plan holds in itself provision for such contingency, just as a balance at the bank makes a man sure in the presence of unlooked-for expenditure.

Many people live morally, as many do pecuniarily, in no beforehand fashion. They are prepared for nothing which may occur. They mean well, but they do not do well; inclination draws them here, then yonder; before they know it they are involved in all sorts of complications.

If, however, one but hold within himself an ordered moral plan for life, such ques-

tions are frequently at once decided simply by the presence of the plan. Does this matter, or does it not, consist with the rule of life which I have determined shall control me? If it does not, no; if it does, yes: the plan analyzes and settles the thing for you. So, while others are hesitating, you are strong in decision; you are in the serene light; you are ready for contingencies; you can afford to live freely, bravely.

This is Christ's suggestion of moral plan: Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."

THE CROSS THE TRUE POINT OF VIEW.

ONE'S point of view is a great deal. I rode into the Vale of Chamouny, along the pass Tête-Noir. The way led directly under the shadow of Mont Blanc. Grand as the sight is, there is a kind of disappointment in it. Mont Blanc does not seem a monarch. You gaze upon its white dome, and you cannot see that it is heaved most loftily; other peaks look higher. Your point of view is wrong.

But leave the Vale of Chamouny, and wind along the road a dozen miles, until you reach the little French town of Sallanches, and then look back. The memory of that sight can never leave me. The day was exquisite. The light shot through the translucent air hindered by scarce a shred of vapor; behind

me gleamed the mighty mountain-range, as white and beautiful as the pearly gates of heaven; and, shooting from its midst, Mont Blanc, crowned now with its real altitude, dwarfing utterly all the other mountains, gathering them like little children under its protection, rising heavenward itself until it seemed as though it would detain the sun, even, careering through the skies. Here at Sallanches I stood at the right place to get a right vision of Mont Blanc. What was distorted in other places was in its real relations there.

Now, there stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene; and a sad standing-place it was for them, and with its awful sadness then altogether unrelieved.

At best, death is something terrible. Smooth the pillow of your friend, your child; speak in whispers, lest a louder voice should scare away the failing life; move with muffled tread; stand alert for the least sign

from the sufferer, that you may give him ministry; by soothing word and soothing help and soothing medicine, smooth that passage to the mysterious change; and then, though you have done everything the ingenuity of affection can suggest, death is something terrible. Even the place of the softest and the sweetest death is a place of sadness, which sadness the comfort that you have had a chance to do your best and utmost for the sufferer cannot put away.

But to Mary and these other loving women standing with her, there was denied all opportunity of ministry. That cross *barred* human help. The thrust of thorn and thrust of nail, the jests of gambling executioners, the taunts of the un pitying multitude, — these things were there; but there was no path for the feet of loving service.

How the mother-heart of Mary must have bled then! How the words of Simeon must have come back to her, which he spoke when he blessed the Holy Child years back in the temple: "This child is set for the



fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against; yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also"! How she must have felt now the stabbing of that prophetic sword! Never was mother so stricken; never was human heart so pierced, save only the heart of her suffering Son hanging there before her on that cross.

But Mary understood the meaning of that cross she stood by better afterwards, when the triumph of the Resurrection and Ascension had fallen on it. In that upper room in Jerusalem, when the Spirit had come, I am sure she went back to stand by its side in memory with an altogether different feeling. For then that cross must have become to her what it has since been to sin-smitten, troubled, bewildered, questioning men and women, — *the true point of view for God and life and destiny*; the place where one sees the moral facts of life in their right relations; the spot where life's deepest questions find their answer, and where life's heaviest bur-



dens get release and help. What Sallanches is to Mont Blanc, that is the cross to human history and human life; it is the point of view from which to get real vision. In the Palace of Justice at Rome, people are sometimes taken into a strangely painted chamber. There are frescos on the ceiling and around upon the walls, and mosaics upon the floor. But those forms and lines and colors seem all grotesque and singularly inexplicable. You cannot get them into harmony: you cannot discover the perspective; the whole thing is a bewilderment. But there is one spot in that room, standing upon which every line falls into harmony; where the reaches of perspective open, and the meaning of pictured roof and wall and pavement is all disclosed. At that point, and at that point only, can you see the frescos rightly.

So, mazy with bewilderment is human history and human life. You can see nothing truly, you must see everything in distortion, until you stand here with these women *at the cross*. That is the place whence God means

you to look at things. Says one of the rulers in German literature: "In all my study of the ancient times I have always felt the want of something, and it was not till I knew our Lord that all was clear to me; with Him, there is nothing that I am not able to solve."

Let us see what light this cross of our Lord casts in but a single direction. Standing at the cross, you may certainly see *the Divine sympathy with human suffering*. How pathetic that, among the latest poems of the dead Longfellow, called "The Chamber over the Gate:" —

Is it so far from thee,
 Thou canst no longer see,
 In the Chamber over the Gate,
 That old man desolate,
 Weeping and wailing sore,
 For his son, who is no more?
 O Absalom, my son!

Is it so long ago
 That cry of human woe
 From the walled city came,
 Calling on his dear name,
 That it has died away
 In the distance of to-day?
 O Absalom, my son!

There is no far nor near,
There is neither there nor here,
There is neither soon nor late
In that Chamber over the Gate ;
Nor any long ago
To that cry of human woe,
O Absalom, my son !

From the ages that are past
The voice comes like a blast,
Over seas that wreck and drown,
Over tumult of traffic and town ;
And from ages yet to be
Come the echoes back to me,
O Absalom, my son !

Somewhere at every hour
The watchman on the tower
Looks forth, and sees the fleet
Approach of the hurrying feet
Of messengers, that bear
The tidings of despair.
O Absalom, my son !

He goes forth from the door
Who shall return no more.
With him our joy departs ;
The light goes out in our hearts ;
In the Chamber over the Gate
We sit disconsolate.
O Absalom, my son !

That 't is a common grief
Bringeth but slight relief;
Ours is the bitterest loss,
Ours is the heaviest cross ;
And forever the cry will be,
“ Would God I had died for thee,
O Absalom, my son ! ”

Yes, the chamber over the gate is built in other cities than Mahanaim, and in other years than in that distant one in which David's heart was smitten. It is built in every city. Its sad bewailings break into every year, into every day. And very surely you and I must sometimes enter that chamber, and find our heart breaking, too. This touch of suffering is sure to make the whole world kin.

And nobody ever stands in that chamber over the gate, smitten there and crushed and crying, that he does not find calling in his heart an unfathomable hunger for the *Divine* sympathy. What he wants to be sure of is that God knows about it, that God cares about it, that God feels about it. Even though one be an atheist, is his heart pierced with the pang of this hunger. “ Have you

ever seen," another asks, "or perhaps made one of a party of people who were going to explore some deep, dark cavern, — the Mammoth Cave of Kentucky, or the Catacombs of Rome? They all stand out in the sunlight; and the attendants, who know the journey they are going to make, pass round among them, and put into the hands of each a lighted candle. How useless it seems. How pale and colorless the little flame appears in the gorgeous flood of sunlight. But the procession moves along. One after another enters the dark cavern's mouth. One after another loses the splendor of daylight. In the hands of one after another the feeble candle-flame comes out bright in the darkness, and by-and-by they are all walking in the dark holding fast their candles as if they were their very life, — totally dependent now upon what seemed so useless half an hour ago."

Before a man gets into that chamber over the gate, while he stands outside in the sunlight of prosperity and of an unbroken

home, he may have no special concern about God's sympathy for him. But when he must go — as some time he surely must — *into* the blackness of that darkness, why then how he longs to get grip on even some little candle-flicker of certainty that the thought and help of God is with him in the darkness.

And now the question comes, Where can we get it? From nature? Oh, if we had no other source to learn of the Divine sympathy but nature, what could men do? What could men do in the presence of those great elemental forces which are "stern as fate, absolute as tyranny, merciless as death; which are too vast to praise, too inexorable to propitiate; which have no ear for prayer, no heart for sympathy, no arm to save?" What could men do with nothing to gaze on in their grief but these? What do gravitation and chemical affinity and the stellar spaces and heat and light and electricity care for us in our chamber over the gate, shut in with our dead Absalom? Did you ever notice that the sunshine was any less gorgeous when it fell on

the grave heaped over the one you love; or that the flowers bloomed there in any tenderer color?

Ah, you must stand at the *cross* to see God's care and sympathy. Stand any other where, and you can never see it. Stand there, and, thank God, you cannot help the seeing it. For it is God in humanity who hangs upon that cross and reddens its rough wood with His own blood. It is God, *bearing OUR sorrows*, who is hanging there. It is God hanging there in infinite self-sacrifice, to let us surely see He sympathizes and loves and cares. Nature tells us of His power; but the cross tells of His love.

“The very God, think, Abib, dost thou think?
So the All-great were the All-loving too;
So through the thunder comes a human voice,
Saying, O heart I made, a Heart beat here,
Face my hands fashioned, see it in myself;
Thou hast no strength, nor mayest conceive of mine,
But love I gave thee, with myself to love,
And thou must love Me, *who hast died for thee.*”

A USE OF THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST.

IT makes God intelligible. "I am that which has been, and which is, and which is to be, and my veil no mortal hath yet drawn aside," was the legend describing God sculptured upon the pediment of one of the most famous temples of ancient Egypt. It is full of that undying longing in human hearts to find out God. It is full, too, of that baffled feeling which must always haunt a merely human search. Who art Thou then, O Lord? has been the question of the ages. Of Thy glory the heavens speak. Thou fillest the spaces with Thy presence. Thou makest the universe Thy temple. From Thee all things proceed; to Thee all things at last return. But who art Thou? And back from the immeasurable silence there ever came to man but the tantalizing echo of his own question.

Who by searching can find out God? Can you measure the distances between the stars with an inch rule? Can you vanquish the night's darkness by the flash of a glow-worm? Can what is finite stretch itself to the comprehension of the infinite? Who by searching can find out God? If God tarry there hidden in the recesses of His own Infinity, I can never find Him out, and my heart's hunger is but smitten into deeper famine. But if God descend to my finite level, if He stoop within the range of my narrower capacity, if He stand before me in my human nature, a being intelligible to me in a brother's shape, if He look upon me out of human eyes, and grasp me with human hands, and speak to me in such language as my finiteness must use,—then the veil which hides Him, He has drawn aside. Then the longing in me to know God is met and answered.

In Rome there is a wonderful fresco by Guido, called the Aurora. It glows upon a lofty ceiling. Standing on the pavement, and looking upward at it, your neck stiffens, your

head grows dizzy, the figures get mazy and indistinct. But the owner of the palace has placed a broad mirror near the floor. You may sit down before that, and study the wondrous picture reflected in it. There is no longer stretch and strain and dizziness and indistinctness and inability. This divine, yet human Christ is the mirror of Deity for us. He is the express image of the Godhead standing with us in our humanity. He interprets God to our longing hearts. In Him God becomes intelligible. There is something vast and vague and difficult to grasp in the name and thought of God Almighty. But the Lord Jesus — God in our own nature — one like ourselves, a child as we have been, and showing us what childhood ought to be in that home at Nazareth; carrying the burdens of a public life as we must, and showing us how to carry them; standing in the place of temptation as we must, and pointing out the method of our victory; lending His presence to our feasts, and telling us therefore, that feasts are rightful even in this

sad world; going with His sweet speech and tender touch to our funerals, and so letting us know that our worst grief is within His knowledge, and since it brings His presence, that grief even can become a most blessed sacrament; going before us into death, and then flinging the light of His resurrection back all along the dreaded way, — our Lord Jesus, how loving, how long-suffering, how sacrificing, and yet how right and just; our Lord Jesus, — not distant from us, not apart from us as by chasm impassable, but close to us, braided into our human relations through this human nature which He shares with us. Oh, He is not vast and vague and difficult to grasp. He gives reality to our thoughts of God, for He is God, stooping to brotherhood with us, that our little thoughts may get on Him some veritable and valuable hold.

LEAVING THE FISHING NETS.

CONSECRATION is the first step in a real Christianity. In Rome there stands the Pantheon. It used to be a temple for all the gods. Round its circular sides were niches in which were placed images of the various deities worshipped by the various nations which Rome had conquered. That temple was a place of blended worships. Mr. Bayne tells us that when adherents to the Lord Jesus began to start rumors of the new religion, the Roman Senate passed a decree consecrating a niche in this temple for all the gods to Him. But Christ enters no Pantheon. The whole temple must be His, or He will have none of it.

It is in such an attitude, precisely, that Christ stands at the door of every heart. He is its rightful Lord. He will share dominion

with no other. The heart must yield all to Christ, or it has not yielded at all. Every whit must be given, or none is given. Christ must be the unquestioned owner of the soul. In Him must its affections centre. To Him must its powers be dedicated. Everything which gathers round it — time, position, learning, influence, money — must gather round Him who is the soul's deeper centre. Said Paul, "I am the slave of Christ." No less word than that can express the depth and fulness and thoroughness of the consecration Christ demands.

"An entire consecration embraces three things — being, doing, suffering — that we must be willing to be, to do, to suffer, all that Christ requires. This embraces reputation, friends, property, time. It includes body, mind, and soul. These are to be used only where and when Christ requires, and only as He requires."

The seal of the Baptist Missionary Union tells the truth admirably. There is an altar, from which ascends the smoke of sacrifice.

There is a plough, and leaning against the plough, a yoke. Beside the two stands an ox; and this is the motto written underneath: "Ready for either," — to burn on the altar as a sacrifice, to toil in the furrow with the yoke and plough. But say the word, and either shall be done, O Lord. Neither myself nor my service is my own — all is Thine.

Such a consecration is the first step in Christianity. If you hesitate here, the Christian way shuts up against you adamantine gates. Where the gates open, self must die.

Said Jesus to the fishermen, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Mark the record: "And straightway they left their nets, and followed Him." Notice, too, that just when Jesus spoke they were casting their nets into the sea, — were in the act of fishing, were probably just beginning their daily toil. Never mind: the nets were dropped; there was instant obedience. They left their nets and followed Him.

No man can be a Christian who has not, in effect, left his fishing-nets. They are

Christ's, not his. If Christ permit him to go on with his fishing, well; he will do it for Christ's sake. If the nets must rot upon the shore, be it so; they are Christ's, let them rot.

There never can be a real following which does not begin in a consecration coincident with the entire circle of one's being.

THE DIVINE DEFENCE.

IN the twenty-third Psalm the sweet singer sings, amid the valley-of-death shade, "Thy rod comforts me."

Get a true idea of this word translated "rod," and at once a beautiful meaning of Divine defence comes out. The word means, literally, *club*, or *mace*. It is a great stout bludgeon, — a most formidable tool of defence. It was made, usually, of the tough wood of the oak. Swelling out from the handle was a great, thick, rounded head. This head was often further armed by the driving into it of heavy iron nails. Grasped by a strong hand, and wielded by a strong arm, the bludgeon, or mace, as you can see, would be a most strong weapon with which the shepherd could beat off assailants of the flock.

And the shepherd had need enough to use this mace, for his flock had many enemies. Fierce Syrian bears and powerful hunting leopards prowled often through those valleys amid the Judean mountains, called in the poetic language of the Hebrews, valleys of the shadow of death. Hyenas shrieked, and jackals yelled through them. The cobra, and also the cerastes, or horned viper, would often dart up through the rocks of the wilderness, and strike suddenly at some part of the shepherd's flock. There were also, lurking about, great yellow vipers, and whitish-yellow scorpions. And, circling through the air, and hovering over the flock, and vigilant for a chance to swoop on some tender lamb and bear it off to some eyrie on the mountain heights, wheeled with strong flight, and watched with keen eye, the immense and formidable lammergeier, or vulture. Besides, as well, banditti threatened, — the Bedouins, their hand against every man and every man's hand against them; these rangers of the wilderness, ambuscaders amid its rocks, who

lived by pillage, were a constant menace to the shepherd and his flock. He had need enough, then, for his stalwart club, or mace, which in the Psalm is translated "rod." He must smite at bears and leopards, hyenas and jackals with it. He must dash down hissing serpents with it; he must beat back sharp-taloned, vast-winged vultures with it; he must stand between his flock and prowling, predatory banditti with it. This mace, in the shepherd's grip, was his flock's defence.

So the singer in the Psalm takes up the figure and sings how strong, glad comfort is in his heart (though he must walk amid the valley of the death-shade) because the Jehovah-Shepherd's mace is his defence. And now what source of comfort here; the Shepherd-Lord defends! He defends by the great and masterful mace of His atonement. There is no need that I detail the dangers threatening, — the prowling, predatory world, flesh, devil; the smiting penalties of sin. But between God's saints and the dangers crowding around them is the mace of the Lord's

atonement. What a comfort for them in the fact that this is their defence.

I freely confess I cannot understand the force of that objection so often made against our Lord's atonement, that it is out of the analogy of nature, and contrary to the order of things, and therefore cannot be believed, and so cannot yield comfort. On the other hand, it seems to me the one thing which fits precisely in with the analogy of things; it is precisely that which was to be expected from a loving God.

Did you read, sometime since, in the newspapers, of brave Kate Shelley? On the 6th of July, 1881, just as the sun went down, a most devastating storm of wind and rain smote the country around the town of Boone, Iowa. In an hour's time the Des Moines River rose six feet. Before the fierce force of the wind many buildings fell. Kate was looking out of the window of her home, and saw, through the darkness and storm, a locomotive headlight. In a second it dropped suddenly from sight, and Kate Shelley knew

the Honey-Creek bridge was gone, and that that train had plunged into the emptiness. There was no one at home except her mother and her little brother. She herself was barely turned sixteen.

She knew the evening express-train was due in a little time, and if it were not warned of the destroyed bridge over Honey Creek, it would surely go plunging down into the abyss. She hurried out into the storm. She gained the railroad track, and fast as the force of the terrible wind would let her, she struggled on toward Moingona, — a station about a mile from Honey Creek. To reach Moingona she must cross a trestle-bridge over the Des Moines River, standing unsheltered in the teeth of the storm, and fully five hundred feet in length.

She crept upon the bridge. The wind flew at her, the rain dashed at her, the lightning flashed around her, the thunder seemed to tread the very timbers to which she clung and shake them. She almost lost her balance. She just escaped falling through into the

black, raging waters. It was pitch dark. The only light was the lightning's lurid flash, revealing for an instant the slippery timbers, and the seething, dashing, roaring flood below. Not a moment was to be lost. Brave Kate Shelley crept steadily on. She gained the ground on the other side. She sped to the station. She gasped out her story. She fell unconscious. Telegrams flashed along the wires, "Honey-Creek bridge is gone." The express train, crowded with men and women and little children, dashing on, was stopped in time. Brave Kate Shelley had saved them all.

