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BROOKS
BY THE
TRAVELLER'S WAY

BY
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"APOSTOLIC OPTIMISM"
etc.

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Foreword.

THE addresses in this volume were all originally published in the *Examiner* newspaper, and it was not intended by Mr. Jowett, that they should ever take more permanent form. They were found, however, to be so helpful and stimulating by a wide circle of readers, and so many requests for their republication were received, that it has been resolved to issue them in the present volume, with the hope that they may appeal for good to a still larger public. As they retain the form of spoken rather than written addresses, it is only due to the author that this much should be stated.

W. B. SELBIE,

(*Editor of "The Examiner."*)

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i.

Man's Setting and God's Setting.

“I have set.”—*Psalm xvi. 8.*

“He set.”—*Psalm xl. 2.*

THE Bible abounds in figures representing spiritual attitudes and the Father's gracious response. Man assumes a certain posture of soul, and the grace of the Lord falls upon him like a soft and inspiring light. How shall I dispose my life? At what angle shall I incline it that I may receive this glorious baptism? I find the requisite suggestion in a verse of the Psalmist,—“I have set the Lord always before me.” That is a “setting” on my part, which will issue in a responsive “setting” on the part of God. I determine the direction of gaze; He will determine the character of my life. I “set the Lord always before me”; He will

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"set my feet upon a rock." He will "set my feet in a large place." He will "set before me an open door." Let us consider both sides of the wondrous fellowship, the steady contemplation, and its inevitable results.

I. Man's Setting.

"I have set the Lord always before me" (Psalm 16, 8).

You are away from home, and in the far-away city; before you retire to rest you take out of your pocket a photograph, and gaze upon the likeness of your wife or child. How calming and steadying is the influence of the picture as you set it before you! One of Robertson's congregation at Brighton used to keep a portrait of the great preacher in the room behind his shop, and when he was tempted to any mean device, he would set the likeness before him, and its influence determined his inclination in the way of truth. But it is not the figure of any earthly personality, however noble and ennobling, which is the object of the Psalmist's contemplation. He "sets" before him the august and holy presence of God, and in the glory of His most searching light all the Psalmist's affairs are determined.

"I have set the Lord *always* before me." It is

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not a temporary vision ; it is a fixed outlook. It is not a Sabbath contemplation ; it is the permanent background of the week. If the Lord is "always before me," then everything else which may obtrude into the line of sight will be seen in relationship to God. I shall see nothing by itself ; everything will be seen in divine company. Everything that emerges into my regard, and which demands my contemplation, will be seen against the great white background of the Almighty. I will judge everything by its appearance in this most revealing light. How does a thing look with God in the background ? My suggestions, my desires, my pleasures, my ambitions, my conversations, my business, my prayers, shall all be seen in this heavenly relationship, and by its revelation shall their true quality be judged and determined. But to "set the Lord always before me," not only implies the possession of revealing light ; it also implies a disposition of reverent and righteous choice. The man who "sets the Lord always before him" not only discerns the real nature of things ; he chooses the worthy and repels the base. To "set the Lord always before me" implies another "setting" which is expressed by the prophet Isaiah, "I have set my face like a flint." That which is unveiled as unworthy I spurn with holy contempt ; the revela-

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tion creates a revulsion. So that to "set the Lord" before one expresses a two-fold attribute of character—the attribute of clear discernment and of wise and sanctified choice.

II. God's Setting.

The man who steadily contemplates God as the abiding background of all his affection will find a spiritual ministry operating in his life with most gracious response. Let us gather up two or three of the "settings" which are the happy experiences of those who set their mind upon God.

(1) "*He set my feet upon a rock.*"

The shake and tremble shall go out of life. Timidity shall be changed into a sense of firmness and security. The loose, uncertain sand and gravel shall be consolidated into rock. Loose ideas about the right shall be changed into strong perceptions. Loose principles shall be converted into immovable convictions. Vagrant affection shall be transfigured into steady and unwavering love. Weak will shall be energised into mighty powers of righteousness. There shall be about the entire life a firmness, a decisiveness, a sense of strength and "go" and security, analagous to the feelings of a

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man who has stepped from wet slippery clay to firm and solid rock.

(2) "*Thou hast set my feet in a large place.*"

The life of the man whose gaze is fixed upon God shall not only be firm but roomy. Everything about his spirit shall receive enrichment. The consecrated life is not lived in the dark, dank surroundings of a narrow cell. Our feet are set in a "large place." Our affections, which were dwarfed and petty, become spacious and inclusive. Our *pleasures* have larger skies and more remote horizons. The enjoyments of the unconsecrated life were only as the uncertain pools and puddles of the common way. "Thou shalt make us to drink of the river of Thy pleasures." The only pleasures that are denied us are the bewitching and destructive delights of the flesh. But why should we mourn that they are gone? It would be like mourning for the return of the beclouding steam that dimmed the window-pane. The steam has gone, the blinding carnality is removed. We have now an outlook over the large and beautiful realm of the spirit. Our feet are "set in a large place." Our *possibilities* are enlarged. There are no limits to the power of our becoming, no confines to the bounds of our optimism. Peak upon peak

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rises before us, and we cheerfully entertain the hope of standing at last upon the ultimate summit "in the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

(3) *"I have set before thee an open door."*

The life that is lived in steady contemplation of God is not only firm and roomy, but is characterised by daily enlargement. Every day the Lord opens doors to the consecrated life. Words that hitherto had no meaning throw open their doors and unveil their wealth. Promises that have hitherto been under lock and key fling their doors ajar, and invite us to partake of their treasure. We don't know just where we shall find the open door. Sometimes a lowly service confronts us. We discharge the humble task, and in the act of obedience we find we have passed through an open door into an enlarged conception of "the inheritance of the saints in light." In the old castle at Edinburgh, the way to the Crown Jewels leads through a very humble doorway and through a very dingy and circuitous passage. The humble doorways of common duties are frequently the way to the room where God keeps His jewels. The Lord is ever giving us new opportunities, fresh chances, that day by day we may grow in grace and in the know-

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ledge of Him. It is His will that we should grow daily in finer discernment, richer affection, and more brilliant hope.

Let us "set the Lord" always before us, and life in its inmost depths shall be wondrously transfigured. We shall step upon rock, we shall live in a large place, and life will be abundant in opportunities for moral and spiritual growth.

ii.

Things Concealed.

“ It is the glory of God to conceal a thing ”—*Prov. xxv. 2.*

THE Lord conceals that He may the more abundantly reveal. He hides a thing in order that we may have the refining discipline of seeking for it, and enjoy the keen delights of discovery. Things which are come at easily are esteemed lightly. The pebble that lies upon the common way is beneath regard. The pearl that lies buried in ocean depths is a treasure of rare price. The pain of getting intensifies the joy of possessing. If everything could be picked up from the surface, life would become exceedingly superficial. But the best things are concealed. “ The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hid in a field.” We have to dig for our wealth. We are called to a life of toil and discipline and research. Things are concealed in order that life may be

Things Concealed.

a perpetual inquest. The only healthy life is the life of ardent inquisitiveness. "Ask." "Seek." "Knock."

But where shall I make my search? I never know where the wealth may be concealed. The patch of ground which appears to be the most unpromising may be the hiding place of the finest gold. Therefore I will interrogate the commonplace, I will search into the humdrum ways of life; I will pierce into the heart of tame and sober duties; I will look for treasure even in the dark cloud. I will assume that there is a dowry of grace even in the ministry of pain. I will search for the wealth of poverty, the advantage of apparent disadvantage, the jewels that may be in the heaviest grief. I will look for the hidden treasure, for "it is the glory of God to conceal a thing."

1. It is the glory of God to conceal His teaching in the hard and toilsome ways of experience.

I come to know when I have begun to do. The doctrine is hidden in the obedience. "If any man will to do, he shall know." Illumination breaks out in the ways of consecration. The Bible expresses this teaching in a great variety of forms. Here is a beautiful image from the lips of the Psalmist. "*Light is sown for the righteous.*" I can so arrange the sowing of seed that my

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garden is never without flowers. They succeed one another in appropriate succession, and each month is adorned with its own distinctive loveliness. I think of next March, with its bleak and chilly east winds. I imagine its prevailing desolations. But the bulbs are sown which, when the chilly month comes, will have emerged into beautiful flower. Now hidden, they are sown for March, and at the appointed time they will appear in their radiant robes. And there are chilly March months which I anticipate in the round of my life, the season of cold disappointment, of heavy perplexity, of dark bereavement; but "the light is sown," and when the chilly month comes, the light will be manifested in counsel and glory. Now it is hidden; when it is needed it will be found. But where shall I find it? "Light is sown *for the righteous.*" Only along that particular way has the seed been sown. No light has been sown in the ways of revolt, and if I journey in these paths of transgression, the March season will find me bereft of the illumination of a clear and cheery light. Only as I toil along the way of obedience, the way of righteousness, shall I have gracious surprises of light which the loving Lord has sown and concealed for my benediction.

Here is another word from the old book suggestive of the same teaching. "*To him that over-*

Things Concealed.

cometh will I give of the hidden manna." There is hidden manna. God has concealed heavenly food, nourishing and sustaining vision. Where has He concealed it? Just beyond the fight. "To Him that overcometh will I give." The fight is followed by the feast. Every conquest leads to the discovery of hidden manna. You fight and overcome the devil, and immediately you are conscious of a sweet joy, a sense of satisfaction, a wondrous perception of the fellowship and favour of God. It is the hidden manna. "Angels came and ministered unto Him." This gift of illumination, and this feast of fat things do not come to us before we have traversed the way of obedience. These are favours that are hidden in the very midst of the toilsome way, for it is "the glory of God to conceal a thing."

2. It is the glory of God to conceal His fortune in apparent misfortune.

We often find that the "valley of the shadow" gives rest to eyes which had become wearied with the "green pastures," and tired with the gleaming of the "still waters." It is sometimes the shadow that "restoreth our soul." The darkness often brings the healing medicament. In the apparent misfortune the Lord has hidden a fortune. God has concealed His riches in the night. The overcast sky is frequently our best friend.

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“The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.”

What a calamity it appeared when the Apostle Paul was checked in his missionary career, and imprisoned in custody at Rome. It appeared as though an irrigating river had been dammed up, and had become a localised lake. His evangel appeared to be confined, and his activities paralysed. But it was “the glory of God to conceal a thing.” The misfortune was only the shrine of a larger fortune. The Apostle cries with great jubilation—“The things that happened unto me have turned out rather for the furtherance of the Gospel.” Out of his activity there came glorious letters which have guided and cheered the pilgrimage of a countless host.

Pain comes to be my guest. My powers are wasted, and I am burdened with the dark companionship. I call it a calamity, or I regard it as a sore misfortune; but how often it has turned out that the calamity was only the dark vesture of benediction. In my suffering I gained a wider sympathy. My responsiveness was enriched. “Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress.”

Disappointment flings a barrier across my path. My purposes are thwarted. My ambitions are checked. There comes an imperative “halt” in

Things Concealed.

my life. I regard it as an ill day, and yet how often the apparently ill thing contains a jewel. Disappointment makes me think. I take a wider view of things. Through my thoughtfulness I attain to a finer discernment. Such is the gracious nutriment that is often hidden in a prickly burr. The dark misfortune was only "the shadow of the Almighty."

3. It is the glory of the Lord to conceal His power in apparently contemptible agents.

We never know where the Lord is preparing His instruments. Their emergence is usually creative of surprise. God hides His preparations in such strange places. He wants a missionary for the New Hebrides, and He fashions him in a peasant's cottage at Dumfries. Three of the most stalwart and fruitful labourers in modern Methodism were reared in a labourer's hut. God so frequently deserts conspicuous spheres, and nourishes His great ones in the obscure corners of the world. Perhaps the mightiest spiritual ministry, now being exerted in our country, is proceeding from the life of some unknown and unrecognised woman, living a strong and beautiful life in cramped and abject material conditions. "Things that are despised hath God chosen, yea, and things that are not." He makes the nobodies and the nothings into kings and queens.

iii.

“Behind and Before.”

“Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid Thine hand upon me.”—*Psalm cxxxix. 5.*

“THOU hast beset me behind!” He deals with the enemy in the rear, the foe that lurks in my yesterdays. He does not ignore the dark heritage that bears down upon me from the past. “And before!” He deals with the enemy in the front, the foe that seems to hide in my to-morrows. “And laid Thine hand upon me!” He deals with the immediate contingency, and gives me a present consciousness of ample defence and security.

But does He perfectly understand me? Does He know my idiosyncrasies? Is He intimate with my peculiar weaknesses? Does He know where the hedge is thin and vulnerable, and where my life is most easily invaded and defiled? Does He know where defences are more specially required?

“Behind and Before.”

Let us seek the answer in the earlier verses of the Psalm, and let the spacious experience of the psalmist be interpreted as revealing the Almighty's intimate knowledge of the individual life.

I. God's Intimate Knowledge of the Individual Life.

“*O Lord, Thou hast searched me.*” The examination has been most thorough and penetrating. Every nook and corner has been explored. Nothing has been overlooked, unrecognised, unnamed. “I, the Lord, search the heart.”

“*And known me.*” It is the knowledge of an intimate friend. I require knowing. I am often misunderstood. The unexplored is so frequently the misjudged. The Lord knows me. “I know my sheep.”

“*Thou knowest my downsitting.*” He is present in my seasons of meditation, in the hours when I sit down to think and plan and devise, and when the formative purposes of life are chosen and shaped.

“*And mine uprising.*” He is an intimate presence when meditation is ended, and the moment of execution has arrived. He knows when my purpose becomes an action, when “I will arise” has passed into “he arose,” and resolution is being fulfilled.

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"Thou understandest my thought afar off." He discerns the faintest beginnings of purpose. He detects the mental germs. He sees my thought long before it is incarnated in an act. He sees it "afar off," when it is only a trembling suggestion, and when it passes almost imperceptibly across the threshold of the mind.

"Thou searchest out my path." He knows the way I take to achieve my purposes. He knows all the windings of the road. He knows when it is "straight" and when it is "crooked." He knows all the means I employ. "He is acquainted with all my ways."

"There is not a word in my tongue, but lo! O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether." He watches life as it blossoms at the lips. He marks the kindly vehicle of grace. He notes the ungainly vehicle of malice and ill-will. He knows the contents of all my intercourse, and how it is determined and coloured by the threats and flatteries of men.

Surely this God knows me! He is intimate with my personal "make-up," with my own peculiar weaknesses, and knows just what is needed to render me strong and invulnerable.

II. The Security Given.

1. *"Thou hast beset me behind."* He stands between me and my enemies in the rear. He

“Behind and Before.”

defends me from the hostility of my own past. He does not cut me away from my yesterdays. Consequences are not annihilated; their operations are changed. They are transformed from destructives into constructives. The sword becomes a ploughshare; the implement of destruction becomes an agent of moral and spiritual culture. The Lord “besets me behind” and the sins of yesterday no longer send their poisoned swords into my life. They are changed into the ministers of a finer culture, nourishing godly sorrow, and humility, and meekness, and self-mistrust. The failures and indiscretions of yesterday are no longer creatures of moral impoverishment and despair. He “besets me behind,” and they become the teachers of a quiet wisdom and well-proportioned thought.

2. “*And before.*” He comes between me and the enemy that troubles me from to-morrow, the foe that lies ambushed in futurity and disturbs the peace of to-day. And so He deals with my fears and anxieties, and repeats the miracle of transformation, and changes them from swords into ploughshares. He changes destructive anxiety into a constructive thoughtfulness. He converts a lacerating fretfulness into an energetic contentment. He transforms an abject fear into a holy reverence. He takes the terror out of to-morrow,

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and enables me to live and labour in a fruitful calm.

3. *"And laid Thine hand upon me."* And the hand suggests the sweet sense of companionship. The little child awakes in the night, and is affrighted by the darkness and the stillness, but the mother puts out her hand and just rests it upon her troubled babe, and the little one sinks to rest again. "O, let me feel Thee near me!" "Only in the darkness just to feel Thy hand."

And the hand suggests the ministry of soothing. The nurse lays her cool hand upon the burning brow of her patient, and he exclaims, "How lovely that is!" And when I come into a sudden crisis in life, and am tempted to become feverish, and "heated hot with burning fears," the Lord lays His cooling hand upon me, and I grow calm again. "And Jesus touched her, and the fever left her."

And the hand suggests the ministry of guidance. That is a most suggestive word, constantly in the book of the prophet Isaiah: "And the Lord said unto me with a strong hand." Speech by strange graspings! Suggestion by grips! Guidance by the creation of a mighty impulse! The Lord declared His will unto the prophet Isaiah by implanting in his life the sense of a tremendous imperative, a terrific "must," a consciousness which the prophet expressed under the symbol of

“ Behind and Before.”

the grasp of a “strong hand.” “Thy right hand shall guide me.”

With these defences we are safe. In these hands our security is complete. “None shall pluck them out of My hand.” “Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commit my spirit.”

iv.

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"Teach me Thy way."—*Psalm lxxxvi. 11.*

"Teach me to do Thy will."—*Psalm cxliii. 10.*

"I delight to do Thy will."—*Psalm xl. 8.*

"*Teach me Thy way.*" Refine my conscience. Make my sense of right and wrong clear and definite. Suffer me not to grope in moral confusion. Train me in a fine discernment of moral values. Let me grow ever more and more exquisite in the perception of the spiritually lovely.

"*Teach me to do Thy will.*" I want more than a fine sense of moral distinctions. I need more than a rare perception of right. I need to know the best way to accomplish it. There are wise and unwise ways of seeking the sovereignty of the right. I may fail of the end by using indiscreet means. I require not only a trained conscience,

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but an illumined judgment. I need to be taught how "*to do.*"

"*I delight to do Thy will.*" That marks a still more matured stage in discipleship. When the soul instinctively and joyfully inclines to the way of obedience, the life has reached a stage of rare fruition.