And now, as you think of her crawling along upon the slippery timbers of that trestle-bridge, amid the pitchy blackness of the night, and the flash of the lightning, the roar of the thunder, and against the savage fury of the hurricane, do you not see how she did, really vicariously, take upon herself all the terrible danger threatening that crowded train, and uprearing the mace of her devotion between it and its hazard, did

defend from the hovering, angry peril, the great train?

It was not out of reason that she should do it; it was in accordance with the noblest, sublimest, even celestial reason.

Why should men object to that in the great atonement to which they do not object in a case like this? It is true, indeed, that this taking upon herself all the danger of that great train by Kate Shelley is but the faintest possible type and shadow of that reality when the Good Shepherd bore our sins in His own body on the tree. But now, between those who trust Him and the death and danger of their sin, the Shepherd-Lord uprears the mighty mace of His complete atonement; and how perfectly does He defend them!

Here is constant comfort for the threader of the Valley of the Shadow of Death; over him is lifted the defending mace of the Divine atonement.

INABILITY.

“**B**UT what are these among so many?”
The disciples, there in the wilderness, before the hungry multitude, uttering this real cry of a real inability, are an exact picture of the moral plight of every one of us.

What is all we can do — though we be to the utmost strained — in the presence of the towering moral demands upon us?

In certain realms, and within certain limits, man has, and has rightly, the consciousness of a very great and glorious ability. To this consciousness of ability, in these certain realms and within these certain limits, science in our day is mightily ministering. As never before, man feels himself, and rightfully, the crowned and efficient master of nature.

There, at Thun, they have reared a statue to Copernicus, and sculptured a legend on it, truly telling the magnificent ability of man on

some sides: *Terrae Motor, Solis Coelique Stator*, "The Mover of the Earth, the Establisher of the Sun and Heaven." Copernicus was able for that. He did, and could, flash the light of science into the dark and, until then, entangled mazes of the spheres. He did show that the earth was not the steady centre of the solar system, as man had thought it; but that it was only a small and whirling attendant upon the stable sun.

In this realm of scientific discovery Copernicus was possessed of vast ability, and multitudes of men have, with him, in this sense, been able too.

But when you pass from the realm scientific into the realm moral, then immediately Copernicus, and all other men as well, are bereft of ability. As true as that inscription is on his statue at Thun, telling of the great and noble power which he could wield in the realm of scientific knowledge and discovery, so true is that other inscription, which he asked to have written on his monument in the church at Thun,— so accurately does it

set forth man's moral weakness and inability: "I crave not the favor which Paul received, nor the grace wherewith Thou didst pardon Peter; I only pray for that which Thou didst bestow from the cross upon the thief."

Copernicus was so able, in one direction, that he could see into and seize the mechanism of the planets careering in their orbits through the spaces. But Copernicus was consciously so unable in the realm which has to do with the Divine law and the Divine requirements that he could be, there, but a humble suppliant upon the benignant grace of God.

Now, the danger is that, because man feels himself possessed of such ability in the one realm, he will imagine himself strong with an equal ability in the other. But in this last and greater moral realm man is unable. Concerning the best that he can ever do in this moral realm, there is left for him but this despairing cry of a present inability, "But what are these among so many?"

As Christ was the only hope and help for

these disciples, helpless themselves in the emergency of that hungry multitude, so in the moral realm of the searching demands upon him of the exact and awful law, man must turn to Christ. By his sin man has rendered himself unable to keep that law; but his glorious hope and help is — Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

THE SUCCEEDING THING.

TOO much is our Christianity anxious about its beginnings, and careless about its subsequent growth and reach. Too much, comparatively, is there a straining after conversion; too little, comparatively, is there endeavor after succeeding maturity and ripeness. We are all the time seeking by various religious appliances just to get people out of Egypt. We are all the time too unconcerned as to whether these people go on to conquer Canaan for the Lord. The continual cry and call from pulpit and from Sabbath-school is "Come to Christ," — as it ought to be; but the call having been answered, the too great tendency is, both toward ourselves and those around us, to think duty done, and to forget that now, having come to Jesus, the reign of Jesus is to be extended inwardly over the entire soul, and outwardly over the entire life.

But Canaan reached was not Canaan conquered. The deliverance from Egypt, and the wilderness discipline, had but brought the children of Israel up to the rugged duty of the conquest. When they stood on the borders of the promised land, they had but begun their work.

What is conversion? It is aptly symbolized in the earlier history of the Israelites. They had left Egypt; they had passed through the wilderness; they had reached Canaan. And so a converted man has turned away from the Egyptian tyranny of sin; has passed through a longer or shorter wilderness of doubt and struggle; has reached the beginning of the Canaan life in Jesus. But the man converted is by no means the man sanctified. He has turned toward Jesus; he has not yet conquered for Jesus. All the deliverance and discipline of conversion but brings him up to this grand duty of the conquest of the self for Christ.

For this converted soul is a soul preoccupied notwithstanding. Hostile aliens have

long had residence within him. Yet, through all his borders dwell Hittites, Amorites, Ammonites, Midianites, Perizzites. They are not willingly dispossessed. They do not at once surrender their fortresses and yield their sway. Pride is in the soul. By that I do not mean a lofty self-respect, disdainng meanness; I mean a swollen arrogance which will accept no higher reason than its own, which is complacent with conceit even at the bar of conscience. And Vanity is in the soul, which, as a sponge sucks water, is always absorbing praise, whether it be deserved or not, anxious about seeming rather than about being. And Jealousy is in the soul, breaking with God's great truth of brotherhood; shooting darts at others; greedy of the good which others gain. And Covetousness is in the soul, narrow, unpitying, prompting to dishonest courses. And Passionateness is in the soul, flaming forth with unholy fury; and Discontent, petulant evermore, because not treated better. And Fear is in the soul, feeding itself on unbelief;

and Bad Habit too, building its prisons and forging its chains. And hosts of other aliens. These have possessed the soul, and are standing ranked against the entrance and the victory of the new life.

But listen, as Paul shall tell us the meaning of the Christian warfare: "Casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity *every thought to the obedience of Christ.*" And this is the thing which the spiritual Israelite must do. Standing with conversion behind him, and with this great duty at his front, he must dispossess these aliens altogether; he must make thorough conquest of himself for Jesus.

While we cannot be too anxious about the beginning of the new life in any soul, let us not forget the equal need of its advance and gathering power and undiminished triumph. That only is a genuine Conversion which goes on into Transformation! This is the succeeding thing.

SCRIPTURAL FAITH.

“ The just shall live by faith.”

SEEK to get at the meaning of this great duty which is so much insisted on in Scripture. As faith has been analyzed, it has been found to consist of three elements: —

First, — The Intellectual Element.

We are told in the Epistle to the Hebrews, “ He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him ; ” and again, in James, “ Thou believest there is one God, thou doest well ; the devils also believe, and tremble.” In order that there be faith, there must be something upon which the intellect may lay hold. If I say I have faith in God, I must be intellectually sure there is a God. So, as a beginning of my faith, I must have a reason for my faith. It is impossible that

my faith stand on nothing. It is impossible that I make a jump into vacancy and call that faith. I use a wrong word; that is not faith, — it is credulity.

It is often said there is an opposition between faith and reason. That cannot be true, for intellectual reason must be the ground of faith. As a pedestal on which faith is to stand, there must always be a *because*.

I have faith that the steamer lying at the dock will carry me safely across the sea to Europe; and I have faith in her because there are a multitude of *because*s for my faith, — her buoyancy, her strength, the power of her engines, the trustworthiness of her crew, the intelligence and the skill of her captain. Standing on these *because*s, I rise into the belief that I could make a safe voyage in her. Otherwise I could not have that belief. Otherwise my faith would have nothing to stand upon.

So with a faith toward God; there must be *because*s under its feet. I must be intellectually certain that God is. I must have

the devils' certainty that there is one God, anyway. There must, at least, be this intellectual, reasonable element in it; that is the first thing.

But there is a second element in faith by which the just live; that is — The Emotional Element.

If my faith go no further than simply an intellectual assent that God is, then I have gone no further than the devils' faith. I have not reached the faith by which the just live. I must not only be intellectually convinced that God is, and that He has made provision for my needs in the grace that is in Jesus Christ, but I must be so emotionally convinced that my heart shall consent to Him and to His provision. The assent of the intellect must pass on into the consent of the heart. Thus I do not simply believe that because the steamer is what she is I might make a safe voyage to Europe in her, but I am willing to stand upon her deck and intrust myself to her buoyancy, strength, trustworthy crew, skilful captain.

I have now taken a step far ahead of what James calls the faith of devils. I do not simply, by the head, assent to the fact that there is one God; I am willing with my heart to consent to that God as my Ruler, Father, and Provider of grace in Jesus Christ.

But there is a third element in this faith by which the just live, that may not be lost sight of, — The Voluntary Element.

Let me again allude to my illustration. Because of the buoyancy, strength, and navigating intelligence in care of the steamer, I have arrived at the intellectual faith that she could carry me safely to Europe. That is the first step. Because of this intellectual faith, this faith founded on reasons, I make consent emotionally with my heart, and I say I am willing to intrust myself to her for the voyage; that is the second step. But now I pass from the passive state of being willing, to the active state of *willing*. I cross the gang-plank. I stand upon her decks. I remain on her while she pushes outward into the stream. I am not only willing to trust

her — I *will* to trust her. That is the third, the crowning step — the voluntary step.

And now toward God, this is the faith by which the just live. Faith begins in intellectual assent to the fact that God is, and that He has made provision for us in Jesus Christ. Faith passes on into an emotional consent of the heart, and willingness to accept Him as my God, and to intrust myself to the provision He has made for me in Jesus Christ.

Faith is crowned by a voluntary, a personal, an active willing to know Him as my God, and to take for my own the grace furnished me in Jesus.

This then is faith, by which the just live. It is *assent* of the intellect; it is *consent* of the heart; it is personal and voluntary *choice* of that to which my head assents, and my heart consents; this is Scriptural, saving faith.

THE PREPARED LIFE.

A GREAT lesson which the parable of the Ten Virgins urges is the necessity of the prepared life.

One thing is certain as are the courses of the stars,—you cannot live with permanent and noble results a life extemporaneous, which goes on in careless fashion, from hand to mouth, which has gathered into itself no strong resource with which to meet the crises, opportunities, responsibilities which the coming days are sure to bring. Butterfly men can never be successful men.

A log-cabin of the humblest out in a Western wilderness; skins flapping in the door-frame to keep out a little the winter cold; bare rough logs for walls; rude split logs for floor; rough stones daubed with coarse mortar, reaching up into a chimney of mud and sticks, for fireplace and hearth-stone.

In that cabin a fragile woman, smitten with consumption, bent to the dust under the hardships of her pioneering life, in the scanty intervals of toil calling her boy to her knee and teaching him to read. She sinking into a speedy grave, and her boy motherless. But her boy had learned to read and the sacred thirst for knowledge had been started in him. In that poor cabin these three books at least, the Bible, Æsop's Fables, Pilgrim's Progress, and besides a meagre Life of Washington and a Life of Henry Clay, which the mother had managed to purchase for her boy. These books the boy had read and read again and kept on reading, far into the night often, when the day's hard toil was done, the pine knots in the rude fireplace flinging flickering light upon the pages. The innermost marrow and meaning of the books passed into the mental structure of the boy, came out on his lips in quaint, earnest, truthful, limpid speech. The boy's hunger for knowledge kept unsated. As the years went he heard there was a science called grammar. It came to the

young man's ears that somebody possessed a grammar between seven and eight miles away. The distance was walked. The book was borrowed. The grammar was mastered. Meantime writing had been somehow learned, and then the compressed sense of the few other books which by any means the young man could get chance at was written out clearly and thoughtfully. Then mounting with difficulty into higher branches, he studied mathematics and became surveyor. Then the vision of the law as a path for life rose up before him. He studied while he had bread; started out on a surveying tour that he might earn more; came back to live upon the bread he earned, and study; made of an old tree on a hill near by the poor town in which he lived a place to study in in the summer weather; moved round the tree as the sun moved, that he might have shade; was so much absorbed the people thought him crazy. Meanwhile the young man had sought in every way, by the poor debating clubs at hand, by political speeches on the stump, by

the earnest perusal of such newspapers as, before the days of railroads, came straggling into the frontier town, to perfect himself in the art of speech and to widen the range of his intelligence.

When you think of it carefully you find such apparently meagre training not the worst sort perhaps. For what choicer fountains, after all, of concise, clear, telling, pathetic, enticing speech than our English Bible and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*?

A rude and multifarious log frontier store. This young man, in the interval of other work, the clerk. A woman buying a little bill of goods, amounting by the reckoning to two dollars and six and a quarter cents. The woman going off. The clerk, adding the items of the bill again that he might make sure they were correct, discovers that he has taken six and a quarter cents too much. It is night; the clerk shuts the store; walks three miles and back to give the defrauded customer her exact due. The same store; the same clerk; just at night, at another time,

another woman enters, asking for half a pound of tea. Tea weighed out; paid for; store left for the night. But when the clerk enters the store in the morning he sees by the daylight what he did not see by the dim candle-light, that there is only a four-ounce weight upon the scales. Immediately the young clerk takes a walk of miles before breakfast that he may deliver the remainder of the tea. Humble incidents these. Yes; but mightily real.

This same young man, now at last a lawyer; always seeking to stand upon the right side and the side of the oppressed; never lending himself to making the worse appear the better reason; often deserting a case in mid-trial when he discovers that, through the trick of a client, he is on the wrong side rather than the right.

A sincerely religious man, — not indeed in cant fashion, but profoundly persuaded that God is, that God is to be recognized, prayed to, depended on, served, and that God will surely make the right triumph in the end.

So you see — though we cannot trace it further, for space fails — a very strong, true, earnest, honest character getting itself nurtured and compacted here, amid such apparently hostile environment; and, as well, a brain getting itself brightened and broadened and made sinewy and fitted for tackling the toughest questions, by a culture which, albeit not of the schools, is yet a culture which has had in it the making of a man.

So that when Abraham Lincoln is confronted by the awful chaos and conflict of the Civil War, his is no untrained hand and unprepared which is set to grasp the helm of the ship of state. Just such a man was needed for that sad and tasking time as Mr. Lincoln, all unconscious of his great destiny, had fitted himself to become, — a man of wide practical knowledge; of the deftest and kindest skill; of speech so clear and at the same time so quaint and homely that when he spoke the nation had to listen; of a willowy strength of body and of mind the heaviest burdens could not break; of an

honesty so unquestioned that even enemies must trust him; of a patience like the charity which Paul commends, enduring all things, hoping all things, never failing; of a faith which carried serene front in the blackest storms. The man and the time met, but they met because the man had become fitted for the time. A hap-hazard, wind-driven, careless, lounging sort of life could never have given issue to a manhood great enough for the tremendous duty of those red and awful days.

And I am sure you assent to what I say. I am sure you answer me, "Yes, the principle that there must be somehow personal fitness for the meeting of crises and the accomplishment of duty, illustrated so signally in the history of Abraham Lincoln, is a principle which must endure longer even than the most ancient heavens shall continue strong.

Now, it is precisely this principle of prepared and personal fitness for crises and for duty that the parable of the Ten Virgins insists on in the realm of religion. No more

in religion can one get on in slouching and hap-hazard ways. The lamps must have the oil prepared for them if they are to burn brightly instead of pitiably sputtering out. And men are wise or foolish as they, in view of the duties and crises of life and the awful certainties of death and judgment, have prepared or have neglected to prepare the oil.

CHRIST OUR PROPHET.

IN the old days Moses prophesied of Christ as Prophet. You will find the prophecy in the eighteenth chapter of Deuteronomy and at the fifteenth verse. In the new days we find Peter taking up this venerable prediction and declaring it fulfilled in Christ. Peter is preaching to the multitude thronging the Beautiful gate of the Temple, and just now hushed into awe by the healing of the man lame from his mother's womb: "And God shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you," says Peter; "for Moses truly said unto the fathers, a Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren like unto me; Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever He shall say unto you." So this predicted prophet is Jesus Christ.

Now this prophet side of our Lord's work toward us is most important. We very much miss the meaning of this grand prophet office by confining it to a single function. With us, too much, a prophet means merely one who foretells future events. That was an element in the prophetic function, but it was not the only element, it was even a subordinate one. More than the mere predictor of events to come, the prophet was the authoritative declarer of the truth of God, for the present as well as for the future. Here was his prime office. The prophet was a revealing, and an authoritative *Teacher*. And this He is sinless, authoritative, infallible, highest, is Christ's chief province as our prophet-crowned Teacher of the truth of God to men.

Now as prophet in this great sense of teacher Christ meets an utmost human need. How much I have thought of it since another directed my attention to it. See that statue of the dying gladiator, holding your eye there in the museum of the capitol at Rome; that is not only a most wonderful piece of sculp-

ture, but it is a mighty symbol. A dying gladiator, — and so a picture of the wronged and suffering and unillumined heathen world, of the men who, for their holiday, could have no loftier or more thrilling pleasure than the causeless butchering of their fellows. See how, as his side is pierced and his life-blood drained away, his head is bowed helpless to the earth. To the *earth*, and to that only. He knows of nothing higher; he can conceive of nothing worthier. To the earth his head droops; he looks toward no nobler, lordlier life to come. To the earth, — his life beginning there must end there. To the earth, — and as he sinks downward and still downward, this is the story he tells you, as one has put it, “Only the earth to look to in dull despair; only the earth on which to fall; only the earth into which to be trampled.”

And as I range in memory through those halls of ancient sculpture, through those remains of that wonderful, strong, yet untaught of God and unillumined and sad heathen life, I am struck by this peculiarity, that none of

those statues are *upward-looking*. As I remember them they are almost all, if not all, downward-looking or simply forward-looking. They tell of nothing better than the earth. They speak, gazing upward to it, of no arching and opening heaven. There is never a look as of a higher revelation falling on their faces. They seem to know simply of this life—nothing beyond it. For them the Prophet Christ had not appeared. Of His shining and authoritative revelation they were untaught.

But when you pass from the heathen style of sculpture into the Christian, at once you recognize an immense difference. Now the main look is not earthward, it is upward. Think of the rude sculptures of the catacombs; think of the statues of the saints and martyrs thronging the old churches,—theirs is the upward look. From earth toward heaven their heads are lifted. They have seen the Prophet Christ. He has disclosed heaven to them. He has taught them that there is more for them than this poor earth.

He has told them of the soul and of the Father-God, and of the eternal brightness. This utmost human need the Prophet Christ has met; that which men could not of themselves discover, He has authoritatively declared,—that this life may be but as the meagre vestibule of an infinitely grander life to come; that now there may be for men, amid the trials and distresses of this present life, the ascent of prevailing prayer and the descent of a divine and enabling strength. The Prophet Christ has rendered possible for man the upward look.

In all my life I have met no drearier book than Mr. Cross's life of George Eliot. How steadily she keeps her gaze earthward. From the time when she turned her back upon Christianity I can remember no upward look in all its pages. Indeed, how could there be? For her God was an impossibility; immortality a poor dream; the only thing left was this swift, failing life, rounded by a sleep. Oh, how dreary and unprofitable this earth must be if it be the kind of earth George Eliot

declared it to be. But it is not. How strange it was she would not see the Prophet Christ. I look at him, and with revealing finger he points from the little earth to the great heaven. So there can be given me a look onward, upward. Let me rejoice in the revelation of the Prophet Christ. Let me be thankful for the possibility he has brought me of the upward look.

HOW THE LORD HELPS.

ABOUT seven miles north by east of Jerusalem, there widens a steep and rocky valley running from east to west. Into it, from the northern side, there shoots a jagged angle. This advanced height the Philistines had seized and garrisoned as an outpost. Its name was Michmash.

About a mile away from this Philistine outpost, and on the southern and opposite side of the deep valley, stood Geba, — a post held now by the Israelites under the command of Saul and Jonathan.

We may be sure that each force scrutinized the other with close attention, separated as they were but by the distance of a mile, and with the valley lying low between them.

The Israelites were in sorry plight. The Philistines, in their overrunning of the country, had to a degree disarmed the people;

taken special care to carry the smiths captive, that new arms might not be manufactured, and that such dull spears and arrows as were left might not be sharpened. Many of the Israelites, in despair, had turned clean traitors, and gone over to the Philistines. Saul's army had crumbled to a poor six hundred, and the hearts of these were wavering.

But one morning, as in the early light the Hebrew watchmen look across the valley to the tents on Michmash, they discover a most strange commotion. In the gray of the early morning nothing can be seen with accuracy; but it grows clearer that some sort of a conflict is going on. What tumult can it be? Had the Philistines fallen out among themselves? Had any from their own company, all unadvised, undertaken some desperate adventure?

Immediate muster is made, and it is found that Jonathan and his armor-bearer are absent. So it gets certain that Jonathan has, somehow, some hand in that strange Philistine turmoil.

Well, the way of it was this: Jonathan cannot stand this dilly-dally longer. Something must be done. Doing anything is better than doing nothing. Jonathan will say nothing to his father, Saul, about it, for in such desperate strait it must be desperate venture.

And Jonathan said to the young man that bore his armor: "Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that the Lord will work for us; for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few."

There is a noble contagion in a real faith. The heart of the armor-bearer grows strong and consecrated, too. He makes swift answer, "Do all that is in thine heart; turn thee; behold, I am with thee according to thine heart."

So the two men lay their plan together. They will move wisely and warily even in a faith venture. A true faith never discounts the utmost skill and wisdom the circumstances admit. It is only an egotistical and blear-eyed fanaticism which does that.

They commit the whole matter to the Lord.

There — in front of that Michmash promontory — is another spur of rock outjutting, called Bozez. They will attempt their climb at that place, for the projection of this rock will conceal them till a good portion of their clambering has been finished.

Besides, they will test somewhat the mood of these Philistines. It is no part of a genuine faith to fling itself into a sheer uselessness. If, when they discover themselves to the Philistines, the Philistine sentinels should say, "Halt! wait till we come to you," and should go forth toward them, it would show that the Philistines were ready for assault, were in the mood for courage, and that attack could not turn out well. If, on the other hand, the Philistine sentinels should shout, "Come up to us!" it would show that the Philistines were in somewhat craven spirits, were lurking behind entrenchments, were not ready for open fight. And this might be taken as a fair sign that God was

with these daring Hebrews, and that a sudden and bold stroke might smite sudden terror into craven hearts.

So, amid the mists of the earliest morning, the two men begin their sublime faith venture.

Under the concealing shadow of Bozez, and with great difficulty, for the way is mightily rough, the two men climb on and up. At length they are discovered by the Philistine sentinels. "Behold, the Hebrews come forth out of the holes where they had hid themselves," they say to each other. But in a kind of want of courage which keeps them behind their battlements, they shout, derisively, to the two men, "Come up to us and we will show you a thing!"

At such propitious omen of a kind of fear on the part of the Philistines, the heart of Jonathan waxes doubly strong. "Come up after me," he whispers to his armor-bearer, "for the Lord hath delivered them into the hand of Israel."

Swiftly, on hands and knees, the two men

climb on. They reach the summit. They do not hesitate. With stalwart blows, on every side, they lay about them. Before the Philistines can recover from their surprise twenty of them have fallen. Onward march the heroes. It is in the gray and misty morning. The sentinels have been stricken down. How many of the Hebrews have forced their way into this Michmash, deemed inaccessible and invincible, the Philistines cannot know. A panic seizes them. In the gray light and in the great confusion the Philistines cannot distinguish friend from foe. They fall upon each other. They become their own destroyers. Riot and ruin capture them. Just then an earthquake shudders. Their hearts quake. They are fleeing like sheep.

It is this commotion which Saul sees, leaning his gigantic stature against his tall, strong spear, beneath the pomegranate tree which is in Migron, upon the heights of Geba; it is this he sees, getting what glimpses he can of it, in the dim, morning light, and between the swaying wreaths of morning mists.

No moment may be lost. Saul summons his followers. They dash across the valley. They scale the other side. Now that the tide has turned, craven hearts become courageous. From the caves and holes whither the soldiers of Saul's decaying army have been slinking, they come forth. Those who had deserted to the Philistines remember their loyalty and lay about them at the retreating hosts. Saul's army is swelling every moment. He plunges into the mêlée. The Philistines melt away as snow-drifts before spring suns.

So the Lord saved Israel that day; and the battle passed over unto Beth-aven.

So. How? There is wonderful suggestion here of the way of the Divine help.

Mediately, not immediately; not through sheer downfall of the Divine power, scattering the Philistines, but through Jonathan, putting forth his consecrated energy in attacking the Philistines. When will men learn that this is always the way of the Divine help, always instrumentally, never in the way of a simply supernatural fashion. Regeneration

through the truth. Prayer answered *through* obedient attempt. Men won to Jesus *through* personal contact with them. What is the reason that a church of, say, five hundred members can go on year after year and report but here and there a sporadic conversion? The reason is plain, — the membership does not *go for* the unconverted; it listens to its sermons, sings its songs, prays its prayers, gives its gifts; but the exception is that a member of that church really attacks another man for Jesus.

Through *faith* God helps. “Let us go to these *uncircumcised*,” said Jonathan. He knew that God’s promises for the possession of Canaan were for him, the Israelite, and not for them. Jonathan dared *risk* on the promises. Romaine’s new year’s wish for his people was, “God grant this may be a year famous for believing.” Oh, if *this* might be such a year for Christians, what a year of prevailing against the Philistines it would be!

“And so you really expect to make impression upon the Chinese empire?” asked

the sceptical merchant of the missionary Morrison, who had taken passage to China on his ship. "No, sir; but I expect God will," was the calm, confident reply.

Through the *hard work* of Jonathan, God saved Israel. It was rough climbing for him; he had to clamber on hands and knees; but because it was hard he did not refuse.

Through the help his *armor-bearer rendered Jonathan*, God saved Israel. That is what a Society of Christian Endeavor may be to a pastor, his armor-bearer. How mightily does a pastor's heart leap when he hears such a Jonathan saying to him, "Turn thee; behold, I am with thee according to thy heart."

Through the *contagion of high example* God saved Israel. The bold stroke of Jonathan and his armor-bearer was powerful not only against the Philistines, but, as well, in their own army. It put courage into the fearful. It reached deserters. It turned the day.

If you and some one with you are the only ones in all your church who will attempt

aggressive work, — personal speech to men, visitation from house to house, tract distribution, the invitation to the sanctuary, — go forth; in God's name, go forth. Your example shall win and hearten others.

So the Lord saved Israel that day.

A LIFE LESSON.

WHAT a fair young life looks out upon us from the window of this ancient Scripture: "Joseph being seventeen years old was feeding the flock with his brethren." This is the first mention of him, save only the record of his birth some chapters back. But the life, whose story is thus introduced, fills nearly all the spaces of the remaining chapters of Genesis. In the old picture-gallery of this earlier Scripture, there is no portrait which stands less dimmed by time, and more inspiring with noble teaching than this of Joseph. It is a fair, young life which we see now. Into how strange a future does it gaze with its earnest, hopeful eyes.

Not such a future, I am sure, as it imagined, thinking of what the years might bring it, there amid the flocks of Jacob. It thought

great things for itself, — about mastery over brethren, and a sun-like destiny, as youth always does. Why should not youth? For it, the world is wide, and time is vast, and hope sees rainbows where more chastened eyes can behold only the dark clouds, with no color painted on their flanks. But such life as he really met and mastered, I am sure not Joseph even dreamed.

As I think of it there comes to me the memory of a scene I saw once in the far West. From the summit of Mount Washburne, in the Yellowstone National Park, I first beheld it, — that smooth, celestial bit of water, the Yellowstone Lake. It lay there in the clasp of the green hills, mirroring all the heavens in its quiet bosom. How peacefully forth from its portals flowed the Yellowstone River! How it wound its silver gleam for a little through the level prairie! “I wonder if those waters know to what they are coming,” I remember I asked myself; for there, within my sight, was the awful gorge of the Yellowstone, into whose depths, in such a little time, the

river fell, with all its peace shattered by the plunge into foam and roar and trouble. And from that leap, the river knows no smoothness for many a mile. It is caught in rapids. It is fretted by cataracts. It is hindered by vast stones, which the frosts have wrenched from mountain sides and flung into its channel. But it gets to the peaceful sea at last, I thought. Yes, it gets there; but along how rough a way! And yet, mastering the roughness, and doing the best it can among the stones, it gets there. God makes a way for it. And God will make a way for us surely. "I will be like the river," I said. "I will do the best I may amid whatever roughness Providence may bring. I will trust God's leading."

"Beyond the frost-chain and the fever
I shall be soon.
Beyond the rock-waste and the river,
Beyond the ever and the never,
I shall be soon.
Love, rest and home, sweet home,
Lord, tarry not, but come."

That river taught me much.

Like that river was the life of Joseph. It started, how peacefully; it fell, how soon into plunges and rocks and rapids of trouble! But better than the peace of the beginning was the peace of the ending. A grand and noble life was behind that ending; a life which overcame instead of being overcome.

Like Joseph's life, in the most real of senses, must yours and mine be too. It must find its falls and rocks. God grant it may find as grand an ending. It shall, if we but meet the rocks as manfully and as religiously as Joseph did.

THE WORLD'S SPRING.

THERE is something inexpressibly delightful to me in the days of the early spring. The tenderer blue in the arching heavens; the softer, more transparent folds in the white tents of the clouds; the steady thickening of the tracery of the twigs against the sky as the buds bulge on them; the purple flower of the maple and the dangling tassels of the poplar and the hazel; the picket-guards of the great army of the birds sent on ahead, — the exquisite note, so softly sweet, of the song sparrow, the flash of the blue-bird's wing, the bright uniform of the meadow-lark, as he struts among the greening grass with his breast of gold and collar of black and wings with their white margins; and here and there a leaf of the hardier sort, pushing its verdure bravely out into the air

not quite cleaned of its winter chill, yet with its edge rounded by a touch of warmth.

Yes, there is a deep great gladness in the early spring-time. Winter with its ice and with its death is all behind, and busily the spring is rearing appropriate vestibule for the glorious summer.

It made no difference — it could not hinder the real gladness of the time — even though, as when I was walking in an early spring, a heavy, spiteful cloud flung snow-flakes at me. They were but last and retreating efforts. The power of such clouds was broken. The spring with its deep gladness was really around me.

Thus it was with the disciples. For them a great, glad, spiritual spring had burst. They had been caught in a winter most terrible and desolate. They had been bitten to their deepest hearts with iciest chill. All the leaves of their fair hopes had fallen; and on their whole spiritual landscape the thickest drifts of the snows of hopelessness had piled themselves. They had trusted that their

Master had been He who should have redeemed Israel. They had followed Him for three years in constantly growing expectation. They had heard Him speak as man never spake. They had seen Him do as man never did, — cast demons out; put sceptre into the hand of health and dispossess disease from many a sickness-tortured body; even send authoritative voice far down into the rotting prison-house of death, and command the prisoner back into life, and with not so much as the touch of the fire of death on any of his garments. Surely, death could never capture *Him*. Surely, Pharisee and Sadducee might plot, and Sanhedrim might sentence, and the Roman Pilate might sanction the execution of the sentence, but certainly death could not touch Him, the Master. In the last extremity He would, by a simple word, make Death crouch helpless at His feet. Surely it was He — the promised One, the One for whom the weary centuries had been waiting — who should restore the kingdom to Israel.

But on that Friday afternoon they had seen

death grimly capture even Him. Men had crucified Him. They had gashed his side. They had spilled His heart out. If any one had ever died, in humanity's long experience of death, He had died utterly. Tenderly the disciples had taken the dead body from that cross. Lovingly they had buried it in that new tomb. Against the tomb's mouth the great stone had been rolled and sealed. It was all over. He was dead and buried, and *a mighty winter had wrapped them round.*

But oh, wonder of wonders! Oh, the quick melting of the snows! Oh, the swift bursting of the leaves, and the time of the singing of the birds!

“At evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, ‘Peace be with you.’ And when He had so said He showed unto them His hands and His side. *Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.*”
What matter if still snows of persecution

might be flung at them from baffled, hating Pharisee and Sadducee. Let them fling at them such snows. Still their power was broken. The disciples' spring had come. Their joy no man could take from them. *Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.*

So, also, albeit the world knew it not, the *world's* spring had broken. It had been a dreary winter into which the world had fallen. For centuries the world had been trying to get on of itself, apart from God. In many ways the world had been trying to help itself. It had tried *culture*, as at Athens, but that had failed. Art had shone as art has since shone never. Cultivated reason had, to the utmost, tasked itself. Socrates had guessed, and Plato had thought. But Stoic said, There is only an infinite fate; and Epicurean said, There is only an infinite carelessness; and Sophist said, The best thing you can do is to play skilfully with words. And men were weary with their sin, and dumb in the presence of the great questions of life, and sin, and death, and of the

other life, which they could not help asking, but for which they could win no answer.

The world had tried *government*, as at Rome. But steadily, as the years went, liberty had become more and more the thrall of tyranny, until now in the single mailed hand of the Roman Emperor the fortunes of the world were grasped, and all men hung helpless upon his single nod.

The world had tried *war*; and war had only avenged with its awful desolation. The world had tried *luxury*; but—

“ On that hard Pagan world disgust
And sated loathing fell ;
Deep weariness and sated lust
Made human life a hell.
In his cool hall with haggard eyes
The Roman noble lay ;
He drove abroad in furious guise
Along the Appian way ;
He made a feast, drank fierce and fast,
And crowned his head with flowers ;
No easier, nor no quicker passed
The impracticable hours.”

This was what men said: “ It is better to stand than to walk, better to sit than to stand,

better to lie down than to sit, better to sleep than to wake; better is a dreamless sleep than dreams; death is better than even a dreamless sleep; and never to have been is best of all." This was what men said: —

“ For we are all, like swimmers in the sea,
Poised on the top of a huge wave of fate,
Which hangs uncertain to which side to fall.
And whether it will heave us up to land,
Or whether it will roll us out to sea, —
Back out to sea, to the deep waves of death, —
We know not, and no search will make us know;
Only the event will teach us in its hour.”

This was what men said, as did the Emperor Tiberius, whom Pliny calls “ *tristissimus, ut constat, hominum* ” (confessedly the most gloomy of mankind), — as did the Emperor Tiberius to the Roman Senate, from that island of Capreae, shining like an emerald upon the sapphire waters of the Bay of Naples, with the whole world under tribute to bring him pleasure: “ What to write to you, Conscript Fathers, or how to write or what to write, — may all the Gods and God-

esses destroy me worse than I feel that they are daily destroying me if I know."

It was a dreary winter into which the world had fallen. But though the world knew it not as yet, its spring had really come — now that Jesus was risen from the dead. For He was God's answer to the world's deepest questions. His atoning blood was the fountain open for the cleansing of the world's sin. His gospel was the cure for the world's evils. His life, in the Resurrection seen to be mightier than the world's death, was the invulnerable proof that man might rise from this poor earth to heaven.

Ah, for deeper reasons than it was then possible for them then to know, might the disciples and all the world be glad as they saw the risen Lord. Their spring had come.

A TEST OF BEING CHRISTIAN.

I HAVE been impressed lately with the apostolic insistence upon the fact of *change* as a test of the possession of the Christian life.

For example, Paul tells the Thessalonians that they were "ensamples," because they had "*turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God.*"

Immediately this test of *change* came out in them.

When Dr. Judson was held in such cruel captivity at Rangoon, and when his heroic wife was contriving to save his life by smuggling food and drink to him in his prison, and Dr. Judson was held there prisoner until the English army took the city and set the prisoners free, then Havelock was

lieutenant in that army, and was a praying lieutenant, as he was afterwards a praying general.

No sooner was the city captured than Havelock sought out a fit place for a prayer-meeting. There was a famous temple in a retired grove dedicated to Buddh. Havelock secured, as a place of prayer, one of the chambers in this temple, a large room filled with the images of heathen gods, sitting on every side with their legs crossed and arms folded in their laps.

One day another officer, strolling round the temple, thought he heard the sound of English singing. He stopped and listened. Strange sound from such a place; but that certainly was a good old English hymn, floating off in a good old English tune. The officer determined to follow the sound; and it led him to this upper chamber, where Havelock, with his Bible and hymn-book before him, surrounded by more than a hundred of his soldiers, was holding a prayer-meeting.

The room was very dark; but every idol

had a lamp in his lap, shedding more light than idol had ever done before.

The heathen temple had been turned to the true service of the true God.