And so the scattered verses of my text arrange themselves in a heightening gradation, and together express the spacious compass of a consecrated life. "Teach me Thy way"—the training of the conscience. "Teach me to do Thy will"—the illumination of the judgment. "*I delight to do Thy will*"—the rectification of the will.

I. The Training of the Conscience.

"Teach me Thy way." The conscience is the organ through which the Lord makes known to me His way, and unveils the primary distinctions between right and wrong. The more refined and highly trained is the organ, the more exquisite will be its perceptions. The greater sensitiveness of the telephonic receiver has vivified the clearness and the detail of the message. But the organ of conscience can be impaired and its receptivity largely destroyed.

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(1) *It can be injured by sin.*

John Ruskin's father would never allow him to gaze upon any inferior picture lest his artistic sense should be impaired. A similar reasoning might be followed in relation to the moral sense. To contemplate the morally inferior, to gaze upon the ugly, to have intercourse with sin, damages the fine delicacy of this sensitive organ.

(2) *It can be perverted by prejudice.*

If conscience be regarded as a light "which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," then it is within our power to put up a stained window and pervert the light. We can erect the coloured medium of a prejudice or a spirit of envy, or a jealousy, and the light we then receive is in reality "darkness." We walk in the darkness, and our errors re-act upon the conscience, and injure its exquisite perceptions.

(3) *It can be muffled by compromise.*

All attempts to find a go-between in matters of right and wrong inevitably issue in the muffling of the conscience. There are tradesmen who, on the Sabbath, compromise with their sense of right by putting up two shutters to their shop window, and then behind the shutters they continue their business as on any other day of the week. Those two shutters play a large part in the destruction of the finer parts of the moral life. If the Lord is

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to teach us His way, to lead us into deeper and more fruitful perceptions, all these things must be forsaken. He, who is the Teacher, will be our Defender; He who gives the revelation to conscience is willing to provide the power by which the accuracy of the conscience may be preserved.

Now all training of the conscience proceeds in the direction of the scruple. In moral and spiritual culture the line of progress is not from the less to the greater, but from the greater to the less. A man can measure the increasing refinement of his conscience by its more pervasive activity in the trifle. The path of perfection leads towards a "faithfulness in that which is least." It is "he that doeth the least," whom the Lord accounts as great. "Teach me Thy way." Train my conscience. Educate it. Breathe upon it Thy refining breath, that in the smallest affairs I may discern the secret of the Lord.

II. The Illumination of the Judgment.

"Teach me to do." A man may know the right to aim at, and may take an unwise way to reach it. He may have a good conscience and be possessed of little tact. He may be conscientious but not resourceful. He may have fine moral discernment, but poor practical judgment. We often dim

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and imperil the end by the unwisdom of our means. Much good work is spoiled by ill-judged method. A man may speak to his fellow man concerning the matter of his salvation, and he may altogether impair the beautiful purpose by an ill-considered approach. We require not only refined conscience but illumined judgment, and so the Psalmist prays, "Lead me in Thy truth, *and teach me.*" Knowing the truth, he prays for knowledge to apply it. In short, he needs a sound judgment. He requires to be taught how "to do" the will.

Now what is the secret of wise judgment? Does it not consist very largely in the active exercise of the imagination? A man of sound judgment is a man who looks all round a thing, and to do this requires the use of a disciplined imagination. Wellington used to say that one of the great secrets of successful generalship was the power to imagine what was going on behind a stone wall. That is the faculty we require in common life, the power to imagine what is going on in our brother's life, the power to "put ourselves in his place." Imagination is the twin sister to sympathy. They move together. If we had a broader and more responsive sympathy, we should have a quicker and more alert imagination. A more spacious sympathy and a more active imagination would give us two of the main essentials of

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a sound judgment. When we pray, therefore, "Teach me to do," we, in reality, ask the Lord to enrich the stock of our humanity, to make us more human and less self-centred, to broaden the responsive service of our life. "I will run the way of Thy commandments when Thou shalt enlarge my heart."

III. The Rectifying of the Will.

"I delight to do Thy will." "I delight," which, literally interpreted, means, "I am bent," to do Thy will. The inclinations of life are instinctively set in the way of obedience. The sense of constraint and reluctance is absent. The bent of the life is God-ward, and the bent abides. This represents a fine and mature attainment. What at first was constrained has come at length to be natural. He who says "I will incline my heart unto Thy testimonies," and will resolutely incline it every moment, day by day, will at length be able to sing, "O God! my heart is fixed." When the spiritual becomes natural, we have entered into the joy of the Lord. When our obedience has become instinctive, "His statutes have become our song." "We delight to do His will."

V.

The Secret of Hope.

“Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Ghost.”—*Romans xv. 13.*

WHAT a radiant assembly of jewels! It would scarcely be possible to bring together into two short sentences a larger company of resplendent words,—“God,” “hope,” “joy,” “peace,” “believing,” “power,” “Holy Ghost”! A prayer which in almost one sentence encompasses these spacious benedictions must have issued from a very exultant spirit, and one deeply acquainted with “the unsearchable riches of Christ.” If we re-arrange the members of the text in vital and logical order, the two extreme limbs would appear to be these: “The God of Hope,” and “That ye may abound in hope.” The one expresses the creative ministry, the other expresses the created result. The text describes the making of optimists,—the “God of

The Secret of Hope.

Hope" fashioning the children of hope. The remainder of the passage points out the gracious intermediaries by which the divine purpose is accomplished.

I. The Great Creative Source. "The God of Hope."

There are some matches which can only be kindled on one kind of surface. We may rub them on an unsuitable surface through a very long day, and no spark will be evoked. The fine effective flame of hope can only be kindled upon one surface. The human must come into contact with the divine. Where else can the holy fire be kindled? A mother is in despair about her son. His face is set in the ways of vice, and his imagination is being led captive by the devil. How shall I quicken the mother's hope, the hope which is so fruitful in loving devices? I will tell her that it is a long lane that has never a turning. I will tell her that the fiercest fire burns itself out at last. But these worldly proverbs awaken no fervent response. The depression remains heavy and cold. The match does not strike. I must lead her to "the God of Hope." A brother is discouraged because of his moral and spiritual bondage. How shall I kindle his hope? I will

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point out to him the lofty ideal, and let the dazzling splendour of the supreme heights break upon his gaze. But the ideal only emphasises and confirms his pessimism. I will then turn his eyes upon inferior men, and point out to him men who are more demoralised than himself. But the vision of the inferior is only creative of self-conceit. A fine efficient hope is not yet born. The match does not strike. I must lead him to "the God of Hope." It is in God that assurance is born, and a fruitful optimism sustained. We must get our fire at the divine altar.

II. The Gift of Inspiration. "In the Power of the Holy Ghost."

The "God of Hope," in the pursuit of his purpose to create children of hope, plants in their life the inspiring presence of the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures compare the ministry of this presence to the influence of a wind, an atmosphere, a breathing.

1. *It is quickening.* Like the air of the spring time. Buried or sleeping powers awake and bud, and clothe themselves in grace and beauty. I become conscious of new and increased capacities, new powers of love, and faith, and spiritual discernment. "In Christ shall all be made alive."

The Secret of Hope.

"The last Adam was made a quickening spirit."

2. *It is bracing.* How easy it is to make long journeys in fine, bracing air! Five miles in the city wearies one more than twenty miles in the Lake District. The Holy Spirit breathes through the life a bracing, invigorating influence. My powers are at their best. I am able to persist, able to endure. "They shall walk and not faint."

3. *It is revealing.* It is the clean, clear air which unveils the panoramas. When the Holy Spirit possesses me I "see visions." I "grow in knowledge." "He shall lead you into all truth."

These are some of the ministries which are implied in the gift of the Holy Ghost. They are the primary requisites in the production of an optimist.

III. The Creation of an Equable Temperament.

"Filled with all Joy and Peace."

The life that is possessed by the pervasive "power of the Holy Spirit" will acquire the fruitful, equable temperament of "joy and peace."

1. *Joy.* Not a scintillating, transient happiness, but a permanent cheeriness. Life shall be lived in the light. "Lift upon us the light of Thy countenance." It is that light, the light of the

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countenance, which rests upon the life. What a difference the sunlight makes to the landscape! It transfigures and beautifies the commonplace. What a difference a smile makes upon a plain face! The plain face is glorified. The sunshine of the Lord's favour upon the life—that is, Christian cheeriness and joy. “Now are ye light in the Lord.” “The God of Hope fill you with all joy.” Every room in the house illumined! God's grace resting upon everything! The sunshine in every corner—upon the affections, upon the judgment, upon the conscience; everything suffused in the “light of life.”

2. *Peace.* A deep, quiet sense of rightness in the background. It does not imply the absence of tribulation, but it suggests an abiding consciousness that fundamentally we are right with God. A man can go happily through a hard day's work if everything is right at home. If things are wrong there, all the work of the day is haunted and impaired, and every moment is weighted with the burden of years. A man can encounter much tribulation, and encounter it calmly if everything is right at home, if all is well between him and his God. “Peace” is just that sense of rightness with God. “It is well, it is well with my soul!” The presence and power of the Holy Spirit are creative of a temperament of mingled joy and peace.

The Secret of Hope.

IV. The Consequent Optimism. "That Ye may abound in Hope."

Surely this appears as quite an inevitable issue. If life is inspired by the presence of the Holy Ghost, quickened, braced, and taught by His power, and possessed of a temperament of joy and peace, it will "abound" in large and fructifying hope. I shall "abound in hope" concerning myself, that at length I shall stand before my God clothed in the white robes of a perfected life. I shall "abound in hope" concerning my brother. I shall never regard him as "past praying for." I shall hope "all things," even when confronted with the stupendous power of majestic vice. "The day will dawn and darksome night be past." The "God of Hope," through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and the creation of a cheery and equable disposition, will make me to "abound in hope."

There are two words in the great text which have not yet been quoted—"In believing." They describe the link which binds the despondent and the pessimistic soul to the "God of Hope." Shall we rather say, they describe the channel by which the quickening and cheering influence of "the God of Hope" is conveyed to the depressed and disquieted life? Belief is an attitude of soul which implies both alliance and reliance—a surrender

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and a trust. To lay down the will at the King's feet: to make His will my choice: to attempt obedience in dependence upon His grace: this is the very secret of practical belief. "Believing," I receive "the power of the Holy Ghost"; and "the God of Hope" fills me with all joy and peace, that I "may abound in hope," and in all the sanctifying energies of this endless life.

vi.

My Need of Christ, Christ's Need of Me.

"I am the vine ; ye are the branches."—*John xv. 5.*

THE Bible appears to exhaust all available figures in describing the intimate relationship which exists between the Lord and His own. All the most subtle and vital associations are laid hold of to shadow forth the wonderful fellowship which unites God and the children of God. The exquisite fitness of the one to the other is suggested by such relationships as hunger and bread, thirst and water, and the intimacy of their united lives is unveiled in the figures of the vine and its branches, the head and its members, the bridegroom and the bride. It is around the first of these symbols that we will concentrate the thought of this meditation.

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I. "I am the Vine; Ye are the Branches."

Then man can only realise himself in union with the Christ.

The branch cannot realise itself apart from the Vine. Its powers remain latent and unexpressed. Its capabilities remain undeveloped and unconceived. If the branch is to burst into bud and leaf and flower and fruit, its resources must be drawn from the Vine. It has no sap of its own creation. Its quickening and sustaining power can be obtained only by association. Its ideal is realised by an alliance which engages the tissues of its most inward parts.

Man can only come to himself by an intimate alliance with Christ. Apart from Christ man is never consummated. The force is wanting which would bring his powers to fruition. If his capabilities are to become abilities, if his possibilities are to ripen into actualities, if the human branch is to break into bud, and flower, and fruit, and life is to receive its appropriate crown, man must enter into profound and hearty fellowship with Christ. Every part of man's varied and composite personality will receive enrichment when the energising sap of the Lord flows in the deep and hidden parts of his life.

My Need of Christ.

(1) May we assume a physical quickening? Why should we shrink from the assertion that if the branch comes into union with the Vine, even the physical powers will be purified and strengthened? Surely it is not illegitimate reasoning to assume that virtue is a finer health-minister than vice. We do not make nearly sufficient allowance for the influence of the spirit upon the body. The hopeful temperament is very frequently a more potent element than the doctor's medicine in ridding the body of sickness and disease. Get a clean, sanctified spirit into the body, and the influences, even upon the flesh, must be very different from the influences which proceed from an unclean spirit of rebellion and night. "He shall quicken your mortal bodies by His spirit that dwelleth in you." I am not prepared to relegate the fulfilment of this promise to an altogether remote futurity. It may be consummated only upon the day of the great unveiling, but I cannot think that its operations are still and inoperative even to-day. "Everything shall live whither the river cometh"; and in that "everything" I am inclined to include the quickening even of the physical capacities of the life.

(2) May we assume a mental quickening? If the energy of the Vine flows into the branch, will man realise himself more perfectly in the realm of

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the mind? That is the promise of the book. The Word of God has a great deal to say about "discernment." Again and again it is implied that the mental powers are sharpened, that the judgment is quickened when life is pervaded by the fine presence of the Spirit of God. The damp atmosphere will blunt the edge of the finest razor, and an unclean spirit can impair the acuteness of the rarest mental power. The wholeness of the mental capacity is affected by the general atmosphere of the life. In a remarkable article written by the late Mr. Hutton, at the time of Sir Isaac Holden's death, the great essayist declared his conviction that the extraordinary fertility and inventiveness of Sir Isaac's mind had been fed and nourished by the deep underlying spirituality and nobility of his life. When a man worships the Lord with "all his soul," he attains the possibility of serving Him "with all his mind."

(3) May we assume a moral quickening? If the sap of the Vine flows into the branch, man will realise himself in a rarer moral fruitage. Conscience will flower in more exquisite discernments. Will will sweeten into a rarer willingness. Obedience will become more and more choice. Affection will grow richer in benevolence and discernment. "The fruit of the Spirit is in *all* goodness." When the divine sap flows into human

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life, the branch bears *all manner of fruit*. Life is not morally lopsided. It is full and fine proportioned, abounding in an all-round moral excellence.

(4) May we assume a spiritual quickening? When the branch becomes allied with the Vine man realises himself in undreamed-of powers for the apprehension and appreciation of the things of God. He is enabled to enter with awed and reverent discernment into the mysteries of grace. He finds himself capable of appropriating the riches of redemption. He experiences the peace of forgiveness. He knows "the power of the resurrection." He "grows in grace and in knowledge," and feels the glory of the immortal hope. When life is energised by the divine sap, life acquires rare appreciations, and holds intimate fellowship with God. In all these ways man must realise himself in union with the Christ. We come to ourselves in Him. In Him our best is hidden; He has our crown. "Our sufficiency is in Him." "We are complete in Him."

II. "I am the Vine; Ye are the Branches."

Then Christ can only express Himself through union with man.

We have been considering the impotence of the branch apart from the Vine; but what can the

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Vine do without the branch? The Vine has need of the branch in order to express itself in flower and fruit. We frustrate the Vine if we deprive it of the branch. We have only to conceive of a branchless vine to realise its impotence. It has pleased the Lord to express Himself through His own. He still incarnates Himself in His children. He communicates Himself to the world through man. If we revolt we deprive the Lord of the means of expression.

He declares His Gospel through witnesses; therefore He has need of the branches. He proclaims His power through the healed man; He has therefore a need of the branches. He warns and counsels the people through prophets; He has therefore need of the branches. In an equally intimate figure, He declares that we are His "body." The unseen life of the Spirit embodies itself through us; we are its eyes, ears, hands, and feet. If we refuse the service, we silence the King.

He is yearning to express Himself in your own home, but He has no branch! He wants to reveal to your family what gracious fruit is matured in the life that abides in Him. He wants to show how barrenness changes to beauty under the influence of His sap, and how unfulfilled promise grows into ripe and beautiful attainment. But He has no branch! He longs to express Himself

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in the civic life. He wants branches in the Town Councils, on our School Boards, in all the different spheres of civic government and life. He wants to display the fruits of consecrated politics, the clear and mature rectitude of the Christian saint. But does He always find the branch? This is an aspect of the matter which we are commonly inclined to forget. The severance of the Vine and the branch is contemplated as meaning the paralysis and death of the branch. We do not very frequently regard it as meaning a maimed and impoverished Vine. When we offer ourselves to Christ, the branch not only attains the power of self-realisation, but the Vine acquires the vehicle for its own gracious and benevolent expression. The Apostle Paul offered himself as a branch to the Vine, and so intimate was the alliance that he was able to say, "I live, yet not I, Christ liveth in me." "For to me to live is Christ." The Lord consummated the personality of the Apostle, and through him expressed His mind and purpose to a world. "I am the Vine; ye are the branches."

"Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee."

vii.

The Shepherd and the Sheep.

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me ; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.”—*John x. 27, 28.*

IN these words there are disclosed to us some of the gracious attributes of the Heavenly Shepherd, and some of the prominent characteristics of His sheep. Let our meditation seek to gather fruit from the contemplation of both.

“*My sheep hear My voice.*” They have the gift of spiritual discernment. All voices do not sound alike to them. They can distinguish the still small voice, even amid the Babel and clamour of the world. They can catch the tones of their own Shepherd amid the loud shoutings of many aliens. They have the gracious faculty of being able to sort the messages which assail their ears. In what-

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ever direction they turn, they can hear the call of the Shepherd.

(1) The voice of yesterday. "My sheep hear My voice." The disciples of the Master can interpret the voice that calls to them from the days of the past. "I heard behind me a great voice." They gather instruction from the voice that speaks in this commanding tone. History is full of expression; it abounds in teaching. In song and wail; in psalm and warning, the disciples can hear the voice of the Lord.

The "days that have been" yield their instruction to the days that are, and the instinct of to-day is refined and chastened by the fight and failures and victories of yesterday. The present gains in riches by the witness of the past.

(2) The voice of to-day. "To-day if ye will hear His voice." The Lord's own people catch the sound of their Master's voice in the seemingly silent circumstances of to-day. They discern His voice in what other men regard only as a dumb drift. They hear the new message in the new conditions. "New occasions teach new duties." The disciple discerns the duty, and in it he hears the still small voice of his God.