Symbol, that, of the change which a real religion must produce in human hearts. Though there may be among us no heathen temples, there are yet heathen hearts. I confess I am often staggered in the presence of the mystery, the appalling fact, of the birth into evil; of this centring, as by an irresistible moral destiny, of each heart about something else than God. And yet no fact of life is a more real fact. And just that is idolatry. If the soul seek and gather round anything else than God supremely, that soul is idolatrous. It makes little matter what that something else may be, — whether ambition, which cares only for the glory shining round the self, nothing for God's glory; whether wealth, for the sake of which one prostrates and prostitutes noblest faculties, designed for a higher worship and a higher service; whether fashion, which, fascinated

by the tinsel of an outward adornment, pays no care to the inward dress and grace of soul which God demands; whether evil habit; whether this or that which tends to keep out of the soul's sight and loyalty the living and the loving God, — that is an idol. And the soul which clings to it and bends before it is a soul idolatrous.

And the sad, grim fact about our human life is that naturally, as it is born, and as it runs, something else does always stand in the rightful place of God. Every human heart is, naturally, a temple dedicated to some Buddh or other, rather than to the living God.

Now, a real religion comes to set at rights these carnal hearts of ours; to give God His throne in them. Like that chamber in that heathen temple where Havelock gathered his men to pray, each heart must be changed from the old, and consecrated to a new and nobler worship. And like those heathen idols, each one holding a lamp to help God's worship on, in every heart that which has

been supreme must become subservient; its very idols must be compelled into the service of the true and living God.

Change, then, is a constant and irreversible test of being a Christian. And any sort of religion which comes speaking smooth things about the usual carnal heart and life, counselling that all that is needed is richer and broader culture, is no religion; is but the sham and seeming of it; is only as a surgeon's knife delicately grazing the scab of the cancer instead of probing it to the bottom.

Nothing can be right in any heart till that heart puts God in His rightful place. That only is a true gospel which, first of all, without equivocation, peremptorily demands change, a radical turning from whatever opposes and dishonors God, to God.

THINK IT NOT STRANGE.

IT is noteworthy how largely martial are the Scripture figures setting forth the Christian life. All the possible imagery which war furnishes is laid hold of. The Christian is a warrior. The Christian must be harnessed like a warrior, with the breast-plate of righteousness, shield of faith, helmet of salvation. The Christian must have weapons; he must grasp the sword of the Spirit. The Christian must play the warrior's part, — struggle, endure, overcome. Triumph is to spring out of fight, and put its heel upon the head of enemies that bite the dust.

Now, we are not to think of this necessity of struggle as though some strange thing happened unto us. The Christian life but falls under the dominion of a universal law. Everything that gets up must struggle up.

We may find hints and symbols of this great law everywhere. We are surrounded by the wrestling of rival forces. What is noble can live only by the vanquishment of the less noble. Here is our body, for example. It is pulled earthward by gravitation. If this force of gravitation were unresisted, as is the case when the body dies, we should be dragged to the ground. But the nobler muscular power of life struggles against the attraction of the matter of the globe and overcomes it. Thus we are enabled to stand upright, walk, run, bear burdens.

Here again is a dead body, — what happens now, since death has smitten it? Chemical forces seize at once upon it, break up its tissues, separate the gases of which it is composed. But during life the nobler, vital powers establish the supremacy of a higher chemistry. These very forces which destroy the body, dead, by this higher vital energy are turned from attack upon the substance of the body and are set at work upon the nutriment which it receives, elaborating and build-

ing that up into the living structure. The higher, vital powers triumph. Physical life can be, only as it contends with and vanishes death.

Exactly so the spiritual life can only be, as it is in contest with, and gains victory over, the lower life, — the earthly, the sensual. The Christian life is but another subject of a vast law. It wrests its radiant crown out of the grip of struggle.

THE ANCHOR OF THE SOUL.

WALKING, on a day one summer, through the vast navy-yard of Portsmouth, England, I came upon a street called Anchor Street. There, side by side, in long lines, were laid multitudes of the hugest anchors. You could not look at those immense and grappling flukes, and mighty iron shafts, without a very real feeling of a restful mastery over tides and storms. With her cable fastened to one of those great anchors, and with that anchor getting grip on the bottom of the sea, no lee shore could threaten, or devastating breaker harm the gallant ship.

Do you remember how in the Epistle to the Hebrews we are told of the anchor of the soul? *The anchor of the soul*—what steady, masterful word this, amid the tossings and the changes and the dashing uncertainties of our lives!

And will you notice a peculiarity of this anchor of the soul? We are told *it entereth into that within the veil*. The veil in the old Temple was the symbol of separation between God and man. And in this Scripture about the anchor of the soul, the veil stands for whatever distance, or mystery, or sinfulness may divide and hinder us from God and hide Him from us.

The great navigator Sir Francis Drake made a voyage round the world in the ship "Golden Hind,"—a little vessel of but a hundred and twenty tons. At last, after an absence of two years and ten months, he dropped his anchor in Deptford harbor. The great Queen Elizabeth refused to summon him to her palace to make him knight; but went herself to Deptford, and, standing with her royal feet on the deck of his little but triumphant vessel, laid the sword upon his shoulders, and bade him stand before her henceforth *Sir* Francis Drake. The great Queen knew how, right royally, to reward those who added glory to her crown. And

she gave him a crest he might wear proudly ever after, — a ship in full sail *with a cable running up to Heaven*, an emblem of the Divine guidance which had helped him to do the, till then, unheard-of deed.

Sir Francis' crest is a kind of picture of the Scripture word about this anchor of the soul. For this anchor of the soul is not flung into any sea-bottom; does not go down into any shifting worldly place or thing. But *upward* this anchor of the soul is cast. The hawser which holds this anchor passes up and through the celestial spaces, through every veil of any sort hiding the face of God, and there, in the place of the selectest Divine Presence, the flukes of this anchor of the soul seize and hold to the very buttresses of God's Throne; and this anchor to God's Throne keeps moored even a poor human soul.

Not like a ship driven of the storm, and flung into the black jaws of cruel reefs, where the breakers dash and tear, need any of us be. For we may have a *hope which*

is as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.

Consider, it is a fact that we may have such an anchor of the soul, *because for us has been spoken the Divine promise.* This is the argument of the inspired author of the great Epistle to the Hebrews. This is the key which he is striking all the time, — promise, promise. There are those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. To Abraham God made promise. Not less to you does God make promise. This anchor of the soul is forged of no less stanch iron than the Divine promise. I was talking once with Mr. Spurgeon about prayer. Said the great preacher and master of prevailing prayer: "A man must have a promise behind him in order to prevailing prayer; grip a promise, and a man can pray." Faith is not ecstasy, a rapt and shining mood, a vision on some mountain of transfiguration; these things may be the results of faith, they are not faith itself. Faith is fastening to God's

promise. Take John Bunyan, in his days of spiritual storms and tossings: "I should in these days, often in my greatest agonies, even flounce toward the promise, as the horses do toward the sound ground, that yet stick in the mire; concluding, though, as one almost bereft of his wits through fear, *on this will I rest and stay*, and leave the fulfilling of it to the God of Heaven that made it. Oh, many a pull hath my heart had with Satan for that blessed sixth of John, 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.' I did not now, as at other times, look principally for comfort, though, oh, how welcome would it have been with me! but now a word, a word to lean my weary soul upon, that I might not sink forever! It was that I hunted for." And the anchor of the promise held for buffeted John Bunyan. Oh, tossed one, weary one, here is something that will hold, — this anchor of the soul forged from the promises of God.

Consider, also, it is a fact that we may have an anchor of the soul, *because the Divine*

promise has been ratified to us by the Divine oath. Turn to the argument of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews here: "For when God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself. For men verily swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing *more abundantly*, to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it with an oath." "*By Myself have I sworn,*" said Jehovah to Abraham. As the Jewish legend tells it: "Said Moses reverently to God, 'Hadst Thou sworn by Heaven and earth, I should have said they will perish, and therefore so may Thy oath; but as Thou hast sworn by Thy Great Name, that oath shall endure forever.'" Surely, anchor for the soul here, — every promise of God certified by the oath of God. Certainly, here is iron massive enough and tough enough out of which to form an anchor for the soul, — these "two immutable things," God's promise and God's oath.

But consider, further, that we may go even beyond this. Not only is it a fact that there may be for us an anchor of the soul because we have God's promise, and God's promise ratified; there is another reason and a higher even. It is a fact that we may have an anchor of the soul *because we have a Forerunner* — "Whither, within the veil, the *Forerunner* is for us entered, even Jesus." God does not give us promise only, He gives us *specimen*, too. Jesus is one with us. He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. He came into our place and plight. He allied himself with us indissolubly. He took upon Himself our nature, never to cast it off. He is elder Brother; He died, He rose, He ascended, He is majestic with the eternal victory and shining. He is beforehand specimen of what will come to us, since with Him we are joint-heirs. He is pledge of my triumph, if I trust Him, for He is my Forerunner.

Weld this, then, also, into the anchor for your soul. Christ is forerunning specimen of what glory you may rise to.

Well, is not here what the author of the epistle calls "strong consolation?" Let me be girded and glad with an undiminished courage. I have right to sing, as the old song has it, "My anchor *holds* within the veil."

TOGETHER.

THAT is a most sweet pastoral of Ruth and Naomi. You remember the tender story.

Famine had blistered and bitten Canaan. So sore was it that Elimelech, and his wife Naomi, and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, must, in search of bread, flee from their home and go southward and eastward beyond the Jordan, into the land of Moab.

It was not long, however, before Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died in a strange land, and she was desolate. After a time her two sons wedded two of the fair women of the land of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth.

Time went on until ten years had sped away, and then another sorrow fell; for now the sons of Naomi, Mahlon and Chilion, died also, and the three bereaved women were

desolate together. But to Naomi just now the tidings came that in Canaan the famine had yielded to plenty; that the Lord had visited His people in giving them bread. The heart of Naomi yearns for her old home; now that it is possible, she will go back to Canaan.

Turning her face homeward, her two daughters-in-law go a distance with her, a convoy of affection. But the place and time of parting have now come, and Naomi said unto her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each to her mother's house; the Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me." Then she kissed them and they lifted up their voices and wept. I will not wait to rehearse all the loving colloquy that went on just here between the weeping women. Naomi was going into scenes perfectly strange to her daughters-in-law, and they were but defenceless widows; and to be a widow, in that Eastern order of society, was to be in most sad plight. Orpah will leave Naomi and go back to her

friends in Moab. Do not blame her overmuch. I think most of us would have done the same. To go as a widow, with a widow, and as a stranger, and of another race, looked like going into a desert.

But Ruth, to Naomi's loving expostulation, answers, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part me and thee."

When Naomi saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, then she left off speaking unto her. A steadfast mind makes steady feet. So they two went until they came to Bethlehem.

Afterwards great triumph and shining honor fell to Ruth. She became the wife of the wealthy and gifted Boaz; was near ancestress of David, the king after God's own heart; and, more than all, was one of the

honored ones along whose lines, in the fullness of the times, was born our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Of all women of Hebrew history, and of all the women in the world—save perhaps only Mary, who was the mother of our Lord—no woman stands in higher place, or is held in more fragrant memory, than this Ruth who *would* cleave to Naomi.

And the thing to be noticed is that all this blessing and brightness came to Ruth precisely because she *did* so cleave to Naomi; precisely because she did so thoroughly identify herself with this Hebrew matron to whom belonged the covenants; precisely because she would join herself to Naomi in a *union deep and irreversible*. Which things, it has seemed to me, are a kind of parable and illustration.

With that picture of Ruth, so joining herself with Naomi, read some such Scripture as the following: "And hast raised us up together, and made us sit together, in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus."

Together ; together in Christ Jesus. How the thought of share and union with, and, in a sense, identification of the believer with his Lord, weights the words in this brief passage ! How plainly the way of the true life shines ! Let us say to the Lord Jesus what Ruth could not to Naomi ; let us put in place of "if aught but," "if even," — the Lord do so to me and more also, *if even* death part me and thee. Together with Christ is safety, help, the shining yonder. Apart from Christ but Moab ; *together* with Him all the surpassing things that Canaan means.

PEACE.

EXQUISITE promise that in Isaiah's prophecy: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee." Think a moment of the meaning of such peace, and of the way into it.

Peace is beyond a mere placidity. It is more than a somnolent and passive quiet. It is an unclashing and smooth harmony of parts and powers; and so the strength and steady triumph which come out of such a harmony. So a real peace is something which achieves rather than simply enjoys. It is such peace which God gives.

Because God is defence; amid the dangers and difficulties of life, the soul looks upward and lives, not in what darkening things may immediately surround, but in the strong hand of God.

Because God is explanation; to the tangling, perplexing questions about the world and life, God is the answer the soul can rest in.

Because God is the true object of affection; the heart must be restless until it rests in God, the infinite beauty, love, power.

Because the service of God is the organizing duty for life; peace comes where a man submits to highest duty, and the highest duty is self-surrendering service of the Highest.

Because in the atonement of the Divine Son is peace of conscience only to be found.

We enter into the peace by trusting. But the essential element of a real trust is consent of heart to the object of trust, is self-surrender. The reason why we do not have more of God's strong peace is because we do not entirely surrender to God as the rightful King of heart and life.

THE DOOM OF GROWING.

THE fisherman found in his net, which he drew to shore, a bottle. In the bottle an Afrite was imprisoned. From the prisoner came to the fisherman prayer for deliverance. And when the fisherman unstopped the bottle the genius swelled at once into proportions vast and even frightful. He could no more into the bottle be gotten back. He stood there an awe-inspiring and immense development, overshadowing the trembling fisherman.

I think the story from those Arabian Nights which enchanted our childhood holds real meaning.

In some such way life comes to us. This great gift of life which God puts into our weak, idly swaying, baby hands is at first very small, hindered, germinal. But starting

there, in the infant, the awful life is disimprisoned. There lies latent in it development eternal. The doom of growth is over it. Advance it must in some direction, forever and forever. It cannot stay in germ. As the years roll on into the ages it constantly becomes. And it constantly becomes somewhat. It may take form demoniac, hateful, ugly with sin, with the furrows of guilt ploughed into its features; it may become pure, white, strong, beautiful, pushing higher and still higher into the light and service of God.

We set off a sort of men, calling them *self-made*. They are men whose youth was straitened in hard environment. They are men who have wrested fortunes from the grip of hostile circumstance. They are men who have hewn their own way out of hindrances into eminence, wealth, influence. They *themselves* have done it. You could not say of them, birth, education, favoring chance, helped. John Roach was such a man. As if a palm, leaf-burdened and fruit-

burdened, should lift itself out of the pure desert, in defiance of the sands and blistering sun. And there is no sight beneath the stars more morally impelling and worthier of honor than such sight of an advancing and overcoming manhood.

Yet, in a deeper sense, all men are self-made. Your plant may be rooted in the richest soil, and roofs of glass may blanket the sunbeams round it, and abundant moisture may distil upon its leaves, but it is only as the plant *shall itself* lay hold of and make its own all favoring circumstance that it can get on. The tree clinging to the mountain-side, sending its roots on many a wandering search for nourishment amid the crevices of the rocks, and the tree fed and propped and helped — either can grow only as from itself there goes the power to take advantage of all the means of growth outlying. There may be possibilities for richer treehood round the one than round the other, but if both grow, they shall do it only as themselves seize what possibilities they have.

So it is with men. That man you call self-made, springing out of rocky circumstance, is really no more *self-made* than the one whose surroundings are more propitious. There is, indeed, better illustration of a heroic energy in the first than in the last. There is, indeed, a heavier weight of responsibility on the last than on the first. But from both alike there must go forth, from an inherent centre, the voluntary power of use and assimilation. Precisely so true is this if a man grow bad instead of good. By voluntary seizure of it he extracts out of what surrounds him that which ministers to badness and builds himself up in badness. So all growth is *self-growth*, all manhood is *self-made* manhood.

It is quite impossible to define life. It is quite possible, however, to distinguish its main symptom. That main symptom of life is action. A living thing is an acting thing. The word "age" is derived from the Latin *agere*, which means *to act*. The Latin historian Tacitus uses this very word *agere* for

“to live.” When you say a man is forty years of age, you really say the man has acted for forty years.

But now, all the ceaseless action of the living subject is not without result. No man can act in any direction and be exactly the man he was before the deed was done. Action is but a means to an end. Power exerted always reacts upon the living subject in increase of power. Life must move out of some purpose toward some point, and the movement always leaves its result in an increase of tendency toward that point. In other words, activity reacts into growth. And the rapidity of the growth is in proportion to the intensity and concentration of the action. Act you must, somehow; because action is the invincible law of life; and therefore, grow you must, somehow, because growth is the inevitable result of action.

It is this which renders life such a momentous, solemn thing to us. On and on it must evolve forever. As long as eternity shall last, so long shall life remain, and with the

necessity of growth ever propelling in it. The elements shall melt with fervent heat; the solid world shall exhale into vacuity; the sun shall fall a burned-out cinder from the sky; the firmament shall be rolled together as a scroll; but the soul, the life, that shall be always; that shall be always growing, downward ever, or pressing into fuller light, and blessedness, and love.

Oh, that this life which must thus go on growing somehow, grow rightly! What concern so strenuously practical and important?

If we grow up into Christ, we grow rightly. It is a tremendous question, Are you growing thus?

TRUTHING IT.

IT is by *truthing it*, the apostle tells us, we may grow up into Him which is the head, even Christ. Our translation of the Greek word is "speaking the truth;" but that does not bring out the exact meaning of the original. Let us coin the word — *truthing it*. It is thus, the apostle tells us, we may grow up into Christ.

Truthing it involves, first, the knowledge of the truth. Truth is the soul's sustenance, nutriment, as soil, light, air, wet are the tree's nutriment. If I would grow rightly I must, somehow, get hold of the truth by which to grow. And now this truth by which I can grow rightly is Christ himself. "I am the truth," He says.

Let us think a moment. In three great directions I want to know the truth: in the

direction of the conscience, of the intellect, of the heart.

In the direction of the conscience. I am sure I never read a more appalling thing than I read lately of Rousseau. "No man," Rousseau says, "can come to the throne of God and say, 'I am a better man than Rousseau.' Let the trumpet of the last judgment sound when it will, I will present myself before the Sovereign Judge and will say aloud, 'Here is what I did, what I thought, and what I was.'" "Ah," said he, just before he died, "how happy a thing it is to die when one has no reason for remorse or self-reproach." And then, addressing himself to the Almighty, he said, "Eternal Being, the soul that I am going to give Thee back is as pure at this moment as it was when it proceeded from Thee; render it a partaker of Thy felicity." And this is the appalling wonder of it: in his boyhood Rousseau was a petty thief; in what he wrote he applauded adultery and suicide; twenty years of his life were spent in avowed licentiousness; his children,

many, if not all, of whom were illegitimate, he sent off to a foundling hospital as soon as they were born, denying them the care of parenthood, glad to be rid of them; he himself was mean, treacherous, blasphemous. Surely it is the veriest insanity of sin to dare like that. The only explanation of it is that a doom of awful sin is awful moral blindness. One thing is certain — though I have by no means sinned as did Rousseau, I have yet sinned, and thus, and simply in myself, I dare not confront God. I am sure no man who is not “past feeling” would dare take his record and ask the infinitely holy God to pass upon it.