(3) The voice of to-morrow. "My sheep hear My voice." "I heard a voice from heaven say, blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."

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The disciple hears that alluring and inspiring call, When he applies an eager ear at the door of a stern futurity, he hears the soothing and calming word, "Blessed." The voice that peals to him from the unknown drives away all his fears.

"Far, far away like bells at evening pealing,
The voice of Jesus sounds o'er land and sea,
And laden souls, by thousands meekly stealing,
Kind Shepherd, turn their weary steps to Thee."

"And they follow Me." The sheep not only discern the voice of the Shepherd they respond to His call, and follow in glad obedience. What at first may be a choice, becomes at last an instinct. The sound of the voice prompts the heart to obedience. The soul leaps to the call. There is a beautiful passage in the Book of Revelation which may be appropriately quoted here. "I heard a voice from heaven, as a voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder, and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps." Who are these triumphant ones in the heavenly place? "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." Then they are "following" still! They began their companionship where we have still ours. They accompanied Him "through the green pastures," and "by the still waters," and through the perilous ways

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of the weird and darksome vale. They took up their cross daily, and now they follow Him still where the hard road and the threatening gorge are quite unknown. They are perfecting in larger spaces the character which began to be formed in the narrower ways of time. The gift of discernment and the spirit of obedience are two of the primary characteristics of the disciples of Christ.

"I know them." Here is the reciprocal discernment. The Master recognises His own. He never mistakes one for another. He knows our idiosyncrasies. He knows my "make-up," my peculiar individuality, my special conditions. He does not deal with us as though we were all alike. "He calleth His own sheep by name." He watches each life as though it presented a unique and separate problem. His recognition means more than perception. It implies sympathy. He not only knows; He feels. He responds to the need which He discerns. He can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities."

"I give unto them eternal life." How this Gospel abounds in messages concerning life, and in declarations which proclaim the Master as the Fountain of Life! "In Him was life." "The Son hath life in Himself." "I am the Bread of Life." "I am the Life." And what His lips proclaimed, His life confirmed. Everything He

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did was characterised by an abounding life. What an expression of intense and abounding life is to be found in phrases like these: "Get thee behind Me, Satan"; "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." What an inexhaustible wealth of affection is to be found in an expression as this: "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." And now there comes an inspiring promise that this Fountain of Life is willing and waiting to impart it into the wills and minds and hearts of His children. He will give unto us "eternal life"—life which is characterised not so much by quantity as to duration, but by quality, rendering us partakers of His own divine nature.

"They shall never perish." They shall be made indestructible. The far country shall never get hold of them again to waste their treasure. Their power shall never be impaired. They shall be kept in health. They shall never be "lost." They shall become ever more and more alive. Everything that is worthy shall be increasingly quickened and enriched.

"No one shall pluck them out of My hand." They shall not be *snatched* into destruction. They shall not be victims of any sudden emergency. They shall never be taken "off their guard." What a wonderful promise, and yet a promise of which

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we may all reap the gracious fulfilment. We often excuse our moral lapses by declaring that we were taken unawares. "The wolf *catcheth* them." It need not be. We may be always secure if we are willing to be kept. Resting in our Saviour's hands we may be quite inviolable. If we have to cling to Him with our frail and fragile fingers, we shall drop away from sheer exhaustion in the cold and stormy day. But if we are resting in the hollow of His hands, with His fingers closed over us, what shall make us afraid?

And what is the foundation of all these gracious experiences? The answer is to be found in the very first word of our text. "*My* sheep." Can that word be used of me? Am I willing to be His? Have I yielded myself to be His property? Can I say, "I am not my own?" Do I admit the Master's claim? If the claim be admitted, then all the gracious issues, which we have been contemplating, will become assuredly ours.

"To Thee, Thou bleeding Lamb,
I all things owe;
All that I have and am,
And all I know.

All that I have is now no longer mine,
And I am not mine own; Lord, I am thine."

viii.

Lightening the Burden.

“Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee. He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.”—
Psalm lv. 22.

TO whom is this gracious promise of sustenance made? Some people's burdens are intended to be burdensome; the very heaviness of their load is purposed to discharge a gracious ministry. The yoke of the unrighteous is purposed to be galling. It would be calamitous to ease their pain even by shifting the position of the burden. The load that presses upon their souls may bring them to their knees, and the endurance of pain may issue in the fellowship of prayer. The gracious promise of our text is spoken to the surrendered life. Immovableness shall be the characteristic of the righteous. It is the righteous who remains uncrushed beneath the heaviest load, and who,

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under the burden, is sustained by the strengthening influences of grace.

I. The Burden Bearer: "the Righteous."

But who is the righteous? We can infer the nature of sources by the character of issues. We can discern the nature of the will from the tendency of the life. If we know the effects of living, we can infer its secret springs. Now the Word of God records many significant symptoms and effects and tendencies of the righteous life, and from the observation of these we may possibly interpret its primary character and source. Let us glance at two or three of these descriptive words.

(1) "*The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life.*"

Here is a symptom of the righteous life. Its conversation is vitalising; the purport of its speech is constructive. The Scriptures dwell on this characteristic with very varied emphasis. "Let nothing proceed out of your mouth but what is edifying." Our speech is to aid in the rearing of a stately and exquisitely finished life. "The lips of the righteous feed many." Their speech is food. Their conversation nourishes the minds of those with whom they hold intercourse. Their words revive the better selves of their companions.

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"The tongue of the righteous is as choice silver." Nothing common or vulgar is permitted. Their speech is carefully selected. It is sincere and refined, and therefore refining. The whole round of their conversation is a gracious "fountain of life."

(2) *"The labour of the righteous tendeth to life."*

Then not only their speech but their labour is a minister to more abundant life. The manner of the man's labour, the way in which he earns his bread, quickens the common life. There is nothing poisonous about his business ways; nothing perverting or destructive. They are not murderous but vitalising, and tend to quicken and enrich the corporate life.

(3) *"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life."*

All the varied issues of his life, all his accomplishments, the plentiful products of character and conduct, everything that emerges from his personality, minister to a more abundant life. All the fruit on his branches tend to sweeten and purify the common life.

Such are a few of the effects and symptoms of the righteous life. From such streams we can infer the spring. "With Thee is the fountain of life." The righteous is in profound fellowship

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with the Eternal. His will is united by steady, momentary surrender to the will of God. He lives and moves and has his being in the august contemplation of the Eternal. "The fear of the Lord is the fountain of life." The righteous is one who, by reverent fear and obedience, is in communion with the fountain, and the issues of his conduct and character minister to the vital enrichment and purification of the race.

II. The Burden: "Thy Burden."

What is the burden which is weighing with painful intensity upon the heart of this troubled Psalmist? Let us look abroad over the disturbed surface of the psalm. What does he bemoan as the burden of his soul?

(1) He bemoans the loud unblushing aggressiveness of evil. He goes about the city, and the ostentation of evil fills his eyes and ears—"The voice of the enemy"; "The oppression of the wicked"; "They cast iniquity upon me"; "Violence and strife in the city"; "Iniquity and mischief also"; "Oppression and guile depart not from her streets." It is the burden of social evils which weighs upon the man's soul, as an intolerable and suffocating load. It weighs him down. "My heart is sore pained within me." "Horror hath overwhelmed me."

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(2) He bemoans the unfaithfulness of the professor. The leaven of professed goodness is revealing itself to be bad. The salt is going wrong. "It was thou . . . my companion, my familiar friend . . . we walked in the House of the God with the throng." He is burdened by the presence of the unfaithful professor, who hath profaned his covenant. Such is the two-fold perversity which is crushing the Psalmist's soul; the burden of proud evil and the burden of false virtue. In the face of these he is almost seduced into flight. "Oh that I had wings like a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest."

III. The Divine Injunction: "Cast Thy Burden on the Lord."

The remedy for thy depression is not to be found in flight, but in continued fight. Rest will not be discovered in the solitude of the wilderness, but in an alliance with thy God. Thou art assuming to carry the burden in thine own weakness, and the load is too much for thee. Thou hast a Partner. This kind of burden-bearing is the labour of a "company." The yoke is proposed to be borne by thee and thy God. Bring together all the words of the Scriptures which suggest the gracious truth. The Bible is great in that class

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of words which begin with the syllable "com": communion, companionship, comfort, commit, communicate. And all these words with the suggestive preface declare that life is purposed to be an intimate partnership between ourselves and God, and that, if man ignores his great Divine partner, life's burden will break his heart. "Cast thy burden on the Lord." Hie thee away to God, go into thy closet shut the door, have a little time with thy Partner; tell Him of the evil of thine own heart; tell Him of the evils that invest the city; tell Him that the word "flight" has been whispered in thine ears, but that thou art more inclined to stand. "Cast thy burden on the Lord," and when thy Partner lays hold of the load, thy burden shall become light.

IV. The Divine Promise: "He Shall Sustain Thee."

That is the common way by which the Lord lightens the burden of life. It is not lifted away from us; our strength is increased, and the burden becomes light. He gives us sustenance, and, being stronger men, we are able to carry the old load with a lighter and more confident heart. Is not this what happened under the appalling sufferings of Gethsemane? The burden was

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unspeakably heavy. "Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me; nevertheless not My will but Thine be done." And what was the answer to this poignant prayer? The burden was not removed, but the Master Himself was sustained. "There appeared unto Him an angel from heaven strengthening Him." That angel is still ministering among the children of men. He is still imparting sustaining strength to those who are bowing beneath life's load. He appears to us in unexpected guise. Sometimes the strengthening food is brought to us in most unfamiliar ways. "I have commanded the ravens to feed thee." "I have commanded a widow to sustain thee." We never know just how the sustenance may come. It may come to us through the speech of our friend, through a chance incident related in a book, through a suggestion from a work of art. We cannot tell how the angel who brings the bread may be robed, but the bread is sure. "He never will suffer the righteous to be moved." Thou shalt not slip or slide, thou shalt remain firm as upon a rock. He will preserve thee from the timidity which is fraught with moral peril. He will strengthen thee so as to encounter thine own temptations and the evils of thy city with a brave and exultant heart.

ix.

“How Much More!”

“How much more.” These words express a mode of reasoning enjoined and commended in the Christian Scriptures. We are permitted to begin on the plane of the human, and reason upward to the Divine; on the plane of the material, and reason to the spiritual; on the plane of the temporary, and reason to the Eternal. We are to exercise the powers of observation in the common ways of life. We are to interrogate the common heart, and find there the elements of our thinking, and with these elements we may then begin to shape our conception of the Divine. “If ye then . . . how much more your Father.” We are to search among ourselves for alphabetic hints and suggestions, and with these we may partially determine the ways and the thoughts of the Eternal mind. We are permitted to move about

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in our homes, and through the many rooms of our large earthly house, gathering rudimentary hints from which we may form our conceptions of the gracious and glorious personality of God. "Look about you," the word seems to say, "and you will find in the familiarities of your home life, and the commonplaces in the world about you, the elements of right thinking concerning the Divine." "If ye then . . . how much more your Father."

1. *"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts, how much more shall your Father!"*

I am counselled to go into the family circle with the purpose of discovering some hints about God. I am told that in the arrangements and government of a typical home, I shall obtain glimpses of the divine fatherhood. Let me exercise this privilege. I will go into a home and exercise my powers of observation. What do I observe? I notice the presence of a pervading affection, but I am impressed by the mysteriousness of its working. I notice that affection has an extensive wardrobe. It does not always appear in the same dress. It enshrines itself in very varied guises, sometimes attractive, sometimes apparently forbidding, but through all the different vestures the one affection persists. There is one breath in the organ, but there are many notes. One breath can express

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itself in bewildering plenitude of sounds. I wonder to be told that behind the variety a pervading unity is sustained. The breath now issues in tones of thunder; now it warbles in bird song; now it expresses itself in clarion-call, like a bugle peal, summoning troops to muster; and again in a sweet persuasiveness, like the soft wooing of a lover. “But all these worketh that one and self-same breath.” So is it with affection in the home. It expresses itself in many guises and tones, now severely, now gently, now in tones of persuasion, and again with the imperative of a commander. If I remain in the home for any lengthy period, I can observe the affection assuming almost the variety of the seasons. Now it is sharp and severe like the winter. Now it is soft and gentle like the spring. Now it is ardent, and overflowing with sunny cheer like the summer. And now it is mellow, full, and yet restrained like the autumn. This is one of the primary characteristics which I observe in the home life, that affection reveals itself through many different conditions, but behind the varied conditions it remains invariable and constant.

I notice, further, in the home life that the wishes of the children do not always determine the gifts of the parents. I observe that affection frequently expresses itself in apparent antagonism to the one

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beloved. The wish of the child is not the law of the home. The law of the home is determined by the judgment of the parents. Your sick child asked for a cake, you gave her medicine. Is this affection? The child asked for a fish, and you gave her a scorpion; but only to the child does it appear a scorpion; in reality you have given the child the only possible food. The child had unwittingly asked for a scorpion, and affection revealed itself in apparent antagonism to the child's desire.

Now take the step in reasoning commended by the Scriptures. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts, *how much more* shall your Father, which is in heaven." If these things pervade the common home life, if affection sometimes denies, and sometimes restrains, and sometimes expresses itself in severity, "how much more" will the all-wise affection be constrained to act in apparent antagonism to our own blind and petty desires. Our Father will give "good things." I may ask for freedom; He may increase the restraints. I may ask for the sweet, and the response may be found in intensified bitterness. I may ask for fish, and there may come an apparent scorpion. But the antagonism is apparent. The thing that comes is "good." "Thou art good, and *doeth good.*" "It is *good* for me that I have been

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afflicted.” “He satisfieth our mouth with *good things.*”

2. “*If God so clothed the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, how much more shall He clothe you, O ye of little faith.*”

I am to take a blade of grass, and contemplate it, and from the suggestions it conveys to me reason upward to a larger and truer conception of God. Have you ever gazed at a blade of grass? I don't mean have you merely glanced at it; but have you taken it up and feasted your eyes upon it until its exquisite beauty is for ever imprinted upon your soul? “Think of it well,” says John Ruskin, “and judge whether of all the gorgeous flowers that beam in summer air, and of all strong and goodly trees, pleasant to the eyes, or good for food—stately palm and pine, strong ash and oak, scented citron, burdened vine,—there be any by man so deeply loved, by God so highly graced, as that narrow point of feeble green.” Contemplate, therefore, a blade of grass. Examine the exquisite robes of a lily. Take one of the commonplaces of the ordinary field. Look long at the daisy, or the buttercup, or a sprig of moorland heather. And when your vision is possessed by the ineffable loveliness, call to mind the Scriptural reasoning, “If God so clothe the grass of the field, how much

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more shall He clothe you." Give to the reasoning its largest reaches. Don't confine the suggestions to merely temporal vestures. Lift it up to include the robing of the Spirit. When I turn to the Word of God, I find descriptions of most wonderful clothing. "Robes of righteousness." "Garments of Salvation." "Who are these in white robes?" "Garments of praise." These phrases describe the lovely clothing of a hallowed and perfected life. May I have my spiritual nakedness covered by their surpassing beauty? I obtain the inspiring answer from the common field. If God takes so much pains with a blade of grass, how much more will He take with one of His own children. The exquisiteness of a flower of the field gives me hope that, through the grace of God, I may one day be a flower in His kingdom. The beauty of nature shall make me confident of obtaining the beauty of holiness.

3. *"If the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of the heifer, sprinkling them that have been defiled, sanctify unto the cleanness of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ."*

The argument is just this. If certain things happened in the Old Testament, how much more will they happen in the New. If certain things happened in the uncertain twilight, how much more will they occur in the splendour of the noon-

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tide? If these gracious experiences took place at the turn of the winter, how much more will they abound amid the dazzling plenitudes of the summer glory. If this man in Old Testament times, who had never seen Christ, attained to this height, “how much more” may I, who have gazed upon the Master’s face? If Moses obtained the spirit of endurance, “as seeing Him who is invisible,” “how much more” may we endure, upon whose eyes has dawned all the glory of the incarnate God? If Job attained unto patience, upon whom the beauty of the Lord had not yet arisen, “how much more” shall we, who have seen the transactions of Bethlehem, Gethsemane, Calvary and Olivet? And so I go through the Old Testament, noting a saint here, and another there, and witnessing their triumphs, and I come away from the spectacle with this word upon my lips, “If these things can be achieved before the unveiling of the King, how much more may they now be accomplished when the light has come, and the glory of the Lord has arisen upon us?” If these things occurred in the day of types and shadows, what may be their power and plenitude in the day of splendid reality, when the Lord has come? If our brethren in the twilight felt the cleansing power of sacrifice and knew their sin to be forgiven, how much more shall be the wealth

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of our consciousness who have gazed upon the "Lamb of God," and have heard the apostolic word that "God for Christ's sake has forgiven you"?

X.

No Failing! No Forsaking!

“For He Himself hath said He will in no wise fail thee, nor will I in any wise forsake thee, so that with good courage we say the Lord is my Helper, I will not fear; what shall man do unto me?”—*Heb. xiii. 5, 6.*

“HE hath said I will in no wise fail thee,” “so that with good courage we say, I will not fear.” What a beautiful antiphony! The evangel of the Father awakens the song of the children. Life moves to gladsome music when we appreciate the content of the eternal promise. We walk like kings and queens when we recognise the dignity of our companionship. When the terror goes out of the heart, the uncertainty goes out of the steps, and life marches to the stately measures of bright and triumphant strains. “He hath said” . . . “So that we say.” Our speech takes its measures from His speech. Our house is built upon the foundation of the divine word. It ought to be

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a roomy house, for God's promise is very rich and plenteous, and "His commandment is exceeding broad." Let our meditations gather round about both the speeches—the gracious evangel of the Father, and the joyful response of the children.