My cavernous craving is to know if there be a truth of the forgiveness of sins. I cannot justify myself; I cannot, therefore, expect God will justify me. Is there any absolute truth that my sin may be put away?

Then Jesus Christ appears to me in the truth of His atonement. He tells me how He has, in my stead, satisfied the law and made it honorable. I learn how God made Him to

be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. I learn how, in Christ, my sin has met its utmost doom; that, therefore, if I will accept what Christ has done for me, my sin may, by a divine forgiveness, be put away. I do accept. I do say, "Lord, in Thine own body Thou didst bear my sin upon the tree. I thank Thee. I adore Thee. I yield myself to Thee." And I am glad with a great gladness, for my conscience rests in the truth of the forgiveness of sins.

But I need also truth in the direction of the intellect. The unknowable, the ultimate force, the moral order of the world, the power, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness, — how vague all that, what a mist of words, what thinnest clouds wide-wandering, to rest my thought upon. And then about myself. Who am I? Whither am I going? What is to become of me? And is there any care for me on the part of the great Someone or Somewhat whence I and all this wondrous world have sprung? I want the truth.

Grand phrases cannot satisfy me. Tell me the truth.

Let me quote a passage from a very noble book I love much to read. "An apostle has expressed in a single phrase a peculiarity of Jesus which distinguished Him from all other men. 'In Him was Yea.' The doctrine of Jesus is never a question and a weary doubt; it is an uninterrupted affirmation. In order to appreciate the wonderful range of His answers and this distinctive positiveness of His teaching, pass quickly from one to the other of the verities which He points out to His disciples. Is there another than this earthly existence for us mortals? Yes. 'I am the resurrection and the life.' Are there other spheres of being? Yes. 'In my Father's house are many mansions.' But can man know the Father? Yes. 'If ye had known Me ye should have known my Father also; and from henceforth ye know Him and have seen Him.' Is God thoughtful of his creatures? Yes. 'Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of.' Does the great

Creator care for me? Yes. 'The very hairs of your head are all numbered.' Is prayer a power with God? Yes. 'Ask and ye shall receive.' Will justice ever be done — justice now mocked and trodden under foot of men? Yes. 'Many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first.'" And so in Jesus Christ my intellect gets the truth of a personal, infinite Father, of His real relation with me, of a shining of His presence I may enter when this life is done. And I rest in Jesus Christ as, for my intellect, the truth.

But I need also truth in the direction of the heart. And where such truth for the affections as in Him? He is the chiefest among ten thousand, the One altogether lovely. As the artist crowds away ugliness by loving and studying the great masters, those who are the crowned interpreters of beauty, so the soul, fastening itself to Christ, seizes for itself and fills itself with the infinitely lovely, the infinitely beautiful.

And thus it is that Christ is the truth by means of which men may grow rightly, and

truthing it is, first of all, the knowledge, the acceptance of Christ as the truth.

But truthing it involves still another element, the earnest use, the sincere *practice* of the truth we know. Ah, if we would only truth it in this further sense of using the truth we get from Christ more thoroughly and more steadily, into what vigorous growth toward Him should we immediately start! It is because we know of truth so vastly more than we use of truth that we are such stunted weaklings. Practice makes perfect in religion as in other spheres. "The end of man is an action and not a thought, though it were the noblest," says Carlyle. I think Oliver Cromwell one of the highest heroes ever the world saw. "I was," he says in his quaint way, "a person who from my first employment was suddenly preferred and lifted up from lesser trusts to greater, from my first being a captain of a troop of horse, and did labor as well as I could to discharge my trust; and God blessed me therein as it pleased him." And it was precisely because Oliver did labor

as well as he could to discharge his trust that, by the blessing of God's invariable law, he grew into England's savior, into the man who has changed the course of the centuries towards liberty for you and me. Your Christian who knows but will not do is a grovelling Christian always. I think I know Christians who would be at once astonished at their growth in grace if they would but begin to use their grace. Everywhere this is God's inexorable law of growth, that we use that which ministers to growth. Truth it then by using truth, and you will find yourself immediately in a glad and stimulating spiritual summer.

THRONGING AND TOUCHING.

THE Master had just returned from the other side of the little lake. On this side He is met by a man who falls at His feet with a great burden on his heart, and a great prayer upon his lip. Yonder in the city his little daughter is sinking into death. He has done all he can for her; but everything has failed. Hope has faded everywhere else; it shines now only around the Master. This is his burden and his prayer: "My little daughter lieth at the point of death; I pray Thee come and lay Thy hands on her that she may be healed, and she shall live." The Master, whose life was a perpetual answer to prayer, hears the man, yields to his cry, and begins to follow him.

Meanwhile a great crowd is gathering. They are mustered by all the influences

which call a crowd, — curiosity, concern for the stricken sufferer, interest in the wonderful Teacher, who is so in kin with men that somehow they always troop to Him as the birds do to the summer.

The crowd is dense and unwieldy, and swaying back and forth as crowds do, and blocking up the path, and rendering advance difficult. In a rude, eager way it forces itself against, and presses itself upon, and throngs and jostles Jesus walking in the centre.

Then a woman thrusts herself through the mass, clearing for herself a difficult course through it, with a most eager and determined, yet withal, with a shrinking and half-fearing look and motion, striving to get into some neighborhood with Jesus. She accomplishes her object; she reaches forth her hand and touches the long fringe upon the corners of the Master's robe. And then, as though that were all she wanted, turns, hastening to get away.

Now, the thing to be noticed is, that that touch seems to establish at once a union

between that woman and the Lord. The woman is diseased, and at the moment of that touch she is conscious of cure. And amid all the pressing and thronging of the crowd the Saviour recognizes the touch and distinguishes it; is strangely sensitive to it; and yields, because of it, a healing energy. It is as though all the crowd were absent, and only the Saviour and that woman stood together.

“Who touched me?” asked the Saviour, turning around. “Did you? Did you?”

And when all denied, Peter answers: “Master, the multitude throng Thee and press Thee. Sayest Thou, Who touched me?”

But the Master replies: “Somebody hath touched me; for I perceive that a healing energy hath gone forth from me.”

A relation between Christ and that woman has been established. There they stand together, in the isolation of that relation. All the crowd has thronged Christ; only this poor woman has touched Christ. They who throng, though, doubtless, many of them are

diseased, are still unhealed. The woman touches, and is cured at once.

And so it must be one thing to throng Christ, and another thing to touch Him.

I am sure that the multitude on the road there, between the Sea of Galilee and the City of Capernaum, with Jesus in the centre of it, with the multitude thronging Him, eager to see Him, with that poor woman pressing her way through that crowd to touch Him, establishing by that means between Himself and herself a most singular and deep relation — I am sure that this scene, which I have rudely sketched, is a perfect symbol and representation of the world to-day.

For, say what you will, the world throngs Christ to-day. Say what you will, Christ is the centre of the world's interest and thought to-day. Men have tried to explain away the Christ. They have said He was a myth. They have said He was an enthusiast. They have said that He was only a man, possessing a wonderful genius for religion. They have brought all the enginery of criticism to bear

upon Him. They have devised countless theories to account for Him. And yet He stands the central fact of the world's history; the grand problem for the world's solution; the gathering point of the world's interest; the controlling force in the world's life.

What think ye of Christ, Historian, Philosopher, Theologian, Statesman, Heterodox, Orthodox, Romanist, Protestant, Rationalist, Ritualist? What think ye of Christ? is the great question which the world has been asking itself, which the world keeps asking itself, which the world cannot help asking itself. The world is thronging Christ.

For consider the singularity and diverse-ness of this Christ from all others upon whom the sun has shone. What dignity of claim, what augustness of life, what grandeur of power!

He comes assuming for Himself a most unique position. He comes claiming to be something more than the founder of a new religion. He declares that He Himself is the new religion. He promulgates doctrine; but

He puts himself at the centre of His doctrine. He brings to us revelation; but He Himself is the sun whence the revealing shines. “*I am the bread of life.*” “*I am the good shepherd.*” “*I am the resurrection and the life.*” “Come unto *me* and I will give you rest.” “He that believeth in *me* shall have everlasting life.” Daring like this has always been beyond the presumption of any man.

He comes substantiating His claims by a sinless life. His life is the one thoroughly pure ray in the world’s darkness. He stands before the world, bares His breast, and challenges, Which of you convinceth me of sin? And the only answer which the world can find for the Sinless One is worship.

He comes setting up a kingdom which stands larger and firmer as ages pass. “Can you tell me who Jesus Christ was?” asked Napoleon, at St. Helena. “Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne, and I myself have founded great empires; but upon what did these creations of our genius depend? Upon force. Jesus alone founded His empire upon love;

and to this very day millions would die for Him. I think I understand something of human nature, and I tell you all these were men, and I am a man; none else is like Him. Jesus Christ was more than man. I have inspired multitudes with such enthusiastic devotion that they would have died for me; but to do this it was necessary that I should be visibly present, with the electric influence of my looks, of my voice, of my words. When I saw men and spoke to them, I lighted up a flame of self-devotion in their hearts. Christ alone has succeeded in so raising the mind of man toward the unseen that it becomes insensible to the barriers of time and space. Across a chasm of eighteen hundred years Jesus Christ makes a demand which is, beyond all others, difficult to satisfy. He asks for the human heart; He will have it entirely to Himself. He demands it unconditionally; and, forthwith, His demand is granted. Wonderful! In defiance of time and space the soul of man, with all its powers and faculties, becomes an annexation to the empire of

Christ. This it is which strikes me most. I have often thought of it." So supreme is the power of Jesus over men.

And now this Jesus Christ, this singular and separated being, so authoritative in claim, irradiate with such purity of life, so imperial in power, — the world cannot help thinking about, inquiring about, gathering around, thronging. Christ is in human history. Christ is the most stupendous fact in human history. As such He challenges and compels attention. Gather around Him in musing and wonder men must, — just as that crowd clustered around Him on the road between the Sea of Galilee and Capernaum. The world does throng Christ.

And yet it is easy enough to see, that just as the presence of the Master in that crowd divided the multitude into two classes, those who throng and she who touched, so now to-day. Christ, as a great fact and presence, divides the world into two classes, — those who simply throng, and they who deeply touch.

To those who touch Him Christ is vastly

more than He is to those who throng Him. There is formed between Him and them an intimate and personal relation. They are conscious of a spiritual healing through this touching of Him. Their need has touched His fulness. Their sin has touched His forgiveness. Their sorrow has touched His comfort. Their weakness has touched His strength. Their faith has touched His promise. Their heart has touched His heart.

This touching is different from the world's thronging. It is not mere intellectual interest; it is not mere enthusiasm which art can glorify; it is not a mere æsthetic admiration; it is not merely public prayer and praise which may be only lip-deep. It is all this and something a million fathoms deeper. It is the closest contact and the most utter spiritual union of the human heart with the heart of Christ. It is along the channel of this touching, and not along the way of a more distant and careless thronging, that the healing, helping energy of Christ flows down upon the needy soul.

COMFORT FOR US.

“**I** WILL not leave you comfortless,” was the Master’s promise to the disciples; and yet that He was going away from them was at the same time His distinct and reiterated word. Strange way of giving comfort, this going away, when just now it seemed to these disciples that they had but begun to reach up into some adequate appreciation of their Lord. Comfort by *taking away!* Strange method that!

And yet, consider: Here the disciples were gathered in the upper room. For three years, more or less, they had been in daily and nightly contact with Jesus. Intimacy is contagion. The mere presence of a bad man causes to spring into lustier growth the badness in ourselves. That is a wonderful touch in Goethe’s Faust when the as yet unstained

Marguerite is made to ask Faust why she always finds it so difficult to pray when his bad friend Mephistopheles is with him. On the other hand, the presence of goodness starts all that is best in us into more triumphant energy. Mrs. Jameson tells in her art-legends how the mere coming into their company of the young Bernadino of Siena hushed immediately all foul words upon the lips of his companions.

Now the Sinless One had been for three years compelling the disciples by His holy fascinations. Everything best in them had been rising into growth and bloom, as the flowers do beneath the tender summer skies. They had learned to love holiness in His holy presence; and truth as it distilled to them from those pure lips; and wide and healing charity, as they saw the Son of Man take all men into His great heart. And as more and more they had grown on toward perfection, more and more they had come to desire its presence as exemplified in Jesus, and to hang upon it. More and more, we

can see, I am sure, the actual personal bodily presence of perfection must have seemed to these disciples the life of all best in them; the departure of it the death of what was best.

Then besides, these disciples had come utterly to believe in the Messiahship of Jesus. Through all the centuries prophecy had been speaking, and true hearts had been longing and listening for fulfilment. Every Hebrew mother cherished her boy-babe with the possibility thrilling through her love that *he* might be Messiah. As the sky of Israel darkened, as the wide kingdom which David set up and Solomon ruled grew narrower, as captivities and disasters thickened, as now at last the chosen people, in all their haughty pride of race, had become the thralls of the hated and oppressive Roman, the prayer for the Deliverer had become more intense and passionate. And for these disciples prophecy had come to fulfilment in the person of their Master. That Messiah had come, they were absolutely sure. That Jesus was Messiah,

they were as certain. What wonderful things would be done! what a glorious kingdom He would set up! what high places they would have in it! what proof of their wisdom and devotion in following the Nazarene would shortly appear! They would not let themselves believe that the dark things Christ had told them were to issue from this last journey to Jerusalem, really were so dark. They were parables, these sayings. They were sayings the hidden and brighter sides of which, glorious events would certainly bring out. They were on the tiptoe of expectation, — these disciples.

So when to them Christ made the distinct announcement of His immediate departure, a pall, as of the midnight, fell smiting down. It was, to their thought, bleak disaster. It was a phalanx of spears transfixing hope.

Well, Christ *was* going away; that was something settled. Whatever of personal despair the going away might bring, it was to be. Christ was going away. But — and make that *but* as emphatic as possible — it

was not to be a simple, aimless, treasureless going away. Rather there was the Divinest reason behind it. Christ was going away, but He was going away *for* something in the behalf of the disciples. And that which He was going away for, and which He could only get for them by going, was something inexpressibly precious for these He must leave; was something inexpressibly more precious than His present bodily continuance with them. They could not see what Christ was going away for; they could only see the going away. But Christ knew what the going away was for, and how utterly they needed that which the going away would bring. Atonement, resurrection, the bestowment of the Holy Spirit,—these things and such as these, were to become the disciples' through Christ's departure.

Now, I think we may get sight here of a very real deep principle of the Divine treatment of us; a principle which, amid the darker ways into which life sometimes dips, we ought never to let our faith loosen its grip on, —

this principle: that no more to us than to the disciples are dark things sent simply for the sake of sending dark things, but always for the high and Divine reason that the dark things are the necessary path toward wonderfully bright and needed things.

You are never the sport of fate. You are always the object of the wisest and most loving Divine care. Oh, when, as it was with the disciples, the wind is contrary and we are toiling in rowing, to be sure of this is hope and energy and triumph. For to be sure of this is to be sure that the flinging winds and the tossing waves are but God's messengers of a better and nobler bestowment. And this *is* comfort.

I COULD DO ANYTHING BUT
THAT.

AT the close of a religious service, not long since, a Christian man was going about asking this one and the other if he would accept the Lord Jesus as a personal Saviour. The questioning had been fruitful of result. Several, touched by the personal appeal, had then and there declared they would end controversy and hesitancy and submit themselves to Jesus as their Saviour and their Lord. The service had thus amounted to a great deal. All present were conscious of the power of the Spirit, and there was much rejoicing that to the Lord's kingdom new adherents had been won. The hinge on which the service had thus swung toward victory had been plainly the simple and tender personal appeal.

The meeting done, another Christian man said to the one who had thus one by one besought men, "Well, I could do anything but that."

Now the precise trouble with the Lord's Church is, that there are such multitudes of her members who are so constantly saying they can do anything but approach men in the way of personal appeal; and who seem to imagine that because they feel such disinclination for the duty, they may therefore be excused from it.

Right here is a main reason for the too slightly vanquishing power of the Church. Sermons, praises, prayers—the Church perhaps is ready enough for these. The general appeal from the pulpit, men will listen to this. But hand-to-hand work, Christians too much shirk. The loving question, from one man to another, Will *you* accept Jesus Christ? waits too often, baffled, upon Christian lips. And because a Christian man lends his presence to religious service, prays, gives, sings, makes perhaps, now and then, in some public

meeting, a kind of set speech of exhortation, he imagines his duty done; or if not that, that he is excused from further duty. And the stranger by his side goes out with never a personal word said, never a question concerning the true life asked, never a welcome offered. And these churches wonder why there are not more conversions, and think the fault is in the preaching, singing, order of service, anywhere rather than precisely where the fault is, — in the disposition to do anything but this thing, so strenuously and constantly needed, the personal approach of the Christian to the unchristian.

How prone Christians are to substitute something other, for this duty of personal approach. One of the troubles with the Week of Prayer is that it has been thrust into such place of substitution. There has been little or none of this personal duty done in a church for a long year. Sermons have been preached, Sabbath-school lessons taught, prayer-meetings held, the formal order of services pushed resolutely on. Nothing much, apparently,

has come of it all. Congregations have come, congregations have gone. Then the Week of Prayer arrives. The nightly services are held. Men pray, and then wait for something with a listless expectancy; but wait in vain. And the church contentedly settles down into the conviction that the Lord has no special blessing for her that year. And the old routine goes on and on.

Meanwhile, scarcely a member of that church has approached a soul unchristian with the question, betokening *personal* interest, Will not you now take for your own the Lord and Saviour? Ah, me! I am sure the showers of grace are ready to fall, but there has been so little personal seed-sowing which such showers could stir and fructify, why should they fall? This "I-can-do-any-thing-but-that" feeling is the main blight and barrier.

When Christian men and women begin to recognize the duty of a personal service, all weeks will be weeks of special blessing, and every service will be a triumph for the Lord.

“For you must know, Mr. Lewis, it is a rule in our church that when one brother has been converted he must go and fetch another brother; and when a sister has been converted she must go and fetch another sister. That is the way one hundred and twenty of us have been brought from atheism and from Popery to simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.” So said a member of one of the struggling Protestant churches in Paris. And struggling though it is, that church is triumphant, because personal service is thus rendered.

Nothing can take the place of this personal duty. Many a church which men call prosperous, and which is prosperous in external ways — in congregations, easy finances, large gifts — is terribly weak and languishing spiritually, because to so great degree its members are willing to do anything but make personal approach to others for Jesus’s sake. What a record of spiritual poverty it is, and a record so often made that the making it seems to be a kind of matter of course, — a church with, say,

five hundred members, and with additions by conversions of from a half-dozen to a dozen in a whole year. The reason is plain. The hindrance does not lie in God, it does lie in that church. As a general basis the membership is willing to do anything *but* search out men, one by one, and personally and lovingly press Christ on them.

Krumacher tells a legend about a man named Eliab. He was rich. He was cunning in all the wisdom of the East. But he knew no peace. His heart was black with sorrow, and he often wished to die.

Then a man of God brought him an herb full of wonderful healing power.

But Eliab answered: "What is that to me? My body lacks not health. It is my soul that is diseased. It were better for me to die."

"But take the herb," said the man of God, "and heal with it seven sick men; then thou mayest die, if thou wilt."

So Eliab was persuaded. He sought out misery. With his wealth he succored the

poor. By the healing herb he brought health to seven sick.

Then the man of God came to him again and said: "Here now is an herb of death. Take it; for now thou mayest die."

But Eliab answered: "God forbid. My soul longeth no more for death. *For now I comprehend the meaning and the use of life.*"

We should not only have a rejoicing multitude of saved souls to thank God for, but we should also have multitudes of glad, strong, hopeful *Christian* souls, if only more Christians were willing to take for themselves and apply to others this healing herb of a personal service.

That Christian is in a sorry state when he lets master him this feeling, that he can do anything *but* use himself in the way of personal speech to individual men about his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Sadly does he need some healing herb.

SUGGESTIONS FROM A BIT OF GRASS.

WHEN in the bright June weather the grass is growing green beneath our feet, let us see if it may have any helpful significance for us. Evidently our Lord thought it ought to have. He tells us it ought to teach us the lesson of a particularizing Providence. "Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field," says Jesus, "which to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" The Divine furnishing of the grass below us is Christ's argument up to the Divine furnishing of ourselves. If God takes such care of the grass He surely will take care of us, so much better than the grass we tread on.

Consider, then, some of the ways in which God makes special provision for the grass.

Look at the grass-root. See how tenacious it is, and fibrous. Notice how along its joints fringes of rootlets are out-thrust. Mark its vitality, so that though you hack at it and cut it, you but seem to give it greater vigor, and the larger opportunity of spreading through the soil and seizing it. The grass bears seed, indeed, but very frequently it is prevented from its seed-bearing. But perfect provision is made against this so often hindrance of seed-bearing. That provision is found in these tough and vital roots, and in the fringes of rootlets with which they are supplied. When the seed capsules are destroyed, the roots hurry to make up for the deficiency, and turn their rootlets into roots, and thrust up from themselves fresh green shoots, and so the cropping and the reaping but mats the grass more thickly, and weaves into compact mass the grateful greenness.

Consider the stem of the grass, — what is called its culm. You remember that Galileo was confined in the dungeons of the Inquisition for teaching, what the Romish Church

was pleased to call the heresy, that the world moves. Lying there in his dungeon, he was visited by a priest who accused him of atheism. Galileo took from the floor of the dungeon a wheaten straw, — wheat, you know, belongs to the family of the grasses, — and explaining the mechanical and scientific principles disclosed in the structure of this stem of wheat, told the priest that this stem was evidence, to his mind, of the existence of God. “If,” said Galileo, “this wheaten straw, which supports an ear heavier than its whole stalk, were made of the same quantity of material disposed in a solid form, it would make but a poor, thin, and wiry stem which would be snapped in the slightest breeze; its tubular form gives to it the necessary degree of strength, and preserves it from destruction.” Very wonderful the evidences of the Divine design in the stems of grasses. The iron columns which support the weighty roof and large galleries of a great church are not solid, they are hollow. Being hollow they are stronger. All along their hollow lengths

you get the principle of the arch restraining any tendency to break from slight deflection, or special strain, on this side or that. So the stems of grasses are hollow, and being hollow, like the wheat stem, are able to bear up triumphantly an ear more weighty than the stem itself. And when they are pressed, now on this side and now on that, by the summer breezes, the arch opposing on the other side prevents their snapping off. But then, besides, this hollowness is not continuous. It is interrupted by partitions. At these nodes, as they are called, the leaves are hung. And these partitions give added strength to the tubular stems. And then, besides, all along the hollow stem, and in the leaves as well, little bits of flinty silex are dispersed. So plentiful is this silex, that the stem may be burned, or destroyed by strong acids, and yet the silicious skeleton of the grass remain. These bits of silex lend their toughness and resistance to the grass. They are, in a sense, the grass's bones. So here in the stem of the grass there is the most

marked evidence of the most particular Divine thoughtfulness providing against various contingency.

Consider the leaves of the grass. Let another describe them. "They are spear-shaped, and strongly ribbed with threads of flinty fibre, thus forming wedges admirably fitted for forcing their way with the least resistance through the soil; they are long, narrow, alternate, and sheathing the stem for a considerable distance, in order to present as small a surface and give as light a hold as possible to the wind; they are destitute of branches, so as to qualify them for growing together in masses without suffering from want of air and light." And that they may have air enough, matted together as they are, their surfaces are numerously punctured with air-holes permitting the freest entrance of the air.

Consider the flower of the grass,—for grasses bear flowers, though they are so inconspicuous we do not much notice them. How human life hangs on the flower of the grass which we name wheat. Out from the

horny sheath protecting the wheat-flower, as the green calyx protects the rose, dangle, in the flowering time, three delicate white hairs; on the ends of these hairs hang little knobs of anthers, and these anthers are sprinkled all over with the yellow pollen-dust. It is on these tenuous hairs that our human life hangs. For these pollen-weighted anthers, hung on these frail hairs, beaten by the breezes, shake off their pollen, and the pollen falling on the stamens of the wheat-flowers, fructifies the seed, and makes it fat and full, that it may give bread to the eater. What delicate design in the flower of the grass.

And the argument is this: If God take such particular care, in root and stem and leaf and flower, of the grass of the field, giving to each unit in the countless company of the grasses the particularizing care it needs, may you not be sure that He will take particularizing care of you, — of you, so vastly lordlier than the grasses, O ye of little faith? And we very much need this argument, springing from such small things as the

grasses of the field, to make vigorous our faith in the particularizing Providence of God. For, instinctively, we associate with God the thought of greatness. The earth, "rock-ribbed and ancient as the sun;" the sun, blazing in the heavens millions of miles away, and yet with such an energy that all life hangs upon his beams; the light, that leaps to us from him at the rate of one hundred and ninety-two thousand miles a second; the midnight heavens, sown with their starry systems, — with such great things we think the great God may well be occupied. But our notion of greatness is always too much one of the vast and large. We associate too much mere bulk with greatness. So it gets to be difficult to believe that the great God, occupied with such great things, can carefully concern Himself with such slight matters as our single human lives and circumstances and destinies.

What we need is to have our notions of greatness corrected. We need to see that there may be greatness in the small as well

as in the large. We need to look beneath our feet as well as above our heads. We need to get a notion of a Divine greatness *so great* that it can—not only fashion worlds, and kindle suns, and set the stars in awful distance—but that it can also lavish particular attention on the structure and form and furnishing of the bit of grass we tread on. And beholding here that God is so great that He will not neglect one of the countless spears of grass beneath us, it is then easier for us to think of Him as certainly refusing to neglect His nobler creatures who stand upon the lowly grass; it is then easier for us to grasp the mighty consolation and girding of a God who will surely minister a particularizing Providence toward each one of ourselves.

This is really a majestic and conclusive argument from God's manifest care of a blade of grass to His therefore certain and specializing care of each one of ourselves. We immensely need the conviction of it and the comfort of it in these lives of ours. Some time since I got a letter telling of failure of

faith right here, — how when the skies were bright, and the sun of success was shining, two of God's children had believed in God, in His special care of them; but how, when afterwards those skies were clouded and that sun could not be seen shooting his beams through disastrous mists, they thought God did not care, had forgotten them, or had never thought of them. Amid the necessities of moral discipline, in the hard places into which the necessities of moral discipline must sometimes thrust us, — that we may be kept and held, — it is our utmost need that we do not let go this sheet-anchor of God's particularizing Providence, this certainty that God does care, does think of us, does Himself appoint the discipline. And that we may hold to and be held by this sheet-anchor, we are to follow Christ's bidding and listen to the teaching of the grasses beneath our feet. "Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

A spear of grass, if you will but *really* use it, use it thoughtfully as Christ meant you should, — a spear of grass, is it not a weapon which can surely slay the giants of our distrust? A blade of grass—when you thoughtfully investigate it, is it not vocal to you of this most precious and sustaining doctrine of the particularizing Providence of God?

A TOO COMMON NOTION.

IT is a very common notion, and one than which I know of none more charged with moral hurtfulness, that God does not require of a man any more than that which he has the present ability to render. "God only asks of you what you can at present do," men say. Men say it, and though they may think it true, they affirm a falsehood.

So a man goes on imagining God will not be very exacting in His demands of complete obedience because the man does not have a present ability of complete obedience. There are, for example, multitudes of men who allow themselves in the constant commission of profanity, who are under the thrall of this falsehood. Certainly the great law of God declares against profanity. But men frequently affirm they have gotten themselves

into such a habit of it that they cannot help it; that they utter it before they think; it has become a second nature to them; they do it unconsciously; they "do not mean anything by it." And I have known men, who had thus allowed profane speech to get a hold on them, who blindly thought that their inability of reverent speech was a sort of excuse which God would take account of, and that the awful demand of reverent speech by God's great law would somehow lessen its distinct exact requirements *in their case*. So men often also make the excuse and plea of disposition in the presence of God's scrutinizing law.

It is wrong to be proud and unconciliatory; it is wrong to be stubborn when one finds himself manifestly in the wrong. Ah! that was a great sentence I met from Daniel Webster some time since, "He who is not wise enough to be always right should be wise enough to change his course when he finds himself in the wrong." It is wrong to be passionate and irritable and flashing with de-

nunciation and stabbing with sharp and angry words; this selfish pride, this stubbornness, this passionateness, are manifest fractures of the divine and holy law. But men say, "My disposition is proud, or stubborn, or passionate," which is the same thing as saying they have not the ability to be otherwise; and they somehow think their disposition an excuse, because of which the grasp of the Divine demand and law will at least a little lessen.

But let us take a case and see if this plea and fact of inability can ever, in any wise, cause the majestic law of God to minify its demands and "let off" a sinner. Let us listen to this confession of Charles Lamb as he bewails the tyranny of drink: "The waters have gone over me. But out of the black depths, could I be heard, I would cry out to all those that have but set foot in the perilous flood. Could the youth, to whom the flavor of the first wine is delicious as the opening scenes of life or the entering upon some newly-discovered Paradise, look into my desolation and be made to understand what a

dreary thing it is when a man shall feel himself going down a precipice with open eyes and a passive will, to see his destruction and have no power to stop it, and yet to feel it all the way emanating from himself; could he see my fevered eye, feverish with last night's drinking and feverishly looking for to-night's repetition of the folly; could he feel the body of death out of which I cry, hourly with feebler outcry, to be delivered, it would be enough to make him dash the sparkling beverage to the earth in all the pride of its mantling temptation."

But because Charles Lamb, by yielding to the fascinations of bad appetite, had induced in himself such inability to resist its tyranny, can it therefore be supposed, is it in the nature of things possible to suppose, that that self-induced inability can make the great and awful law of God less severe against even the gentle Elia? No, the law remains; and the law remains demanding, notwithstanding inability.

Said one once who had allowed himself to

become the victim of the opium habit, "If I should see a piece of opium on the table before me, and between it and me a knife was flashing backward and forward with the rapidity of lightning, and I knew that if I reached for the opium the knife would cut off my fingers, I could not resist the temptation; I should try for the opium."

But would such self-induced inability to resist the temptation make God's law against such self-destroying slavery less severe and less terrifically stern? No, the law remains, and remains demanding.

Read the great Scripture, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth," if you would find the place of your true help. Your inability, self-induced and wilful, cannot excuse; but Christ's complete obedience in your behalf can become the reason of your forgiveness. And when, confessing your sin and helplessness, you take by faith His obedience and thus make it yours, you have opened your heart also for the entrance of the Holy Spirit, who

will work a "new creation" in you and give you daily and triumphant aid against the bad and tyrannizing tendencies you have induced within yourself by sin. Your hope and help is not in the foolish thought that your slavery to sin will let you slip the grasp of the demanding law; it is in the Christ who has satisfied the law for you and "made it honorable," and who will make a new man of you if you will let Him.

IN THE WAY OF DUTY, AND YET STORMS.

“**A**ND straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship and to go before Him unto the other side.” Certainly these disciples, getting into the boat and pulling for the shore yonder, were in the way of duty if men ever were; they were doing precisely what Christ had commanded them; and yet against them came hurtling and baffling the storm, which, with all their seamen’s craft, they could make no head against until Christ came to make the sea quiet for them.

A very real and deep lesson for life here, I have often thought; namely, that storms are very apt to break upon us even though we are in the way of duty.

This is a lesson we have constant need of learning. We are very apt to forget it. I do

not know a commoner practical heresy than the forgetting it. We all the time associate blue skies and smooth seas and whist winds with the way of duty, and are so constantly smitten with great surprise if we do not always find them going together.

In a profound inner sense the way of duty is that of sunny skies and pleasant seas and whist winds. The way of duty is the way of a quiet conscience; and there is no sunshine so radiant and there are no seas so unvexed as are the inner sun and sea of an approving conscience, of the recognition and practice of the right. The ways of wisdom *are* ways of pleasantness and her paths *are* paths of peace in this spiritual, high, holy, secret sense.

But it does not follow that the track of duty will never lead you into external storm, that the tempest of opposition will never beat, that the waves of trial will never rise and threaten and dash their bewildering crests into your boat of life, that the besteadings of a difficult discipline must not

put you to your oars and call out your strength and summon your skill and sea-craft to its wariest and wisest use. It does not follow that God will not, in His best time and way, set storms to making a man of you, even though you are precisely and consciously in the way of duty.

What was true of these disciples, that doing the right they were set against by storms, has been always true of all the saints of God. It is worth noticing how thoroughly the Bible is against this so usual practical heresy of ours,—that duty and storms are not to be found together.

Abraham was certainly in the way of duty when he got out of his country and from his kindred and from his father's house into the land that God should show him, as God ordered him. And yet how he met the storm of famine, and the storm of Lot's selfishness, and the storm of the long delay about the promised birth of Isaac, and the storm of the sacrifice of Isaac upon Mt. Moriah!

Moses was certainly in the way of duty when, according to the command of God, he went to lead forth the Israelites from Egypt. And yet how he met the storm of the hard-heartedness of Pharaoh, and the storm of the murmuring of the people,— even after he had led them through the Red Sea and they had seen Pharaoh over-swept by the returning waters,— and the storm of the idolatry of the people when even Aaron set them to dancing round a golden calf, and the storm of the pitiable faithlessness of the people when Moses had brought them to the very edge of the promised land, and they would not go in because, they said, they were nothing but grasshoppers compared with the sons of Anak!

Daniel was certainly in the way of duty when he administered the Persian kingdom with such questionless integrity that not even the dogs of envy could get scent of the least wrong, and when, as his wont was, he opened his window toward Jerusalem three times a

day and kneeled upon his knees and prayed and gave thanks before his God. And yet how he met the storm of the lions' den!

Stephen was certainly in the way of duty when he stood forth, with never the least blanching on his cheek or a quiver in his voice, and declared the crucified Messiah to the Sanhedrim. And yet how he met the whelming storm of his martyrdom!

And Paul was certainly in the way of duty when he passed restlessly to Jerusalem, to Antioch, to Lystra, to Derbe, to Ephesus, to Corinth, to Athens, to Rome, preaching the Lord Jesus. And yet what storms did he not meet! How they raged against him! He tells us how the tempests howled and with what strain of strength he had to row against them. "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one; thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by

the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness."

Storms often strike in the way of duty. Even the Master met the storm of the cross in the way of the Father's will.

Yes, it is surely true; though you are in the way of duty you must meet storms. Not always waters lying still beneath the sunlight and the moonlight; not always easy rowing; not always the quick reaching of the desired haven.

Take this for your comfort when, serving God the best you know and keeping the prow of your boat of life pointed along the line of the Divine command, you find yourself smitten by the storms,—take this for your comfort: there is for you a Vision and a Presence! I think those are most sweet words which Mark, in his graphic way, has not forgotten to tell us about this storm,

“And He saw them toiling in rowing.” No storm flares and plunges outside the circle of the Divine Vision. “It is I; be not afraid;” the Divine One is with you in the storm.

When your babe slips out of your arms, and the cradle is empty, and your home is desolate, and your heart; when you are drenched in the black waters and the sky is crowded with awful clouds and the sun seems to have caught back and hidden in his quiver every straggling arrow of his beams, and you are scared and helpless in the darkness and the terror, He is with you in the black moments; He is with you as you fall over your child's coffin and are too weak even to try to pray.

When the times are hard, and you are pulling at the oar of business, but can make no headway and reach no haven; when you think you must go down amid the waters, and the third hour has come, and you are utterly discouraged and almost too worn and anxious to pull another stroke, — He is not distant from you; He is walking beside you

on the ridges of the waves; He knows how the storm is blowing and the very propitious instant in which to come to your relief.

When you are struggling against temptation, when its winds seem mightier than your utmost effort, — you will master drink, you say, impurity, bad companionship; and you are rowing hard and well to do it. But there come to all such strugglers third hours in the night, when they are at the failing-point and temptation is at the highest. You must meet the storm; but He is right there at your side. Oh, listen for His voice! hear His reassuring words, “It is I; be not afraid.” You are not alone. You will not be left. He will come. He does come. He is with you.

Storms do often break in the way of duty. But amid them there is always the comfort of the Divine Vision and the Divine Presence.

NO DIFFERENCE.