"I will in no wise fail thee." "I will not wax feeble towards thee when thy difficulties grow mighty. Thy resources shall not run out in the day of stress and strain. I will not fail thee when life approaches some supreme and severe demand." Such appears to be a little of the wealth of the gracious word. The promise proclaims that the crisis shall not find us impoverished. I was recently travelling in an electric car up one of the steep streets of a town in the West Riding, and when we had reached the middle of the ascent the power suddenly failed, and we stuck fast with half the height still to be climbed. This may provide us with a figure by which we may enter into the heart of the promise of God. Power is never to fail us on "the Hill Difficulty." The moment of supreme test is to be the moment of supreme revelation. The most trying conditions of life are to be the seasons when the Father will most be glorified. And so the promise appears to me to have reference to two different classes of conditions through which every soul has to pass.

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It has reference to the sharp emergency, and to the prolonged monotony.

He will not fail us in the sudden emergency. The rope will not snap at the unexpected tension. The great disappointment shall not destroy our steadfastness. The receipt of bad news shall not extinguish our valour. A sudden bereavement shall not break our hearts. Our resources will be sufficient. The staying power will remain. We shall "stand it well," for "the Lord will in no wise fail us."

He will not fail in the prolonged monotony. Perhaps the test of monotony is more severe than the test of an emergency. Perhaps the long pull tends more to exhaustion than some tremendous but momentary strain. In a cycle journey which I took recently from Oxford to London, I found the latter half of the journey far more trying than the earlier part. The earlier part of the road was full of changes, now climbing, now descending; the latter part was one long, dead, monotonous level. Along the monotonous level I missed the freshening breeze, the expansive outlook, the rest which is born of change. The limbs were apt to tire, the same muscles being unceasingly exercised. The uneven road brought more muscles into play, or changed the posture of the limbs, and out of the variety there came strength. Life which has

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to trudge along the dead level is in fearful peril of exhaustion. "Because they have no changes they fear not God." When my difficulty faces me daily through many years, or when my pain becomes chronic, or when my anxiety respecting the prodigal child is perpetuated through half my life, I need the presence of rich and most nutritious resources. It is in these dead monotones that Christ reveals the glory of His power. He can bring blessedness even into drudgery, and the long, long lane, which seems to have never a turning, may become the very "Highway of the Lord." In the stress of startling crises, and in the prolonged strain of a standing trouble, our Father will in no wise fail us.

"Neither will I in any way forsake thee." This adds an emphasis to the preceding word. The Lord will not desert us; He will not leave us behind. He will not drop us when we grow old and are worn out. Our war correspondents tell us very frequently of worn-out horses, which are left upon the line of march to die. Our God will not so forsake His children. The worn-out life He rather "carries in His bosom." "In Thy manifold mercies Thou forsakedst me not." "When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." The frail, the easily-spent are the peculiar care of the Almighty God.

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How easily we forsake one another ! *The lure of gain* will make us forsake our friend. The garland of the world draws us into alienation. "Demas hath forsaken Me, having loved this present evil world." *The vision of peril* will drive a man to forsake his brother. He fears the persecutor, so he takes the way of ease. He turns with alarm from the valley of shadows, and abides in the green pastures. "At my first defence no one took my part ; they all forsook me." How beautiful it is when a man stands close by his exhausted brother, and permits no offer of gain or threat of pain to take him away. There is no more beautiful characteristic of a noble man than that which is attributed to Onesiphorus by the Apostle Paul :—"He was not ashamed of my chain." The Apostle's captivity only drew his comrade into closer and more affectionate bonds. His chains were the ministers of a deeper spiritual wedlock. This is the abiding attachment referred to in the text, only in an infinitely exalted degree. The Lord is never repelled by our need ; rather is it our need by which He is enticed. "I will in no wise forsake thee."

Now let us look at the children. If they have apprehended the Father's evangel, if the music of His word is in their hearts, if they appreciate the

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strength of the promise, what will be the issue in their life?

"With good courage we may say, the Lord is my Helper." Mark their fine, inspiring, confident conception of God. "My Helper." The word is suggestive of one who runs with succour at the hearing of a cry. It is the act of a mother, who, perhaps amid much clamour, hears the faint cry of her child in the chamber above, and who runs to bestow expressions of love and of comfort. "His ears are open unto their cry."

What wonderful examples we have of "The Helper" in the New Testament Scriptures! The cry of an aching heart always brought succour from the Helper. The Syro-Phœnician woman came with a breaking heart, and falling at His feet, she cried, "Lord, help me!" and the Helper gave of His resources, and gave abundantly. "Oh, woman, be it unto Thee even as Thou wilt." But perhaps a still more suggestive instance is to be found in the story of the father who brought to the Lord his son, who was afflicted with a dumb spirit. Twice does the father ask for help, and twice the help was given. He prayed that they might be helped in their tragic trouble, and he prayed that he might be helped in his wavering unbelief. The Lord heard both the heart-cries, and the needed succour was given. The Lord

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can hear cries that never pierce the human ear. There is no sigh so low as to escape His hearing, The faintest breath of an aspiration sounds like thunder in the ears of the King. "He inclined unto me, and heard my cry."

"I will not fear." If the Lord is listening, and heeding, and even anticipating my cry, "I will not fear." I will not be a child of alarms. I will not be a victim of superstition. Rather will I be a child of faith. I will not fear the visible hosts of armed foes, the unseen heights are full of horses and chariots of fire. I will not fear the cloud, for "He cometh in thick clouds," and these seeming portents will be only the vehicles of heavenly benediction. I will not fear my yesterdays, for the "Helper" is my rearguard. "Goodness and mercy shall follow me," and by the ministry of grace shall wipe out my transgressions. I will not fear the lurking snares of to-day, for "He will keep my feet." I will not fear the unknown experiences of to-morrow, for "my times are in His hands." The apprehension of the truth that the Lord is "My Helper" issues in a consequent fearlessness which makes my life the progress of a conqueror.

Now let us finally bring the two extreme clauses of the text together, and we shall obtain the point of view from which all life can be seen in true

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perspective and proportion. "He Himself hath said. . . . What shall man do unto me?" Survey the antagonisms of the world with the word of the Almighty sounding through your soul, and the antagonisms will cease to appear insuperable. The colossal barrier will no longer seem impenetrable, and the mountains will melt away like smoke. "I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me." "I will not fear." He is always preparing a place for me, a place where next in my life's journey He will call me to stand. "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain."

xí.

Perilous Sleep.

“I think it meet to stir you up by putting you in remembrance.”—*2 Peter i. 13.*

“I stir up your minds by way of remembrance.”—*2 Peter iii. 1.*

THE peril suggested by the Apostle is that of an insidious sleep. His readers were not inclined to any deliberate revolt from the truth. They were not meditating any act of open and avowed treachery. They were in no immediate danger of consciously allying themselves with the evil one. They were not mustering their forces in hostility to the Son of God. The peril was of another kind. They were in danger of almost unconsciously dropping their enthusiasm, of loosing the keenness of their discipleship, and of subsiding into a fatal sleep. The Apostle therefore seeks to “stir them up,” to keep them awake, to preserve their

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vivid apprehension of truth and their sense of the glory of the grace of Christ. This perilous sleep, which so easily encroaches upon the Christian life, may be induced in many ways, and our meditation may gather round about those which are perhaps the most prevalent.

I. There is a sleep which is begotten of familiarity with the truth.

That which once startled us may ultimately minister to a deeper slumber. The Christmas bells awoke me in the hours of night, but I lay awake until they lulled me into sleep again. The alarm bell which originally stirred us into the brightest vigilance may act at last as a lullaby to lead us into deeper sleep. The green of the spring time arrests us by its novelty, but by summer time the observation of most people is satiated, and the attention has gone to sleep. The permanent grandeur of the night sky has long since induced the majority of people into a profound sleep, while a display of fireworks will stir them into most deliberate attention. What is the principle underlying all this? Unwilled observation is soon satiated and goes to sleep. Willed observation, vision with executive force behind it, is full of discernment, and is continually making discoveries

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which keeps the mind alert and interested. Get a will behind the eye, and the eye becomes a search-light, and the familiar is made to disclose undreamed-of treasure. We must "stir up the mind" by allying it to a strong, deliberate, and directive will. If the familiar thing is to abound in fruitful revelations, if I am not to sleep in mental satiety, I must control my observations with a strong hand, so that, in all its work, it is as sharp and penetrating as a needle.

Is not all this equally true as to our familiarity with Christian truth? Here in the Word of God we have pictures of the life of Christ, revelations of His mind and disclosures of His heart. We may become so familiar with them that our attention goes to sleep. There are no further unveilings, no novelties, nothing unexpected, and the familiar vision ceases to arrest our attention. What do we need? We need to "stir up the mind," to put some force behind it, to direct it in a strong, fresh, eager inquisitiveness. We need to put it into the attitude of "asking," "seeking," "knocking," and the familiar presence will reveal itself in unaccustomed guise. The familiar puts on wonderful robes when approached by a fervent inquisitor. Truth makes winsome revelations to her devoted wooers. Every day the ardent lover makes a new discovery. If men would come to

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the familiar pages of God's Word with mental alertness analagous to that which they bring to the inspection of a stock-and-share list, they would have gracious surprises, which would make the heart buoyant and glad. The Book promises its wealth to the wakeful. There is no book has more to say about "unfolding," "revealing," "manifesting," "showing," "declaring," and the only condition is that the spectator of the promised apocalypse should be an ardent seeker, stirring up his mind in eager and determined quest.

II, There is a sleep which is begotten of decided opinions.

There is a very suggestive sentence in one of John Stuart Mill's essays, which will enable me to make my meaning perfectly clear: "The fatal tendency of mankind to leave off thinking about a thing when it is no longer doubtful, is the cause of half their errors." That is to say, a decided opinion may make a man thoughtless about his opinion and may induce a mental sleep. It so frequently happens, that when a man has attained a decided opinion, he ties a bit of tape about it, puts it away in a pigeon hole, and lapses into unconscious slumber. He leaves off thinking about it. When the matter was still doubtful,

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he was engaged in constant examination. While the conclusion was still uncertain, he remained a persistent explorer. But now that his judgment is decided, the explorer goes to sleep. What is the issue? We lose a thing when we cease to think about it. It is well to have decided thoughts, but it is bad and fatal to stop thinking. There is need in every life for a fresh stream of thought to be continually playing about the most cherished opinions, principles, and beliefs. When the photographer is developing his plate in a dark room, he keeps the liquid in constant motion, moving over the face of the plate, and evolving into clearer outline its hidden wealth. Our thought should be continually moving over the face of truths and beliefs, bringing out into discernment lines and beauties never before conceived. You have a very decided opinion on the Atonement? Then there is a peril that you may cease to think about it. The thing is settled and you may go to sleep. The man who has not a very decided opinion about the Atonement may be moving with doubtful thought round about the great mystery, and may, after all, be gathering fruit which may be unknown to you. Let us "stir up our minds" and turn the stream of our thought on to our accepted beliefs and our decided judgments, that the wealth of these may

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not remain stationary, but may reveal more and more of the hidden wisdom of grace.

III. There is a sleep which is begotten of failure.

Success can make a man sleep by making him cocksure. Triumph can make men careless and thoughtless. The glare of prosperity can close men's eyes in slumber. There is a "destruction that wasteth at noon-tide." A perilous sleep can also be begotten of failure. When repeated disappointment visits the life, when the "wet blanket" is frequently applied to our fervent ambitions, when the fire in the soul is damped, and enthusiasm dies out, the life is inclined to a most dangerous sleep. How many there are who were once awake and enthusiastic in civic service, or in seeking social ameliorations, or in the ministry of Christian instruction, who are now sunk in the indifference of a profound sleep. They were disappointed with the results. The grey conditions at which they worked never gained any colour. The unattractive lives to which they ministered were never transfigured. The desert never revealed even a tiny patch blossoming like the rose. And so their enthusiasm smouldered. They became lukewarm. Their reforming energy abated. They

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went to sleep. This is "the pestilence that walketh in darkness." Is not this the peril that the Apostle Paul anticipated for young and enthusiastic Timothy? He was beginning his Christian discipleship, fervent, hopeful, optimistic, with the eager consecration of his entire strength. The Apostle knew that disappointment would confront him, that cold water would be thrown upon his enthusiasm, that many a hopeful enterprise would issue in apparent failure, and the young recruit would be exposed to the indifference of a fatal sleep. "Stir up the gift that is in thee." Stir it into flame! Keep thy first love ardent and vigorous. Feed thy fires. Let disappointment only deepen thy consecration, and failure keep thee near the well-spring of eternal life.

IV. There is a sleep which is begotten of the enchanted ground.

When difficulties appear to have vanished from our life, when Apollyon no longer encounters us with dreadful front, when there is no lion in the way, when the giants are miles in the rear, and the precipitous hills, that took so long to climb, are away back on the far horizon, then we are in imminent peril of a most dangerous sleep. "I saw then in my dream that they went on till they

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came to a certain country, whose air naturally tended to make one drowsy if he came a stranger into it. And here Hopeful began to be very dull and heavy of sleep, wherefore he said unto Christian, 'I do now begin to grow so drowsy that I can scarcely hold up mine eyes. Let us lie down here and take a nap.' 'By no means,' said Christian, 'lest sleeping, we never awake more. Let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober.'" And how did these two pilgrims contrive to keep themselves awake as they journeyed over the enchanted ground! "Now then," said Christian, "to prevent drowsiness, let us fall into good discourse." "With all my heart," said the other, "where shall we begin? Where God began with us?" The great dreamer has summed up their conversation in this marginal note, "*Good discourse prevents drowsiness.*" They had an experience meeting. They began with the very first stages of their conversion, and told each other the story of God's redeeming grace. They reviewed the miracles of the Lord's mercy. That is the secret of safety for any traveller over the enchanted ground. Begin your review "where God began with you." Tell over to yourself, or to others, the early story of the Lord's dealings with you. Stir up your mind with a rehearsal of the wonders and favours of God,

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and so far from lapsing into sleep, you shall be kept awake in a grateful song. The grace of the Lord will occupy your heart with such intensity that spiritual lapse will be impossible.

"Watch therefore . . . lest, coming suddenly, He find you sleeping."

xii.

Beauty in the Heights.

“He maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.” —
Psalm cxlvii. 8.

“HE maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.” Unless we read the words in the right tone, we can never apprehend the trend of their suggestion. The words are uttered in a tone of great surprise. They are much more than a descriptive record of a certain feature in a vast assemblage of natural things. They express the unexpected, the unique. The Psalmist is profoundly surprised to find grass growing upon the mountains. It would have been ordinary and commonplace, arousing no wonder, to have found it in the vale, but to find it away up in the heights where barrenness usually reigns, affected him as the suggestion of exceptional power, and stirred him into profound amazement. He discovered what he

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thought to be a native of the valley, dwelling upon the mountain tops. Have we any similar surprises on other planes of being and life? Are we sometimes startled by encountering the unexpected in the heights? Let us see.

1. "*He maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.*" I am not surprised to find piety at the Carpenter's bench, but I wonder to find it in the midst of the Throne. I am grateful that Christ has in these recent days had the opportunity to reveal to the world what He can do in the neighbourhood of a Throne. He frequently reveals to the world the spiritual beauty with which He can grace the Poet. It is almost a commonplace for us to behold His workmanship in the production of some pure and noble merchant. But only rarely is He permitted to display His sanctified power upon the occupant of a throne. Now the claim of the religion of Jesus is this, that faith is effectual everywhere. The Lord can grow His flowers in every place. His converts are not taken from any particular place or vocation. He can make them anywhere. He can grow His flowers in palaces or in garrets, but I am not quite sure that they are grown with equal ease. The Master has told us that there are conditions in which it is very difficult to rear a saintly life. "How hard is it for them that have riches to enter into the Kingdom." It

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is inspiring therefore to know that even in the hardest places He can redeem and beautify His people. "He maketh grass to grow upon the mountains."

It is a wonderful conjunction to find piety upon the throne. Study the conditions in which the choice temperament has to be begotten and reared. The occupant of a throne is the centre of a most lonely Majesty. All who are round about her pay her obeisance. All who draw near unto her bow the knee. The altar of homage burns without ceasing. Is it any wonder that in conditions so intoxicating the monarch should be "lifted up" in perilous self-dependence, and God should be exiled from the thought. But in our own day the Lord has made it plain to us that even on these far and lonely heights He can rear a saint. Piety is blooming about the seat of majesty. The Queen, to whom everybody bowed the knee, herself bowed the knee to a greater. She reverently recognised God. She has, by the intimacy of her fellowship, and by the fervour of her devotion, made the hallowed words upon our coins infinitely more than members of a legal and official phraseology. She has transfigured them, and made them shine as radiant truth. Of her it may be said that she was "Fidei Defensor," as Paul himself was able to say "I have kept faith." Of her, too,

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it is well and true to say she was sovereign "Gratia Dei," for the grace of God was the empowering energy in her long and beneficent career. In these stupendous heights of majesty I marvel to find a soul upon its knees. I wonder to find a flower of piety blooming in the mountains.

2. I am not surprised to find lowliness adorning a subject, but I wonder to find it dwelling in the very heart of sovereignty. It is a rare thing to find lowliness in the heights. What do we mean by lowliness? It is a word which is grievously impoverished, and much misunderstood. It is sometimes associated with the shrinking spirit; a little less frequently it is regarded as synonymous with the cringing. Its meaning is far otherwise. A man may shrink from a high calling, and may not be lowly. His shrinking may be the child of his pride. The New Testament uses the word with quite other significance. Perhaps if we call to our mind the figure of a carpet or of a rug, we may be helped near to the New Testament conception of the word. When the carpets are up in the house there is a sense of general forlornness and discomfort. The hollow sounds in the house make the home sepulchral. When things are put straight again how comforting it is to have the carpets down. Or recall the comfort which the use of a rug gives to one in journeying. Or call to mind how

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refreshing it is to leave the hard dusty highway, where your feet have become weary and sore, and to turn on to the fringe of grass which now carpets the wayside. All these figures will lead us to the central suggestion of the meaning of lowliness. It is a laying down of one's sympathies and affections, and making as it were a carpet or rug of them that the chills and pains of the world may be removed. The man who is lowly has kind purposes, friendly feelings, beneficent deeds, and these are spread out before the lives of others, that the bareness of living, and the coldness of living, and the soreness of living, may be partially taken away. A man who "lays down his life" that he may bring rest and comfort and joy to another, is essentially a lowly man. A man who offers the leisure-time of his days to ministering to bruised and broken lives, is graced with the Christian robe of lowliness.

Now this kind of lowliness is a commonplace among the poor. I am not surprised when I find a member in one of the poor courts of a crowded city, spreading out her affections and her sympathies for another to rest upon. But I am amazed when I find this disposition allied with sovereignty. Power usually makes for pride. It creates a spirit of exclusiveness. It often issues in cruelty. One can frequently trace the evil influence of power in

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a master who has just been created out of a working-man. The transformation is often creative of hardness, and sympathy is narrowed or destroyed. Young mistresses, intoxicated with the sense of power, are often thoughtless towards their servants. Power of any kind is apt to "freeze the genial currents of the soul," and to be a great enemy to the spirit of lowliness. But the Lord can grow this grass in the heights.

3. I am not surprised to find the virtue of temperance in conditions of scanty or moderate affluence, but I am surprised to find it in conditions of sumptuousness and wealth. "How oft the sight of means to do ill deeds makes ill deeds done." To behold the means to gratify the appetite often leads to the gratification. Appetite often sleeps where the means to please it are not abounding. It is so easy for those who are sumptuously placed to spend their lives in eating, drinking and merry making. It is so easy for the wealthy to become morally vulgar, and to lose their virtuous self-control. I therefore wonder when one meets the grace of a rigid self-control in circumstances of overflowing affluence. But the Grace of God can accomplish it. He can grow this flower in the heights. He can cultivate souls of puritan temperament in conditions which appear to be intensely hostile to its creation. In the midst of all manner

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of sensational enticements He can keep the pleasures simple, natural, and homely, and in a land which flows with milk and honey, He can preserve the appetite in healthy self-restraint.

“He maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.” If the Lord can do this on the mountains, what may He do in the vales? If He can grow choice temperaments in the heights of majesty and power, what may He grow in the quieter places of obscurity and seclusion? The majority of us are children of the valley. We are not called upon to occupy any conspicuous place. The blasts that shake the heights do not disturb us. God has not called us to the supreme difficulty of an exalted station. Let us ask ourselves the searching question—have we permitted the Lord to beautify the vale? The plain may be a desert, or it may blossom like a rose. Let us ask the great Renewer to take us in hand, and clothe us in His own unspeakable beauty.

xiii.

“Dying, We Live.”

“Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth by itself alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit.”

“EXCEPT a grain of wheat”—a germ of life, a promise, a potency, a possibility—“fall into the ground,”—enter into fellowship with other forces, merge itself in the dissolving, evolving powers of the broad earth—“it abideth by itself alone”—it never gets any further, it never enters into a richer realisation; it remains a promise, a mere potentiality, a bare possibility, and does not discover the wealth that lies enshrined in its own heart.

Except a human soul—the germinal promise of unutterable wealth—enters into fellowship with other souls, loses itself in the larger interests of a broad humanity, buries itself in the common

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ground of the race, "it abideth by itself alone," an unfulfilled promise, a sleeping possibility, never realising the wealth of its own endowment. "Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die," its powers remained unpacked, and the joy of harvest is unborn. Except a life is buried in the common life all manner of autumn glory is imprisoned and unsprung. Resurrection is subsequent to burial: maturity waits upon communion. The powers of a life never ripen to their prime until the life is lost in the interests of a wealthy fellowship.

"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth by itself alone." Then the cure of loneliness is death. "It abideth by itself alone." That is a most chilling and impoverishing loneliness. It is the loneliness of incessant self-remembrance. It is the loneliness of a life that is always with itself, that never loses itself, that never forgets itself, a life that never bleeds for others, that never expends beneficent energy for others, that never satisfies itself in thoughtful sympathy for others. It is the loneliness of a life that never occupies the common stand-point, and never loses itself in the crowd. "It abideth by itself alone." It is the loneliness of the egotist, of the man whose world is himself, who never gets away from himself, who never dies to his little

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sphere that he may live a larger life in the wider spheres of the race.

There is a nervous disease known to physicians as chorea, and in this distemper “the patient sometimes turns round and continues to spin slowly on one spot.” Egotism is just an incessant spinning on one spot. Sometimes we spin slowly round about our own particular talent. Or perhaps the centre of our egotism is our suffering. How prone we are just to spin round about our own pains and complaints! An ailment is apt to make us think ourselves interesting to other people, and we move as the craving absorbents of the world’s sympathy. We all know the sufferer who ever pilots the conversation round about his own pains, and if it appears to stray for a moment from the line of the recital of his sombre symptoms, he sharply turns it back again to his all-engrossing centre! We are apt to find a melancholy pleasure in “tearing the lint from our bruises and the bandages from our limbs,” and moving in fascinated contemplation of our own complaints.

Now, the egotist is exceedingly lonely, and becomes increasingly so, and that by the eternal law of God. It is a dry, parched, arid loneliness, for the genial springs and currents of the soul have never been unsealed. Incessant self-regard

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imprisons a life in the wintriest impoverishment. If I would attain unto a life that is bright, genial, fruitful and interesting, I must cease to spin upon a point and move in wider fields. I must die to self and be born in brother. I must be born into another man's life, into his interests and affairs, into his joys and sorrows, his pains and disappointments, his conquests and defeats. I must be born into my brother's world, and stand at his point of view, and contemplate the landscape of life from his window. How does life look through the eyes of the poor? I must be born into their world and gain the sympathetic vision. How does life appear through the eyes of the rich? I must seek to gain their point of view and survey the hills and the vales, the slippery slopes and the dangerous crossings which fill the line of their sight. The old man must not forget the world of the young man, and the young man must think himself sympathetically into the world of the old man. The sectarian must sensitively interpret his brother sectarian who worships over the way, and the political partisan must seek an intelligent apprehension of the other partisan who sits on the opposite bench. Health must seek to realise the glooms of sickness, and sickness must strive sympathetically to apprehend the glowing vistas which stretch away in the land of health. We

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must die to self, and be born in one another's worlds. We must call out and employ, in sanctified exercise, the elevating faculty of the imagination. Egotism is born when imagination is dormant. The man of little imagination is always the victim of large conceit. Small imaginations are always creative of petty worlds, and in the tiny world the little self looks colossal. What is the function of imagination? Imagination is the exploring faculty prospecting other worlds. It exercises itself in the unseen. It seeks to realise what is proceeding behind the blank and un-suggestive wall. It strives to pierce the veil and vesture of the flesh, and to interpret the mystic life behind. It endeavours to enter into another man's thoughts and feelings, and to gather up the significant movements of his spirit. It is imagination, lofty and sanctified, that takes me out of myself and places me in the home of another self. Where imagination is weak, or listless, or asleep, other selves become obscurities or nonentities, and our own swelling self fills the entire scene. And so we have John Ruskin making the startling assertion that “an unimaginative person can never be reverent or kind.” The assertion is self-confirmatory. The imagination is just a refined, discerning sensitiveness, and where this is absent there can be no perception of the venerable, and

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where man does not perceive the venerable, he cannot be reverent, and where there is no reverence there is the spirit of harshness and cruelty, and man can never be kind. Imagination delivers me from incessant self-regard—from merely looking upon my own things,—and enables me to adopt the Apostolic counsel, and to “look upon the things of others.” When imagination lifts me into the world of my brother, there arises a need of a new vocabulary. New things come into existence for which new terms are required. The old lonely life had no need of the terms, because the things themselves did not exist. Now, with the death to self, beautiful intimacies are born, and I require such great and wide-reaching words as these—sympathy, fellowship, communion, co-operation, and the whole vocabulary of brotherly speech which rings in the Kingdom of God. When a hallowed imagination is at work, egotism dies, and with the death of egotism, loneliness is destroyed. “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth by itself alone.”

“But if it die it bringeth forth much fruit.”

Then death to self is not only the cure of loneliness, it is the secret of fruitfulness. “It bringeth forth much fruit.” “To die”—to bury yourself in others—is the secret of personal fruitfulness. Impartation is the clue of multiplication. We

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must get away from self if we want self-treasures to be beautified. To give a thing is more really to possess it. How is it with a truth? Here is a truth which has been given to me. What shall I do with it? Shall I merely lock it up in some strong secret room of the mind? Then I shall lose it, or retain it only as a dim and corroding treasure. How, then, shall I keep it? Impart it, and in the very act of imparting I shall more truly possess it. There is not a Sunday School teacher who does not know how a truth which has lain dull and unattractive on the floor of the mind for years, has shone resplendently while he sought to impart it to his scholars. He said he never really saw it till he began to teach it. Truth never puts on its most beautiful garments until it is being given away. The disciple never sees the superb glory of the truth until he becomes an apostle. If we bury the truth in self it soon appears tarnished; if we share it with a brother it shines like a star. While we give we all the better possess; if we die, things germinate into richer loveliness; we “bring forth much fruit.”

It is not otherwise with the Church. If the Church shrink into a club, self-contained, self-sufficient, it “shall abide by itself alone,” unconscious of its own heritage, imprisoned in

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chills and infertility. But if the Church dies she "bringeth forth much fruit." The Church must get out of herself, must die to herself, must become apostolic and missionary, both at home and abroad. For her own sake the Church must be apostolic, going out to prospect among men with the word of her great evangel. The Church will lose the grip and beauty of the truth if she fail in her commission. The Church never really claims a truth until she has proclaimed it. When she takes a truth, and gets away from her comfortable self, and enacts the truth before others, the truth is lifted up before her own vision, verified, clarified, glorified. She stands in the midst of her mission with her own treasures burnished and refined. But if we drop the mission, and sink into a cosy club, if we drop the apostolic and become self-centred ecclesiastical egotists, we shall abide by ourselves alone, and the winter of our isolation will rob us even of the bloom we bear, and we shall lapse into moral and spiritual sterility. This is the explanation of much of the spiritual barrenness which prevails among men and Churches. We spin too much on one spot. Life would become more fruitful if we shifted our ground. It is when life becomes self-forgetful that our powers are raised to their

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highest significance. Graces speedily germinate in the atmosphere of sacrifice. The life bringeth forth much fruit.

xiv.

Statutes become Songs.

“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you: that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.”—*Matthew v. 44, 45.*

“THAT ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.” “The children.” There is a wide difference between a mere connection and a kinsman. One is in the sphere of the legal and artificial; the other is in the vital and natural. One is determined by a certificate; the other resides in the blood. There is an equally wide and more profound distinction between offspring and children. One is suggestive of common blood; the other of common spirit. One indicates relationship; the other implies fellowship. Joel and Abiah, who “turned aside after lucre, and

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took bribes, and perverted judgment," were not the children of Samuel; they were only his fleshly seed and offspring. To be a child is to share a spirit. Not to share the spirit is to be only the seed. "Abraham is our father." No, "ye are of your father the devil." Your deeper spiritual movements have their origin and affinity in him. To be a child means more than succession; it means repetition of the life which gave us our birth. It means more than descent; it means spiritual likeness. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God"; so beautifully do they reflect and repeat the spirit of our God. "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you . . . that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." I shall be a child, revealing and repeating a Father. If I do this I reflect Him. The child unveils the Father. Then mark this principle, *What He wishes me to be, He is*. He says that if I love, I shall be like Him, a child of my Father who is in heaven. What is the significance of this? His commandments are revelations of Himself. If I gaze at what He commands me to be I shall see what He is. Have we sufficiently thought of this? We have looked for revelations of our God in the promises; have we sought the revelations in the commandments? We have looked

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into the commandments for our duties; have we looked for our comforts? It throws a tender, mellow, softening light round about apparent severity. Take the most searching and exacting commandment you can find in the Sacred Word. Say to yourself—"This is what a child is to be like; this, then, is what the Father is like," and use the apparently stern commandment as an open window through which to gaze upon the incomparable and inspiring loveliness of the eternal God. The commandments laid upon men are revelations of God. That which stands alone as a commandment appals me; seen as a revelation it fills me with rejoicing.

Now, let me turn the light of this principle upon two or three exceeding broad and uncompromising commandments which confront us in the Word of God.

1. "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." The brilliance of the ideal almost consumes me. The vastness of the height tends to make me faint and despondent even before I leave the base. Let us hold the commandment squarely before us. "Love your enemies." The man who makes your misery his policy, who dogs your steps, who sets snares for your feet, who twists your

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words, who is always pointing out the fly in the ointment, and who is never happier than when he is slowly dropping bitterness into your cup; *your enemy, love him*. There must be no fiery retaliation, no mere chilling toleration, no proud and lofty contempt. I must remain well-disposed toward him, watching my opportunity to save him from himself. My enemy is first of all an enemy to himself. The bitterness which he drops into my cup has, first of all, poisoned his own. I must be lovingly alert for his salvation. "Do good to them that hate you." If opportunity should place him in thy power, let there be no rejoicing because thou hast him "on the hip." Use the opportunity in the ministry of goodness! Ferret out a way of doing a kindness, and take the beautiful living branch and drop it into the waters of bitterness, if perchance they may be made sweet. "Do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." Remember them upon thy knees. Name them quietly and kindly in thy most secret place. Offer them the highest privilege it is in thy power to grant—the privilege of being remembered when thou art face to face with God. Forget the superficial injury he inflicts upon thee in the absorbing thought of the fatal injury he is inflicting upon himself. On thy part he creates bitterness; on his part he

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commits suicide. Therefore for their sakes, "love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you."

The demands of the command are appalling. The command is so exceeding broad as to stretch across the entire path of my life, and there is no possible margin for compromise or evasion. If I confine my attention to the commandment and its relationship to me, I am oppressed and discouraged by the firm breadth of its demands. Why should I bow to the commandment? That I may be a child of the Father. This is what a child is like; so through this I see my Father. The commandment becomes a revelation, and I am filled with an inspiring and aspiring sense of rejoicing. What God wants me to be, He is.

"Love your enemies." Look through that window at God. God loves His enemies. Don't let the energy of that great truth be wasted in a vague and diffused generality. God loves His enemies. He is vigilantly alert to redeem us from ourselves. From Him there proceeds a river of mighty beneficent energy working round about us to accomplish our redemption. Love in God is no idle or passive sentiment. A mother's love is just a bequest from the heart of God. All her finest, most exquisite, and tenderest instincts

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have been communicated to her out of the unsearchable riches of God. A mother's purest love is just a broken piece of the ineffable love of God. All the deep feelings of parental solicitude are but echoes of the primary reality that dwells in the heart of God. And this love of the Eternal is at work about His enemies, seeking to deliver them from their enmity, and to lift them into the sweet and spacious condition of spiritual health. There is no one, however remote he may be from God, however wretched and dejected, however shameless and unclean, to whom the eternal love is not ministering, as a mother stoops with yearning solicitude over her sickly child. That is a wonderful word of the Psalmist's, and abounding with cheer and inspiration, "Thou hast loved my soul out of the pit." Thou hast loved me out of it! Have we not known men who have been loved out of meanness and out of looseness by the unwearied affection of a noble wife? Their character was elevated by the persistent application of a mystic gravitation which they were unable to resist. God loves His enemies, and loves them out of the pit! He does good "to them that hate Him." His mercies do not cease with our obedience. He prepares green pastures for us when our just reward would be a desert, and He leads us by still waters when we might

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have expected a land of drought. God loves His enemies, and does good to them that hate Him. This fills me with rejoicing, and makes the soul to exult in the power of a quenchless hope. So I will interpret His commandments as revelations. They shall first of all tell me, not what I must be, but what God is, and the inspiration of the glorious vision shall nerve and brace me for the task—by the attainment of which I become my Father's child. "Love your enemies," and so be a child. God is the Father, and so loves the children.

2. Now, turn the light of the principle upon another commandment, calculated, I think, to fill us with fear. "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Till seven times?" "I say not unto thee until seven times, but until seventy times seven." That is a suggestion that these things are not to be governed by mere processes of counting; that they belong to a province where arithmetic has no sovereignty, and where quite other measures and standards hold the throne. Let us deepen the clear significance of the teaching. "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him; and if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, 'I repent,' thou shalt forgive him." That seems an overwhelming ideal! I do not wonder

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that the apostles, to whom the word was spoken, fearfully perceived the vastness of the demand, and instinctively broke into speech which was both confession and prayer—"Lord, increase our faith!" What is the principle of the commandment? The principle is this, that arithmetic plays no part in real forgiveness, that mere counting is not to determine the outgoings of mercy and grace. But what a large part we allow arithmetic to play in common life! How many of us have ever forgiven a man three times? "As this is the first time, I forgive you, but—" And we carry the memory of the first offence forward and forward, and in the second offence condign, and final judgment is inflicted for both. Our arithmetic is our ruler. That is not the prescribed way of the Word. To forgive, and forgive, and forgive, and on each fresh offence not to count the last—to have no arithmetic in these high regions—this is to make demands upon our grace which we have apparently no resources to meet. And that is perfectly true if we confine ourselves to the bald limits of the commandment. We want an inspiration, if the aspiration is to be more than a mocking dream.

Where shall we get the inspiration? Apply our principle; the commandment laid upon men is a revelation of God. What makes a child

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reveals the Father. What God wants us to be, He is. Take the commandment, then, and use it as a window to look at God! "Not seven times, but seventy times seven." That is the character of the forgiveness measured out to us by the eternal God! There is no arithmetic in the transaction, no severe counting of the forgiveness of yesterday. "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions . . . and will not remember thy sins." I fell yesterday, and sincerely I turned to the Lord for forgiveness, and "He inclined unto me, and heard my cry." I have fallen again to-day. I would like humbly to seek His gate that I may tell Him the sad and saddening story. Will He heed me if I knock at the door? Or shall I be spurned away? Will the dogs be turned upon me, or shall I hear the heartening voice, "Come in, my beloved!" "If he trespass against thee seven times a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him." Through that commandment I see my God. I will not be afraid to knock at His door. As old Samuel Rutherford says, "It becomes us still to knock, and to die knocking." I hold up this commandment concerning forgiveness, that in it you may see the beauty of your God. The commandment becomes a revelation, and in the inspiration of the revelation the commands may be fulfilled.