IT is God's thought of things, not my thought of things, which represents the truth of things. It is very possible that I may be mistaken; it is impossible that God should be mistaken. "You say," said the Emperor Trajan to Rabbi Joshua, "that your God is everywhere, and you boast that He resides specially in your nation. Show me your God." Answered Rabbi Joshua, "God is everywhere, but He cannot be seen; no mortal eye can behold His glory." But the emperor insisted. "Well," said Rabbi Joshua, "look first at one of God's ambassadors." The emperor assented. Forth into the noon the rabbi took the emperor and bade him look upon the sun. "But I cannot," said Trajan; "the light dazzles me." Answered the rabbi, "Thou art unable to bear the light

of one of God's creations; how then couldst thou behold His face and live?" Certainly He who dwells in such light that of Him the dazzling sun is but partial and poor reflection cannot dwell amid the mists of possible mistake. Will you look a moment, then, at God's thought of things?

It is toward universal man the apostle Paul points the artillery of his tremendous Epistle to the Romans. For the apostle all mankind grouped itself in but two classes, Jew and Gentile. The argument of the opening chapters of the great Epistle is that both Gentile and Jew have sinned. The levelling, startling conclusion is there stated in the twenty-second and twenty-third verses of the third chapter, "For there is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." This, then, as uttered by the inspired apostle, is God's thought of the wide human plight: "There is no difference."

You say, as men do constantly, "Is that true? I cannot see it to be true. It is the plainest fact of life that among men there is

difference." I think the answer is, In your sense you may be right; there is difference. In the apostle's sense, however, you are wrong; there is no difference.

In your sense there is difference. There is difference in natural endowment: one man is born with a brighter brain than another. There is difference in environment. Have you never felt your heart swell and gladden with gratitude, as you have walked amid the squalor of the poorer quarters of some great city, that you were not born into the surroundings of these poor children, whose school and playground is the narrow street, and whose home is only a garret in a tenement-house? God pity such! I am sure He does. But how different the surroundings of your childhood. I do not think, amid such scenes, a man can help asking himself, "Who maketh thee to differ?" "God," is the only answer.

There is difference as to culture. Mr. Big Ox, a chief of the Crow Indians, whom I used to know, thought there never was a braver or a brighter hero to be seen than himself when

he had painted one cheek yellow and the other green and his nose vermilion, and when he had put about himself his buckskin war-jacket, splashed with various hues, and had hung about his neck a lot of pewter medals and some claws of the grizzly bear. You would laugh at him, if you did not pity him, because you are civilized, while he is barbarous.

There is also difference as to sorts of sins. Bill Sykes, in Mr. Dickens's novel of "Oliver Twist," has not lived only in that novel. Mr. Dickens only painted a too common picture of what is too often true in this sad world when he drew Bill Sykes. Nancy, at once so strangely true and so sadly false, Bill Sykes slew in a passion on that dark night, you remember. He could not stand the presence of the dead when the morning came, and though he fled to Islington and then to Highgate Hill and then to Hampstead Heath and then to Hendon and then to Hatfield and then on and on, it seemed to him as though the sun told all men of his awful deed, and that

her poor ghost was as palpable to their sight as it was to his own. Men have sinned as Bill Sykes did. But you have not so sinned. No. There is difference among men in sorts of sins.

And yet, in the apostle's sense and as God sees things, it is also true there is no difference. I remember another uses the illustration, and it comes to me to use it in my fashion as I think of what I saw the other summer. If you pass along Whitehall in London, you shall see there through all the hours of the day, from six to six, two soldiers under covered archways, sitting upon coal-black horses. They are most resplendent fellows as they sit there, with their plumes and burnished breast-plates and shining arms and red coats and white leather breeches and polished boots. It is like the flash of a rainbow to see a company of them ride along the street. They are the Horse Guards, the *élite* corps of the British army. But it is the law of that army that every man to join that corps must be six feet and over. Here is the

recruiting officer, and here are some young Englishmen who think they will enlist. One measures five feet eight, but he cannot enlist. Here is another who measures five feet nine, but he cannot enlist. Here is another measuring five feet ten; he cannot enlist. Here is another still whose height is five feet eleven and a half, but he cannot enlist. Six feet or over is the law. There is difference among these fellows as to stature; there is no difference among them as to want of ability to enlist in the *élite* corps, for they all come short.

I have gone down hundreds of feet into a Colorado silver mine, and looked down a good deal farther. Here is a man at work down there, two thousand feet below the surface of the earth. I have stood on the top of Mt. Washburne in the Yellowstone National Park, ten thousand feet above the level of the sea. Between that man down there in that mine and me on the summit of Mt. Washburne there is a difference of twelve thousand feet, and that, as to altitude, is a good deal of difference. But as far as touching the stars is

concerned there is no difference whatever between us, for both he and I are helplessly unable to do that.

Now right here is where the "no difference" appears. The sublime, holy, exact, unchangeable law of God, no man is able to touch and answer that with an exact obedience, for every man is in some sort a sinner. All men are helpless, then, toward the perfect keeping of God's perfect law. As to this there is no difference. There may be difference as to endowment, surroundings, culture, sorts of sins; but as to sin, as to the fact that all men by sin have made their arms too short to touch and keep that white and changeless law, there is no difference. That is God's thought of things. That is the truth of things. There is no difference among men as to the breaking of God's law, and so as to the impossibility of justification by means of the awful law.

No difference — this is the solemn fact. Therefore the need of an atonement. Therefore the irreversible necessity that men, among

whom there is no difference, accept by faith that atonement, and so, by God's good grace, enter into justification "apart from the deeds of the law." Ah! friend, sinner, like all, are you miserably measuring yourself by others when others are not the standard, and so thinking that because you have not so much come short you can get on and through? Do not fill your eyes with the mist of your thought of things. Behold God's thought of things. There is no difference. Flee to Jesus.

OF NOT GOING ON.

THAT is a significant incident in Old Testament history, of King Joash and Elisha. In those old times hostilities were often declared by the formal discharging of an arrow toward an enemy. Syria had been the constant and encroaching foe of Israel and had lately been pressing sorely. After sixty years of ministry the prophet Elisha is dying. King Joash pays the respect of a personal visit to the sick and aged man. "Take bow and arrows," says the dying prophet to the king. And the king took unto him bow and arrows. "Make thine hand to ride upon the bow," commands the prophet. And the king laid arrow on bow, and set its notch against the string as though he were about to shoot. And Elisha put his

hands upon the king's hands; thus would the prophet show that what was being done was being done by Divine direction. "Open the window eastward," orders the prophet. And the lattice was flung apart. "Shoot!" commands Elisha. And the king sped the arrow. And as the arrow flew, the prophet made formal declaration of war and of success in it against encroaching Syria,—"the arrow of the Lord's deliverance from Syria, for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek till thou hast consumed them."

But the king had still a quiver full of arrows. "Take them," says the prophet. And the king gathered them into his hand. "Smite upon the ground," orders the prophet, — that is to say, In token of determined and vanquishing war, through the open lattice, shoot arrow after arrow till all are gone, and they remain there smiting into and sticking in the ground as symbols of a dauntless purpose. And the king shot one arrow, and it smote the ground. And the king shot the second arrow, and it smote the ground.

And the king shot the third arrow, and it smote the ground.

And then, listlessly, or unzealously, or faithlessly, the king stopped.

“And he smote thrice and stayed.”

“And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, ‘Thou shouldst have smitten five or six times, then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it; whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice.’”

Ah, *not going on*, only half doing, not pushing to the finishing in grand faith and unrelaxing purpose, — is not that the trouble with multitudes of men?

But it is hard, men say. I have smitten three times; I have in a measure overcome the Syrians; I have achieved somewhat, — not what I meant, I grant, not the fulness of the young ambition that once thrilled me. But I have smitten thrice, and now to go on smiting still, is hard work and weary. Yes, it is hard. But what of that? Everything that gets up in this world must struggle up. No oak ever became like Cowper’s oak

at Yardley that only struggled through three seasons and then stopped. Arago, the great French astronomer, tells in his autobiography, how once, in his young days, he was utterly puzzled and discouraged over his mathematics. He was holding a paper-bound text-book in his hand. Dimly through the cover some writing showed. Urged by curiosity, he dampened the cover and carefully unrolled the leaf. It turned out to be a brief letter from D'Alembert to a young man discouraged over mathematics, as, just then, he was. The letter was in this fashion: "Go on, sir; go on. The difficulties you meet will resolve themselves as you advance; proceed, and light will dawn with increasing clearness upon your path." Well, it was the going on that made Arago the astronomer. The Syrians of difficulty had been too many for him had he smitten only thrice.

"But I am too old," men often say. "Life with me has passed its crest; I have smitten my three times in life; I can smite no more; my hand must stay itself." Well, — how con-

stantly does experience declare it, — if you want to bring upon yourself the very helplessness and senility of age just do that, *stop smiting*. Use is the law of growth. And use is as thoroughly the law of conservation. Cease the going on, refuse to use yourself, and every added year, instead of being an added force, will be an added burden. Gladstone, Bismarck, Whittier, Dr. McCosh, Mr. Bancroft, are strong still and affluent of service, though the shadows lengthen round them. And why? They have not ceased dealing vigorous strokes. How powerful is age when age will keep on acting. And, by the way, that word “age” means literally *to act*. When you say a man is seventy years of age, you really say a man has *acted* for seventy years. And that man is the best man on that verge who has really kept on *acting* for high things and true. He is free from rust; smoothly, still, and vigorously his powers work. And experience nobly won and nobly used — what benediction like the tender, glorious colors of a June sunset!

One of the saddest things I know is to see a man, when the shadows of life begin to lengthen, — and often before they begin to lengthen when a man yet stands in the noon of a noble prime — begin to loosen his hold on things (men are most apt to do it from religious things, church work, etc.), withdraw personal interest, fling off burdens, get out of relation with beneficent enterprise, refuse this going on, stop smiting. Necessarily this means cessation of growth, narrowing of usefulness, a swift and sure decay of power.

I was walking once, looking for the evidences of the coming spring. I passed two trees standing side by side on the crest of a hill. One of them in every branch and limb and twig was in evident and full relation with the spring. You could see the beginning swelling of the leaf-buds, and you could not help marking that peculiar and beautiful thickening of their tracery. It was not difficult to see that that tree would soon be glorious with green banners. But the other tree had begun the refusing to go

on; the buds were swelling but here and there, on a few twigs amid a multitude of dead branches. In great part that tree had withdrawn itself from the vivifying spring airs. Manifestly it had "retired." It is but poor and meagre life that even June can bring to it.

The only way to live strongly is to act strongly, to persistently keep in relation with things, to welcome duties and burdens as the best medicine, to refuse to smite but thrice and stay.

Many a minister wonders why he has reached the dead line. The reason is plain enough. He has smitten but thrice and stayed. He is no longer an alert student. He is chopping over old straw. He is preaching old sermons as a habit. Well, if he will do so, he is himself drawing the dead line about himself.

Here, too, is the trouble with much of Christian experience. Men get no further than forgiveness; they do not keep on smiting toward achievement of Christian char-

acter, sanctification, an increasing likeness to their Lord. They do not seek with Paul to apprehend that for which they have been apprehended. Well, they are dwarfs only and must stay such. No Syrians of the world, the flesh, the devil, are vanquished by a faithless smiting but three times.

Significant for every one of us those words of the great Master: "My Father worketh hitherto and I work."

DISSUASIVES FROM PRAYER.

THAT is a very explicit Divine word coming to us out of the heavens: "And call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."

But while this word of God is very explicit to us, and while it legitimizes to us the great boon and blessing of prayer, it is not to be denied that there are many influences in us and about us dissuading us from prayer; making reply to this divine word, "Call," with a lower and human word, "Do not call."

That is a very common word which *Prosperity* has to say to us: "Do not call;" "You do not need to call." It seems very strange that we should wrest the very blessings which God showers on us into dissuasives from prayer, yet how frequently do men do precisely this. It was, I think, the thrifty Ben-

jamin Franklin who suggested to his father, when the well-filled pork barrel came into the house, that it would save time if he would say grace over the whole barrel once for all and have done with it, instead of delaying to thank God for the daily portions which the family would day by day consume. The feeling at the bottom of this suggestion was that, now that the larder was supplied, there was no longer any special need for God, at least in that direction.

Such feeling is the temptation of prosperity. When a man begins in any wise to accumulate, if he be not careful he will be smitten by the siren voices of accumulation: "You need not call on God;" "You have a good bank account;" "You have a prosperous business;" "You are sufficient for yourself;" "You are independent." And, as the life of religion consists in a consciousness of dependence, and as the man's prosperity is eating away this consciousness of dependence, the religious life of this prosperous man is losing grasp, sinking, failing, going out. This is the

temptation of prosperity: that to God's word "Call," it replies, "Don't call;" "You do not need to call."

I always tremble for a man when I see such result of God's prosperous providence stealing over him. And I have often seen it. The trouble about it is, it is no rare thing to see. I remember such a man. Back in the years when he was comparatively poor, when life was a daily struggle and tussle to make the ends meet, no man could have been more recognizing of his dependence on God, more spiritual, more devout, readier and swifter in all holy service. But prosperity began to flow in on that man like a tide. Everything he touched turned out well. Larger house, better dress, more elegant appointments, fine equipage, travel, an abundance of all the rarer and finer furniture of life, — that was all right; he could afford them all; it was not in the least unchristian that he enjoy the good things his prosperity brought him. But the trouble was you began to mark a different tone striking through all his religious life; it was as

evident as could be that the man was neglecting prayer, or praying only in machine and routine fashion. He did not give, in his prosperity, in any wise proportionately to what he gave when he was less prosperous. Little by little he began to take his hands off religious service, did not come to the prayer-meeting, or sat silent in it; could not spare time now for Sabbath-school work, benevolent work, church work of any sort. "Ah!" those who knew him said; "how different he is." It was perfectly plain he was losing his sense of dependence on God; he was listening to the siren song of prosperity droning, "Don't call," in answer to God's word "Call." I always tremble when I see a man doing thus. I think if a man needs God's help wisely and honestly to make a fortune, he needs God's help as much wisely and nobly to use and keep a fortune. Well, this man, becoming through his prosperity arrogantly self-dependent, lost his head, thought he could do anything, thought everything *must* turn out well with him, plunged into daring

unfortunate investments, in a little time stood stripped. I do honestly think he would not have stood so if he had steadily refused to hear this tempting suggestion of prosperity, "Don't call;" if, instead, he had kept on "calling," as he was wont to do in his poorer days, asking God's help that now, with larger resource, he might the more largely use himself for God's glory and the good of his fellow-men. Oh! as God makes for any one of us the days brighter with prosperity, let us scorn to be touched by this bad scepticism, exhaling so often like malaria from better days. To God's great word "Call" let us refuse to be so mean as to allow God's very blessings to frame themselves into the reply, "Don't call."

Then, too, the *usual work, routine, duty, pleasure of life*, are apt to return to God's great word "Call," the answer "Do not call." "I am hurried on too fast in the round of duties and enjoyments," said that sincere and noble man, Dr. Arnold, of Rugby, "and I greatly feel the need of stopping to consider

my ways and to recognize my own infinite weakness and unworthiness." "I am hurried on too fast." Ah, yes! how true that is of most of us. And how this very hurry and push and pressure says to us, "Don't call;" "You have too many things to do;" "Never mind calling;" "It cannot be expected so busy a person should take much time to call on God." And so we shoot by the closet-door. An English clergyman taught with much pains an ignorant parishioner to read. He learned to read so well he could spell out the Bible very nicely. Visiting at his house some months afterward, the clergyman said to the man's wife: "I suppose your husband enjoys reading his Bible now very much?" "Oh! dear no, sir," she said, "he's left that long ago, and got into the newspaper." Yes, in this swift age there are so many newspapers to read, and they are so interesting, how easily we leave the Bible, say we have no time for it, for sake of them. In the rush and hurry we shoot by the closet-door, on the other side of which lies the Bible, with the dust gather-

ing thickly on its covers; on the other side of which waits for us the salutary silence of communion with God, the strength and spiritual nurture of which we need so much, that we may know how to manage well these rushing lives of ours, — that they be really turned to some account, that they be not frayed and frittered out into poor nothingnesses. God says, “Call;” but how often business and engagements and social duties and household duties and life’s various rush and hurry reply, “Don’t call.”

That is the strong life which shuts its ears to such dissuasives and *will* call.

PAYING THE FARE.

“ So he Paid the Fare thereof.”

AND that was not a very great thing for Jonah to do; ships were sailing constantly from Joppa to Tarshish, and I do not suppose the fare was exorbitant. And yet—

When Charles the First was king of England the struggle struck between absolutism on the one hand and constitutional freedom on the other. Out of the throes of that struggle was born the ordered liberty which you and I, in this free land, enjoy. King Charles said, “I am king by Divine right; I will rule as I please.” The English people said, “By what right soever you may be king, you must yet rule, not absolutely, but constitutionally. It is part of the British constitution that the money which goes into

the king's hand for purposes of government must be voted him by a freely chosen House of Commons. If you, the king, are determined to rule absolutely, we, the English people, represented by the House of Commons, will not vote you any money."

Answered King Charles, "I am king by Divine right; I will rule as I please. If you will not vote me money I will *take* it. I need money for my navy; I herewith order that each English county be assessed to pay its proportion of the royal ship-money."

John Hampden lived in Buckinghamshire. He was a wealthy man. Buckinghamshire was assessed to furnish for the royal navy a ship of four hundred and fifty tons. It was not a large assessment for a rich county, and the proportion of the assessment which would fall upon the wealthy John Hampden was very small, — but a few shillings.

But precisely those few shillings the great and good John Hampden absolutely refused to pay, — not because he was unpatriotic, no man more loyal to king and country; not

because he was stingy, no man of wider heart; not because he could not, the few shillings were but as a drop compared with the river of his wealth,—but because the thing, the paying those few shillings, though so slight in itself, *meant an immensity*, meant the triumph of despotism and the death of freedom. And John Hampden's standing at that little thing has come to mean your liberty and mine.

You can see plainly in this instance, I am sure, how a little thing in itself may mean and make vast things.

So Jonah "paid the fare thereof,"—not a great thing to do, not an unusual thing, not an exorbitant thing; but yet, for Jonah, it meant and made vast and sorrowful result.

Let us think together a moment *of what Jonah really bought when he paid his fare.*

Well, he bought his passage to Tarshish, you say. Yes, certainly he bought that; but the paying that fare held results in its bosom, and Jonah could not help buying the results, too.