XV.

Unfulfilled Impulse.

“Lord, I will follow Thee—but—”—*Luke 9, 61.*

“LORD, I will follow Thee—but—.” Then he perceived the beauty of the Christ. He acknowledged His authority. He recognised His duty. An impulse had been created within, which, being interpreted, said unto him, “Follow,” and he now replied, “I will follow—but—.” Let us apprehend very clearly the stage at which he had arrived. It had come to this. There was the Lord, Son of Man, King of the race, beckoning into discipleship. Conscience had said, “Follow Him, for He is thy supreme Lord.” The heart had said, “Follow Him, for He is the ideal loveliness.” Conscience and heart had combined to the creation of an impulse which urged the life to immediate decision. The impulse was aroused and active. The imperative sounded in the very

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depths of his soul, "Follow Him." "I will follow—but—" Obedience to the impulse is delayed. Impulse is kept waiting while attention is diverted elsewhere. Precedence must be given to another interest. "I will follow Thee, but suffer me first to go and bury my father." "At thy peril, no!" "Lord, I will follow Thee, but suffer me first to go and bid farewell." "At thy peril, no!" Does that wear the appearance of harshness? Does it seem inconsiderate and severe? The harshness is only apparent. It is the harshness of the man who violently grasps another who is drowning. It is the severity of kindness. It is the emphasis of love.

Let us look at it. What is the essence of the narrative? The essence is this—that nothing must be allowed to take precedence over a divine impulse, that a divine impulse is of royal and imperial descent, and must ever be given the first rank. Man's relationship to Christ is the primary relationship, and to that relationship all other associations must bow. That is the pith and marrow of the story. My first and immediate attention must be given to any impulse which concerns my relationship to Christ. Nothing on earth must be permitted to thrust it into a second place. "Let me first bury my father." "First, the impulse," replied the Lord. "Let me first bid

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farewell." "First the impulse!" "Seek ye first the kingdom."

Now why this pre-eminence to a divine impulse? Christ had looked at the two men, and had gazed into their souls. Perhaps they had been men of the world, living on the mere superficialities of things, absorbed in affairs that are belittling and transient, and having no large bracing intercourse with the things of the Eternal. And now the Master saw that the divine spark was kindling. He saw that a faint, fitful and trembling inclination was aspiring after a higher life. He saw that the men felt the impulse, and were half inclined to heed, and half inclined to seek postponement. He saw the precariousness of the heavenly babe-life that in the heart was newly born. He knew just how long it would live if it were treated with neglect. He knew that if attention were denied until after the father was buried, the impulse also would be dead and buried. He knew that postponement meant destruction, that if obedience to a good impulse be deferred until the third day, on the third day there might be no impulse to obey. And so underneath the Master's reply there runs this current of awful warning: "With thee, the postponement of a day may mean eternal death; the spark of divinity may be extinguished; the spirit may be quenched; and if

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thou seekest postponement until after the burial of thy father's body, or to bid thy friends farewell, the heavenly impulse is imperilled. Even these must not be given pre-eminence, but must be sternly set aside. This is thy pre-eminent concern : First, the divine impulse, 'Follow thou Me.'"

This is Christ's way of emphasising for all time the infinite and transcendent preciousness of a divine impulse. No life is utterly without good impulse. No life is consistently and increasingly bad. There are softer seasons among the years, times when the springs in the life are unsealed, and lovely purposes come to birth. We have a beautiful phrase by which we describe the gracious season. We speak of being in a "softer mood," as though the rain had fallen, as indeed it has, and turned the hard unfertile ground into forcing-beds of beauteous growth. "I will come down like rain," says the gracious God, and like rain He comes, creating these "softer moods" in the life, and causing it to be fragrant with budding things of the kingdom. This rainy season is known to all.

Now we cannot tell in what circumstances the rainy seasons will come, and the consequent softer mood. No one can foretell the coming of the Lord, or anticipate His ways. Sometimes the vision of infirmity will cause the rain to fall, and

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soften the heart in gracious sympathies. It was my lot only a little while ago to have daily intercourse with a man in the prime of life, over whose body creeping paralysis was stealing with slow but irresistible tread. Little by little the disease was claiming the flesh, but it had no proprietary rights over the spirit, and the cheery faith and hopefulness of his soul remained intact. He crawled about, a minister of light. And I have seen a group of men, watching him as he crept like light about the grounds, and their voices sunk into a whisper as one voiced the common feeling, and said, "That ought to make us better men." "Yes," I thought, "the Lord's rain is falling on this group. The vision of infirmity is bringing the heavenly shower, and giving men a softer mood, a spiritual impulse, a more sensitive aspiration after a better life." I wondered if the physical paralysis of one is to glorify God by the spiritual emancipation of many. Infirmity created a softer heavenly impulse, which said, "Follow Me."

But there are softening seasons other than those caused by the visions of infirmity. I have known God's rain fall in copious showers the morning after a great sin. The night before the shower I was hard, rebellious, obstinate! I shut the gates of my calmer reason, and opened the gates of fiery

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passion, and I sinned. But, next morning, on to the hard passion-burnt heart, the gracious long-suffering Lord came down like rain. He brought me into a softer mood. He re-sensitised my sympathy. He created a drift heavenward. Reflection was the occasion of a rainy season, giving birth to a heavenly impulse, which said, "Follow Me."

Who does not know that the hour of bereavement is sometimes the season of the falling rain? Many a divine impulse has had its birth by an open grave. Here and now I could not pray that God would do away with infirmity and death. If it were in my power now, by the lifting up of my hand, to rid this land of infirmity and death, I think I should hardly dare to lift it. I know not what would become of us if in our present condition there were no more pain and no more death. Life would become a mass of selfish isolations. We should become hard as the nether millstone, and the softer mood and the heavenly impulses would be unknown. So God keeps it possible for us to grow into His image by keeping two dark angels in our midst, the angel of pain and the angel of death, whose visits to our homes keep us from becoming callous, and call us from the thralldom of the senses by the creation of

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a heaven-directing impulse which says to us, "Follow thou Me."

Well, then, God creates these softer moods. He begets this impulse within us, this spiritual emotion. Now proceed a step further. What is the purpose of impulse? Let this in the first place be said, impulse is not to be a resting place. Emotion is not the goal. Is that altogether a needless warning? It is possible to cultivate a spurious emotionalism, a luxury of emotions, which may come to be regarded as the marrow and essence of true religion. True religion is not merely the enjoyment of certain feelings; it is the translation of them. There is a wide difference between good impulse and good life, and the work of true religion is to translate the one into the other. Yes, let me repeat that the work of the truly religious is the work of translation. I have to take the impulse, given me by God, and translate it first into resolution and then into action. That is religion, to take divine impulse, and, by the process of living, translate it into finished and eternal achievement. "Follow Me," must not only be translated into "I *will* follow Thee," but "I *do* follow Thee." The impulse must be converted into a perfected act.

But now, suppose I don't translate this impulse. Suppose I just rest and luxuriate in the divine

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emotion. What then? Then the impulse will translate itself, and will become a corrupting power in the life it was proposed to soften and redeem. Divinely given impulse is like the divinely given manna of the days of old; if it is not immediately used, it will become the nourisher of corruption; it will "breed worms and stink." The only way to keep an impulse sweet is to change it into an act, and it will then remain a sweet and gracious influence throughout eternity.

Let me assume, then, that you have a divine impulse. You have been brought into a softer mood. You feel the stirrings of the heavenly citizenship. You feel the hand of the Lord. You are inclined to obey the impulse. I pray you, let your first inclinations have the leadership. In all matters affecting your relationship to Christ, your first thoughts are ever the best. Second thoughts are usually suggestions of compromise, postponement and doubt. The first thought is this—"I will follow Thee." The second thought is this—"I will follow Thee, but—" and thus there creeps in perilous postponement and destructive doubt. The intrusion of a traitorous compromise can spoil the music of a life. You know the story of the great bell of Moscow, the largest bell in the world. It was cast more than two hundred years ago, and has never been raised, not because it is

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too heavy, but because it is cracked. All was going well at the foundry, when a fire broke out in Moscow. Streams of water were dashed in upon the houses and factories, and a tiny little stream found its way into the bell-metal at the very moment when it was rushing in a state of fusion into the colossal bell-mould, and so the big bell came out cracked, and all its capacity of music was destroyed. The historic incident presented itself to me as a symbol of the thought I am endeavouring to lay before you now. Here is a divinely-given impulse, like soft and molten metal, just flowing into the mould of my first thought, and hardening into noble and steadfast decision. And an insidious doubt or compromise is allowed to have its way, and trickle in at the vital moment when impulse is just shaping into the image of the divine likeness, and all is spoilt, and the bell of heavenly impulse does not ring out the music of a redeemed and sanctified life.

It is this intrusion of the compromise that works such destruction in our spiritual life. Life would abound in heavenly bell-music if we took every divine impulse and offered it the mould of a ready and willing decision. "Teach me to do Thy will."

"Take my feet, and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee."

xvi.

Destruction by Neglect.

“ Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.”—*Romans xiii, 14.*

“ MAKE not provision for the flesh.” Let the evil thing die of famine. Let the ungodly suggestion perish for sheer lack of food. Let the presumptuous thought be destroyed by the withholding of appropriate support. Kill your spiritual enemies by starvation. Make no provision for them. This appears to be the principle advocated by the great Apostle for the culture of the spiritual life. Our enemies are to be conquered by neglect. It is a principle which prevails along purely material planes. Some two or three years ago, the Liverpool School of Tropical Science sent out a body of qualified experts to investigate the causes of the malarial fever which works immeasurable havoc in the lives of multitudes of our fellow citizens

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throughout the Empire. The investigations have resulted in the discovery of the malarial microbe, which is the germ of this awful and widespread destruction. A further discovery has been made of the nutriment by which the microbe is sustained, and now our scientists are seeking to discover the means by which the microbe and its sustenance may be divorced. Can we separate it from its nutriment? Can we isolate it from its means of maintenance? That is the problem, and there is every prospect of its being satisfactorily solved. Our experts propose fighting the malarial microbe by surrounding it with conditions of famine.

It is even so in the realm of the spirit. When the microbes of evil appear in the life, little baby germs, infantile suggestions of revolt, weaklings of unclean desire, the effective method of destroying them is by deliberate and studious neglect. We are to annihilate them by refusing proper maintenance. We are to see to it, that there is no food about the life on which they can thrive. We are to make no provision for them.

Now there is no method more absolutely efficient and assured in its working than the method of destruction by neglect. "Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out." Deny the fuel, you exhaust the flame. If the enemy in the spirit hunger, starve him. If we surround him with

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plentiful food, if he finds rich provision for the maintenance, he will speedily become full grown and tyrannical; but if we starve him, he will never be "fulfilled," he will pass away of sheer exhaustion.

I want to give this apostolic word "flesh" the apostolic content. We perilously impoverish its significance if we limit its comprehensions to the rise and sovereignty of carnal desire. It embraces dispositions and tendencies which appear to have no immediate relationship with carnality. The Apostle has broken up the surface of the word, and enabled us to see its varied and manifold significance. He has proclaimed that, in his conception of the term, there are involved such presences as "wrath," "strife," "sedition," "drunkenness," "uncleanness." But whichever of these manifold guises the flesh may assume, the Apostolic method works a sure destruction. We are to slay them by withholding congenial food. Let us apply the principle to two or three of the enemies which besiege the souls of men.

I. "Wrath."

How shall I deal with unholy anger, with anger whose only influence is self-destruction? How shall I contend with passion that boils over and scalds and destroys the sensitiveness

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of my spirit? The way to destroy it is to "make no provision for it." It must find no food on which to grow strong. It must find no fuel with which to feed its flame. Now the nutriment of wrath is thought. There can be no anger if there be no thought. Thought is the fuel by which the fire is fed. We recognise this in our everyday speech. Here is a man who is under the impression that he has been contemptuously treated by his fellow. His feelings are worked into a passion, and his speech becomes violent and threatening. What counsel do we give him? We say to him, "Don't think about it"; that is to say, we counsel him to withdraw his thought, and to occupy it with other things. We assume that if the thought be withheld, the passion will subside. To take away the food will emasculate the wrath. It is when we "dwell upon a thing" that our feelings are aroused. "As I mused the fire burned." It is a most vital principle in common life. We can control our passion by wisely directing our thought. Make no provision by thinking, and anger will languish and die.

II. "Strife."

This is another of the carnal enemies described by the Apostle Paul. "Whereas there is strife among you, are ye not carnal?"

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Strife is the opposite of a fruitful and blessed peace. Now the germ of strife is usually found in a tiny misunderstanding. The misunderstanding in its earliest stages may be small and puny, but we may make provision for it until it grows into fierce and violent strife. There are two correlative ways in which strife is engendered and matured.

(1) We may make provision for strife by indiscreet conversation. To gossip about a misunderstanding will almost surely aggravate it. Misunderstandings grow by being talked about to others. To make them the topic of idle speech is to inflame and exaggerate them. It is a very device of the evil one that when we talk about a supposed injury, it assumes colossal proportions. The way to deal with a misunderstanding is to make no provision for it. Don't let us provide the food by which it nourishes itself into appalling bulk. If we talk about it at all, let it be in frank and sanctified speech with the one in whom the misunderstanding has occurred. Such conversation provides no food for evil germs. It rather checks their growth and causes them to perish.

(2) We may make provision for strife by indiscreet hearing. It is not only the speaker but the listener who may be making provision for the flesh. We may nurse the spirit of strife by being unwise and receptive hearers. There would be

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no talkers if there were no listeners. It is not unsuggestive that the same Lord who warned us against speaking idle words also uttered this equally fruitful warning, "Take heed what ye hear"; "take heed how ye hear." We are to be on our guard, lest by our receptive hearing we help a man to feed the ugly spirit of strife. Let us make no provision for it, and let us close our ears when deliberate deafness will help to annihilate evil.

III. "Envyings."

This is another of the off-springs of the flesh characterised by the Apostle Paul. It suggests an ill relationship to another which, if nourished, will grow into ill-will, and manifest itself in positive attempts at injury. Let me give two or three familiar examples of its work. A young girl in a business house is very popular in her circle. She has many attractions, many gifts, and much personal charm. She is admired and sought after, and lives in the light of ceaseless favour. Another girl in the same house enjoys no such popularity, and is little sought and not conspicuously admired. What space there may be here for the growth of envy, and if suitable provision is made, how speedily envy will mature into ill-will and grievous

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attempts to injure! A business man, by honourable means, passes from success to success. He appears to take leaps and bounds in the highway of prosperity. Another man only crawls, and large success never comes within his grasp. How tempted he is to think ill of the successful man, and to speak ill, and maybe to do ill! A missionary comes to conduct special evangelistic services in a town. There is nothing conspicuously great about his addresses. There is nothing extraordinary in his matter or manner; indeed he appears to be rather commonplace, and yet men and women are drawn into the Kingdom in crowds. And here is another minister of greater culture and apparently wealthier gifts, preaching the same Gospel, depending upon the same Lord, and yet only now and again has he the joy of drawing men and women into decided surrender to God. What an occasion there may be for the rising of envy! If we provide appropriate food how speedily envy may grow into unkindly criticism and disparagement, which will even throw aspersions upon the character of the missionary himself. Have any of us felt the birth of these baby-devils within us? Let us make no provision for them. If the ugly thing has just shown its head, let us kill it by starvation. And how shall we do it? By withdrawing the thought on which it feeds,

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and providing another kind of thought which will be as poison. There is only one way of doing it. We must pray for those we envy. We must tell God all about it, and in these conditions the evil thing will languish away and die. We must look at the enviable one in our Master's presence, and he will become to us the lovable one. Envy is asphyxiated in the atmosphere of prayer. In prayer is no provision for the flesh.

So one might travel the entire round of the fleshly symptoms described by the Apostle, and to every species we might have applied the apostolic counsel. Let us learn this method of spiritual culture, the method of killing our enemies by neglect. The counsel emerges conspicuously in almost every book of the Bible. "Avoid it; pass not by it; turn from it and pass away." That is only the Old Testament setting of our New Testament injunction. Treat a thing with neglect and it will pine away and die. "Set your mind on things above," and the things below, the enemy that comes from beneath, will find no provision in our lives. He will find his cupboard empty, and he will sink away to faint and die.

xvii.

Desiring and Seeking.

“ One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek after ; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple. For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion ; in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me ; He shall set me up upon a rock. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me.”—*Psalm xxvii, 4—6.*

IT is always a great privilege to be permitted to overhear the prayers of a saint. It is greatly helpful to be allowed to know the kind of vision which occupies the mind of a saint when he is upon his knees. What is the burden of his supplications? What is the character of his largest hopes? What is the hope of his aspirations? Perhaps it is by no means the smallest of our obligations to the Apostle Paul that we are so frequently permitted to hear him at prayer. Again and again in his

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epistles he breaks out into supplications, and we enjoy the privilege of gazing upon the wonderful spiritual prospect which his own soul contemplates and covets. And here in the psalm which we are meditating to-night, the veil is lifted, and we overhear the prayer of a saint of old. What is the nature of the prayer? What is the goal which offered the greatest allurements? "One thing have I desired of the Lord; that will I seek after." What is this thing which formed the all-attractive goal of his devotional life?