He bought *treachery toward Duty*. Duty is a most weighty word. Spell it as it ought to be spelled, and you can begin to see how heavy a word it is — *D-u-c-ty*. Duty is that which is *due*, that which I *owe*, that which I *ought*. Ought! how majestic with mighty sanction what I *ought* is! God is in that word “ought.” God, then, is in duty. Treachery toward duty is treachery terrible. God’s word came to Jonah, bidding him go preach in Nineveh. Jonah paid his fare to Tarshish, a place directly opposite from Nineveh. So he bought disloyalty of the utmost sort.

I have met young men who have protested to me that they were never mean, that though they knew they were going on in courses of dissipation, they always *paid their way* like men; if they lost money at gambling, they marched right up to it and settled these “debts of honor” like men; if they were drinking with others, they were always willing to pay their share of the costs. Whatever you might say of them, they affirmed, no one could ever say they were mean. No,

they *paid their way*, they laid down the fare of their dissipations right royally,—all of which may be very true. But I cannot see that all this they proclaim so loudly helps the matter very much. The chief question is, Have they any right to be paying such fare at all? When they pay it they cannot help buying at the same time the meanest sort of a commodity,—treachery to duty. Because Jonah paid his fare, it did not make it a high and noble thing that he should start for Tarshish when God told him to go to Nineveh.

Jonah, paying this fare, bought also *loss of the Divine presence*. We read that Jonah “went down” from the presence of the Lord. God is present everywhere, indeed, but God specially manifests His presence to the heart true to Him. The consciousness of that presence is the most precious and shining *inner* wealth. Not long since, in Bedford, England, I looked through the iron bars of the old jail-door which used to shut brave John Bunyan in. But the iron bars could not

shut out from Bunyan the sweet sense of God's presence. I like much his rough measures. He could not help singing, so glad his heart was because God was with him, —

“I am indeed in prison now
In body, but my mind
Is free to study Christ, and how
Unto me He is kind.

“For though men keep my outward man
Within these locks and bars,
Yet, by the faith of Christ, I can
Mount higher than the stars.

“When they do talk of banishment,
Of death, or such like things,
Then, to me, God sends *heart-content*
That like a fountain springs.”

Well, the miserable James the Second, on his throne, was not so rich as honest John behind these bars. There is nothing so precious as God's smile shining into your heart. The loss of this shining Jonah bought when he paid his fare. He *went down* from the presence of the Lord.

My dear friend, you say you are getting a good deal of pleasure out of life; you are

young, you are having a good time, and you mean to have it. But are you losing, through what you get, the consciousness of God's presence? If you are, you are losing treasure immeasurable. And the loss of that is always a *going down*.

Jonah also bought, when he paid his fare, *trouble for himself*. I suppose it all went well enough at first. The sea was smooth. The breezes were gentle. The sails were filled. The oars dipped merrily in the waters. But you remember a storm came before very long, and all sorts of other trouble came to Jonah, — the being cast overboard, and the slimy entombment in the great fish. Jonah bought all this trouble when he paid his fare. Be you very sure of this, that sin must bring trouble, and that when you buy sin you cannot help buying its trouble too. Says the Buddhist proverb, "As the cart-wheel follows the tread of the ox, so punishment follows sin."

Said a young man to me once, "If God is good, as you say He is, why does He

let me be so wretched as I am? If He were good, I should think He would make it pleasanter for me."

"And you know you are going on in sin," I answered. "Yes," he said, "I acknowledge that." "Do you think," I asked, "God would be good to you if He made a sinful path pleasant for you; does He not make you tread on thorns because He wants you to turn into the right path? Is not your trouble the best possible proof of His love?"

"Yes, it must be so," he said, after thinking a little. "God could not be good if He made sin pleasant." No, He could not be. God will not, *cannot*, make sin happy. If you pay the fare of sin, you must, as Jonah did, purchase bitter trouble with your fare.

Jonah bought also when he paid his fare a more *difficult repentance*.

To Nineveh, eastward, was about six hundred miles. To Tarshish, westward, was more than a thousand miles. Is it not the plainest of plain things that the farther Jonah went toward Tarshish, the *farther back* he would

have to go to reach Nineveh? Every mile in the wrong direction was an added mile to be re-traversed toward the right. The farther one goes on in evil, the longer and the harder is the way back.

Poor purchase, was it not — that fare?

Poor purchase! But what sort of a purchase are *you* making?

ROLLED AWAY.

THE death there on the cross; the quenching of hope; the begging the beloved body; the hurried sepulture; the great stone blocking the tomb's mouth; the at once prohibiting and identifying Roman seal; the pacing of the sentinels; the vigil of the loving women, and then the gathering of the shadows of that Friday evening; their deepening into night; and afterward, the long hours of that tragic Saturday, while He whom they trusted would have redeemed Israel lay, chill and lifeless, as real a subject of Death's empire as any one of the countless company who, in the long course of human history, had gone over to the majority.

Do you know how you may test your love? You may be sure your love is genuine if it prompt you to serve, not alone in great, but,

with exceeding carefulness, in little things. A love which is laggard in little things, is a love the heat of which has slackened. A great love glorifies lowly duties, instead of neglecting them; hastens to put its hands to them, and transfigures them. How a mother delights to do even menial things for her sick child. "Entire affection hateth nicer hands." You say you love, but if you willingly blurr the infinitesimals of service you do not much know what a real love is.

Well, the high hopes of these loving women are smitten, but their love glows on, and therefore they are concerned about details. That burial was hurried. The cerements were not wound as love would have them, and the embalming spices were neither as plentiful nor as accurately placed as love would wish.

So, on that first day of the week, as soon as the sunrise would yield love light, they hasten. To the last fold, love would decorate and arrange that shroud, and with exquisite attention surround that body with fragrant spices. But there is a difficulty. Often love's

feet must tread rough paths, but because they are the feet of love they will go on treading.

The stone still blocks the tomb's mouth: it is a great stone, beyond these women's strength to move; and besides, it is a stone stamped with the Roman seal, which none may tamper with but at the risk of life; and besides, as the women think, the sentinels are still pacing their guarding beat.

It is no wonder they question, "Who shall roll us away the stone?" Who shall? They do not know. They cannot tell. But the noteworthy thing is they *go on toward the stone notwithstanding*. Yes, it is also a test of a real love that it will go out against the hugest obstacles, as well as be punctiliously careful of little things.

So even the great stone cannot daunt such love as theirs.

And when at last they reach the tomb, the stone *was rolled away*. God interferes for love. The Resurrection smooths the path for love's determined feet.

Ah, well! If we loved more, if we were but more facile to love's prompting; if we were but more anxious to do little duties for our Lord's sake, even though obstacles might seem to hinder; if we would but go on to service notwithstanding, how many stones should we find rolled away, and what revelation should we receive of God's care and path-making for a love which *must* express itself in service.

But we love so little that we do *not* go forth, though the stone be there; so we miss what shining and strange help God has for a great love! If we but loved more, with such love as could not leave the attempt at little services unmade, even though a high hindrance seemed to uprear itself, we should know — how immensely! — more of the wonderful help of God.

GOD'S GREAT JEWEL.

IN the long line of British heroes there is no one who wrought more nobly both for India herself and for England in India than Lord John Lawrence. Somehow there had come into the possession of the British the mountain of light, the marvellous Koh-i-noor. For safe keeping the great gem was made over to the Board of Government of the Punjab Province, and by the Board made over to the personal keeping of Lord John Lawrence himself. Half unconsciously, Lord John thrust the diamond, wrapped in numerous folds of cloth, and laid in an insignificant little box, into his waistcoat pocket. Burdened with all sorts of duties, and tasked even to the limit of his surprising industry, Lord John kept working on, and thought no more of the precious treasure. He changed his

dress for dinner, and threw his waistcoat aside, still forgetting all about the box it held. Some six months afterward there came a message from Lord Dalhousie that the Queen had ordered that the great jewel be sent to her at once. The matter was mentioned by Sir Henry Lawrence, a brother of Lord John, at the Board, when Lord John answered, "Send for it at once!"

"Why, you 've got it," replied Sir Henry.

Then it all flashed upon Lord John — the fact that he was in possession of the gem — his carelessness. Thought Lord John, "Well, this is the worst trouble I have ever got into."

But Lord John was a man of iron nerve, and gave no outward sign of his inward quaking. He went on with the business of the meeting as though nothing had happened, saying simply, "O yes, of course; I forgot all about it." He soon, however, seized an opportunity of slipping to his private room, and with his heart in his mouth sent for his native servant, and said to him: "Have you

a small box which was in my waistcoat pocket some time ago?"

"Yes, Sahib," the man answered, "I found it, and put it in one of your boxes."

"Bring it here," said Lord John.

The old servant went to a battered tin box and brought the little one from it.

"Open it," said Lord John, "and see what is inside."

So, anxiously enough, Lord John watched the man unwinding fold after fold of the poor rags which wrapped the jewel round; and what was his relief when he saw the sun-like gem shine out.

The old servant seemed entirely unconscious of the immense treasure he had been having in his keeping. "There is nothing here, Sahib," said the old servant, "but a bit of glass." Carefully now the gem was guarded till the Queen herself laid it among the jewels of her crown.

Yet there is a rarer and more lustrous, and more costly jewel far, which men are wont to treat as though it were of no worth what-

ever. Like Lord John they wrap it about with the rags of neglect, and then, engaged with other things, forget all about it. Or, like the old servant, when, perchance, it is displayed to them, they declare it nothing but a bit of glass.

It seemed to me I saw the gleam of God's great jewel in these words of Scripture the other day: "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace." And as I looked at it entranced, the jewel of God seemed to flash light upon me from these four facets, — *what* men may have, *when* men may have it, *how* men may have it, *how much* they may have.

Let the flash from the first facet shine upon you for a moment, — *what* men may have; *redemption*, the forgiveness of sins. Redemption — that is a large word; it includes the sublime whole of the Divine gifts to us through Jesus Christ our Lord. But an angle and element of this redemption is here shown us, — the forgiveness of sins.

And that word translated "sins" is a word significant. It means literally, I think, a badly heedless falling, and so sin. It has often seemed to me as though Samson were an admirable specimen of a quite usual sinner. I do not mean so much in the special sins he did, as in the spirit in which he wrought them. He felt so strong; he was so heedless; he fell so easily, sadly, surely. How often a young man says, "I am too strong to fall," and then foolishly flings himself into temptation, and then tumbles. So from the right and true he falls through a wilful heedlessness. But such a fall is sin. He did not mean to sin. He thought he would not. But he heedlessly went where sin abounded, and marching on, as he thought, securely, his foot was tripped by sin's multitudinous snares, and down he went almost before he knew it. He "did n't think." But when your boy says that to you, in excuse for some poor heedlessness, your rightful reply is, "You ought to think; that is precisely the trouble, that you did not." Yes,

a sin springing from a wilful heedlessness is still a sin. Who of us has not thus tumbled?

And against our sins must burn the Divine resentment. God is not a mere nebulosity of good-nature. God is not a poor and nerveless mist of easy-going sentiment. There is such a thing as the Divine holiness, which must mean an active and pure going forth against that which is opposed to itself. I think it would be well for all of us if we thought more upon the cannots of God. Here is one as irreversible as the Divine nature itself, — God cannot make sin blessed. And also, our own better nature burns against these sins of ours. I was reading, not long since, how once the late William Cullen Bryant, after reaching his office one morning, and trying in vain to begin work, turned to his associate and said: —

“I cannot get along at all this morning.”

“Why not?” the other asked.

“Oh,” replied Mr. Bryant, “I have done wrong. When on my way here a little boy,

flying a kite, passed me. The string of the kite rubbed against my face. I seized it and broke it. I did wrong; I ought to have paid him."

I am sure such quick sensitiveness of conscience every one must think most right and noble. Against our heedless sins, in just the proportion of our true manhood our own better nature burns. In addition still, since God must be against our sins, and our own consciences are against them, there must be doom for them. I do not believe it possible for a man really to think himself out of the fact, if he thinks at all, that there must be such a thing as punishment for his sins.

Now here is God's great jewel sending wonderful flash into the darkness of our conviction of sin, — the forgiveness of sins. And that word translated "forgiveness" is a great word also. It means literally a forgiveness which is a letting free from sin; God's anger ceases; the resentment of our own conscience may; sin's doom is dissipated. "Behold, I have cast thy sins behind my back; I have

drowned them in the ocean of my forgetfulness," says God.

I do not think that any man who has ever known what the feeling of sin is can call this divine gift of the forgiveness of sins only a bit of glass.

But God's great jewel flashes light upon me from another facet; *when* men may have this redemption. I wait and think upon that blessed present tense of Scripture, — in whom we *have*. That is not subjunctive mood, may have; that is not future tense, will have; that is indicative mood, present tense, — in whom we have. The jewel is mine at this moment. Redemption is a present possession for believing men. It were better for us if we sought more present-tense experience. The Bible is full of the possibility and promise of it. Such a present possession is not a bit of glass.

I keep looking at the great jewel, and from another facet a wonderful light gleams; *how* men may have this redemption. My eyes fasten on these words: *in whom*, that is,

Christ. All I have to do is take Christ, and I get it all. No painful penances, no hard doing of hard drudgery. The great gift is held in the pierced hand, and that hand opens immediately at the faintest call of my faith. If my faith will let Him, He will give it to me. Such ease of getting is certainly not a bit of glass.

Once more, from still another facet a holy light streams from this jewel out; *how much* of this redemption may I have? According to the riches of His grace.

I wake up on some June morning, and I ask myself, How much of a day may I have? and as the light streams in at my window, the answer comes to me, according to the shining of the sun. That means all that the sun will disclose to me,—the white encampments of the clouds in the blue heavens; the wide array of summer landscape; the flash of the sea as it sends back the sunbeams; the fresh garniture of the June leaves; the bursting beauty of the flowers at my feet; that means vastly more than

I can possibly take in, by my meagre senses, through the long hours of the glorious day.

According to the riches of His grace. How much that means it will take eternity to discover. Forgiveness, regeneration, adoption, sanctification, peace, joy, love, resurrection, heaven; what a wondrous jewel of God this is which flames and flashes according to the riches of His grace. Surely this is no bit of glass. It is a vast diamond of the first water. Oh, if men only would take what God has for them in the Lord Jesus!

THE LIFE VANISHING, YET
VALUABLE.

“FOR what is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.” Common enough, that symbol of our human lives, and true enough. Truer it gets to be as life goes on, and the months hasten breathlessly, and the year rushes to its close before it fairly seems to have begun.

You have seen the vapor lying on the mountain-side. I remember a morning I looked forth upon it from the summit of Mt. Washington. I wanted to see the sun ride forth gloriously in his strength. It was December on the mountain-top, though it was August in the valleys. In the wintry chill and in the faint light of the early morning I cast my eyes abroad. Below me, just

as far as sight could reach, was one vast ocean of billowy vapor. The waves of it swayed, and writhed, and rose, and fell, and settled down damp and impenetrable upon the earth beneath. Only here and there the black peak of some loftier summit protruded, like a little island, above the misty sea. The vapor was triumphant. It had climbed the rocky mountain-sides and overswept and vanquished them.

Then the sun appeared. He flung abroad the slanting javelins of his beams. They smote and pierced the vapor. Insensibly, but quickly, the vapor melted into the transparent air. Clearly, and more clearly still, stood forth the mountains. Now the sunlight, cleaving the mists, poured radiance into the lowliest valleys. Shreds of vapor clung still, here and there, in the more shaded corners. But soon these were burned away. And in a little time the whole grand landscape — from the blue line where, miles away, the ocean met the coast, to the far uprising of the Adirondacks — was cleared of every

particle of mist. It was a large and swaying ocean of vast vapor; and then, how soon, it — was not. Your life is even as a vapor, which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

And how more and more life gets to seem like it. Back in your boyhood or your girlhood, do you not remember how laggard seemed the time? Christmas would never come, as you counted the weeks and days which led to it. Fourth of July — could the slowly revolving weeks ever bring it round? Vacation — the stretch of term before it was interminable.

But now, amid the stir of young manhood or young womanhood, or at the centre point of life, or amid the lengthening shadows of life's afternoon, how like a weaver's shuttle and with accelerating swiftness fly the years!

Well, life *is* like a vapor in this quick vanishing of it.

But, in another sense, is life like a vapor to too many, — not only in the sense of its vanishingness, but of its *tracelessness*.

There it is clinging to the mountain-side,

that shred of vapor. You gaze upon it, and even while you look, thinner it grows, and thinner still, and then — is gone. Nor can you find, in any wise, the place to which it clung. Gone it is, leaving no wrack behind. It but clung there for a short season and then vanished, and that is all of it. Too much is life like that to many, — not simply vanishing, but traceless of much value, to great degree resultless of worth or blessing.

But though life must be like the vapor in its vanishing, it need not be like the vapor in its tracelessness. If we will but have it so, we may make this vaporous, vanishing life a mighty force and energy for God's glory and for our brother's help.

Why, think a moment, even that poor vapor holds within itself immense possibilities of power. I was sailing home from Europe the other year. Near the banks of Newfoundland we were met by a northwestern storm. The wind was very strong. It was dead ahead. It pushed with its whole might against the vessel. It piled the huge waves in her path. It dashed them furiously against

her bows, as though the tempest would forbid the vessel's progress. There was an enormous force disputing the vessel's way.

But while the storm could dispute, it could not prevent. Onward the vessel went, and onward. The waves were mounted or cut by her never-resting keel. The winds were baffled. Steadily toward her port the vessel moved, and kept on moving. There was a force within the steamer mightier than the stormy power without. There was within that ship the force of vapor we call steam, and that was all; but that was enough.

Did you wait there, in wonder, by the throbbing heart of the Centennial Exhibition, ten years back, — that Corliss engine? Did you see it, as swaying back and forth its ponderous arms, it lent the life of its own motion to those ten thousand whirling wheels? Did you mark it as it lifted and then sent crashing down some tremendous trip-hammer, and at the same moment deftly plied some fragile needle, or laid soft touch on some slight and curious mechanism? And that which was behind and within the

engine, stirring it to life, and so communicating life to that treasure-house of various industry, was but a vapor, — that was all.

And so this life of yours and mine, though it must be vanishing, need not be traceless. There is possibility of power in this vanishing life. It can be used for something. It can be made to tell. Managed rightly, as men manage steam, which is only vapor, it may count mightily. It may leave results. It may become a blessing crowned.

Yes, if only we compel to worthy service what is left to us of this swiftly consuming life, though we cannot prevent it from being like a vapor, vanishing, we may prevent it from being like a vapor, traceless; we may imprison it in holy duty, and set it moving toward such right result that at the last the Great Master shall say of the way we have used it: "Well done, good and faithful servant."

THE END.