I. The Character of the Quest.

"That I may dwell in the House of the Lord all the days of my life." He prays that his life may be spent in a sanctuary. The ideal life is to him the life of ceaseless worship. In the perfected life the soul is always upon its knees. The saint "dwells in the House of the Lord all the days of his life." There are no interregnums. Life is not broken up into hours spent in the House of the Lord, and days spent away from it. The whole life is pervaded by the atmosphere of worship. Now when we usually speak of the devotional life, we describe a mere patch of our days, a little fringe, or a thin thread in a wide, barren waste. We think of the early moments of the day, or of its later

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moments, and these we regard as constituting the devotional season. But here is a man whose aspiration is not for a partial sanctification, but for a life entirely devotional. He yearns to spend all the days in the House of the Lord. He never wishes to be away from the atmosphere of worship. He desires never to lose the attitude of the suppliant. When the body rises from its knees, he wants the soul to continue in prayer. He longs to "pray without ceasing."

We commonly speak of the religious *and* the secular, as though they were two quantities that might run along in parallel lines without flowing into intimate combination. The distinction is perilous and illegitimate. We can no more separate the religious and the secular, and preserve their life, than we can preserve the life of flesh which is divorced from blood. We cannot isolate flesh and blood and sustain vitality. The condition of the life of each is the union of both. Religion without the secular is a wasted and ineffectual breath; the secular without religion is a dead and inert form. And so the distinction between secular music and sacred music, between secular books and religious books, between secular callings and sacred callings, is fraught with tremendous peril, and is usually the prelude to spiritual death. The psalmist wanted

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no such divisions in his life. He wanted all the days, and every moment of the days, to be spent as in the House of the Lord. He never wished to go from beneath its gracious roof. He wanted life to be a temple. If he were in the market-place, or in the ways of the crowded city, or threading a sheep-track on the lonely moor, he wanted to have the unbroken consciousness that he was in the Temple of God. He wanted the humblest toil to be as sanctified as sacrificial service. He longed that his soul might be at prayers in his labour, in his pleasures, in his social intercourse, in his burden-bearing, and through all the varied experiences of the complex day. He prayed that he might not be a mere sojourner in the house of worship, but that the incense of devotion might rise continuously from his reverent and aspiring soul.

"To behold the beauty of the Lord." That is the second of the great emphases of the psalmist's prayer. He yearned for a life that is inspired by contemplation of the divine beauty. Is it altogether irrelevant to say that nowadays we give ourselves very little time to "behold" anything? Is not seeing becoming a lost art? We go too much at the gallop, and quiet, fruitful seeing is not consistent with the racing and hurrying life. We have almost coined a word which has

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supplanted the old word "see," and is perhaps expressive of our modern ways. We speak of "doing" a place. We walk round the National Gallery, and we have "done" it. But in the doing there is no seeing; in the going there is no quest. A mere glance appropriates nothing; a long gaze appropriates the beauty it beholds. It is only when we behold with quiet, steady, persistent contemplation that we pierce beneath the surface of things, and possess the hidden wealth. I do not wonder that another psalmist proclaims this most natural sequence:—"When I meditate on Thee in the night watches . . . my soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness." That is not an arbitrary connection; it is the natural fruit. Meditation appropriates the very marrow of things. We only lay hold of rich, satisfying sustenance when we practise the habit of meditation. If we wish to taste the exquisite sweetness of life's essences, we must move in the spirit of more deliberate meditation. "My meditation of Him shall be sweet." If we want to know the rich beauty of God, we must give ourselves time to think about it. It is well to take some single word spoken by the Master, or some one incident of His life, and dwell upon it until we have beheld its glory, and, by the beholding, have ourselves become glorified. As the beauty

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dawns upon our vision it will inspire the heart into more fervent quest. Let us gaze upon the Lord until the wondrous allurements woo us into ever deeper and richer union.

"And to enquire in His Temple." He wants to seek his knowledge in the spirit of devotion. Where will he make his enquiries? "In His Temple." That is the place in which all enquiries should be made. All investigations should commence and be continued on one's knees. The solution of pressing problems must be sought in the mood of prayer. We are just here at the root of many of our errors. We do not ask our questions in His Temple. We ask them elsewhere, and in an alien spirit. We ask our questions defiantly. Grief overshadows us, and we raise our questions in stiff rebellion. Adversity comes, and we project our enquiries in bitterness. The healing answer is frequently withheld because we have asked amiss. We must ask our questions in reverence. We must kneel if we want to enquire. We must not give up worship when we are face to face with a hard difficulty. Let us seek the clue in the Temple. "Take it to the Lord in prayer." There are many things which feel overwhelming when we ask them in a spirit of revolt; they become tolerable when we ask them in the mood of prayer. "When I sought to know this, it was

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too painful until I went into the sanctuary of God ; then understood I." We get the clue which makes the burden light when we bow in reverent prayer and praise.

" Sometimes a light surprises
The Christian while he sings."

II. The Fruits of the Quest.

What would be the issues of such a life? The psalmist yearns for a life in which the spirit of worship is unceasing, and in which the divine beauty is intimately contemplated, and in which all investigation shall be made in the spirit of reverent supplication. What will be the fruits of such a quest?

1. *Restfulness.* " In the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion ; in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me." There shall be quietness at the heart of things. There shall be a centre of rest, even though there be a circumference of trouble. The life shall be kept calm, and free from panic, as in a secret place. When the foes are many and threatening, there shall be a place of rest, even in their midst. When the enemy shows his teeth, and I can almost feel his hot breath, there shall still be a hiding-place of rest. " Thou preparest a table

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before me in the presence of mine enemies." That is a wonderful promise, and it is daily fulfilled. I have seen a widow sit down quietly and trustfully at the Lord's feast when the grim enemy death is in the house. The life that is spent in intimate fellowship with God is never bereft of a pavilion of peace. "Peace, perfect peace, with sorrows surging round."

2. *Security.* "He shall set me up upon a rock." He will give me the sense of the firm-rootedness of the good. He will inspire my consciousness with the faith that everything is not loose, and slippery, and uncertain. There is something firm and dependable. There is a rock. "The Lord is my rock." The man becomes sure of God, and in that assurance his security is complete.

3. *Elevation.* "Now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me." The foes that conquer shall themselves be conquered. The enemy that ruled shall become a subject. The things that troubled him shall now be beneath his feet. It is salvation by elevation. "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and the adder; the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet." I shall be above my old worries, my old irritations, my old temptations. The Lord lifts

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us above our enemies, and makes us more than conquerors.

There are just two other words in the passage which I desire to emphasise. This kind of life was not only "desired" by the psalmist; it was "sought after." "That will I seek after." His prayer determined his pursuit. That is the order in all fruitful religion. A man's practical search must follow the vision of his supplications. It is not a mere coincidence that our Master has linked together the two words "ask" and "seek." We must find our purpose in our prayers. We must shape our ambitions out of our aspirations. We must turn our supplications into duties, and let our prayers determine the trend and intensity of our search.

xviii.

The Forces of the Kingdom.

“Except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God.”—*John iii, 3.*

“WE know that Thou art a teacher come from God.” How did he know? There is a dogmatism and a finality about the assertion which arouses our inquisitiveness. The statement is made in the tone of one who is familiar with heavenly things. “We know that Thou art come from God.” About Thee there are all the signs of the heavenly-born. What were the signs he marked? How did this ruler of the Jews know that Jesus came from God? “No man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him.” “These miracles that Thou doest.” These were the signs that determined the ruler’s judgment; these were the hall-marks which testified that Jesus belonged to the prophetic order, and had intimate

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relationship with God. Is that the criterion? Is that the standard of judgment? There is no reference to character, no reference to beauty and sanctity of life, no reference to personal motive and ambition. These are all signs without significance, symptoms that to Nicodemus suggest no eternal import. These "miracles that Thou doest" are the unquestionable evidences that a man is in league with the heavenly forces, and is a favoured son of the Eternal God. "When we see the miracle," says Nicodemus, "we know its significance, and know how to interpret the man."

Now look at that position. By this one individual we may be able to interpret his race. Here is a light which illumines for us the thought and expectation of a people. The Hebrew people were looking for a kingdom, the kingdom of God. Their eyes were gazing wistfully for signs of its advent. They said that when it came they would see it, and know it by its extraordinary display of miraculous power. That was to be the sign of its presence. There would be a manifestation which would fascinate all eyes and determine all judgments, and all men should see it together.

Here, then, was the attitude of the Hebrew race. "Let us wait for the kingdom. Let us watch for the miraculous, that we may know the advent of the Kingdom. Let us keep our eyes alert that

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we may see these forces of the Kingdom when they appear." That was the attitude of the race, an attitude shared by Nicodemus, a ruler of the race. He has been upon his watch-tower, a sentinel, scanning the horizon, looking for the Kingdom, and the miraculous burst upon his vision in the doings of a lowly Nazarene. He saw a miracle, and it interpreted itself to him as a sign of the Kingdom. Tremblingly he buried the secret in his soul, and carried it in the hush of night to the wonder worker himself. "Rabbi, we *know* . . . for we have *seen*." "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again he *cannot see* the Kingdom of God." To see a miracle is not to see the Kingdom. Thou speakest as though thou wert altogether intimate with the Kingdom, as though thou didst understand its characteristics, and knew its tendencies, and wert familiar with its forces and recognised its life. Thou sayest, "We know, for we have *seen*." The Kingdom is not in the region of the visible and temporal. It lies back in the Unseen and the Eternal. Its nature is known only to its natives. Its conditions are known only to the initiated. Its forces are mystic and mysterious. "Except a man be born again he can have no knowledge of the Kingdom; he has no faculty of vision or apprehension, he cannot *see* the Kingdom of God."

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Now, if that be so, what is the work of the unregenerate judgment when it expresses itself concerning the Kingdom of God? What is the value of the "we know" of the unborn? The Master declares that the unregenerate are stamped by inability to apprehend and appreciate the forces of the Kingdom. What authority, then, I ask, shall we place upon their judgment? The man born blind is no authority in the discernment of exquisite colours. The man born deaf is no authority in the discrimination of melodious sounds. The man born without a palate is no authority in matters which demand the exercised powers of an epicure. To receive sensations you require a sense. The forces that create light demand an eye. The forces that create sound demand an ear. The forces that operate in the Kingdom of God demand a regenerated soul. Except a man have eyes he cannot see the kingdom of colour. Except a man have ears he cannot apprehend the kingdom of sound. Except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God.

Now, can that declaration be submitted to the test of practical experience? What is the declaration? The declaration is this, that in the regenerate life forces operate and conditions prevail which are absolutely beyond the apprehension of the unregenerate, and that when the

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unregenerate express judgments about the regenerated life they are speaking about a Kingdom of which, by necessity, they are absolutely ignorant. Is that confirmed by common life? Can the unregenerate in a congregation form any conception of the hallowing ministry, the gracious heavenly forces which are now at work in the lives of the re-born? Can they *see* that Kingdom, with a vision which includes vivid and sympathetic apprehension? The Apostle Paul, a man of no slight intellectual eminence, well disciplined in faculty and broad in culture, emphasised and re-emphasised this inability of the unregenerate man to perceive the Kingdom of God. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared." "Eye hath not seen"—art-culture or nature worship, assiduous discipleship in the school of the beautiful, the adoration of the lovely in field and sea and sky will not endow a man with the perceptiveness for apprehending and appreciating the things of the Kingdom of God. "Ear hath not heard"—no passion for music, no listening to the musical speech of the philosopher as he teaches in the grove will endow a man with aptitude and power to realise the things prepared in the Kingdom of God. "Neither hath it entered into the

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heart of man to conceive"—the unregenerate cannot by any power of the imagination conceive the condition of the regenerate; poetry will tire of wing, and fall back baffled in the attempt. "It hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive." Mere poetic sensibility is devoid of the higher sympathy which can perceive the things of the Kingdom of God. The study of the beautiful in art, and music, and poetry, through eye and ear and heart, can never win the secret of the Lord. They leave all undiscovered the deeper mysteries of the Spirit; they leave a world unknown, for "except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God."

Let me give one or two examples of forces at work in the regenerate life of which the unregenerate cannot conceive. Let me give one or two suggestions of a kingdom which they cannot see. In the Kingdom of God there are what I will call *liberating forces* at work, of which it is quite impossible for the unredeemed to conceive. You cannot be in the Kingdom and not experience their power. You cannot be outside the Kingdom and understand their power. They may be at work, operating upon the life of the one who is sitting near to you in the House of God, and if you be outside the Kingdom the life

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of your neighbour is to you an entirely unknown and unthinkable world.

What are these liberating forces of the Kingdom, circulating like healthful winds among all its members? Here is a member of the Kingdom. Listen to a snatch from his daily song, "He brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock." Do we all know the meaning of that song? How much of it do we understand? We all know the horrible pit; we all know the miry clay. Thus far our experience has been common, and we speak in familiar terms. But do we all know the meaning of the *rock*? Do we all realise what the force has been that laid hold of the man, like a strong hand, and lifted him out of pit and clay into the welcome light and set his feet upon a rock? Can we form any conception of that? He was in the pit, and he walked in darkness, and the darkness was blinding his eyes, and he saw and heard nothing ahead but the threats and portents of judgment. And then God's Kingdom came, and the sweet, strong angel-forces of the Kingdom befriended him, and threw their influences round about him in glorious and redeeming might. And now, when I call to Him and say, "Dweller in the horrible pit, how fares it with thee now?" there comes back the glad response, "No more night ;

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guilt and fear have fled away like great black birds of the darkness, never more to return." That is the inner life of the Kingdom. Can we all understand it? Can we all *see* it with a perception that is richest realisation? The man walked in the miry clay. He was sunk deep in unclean habit. Life had become a captivity of defilement. He was stuck fast in exhausting and paralysing sin. Then God's Kingdom came, and the power that works mightily worked round about the captive of sin. And now, when I call to him, "Man, who wast enslaved by the miry clay, how fares it with thee?" he sends back the response, "Free indeed! The captivity is ended; I am a child of liberty; He brought me up out of the miry clay and set my feet upon a rock." That is the life of the Kingdom, and such are its liberating forces. To some they are no more than fiction, a beautiful dream of an Utopian world. They cannot realise them. They are outsiders, and so the forces are unthinkable, for "except a man be born again" these powers to him are non-existent, "he cannot see the Kingdom of God."

Let me give another example of the forces at work in the regenerate, and of which the unregenerate are quite unable to conceive. I named my first example the liberating forces of the Kingdom; let me name the second example,

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the *fertilising forces* of the Kingdom. Now whether we are in the Kingdom or not we are under the same obligations. We do not lower the standard of judgment by the evasion of a duty. That is a truth that needs to be remembered. It is sometimes assumed that if a man turn a deaf ear to the calls of the Christian religion, he will not be subjected to the same exacting judgment. It is an appalling error. The standard remains, alike for all men, and "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." We are under common obligation, whether we are in the Kingdom, or out of it, to grow certain virtues and graces, love, joy, peace, longsuffering, meekness, faith, and many others of the shining band. Now there are some people, who are rightly named "saints," who are in the Kingdom, and who manifest these dispositions in marvellous strength and beauty. If I ask them by what power these fair flowers are grown, they one and all reply that they grow them "in grace." Do you understand that? Is it any more to you than a word? Does it suggest a great reality which in your personal experience you see and know? "Grace!" That is the familiar power of the Kingdom. They who are in the Kingdom declare that they have mysterious forces within them, which they call by the mysterious name of "grace." Yes, they declare that in the Kingdom

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they have a "new heaven and a new earth," and that with a new heaven and a new earth moral and spiritual culture becomes an eager delight. That is what grace provides in the Kingdom, a new heaven and a new earth. That is what is wanted in the desert of Sahara if ever that desert is to blossom as the rose. There is wanted a new heaven, which shall drop fatness, in showers of refreshing rain; and there is wanted a new earth, in which the barren sand shall be transformed into rich and fertile soil. We must get into conditions where the God above us can come down in showers of blessing, and where the stony heart within us can be transformed into prepared and eager ground. These conditions are to be found within the Kingdom. Within the Kingdom the heavens are opened in an outpouring of grace. "I will come down like rain"; "then shall the earth yield her increase." And so the saints grow their graces in grace. Can you understand that mysterious force? Do you know it? Or do you stand aghast, with the confused inquiry—"How can these things be?" I can understand how a vine that is thin and lank and fruitless, shivering outside a vinery, might look through the glass at the sister vine that is burdened with clusters, and despondingly cry, "How can these things be?" It is all a difference of atmospheric conditions. On

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the other side of the glass forces are reigning and at work which to the outside vine are practically non-existent. Just across the frontier, in the Kingdom of God, "grace reigns," and in grace the citizens accomplish their growth. Do you know the gracious powers? Or are you an outsider? Then to you the powers are unthinkable, and "except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God."

The Kingdom can only be known by its natives. How can we become naturalised? How can we cross the borders and come within the range of the gracious forces of the Kingdom? "Except ye become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." We must lay aside all pride, and kneel at the King's feet. We must resign our wills. We must be docile and obedient. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

xix.

Saving the World.

“God so loved the world.”—*John iii. 16.*

“I pray not for the world.”—*John xvii. 9.*

“GOD so loved the world.” “I pray not for the world.” We are confronted by an apparent antagonism. The two dispositions appear to be contradictory. “God so loved the world.” The evangel suggests an all-affectionate inclusiveness. “I pray not for the world.” The supplication suggests a partial and severe exclusion. The one describes a circle which embraces a race; “God so loved the world.” The other defines a sphere of benediction which comprehends an elected few; “I pray not for the world.” It is well to feel the strain of the apparent antagonism in order that we may enter into the peace of the fundamental consistency.

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Now, let us begin here. The Christianised instinct revolts against a spiritual exclusiveness. The culture of the Christian religion is in the direction of an ever-expanding comprehension. Growth in grace is growth in sympathetic inclusiveness. We may measure our growth by the size and quality of our fellowships. Measure the circumference of your love and you have got the amplitude of your Christian life. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour." That is the circle which defines the size of life lived in the days of the early covenant. "Thou shalt love thine enemy." Such is the incomparably larger circle defined for the privileged possessor of the new covenant in Christ our Lord. "Thou shalt love thine enemy." That is the stretched-out circle of affectionate fellowship enjoined by the Christian religion. It stretches out to include the outermost. There is no one beyond its pale. Within the scope of its far-reaching lines the whole family of man can find a home.

"Thou shalt love thine enemy." "I pray not for the world." Now the Master is never behind the disciple. In this warfare the great Commandant never lags in the rear of the common soldier. In Christ the ideal is realised, and all the law is fulfilled. "I pray not for the world." And yet I know the world is loved, and cared for,

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and is never absent from His yearning and solicitous regard. "I pray not for the world," and yet it was the world that was never out of His sight. "I pray not for the world," and yet the world was the desert which He yearned to grace and adorn with glories from the paradise of heaven. "I pray not for the world," and yet the world projected itself into His prayers as the goal and bourne of ultimate benediction. Range through the course of this prayer, and see how the salvation of the world emerges as the yearned-for product of all His saving ministry. "That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us, *that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.*" Do you mark the dazzling peak of the shining gradient? "I pray not for the world. "I pray for them, that they may be one . . . that the world may believe." The apparent exclusion is only a loving design for an ultimate benediction. See how the wealthy purpose again emerges in the subsequent reaches of the prayer. "And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one, *and that the world may know.*" Mark again, how the whole thought and purpose rises to a consummation in

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the illumination and salvation of the world. "That the world may know!" The whole world is the object of saving benediction, but of benediction through the means and ministry of a chosen few. "I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me": but for them, in order that the world, through them, may be blessed and saved.

1. Now, this is the vital doctrine of election, the election of some for the benediction of the whole. "I pray for these that the world may believe." The elect are not called to a sphere of exclusion, but to a function of transmission. They are not elected to privilege, but to service; not to the secret hoarding of blessing, but to its widespread distribution. The elect are not circles, but centres, heat centres for radiating gracious influence to remote circumferences, that under its warming and softening ministry "the world may believe" in the Son of God. That is the way of the Master. He will work upon the frozen streams and rivers of the world by raising the general temperature. He seeks to increase the fervour of those who are His own, and, through the pure and intense flame of their zeal, to create an atmosphere in which the hard frozen indifference of the world shall be melted into wonder, into tender inquisition, that on the cold altar of the heart may be kindled the fire of spiritual devotion. "I pray not for the

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world, but for these" . . . "that the world may believe." Through the disciple He seeks the vagrant; through the believer He seeks the unbeliever; through the Church He seeks the world; through the ministry of Christian men and women the world is to be won for Christ.

2. Now in this great prayer there are one or two clear glimpses of certain convictions which will have to be created before the world can be constrained to turn to Christ. "That the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." We have to get that conviction deeply and ineradicably embedded into the mind and heart of the world. And here is another collateral conviction, "That the world may know that Thou hast loved them." The believers are to make that fact shine like the noontide, that the world can no more evade it than it can evade the obtrusive glory of the meridian sun. Somehow or other the disciples of Christ are to drive this twofold persuasion into the heart of the world:—

(1) That Christ was really sent, that what He said was true, that He is grandly dependable; and

(2) That we are loved by Him, and that the Christ life is the life of blessedness. "That the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me"; the dependableness of Christ. "That the world may know that Thou hast loved them"; the blessed-

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ness of His disciples. Whatever else the world may do or not do, whatever may be the nature and extent of its revolt, if men will deliberately steer their lives into perdition and hell, we believers in Christ are to see to it that they do it with their eyes open, and with these two convictions sounding through their souls like a great bell, the Lord is dependable, and the life of His disciples is blessed.

How are we to do it? I gather the answer from the prayer of our Lord. These convictions are to be driven home to the world by the force and impetus of redeemed character. See the march and ascension of the wonderful prayer. "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil." And a little later the light breaks upon the primary purpose—"that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." "Kept from the evil . . . that the world may believe." The unworldliness of the believer is to make the world believe in the dependableness of the Lord. Our moral elevation is to be the initial ministry in the world's salvation. By our elevation we are to create a profound conviction that it is possible to resist the gravitation of the world. The strength of our resistance is to placard before the world the might and dependableness of our God. We are to manifest pure aspiration amid defiling

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ambition. We are to reveal refined tastes amid appetites that are coarse and defiled. By the strenuousness of Godly living we are to drive the conviction into the souls of men that we are in solemn league and covenant with a mighty God. "Kept from the evil . . . that the world may believe."

Listen again to the Master in prayer—"that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and Thou in Me . . . that the world may know that Thou hast loved them." Do you see the creative force of the second of these convictions? We are to make the world believe that the Lord loves us by the loveliness of our fellowships. "That they may be one . . . that the world may know." Our oneness, the absence of division and strife, the beauty of our communion, the lovely vision of exquisite family kinship, is to convince the world that the love of God has been engaged in so fair a creation. The winsome bloom that rests upon our relationships is to persuade the world that the life is heaven-born. We are to placard the love of God through the loveliness of our communion. "That they may be one . . . that the world may believe."

Here, then, my brethren, is the setting of the divine purpose. Our Lord will work upon the world through us. Through our moral elevation

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and fine spiritual kinships He would compel the world into primary and fruitful beliefs. Let us place the matter before us in pertinent application. If the organised worldliness of this city is ever to be disturbed, if worldly men and women are to be startled into wonder and incipient belief, it will have to be done through the unworldliness and fine spiritual fellowships of professed disciples of Christ.

Are we ready for the Master's use? Do we really believe in the possibility of the world's redemption? How spacious is our belief; how large is the possibility which we entertain? When we survey the clamant needs of the race, do we discover any "hopeless cases"? Where have we obtained the right to use the word "hopeless"? What evidence or experience will justify us in saying of any man, "He is too far gone"? In what atmosphere of thought and expectancy are we living? Are we dwelling in the Book of Ecclesiastes, or making our home in the Gospel by John? Let us ransack the city. Let us rake out, if we can find him, the worst of our race. Let us produce the sin-steeped and the lust-soddened soul, and then let us hear the word of the Master. "Believest thou that I am able to do this"? The first condition of being capable ministers of Christ, is to believe in the possibility

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of the world's salvation. Let us become reverently familiar with the glorious evangel until the music of the Gospel rings through every part of our being. Let us ask Him to free us, not only from doubt, but from uncleanness. Let us plead with Him to make us the fitting instruments of His power, that through the beauty and strength of our life, and the steady persistence of our faith, the world may be allured into the fellowship of the saints in light.

XX.

The Modesty of Love.

“Love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own.”

—1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5.

“*Love envieth not.*” And what is envy? To envy any one is to repine at their superior excellence. But the repining leads to something worse. Envious repining is the parent of malice and ill-will. Nay, envy drags after it a whole brood of evil spirits. I think the great tempter must be exaltingly satisfied when he has inserted into the life of anyone this germ of envy. There are some insects which insert their eggs into the bodies of others, and at first the insertion seems to be comparatively harmless. But the inserted life begins to develop, and to feed upon the body in which it dwells, and matures and strengthens itself by the entire destruction of the other. And so envy is somehow or other introduced into our spirits, and may at first appear

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nothing very harmful. But it begins to develop and mature, until it has devoured the whole of our spiritual life.

Here are these Corinthians, endowed with various gifts. One had eloquence, another had wealth, another had a wonder-working faith. And they became envious one of another. The one who had eloquence envied the one who had faith, and from envy he passed to ill-will and disparagement and slander. And the disposition became so prevalent that this Corinthian Church became the dwelling-place rather of Satan than of Christ. Well, you know how prone we are to this disposition to-day. Everywhere we are exposed to its insidious allurements. Here are two ministers. One has an influence assuredly broadening, and a congregation steadily increasing. The other has a congregation slowly diminishing, and an influence apparently shrinking. Oh, how terribly strong is the temptation to envy and ill-will! Is it otherwise in social functions? When one who has moved in your circle becomes a general favourite and is greatly courted and admired, while you are partially overlooked or altogether ignored, how fierce is the temptation to envy, and slander, and ill-will! And so it is everywhere and in every life. When we turn with this thought in our minds to gaze upon the personality of John the Baptist, I think it shines with most

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supernal light. Here he is by the Jordan, the popular favourite; vast crowds enrol themselves in his discipleship. And here comes Jesus, and the crowds about John begin to melt away; his popularity begins to wane, and the enthusiasm which he enjoyed gathers about the Nazarene. But there is no envy! He quietly and joyfully says—"He must increase, but I must decrease." I am only as the moon, and now that the sun is risen, I must fade away into obscurity. "He must increase, but I must decrease." No envy, I say. And why? Because John loved the Nazarene. He loved His mission; he loved Him with a great and passionate love, and with love there can be no envy. There is only one thing that can kill envy, and that is love. Everything else is impotent. If you want to destroy the envy that is lurking in your heart, you must have created in your heart the atmosphere of love, and the secret of that atmosphere you can learn at the foot of the Cross. "Love envieth not."

"Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up." No, where there is no envy there will be no vaunting of oneself, no self-glorifying. It is the envious folk who are the swaggerers. Envy always forces a man into self assertion. Envy leads a man to disparage another, and the disparagement is always directed to the commendation of himself. If you listen to an envious person, who is engaged in dis-

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paraging another, you will find that the whole process is a glorification of himself. There is nothing like envy for puffing us up. Envy vaunts itself by slighting others. I have heard a man speak very critically and disparagingly of the electric light, pointing out its irregularity and its defects, but then he was a large shareholder in gas companies! And I think this has its moral application. Our envy leads us to speak disparagingly of other people's excellences, in order that we may vaunt ourselves. We criticise them that we may puff up ourselves. Our envy makes us proud. Love envieth not, and therefore it hasn't the progeny of envy—"it vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up."

"*Love doth not behave itself unseemly.*" Envy does. Envy leads to self-vaunting, to swagger, to self-conceit, and self-conceit leads to unseemly behaviour. The envious, conceited man is for ever pushing himself to the front. He is always putting himself in evidence, thrusting himself before the public gaze. In this Corinthian Church every envious man was wanting to exhibit his own gift. They all wanted to be at the front, and their behaviour became unseemly. "*Unseemly*," or, as the word literally means, mis-shapen; their behaviour became shapeless, ugly; it had no form, no comeliness. It ignored all the claims of civility and grace. Well, I think we shall all feel that this unseemliness

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of behaviour is not unknown among us to-day. There is a great deal of the behaviour, even of Christians, which is shapeless and ugly. We are called by our Master to see to it that our behaviour is graceful and comely. They who ascend into the hill of the Lord have not only to have a pure heart, but clean hands. Their behaviour is to be as graceful as their principles are true. I think we might all give a little more concern to this—that we might emphasize the clean hands as well as the pure heart, the seemly behaviour as well as the secret life. There are some men who even make their bluntness a boast, and others find defences for them in the excuse that “they mean well.” That is not enough. We have not only to mean well, but to seem well. The demand is for a pure heart and for *clean hands*. No man has a right to be blunt in his speech and shapeless and ugly in his behaviour, whatever may be the worth and rectitude of his meaning. A good picture can be greatly helped by good mounting. And so it is in the Christian life—behaviour is the mounting of character, and we are called upon to have the character good and the behaviour seemly. But when the unseemly behaviour arises from envy, when pride makes us self-assertive, when our lust for praise leads us to trample upon others that we may display ourselves, when this makes our behaviour unseemly, there is

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only one remedy. We must get our hearts filled with love, the cleansing love which we may find at the Cross, and then all the unseemly behaviour will cease. "Love doth not behave itself unseemly."

"*Love seeketh not her own.*" So far from rushing into any unseemliness in seeking to display itself, so far from trampling upon the rights of others, love does not even claim her own. "Love seeketh not her own." She claims no rights except where moral principle is involved, and on this she takes a stand, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against her. There is a quaint, grey monument in the sweet old town of Appleby, which was built in the days of the Puritans, and on which these words are inscribed: "Maintain your loyalty; preserve your rights." Maintain your rights! Aye, but they were the crown rights of manhood, freedom to oppose iniquity, freedom to worship God, and the very love in the hearts of those strong old Puritans made them claim the rights, and support their claim by death. There are rights which true love will never relinquish. She will always seek her own. On the other hand, there are rights which love is ever prepared to yield to others. If love had a right to the uppermost seat at a feast, and somebody else has got it, love would seek not her own, but would gracefully insist on the rights of the other. If love had a sitting in the Church of Christ,

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and came and found that someone else was seated there, love would not behave itself unseemly; love would seek not her own, but would cheerfully seek a seat elsewhere. Is not this the way of love? Would not this be the way of Christ? How many opportunities there are, in the whole round of life, where love might graciously abdicate its own rights for the comfort and interest of others. Let us keep our eyes open, that when the Master gives us such opportunity, we may use it according to His desire. And, some day, when the evening of our life is come, He will come to us, and because we have sought not our own, but have cheerfully yielded to others, He will whisper to us, "Friend, go up higher," and the word will make us leap for joy as we enter the eternal world. "Love seeketh not her own."

xxi.

Feverishness.

“Sick of a fever. And He touched her hand, and the fever left her.”—*Matt. viii. 14.*

I HAVE no hesitation in interpreting this miracle as symbolic of a greater miracle which the Master works upon the soul. He has made it perfectly clear that such interpretation is not an illegitimate use of His healing ministry. “That ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins (then saith He to the sick of the palsy), Arise, take up thy bed.” He performed a miracle upon the body that we might know He can perform an analogous miracle upon the soul. He released a paralysed body that we might know He is able to release a paralysed spirit. And so with the incident before us. By a touch He drove the fever from the body, that we may know He can drive the feverishness out of the soul. I want,

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therefore, to consider two or three of the fevers by which our spirits are afflicted, and to proclaim the Christ as the One by whom they can be destroyed.

I. The Fever-Stricken.

There is *the fever of anxiety*. We become "heated hot with burning fears." We are fearful about yesterday, fearful about the things we are doing to-day, fearful about the things which confront us on the morrow. We become feverish over "evils that never arrive." Now anxiety is a wasting power. Even from the point of view of economy it is a foolish expenditure. We could obtain better results with a smaller outlay. Temperate carefulness accomplishes more than a burning anxiety. I have noticed that with the incandescent lights, firm control of the gas results in more brilliant illumination. Turn the gas on to the full, and whilst you obtain a wasteful roar you get a poorer light. It is even so with anxiety. Its issues are more impoverished than those attained by calm and temperate thought. But the fever of anxiety is more than bad economy. It impairs and enervates the moral powers. Anxiety easily passes into fretfulness, and fretfulness is frequently creative of peevishness, and peevishness is easily conducive to a chronic evil temper. It is not with-

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out suggestiveness that the words "anxiety" and "anger" are vitally related, and spring from a common root. Anxiety consumes the moral defences, burns away the forces of self-control, and so makes the life an easy prey to the irritations which so plentifully beset us.

There is *the fever of zealotry*. I am conscious that the word I have chosen as descriptive of this fever is not altogether adequate. I use it in the sense of unillumined zeal. We require ardour in the religious life, and the demand for "fire" in our devotion and fellowship has become a commonplace. But ardour is not sufficient. We may have heat accompanied by a great deal of smoke. We need not only heat, but light. John the Baptist was a "burning and a shining light."

And so the New Testament has much to say about the necessity of "knowledge," "understanding," "discernment," and we are strongly warned against a religious life from which these elements are absent. "They have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge." They had abundance of passion, but little discretion. Now, zeal allied with knowledge creates a fruitful fervour. Zeal bereft of knowledge is a perilous fever. And here again there is a pregnant suggestion in the etymology of the words. Fervour is akin to fever, and it fre-

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quently happens that the one passes into the other. We are called upon to grow in knowledge. We are bidden to exercise our senses to more refined discernment. We are counselled to have a passion for souls, and also to be the light of the world.

There is *the fever of superstition*. Charles Kingsley has defined superstition as "an unreasoning fear of the unknown." I think we may perhaps express the same thought by saying that superstition arises from an unworthy conception of God. There are many of the superstitions which distress men, that would pass away like mist if only we lived in the light of God's countenance. Where superstition dwells, fever abides. The life is never calm and restful that is haunted by superstitions. I don't think this is altogether an irrelevant warning even for our own enlightened day. There are many apparently trifling superstitions which tend to disturb the sanity and quietude of the life. Take the superstition which gathers round about Friday as the unlucky day of the week. What an abhorrence there is of the suggestion that anyone should be married on a Friday! How few of the maids who go out to service will take a situation on a Friday! Such superstitions may appear to be harmless, but in reality they tend to consume the vitals of religion. There are other superstitions which gather round about charms, and ritual, and sacraments, all

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of which help to rob life of its calmness and coolness, and fill it with perilous heat.

There is *the fever begotten of success*. We might have thought that success would lead to a cool contentment. We should have assumed that when men had prospered their feverish craving would cease, and they would rest in calm satisfaction. But quite the opposite appears to be the prevalent issue. Success fosters feverishness and begets a clamant thirst. The more one succeeds the more he wants to succeed. The more he obtains the more he craves. The more you drink when you are heated, the more you want to drink. This seems to be the peril of the prosperous life. There is a quaint remark in Bacon's "Natural History," which I think has wide suggestion—"It hath been noted by the ancients that southern winds, blowing much, do cause a feverous disposition." I think this is a frequent result of the ministry of the south wind. When the soft, genial airs of prosperity breathe over a man, and he never feels the rawness of the east wind, or the biting nip of the north wind, he is apt to acquire a "feverous disposition" which consumes the wealthier elements of his soul.

II. The Healing Touch.

"He touched her hand, and the fever left her."

"He touched her hand." The fever-stricken

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came into contact with the Christ, and at the touch the fever fled as if afraid. That "touch," in the life of the spirit, expresses communion and fellowship. The feverishness of life, whatever guise the fever may take, is to be dispelled by union with the Spirit of the Lord. The Christ was never perturbed; He was always calm. The Christ was never distracted; He was always collected. The Christ was never feverish; He was always cool. When everybody else was feverish and panic stricken, He could speak about "my peace." Now it is the very secret of the Christian Gospel that the Spirit of the Master can be conveyed to His disciples. He can

"Breathe through the pulses of desire
His coolness and His balm."

By my union with Him, the ill-working heat of my life is reduced. I am delivered from panic, I am brought into a normal and healthy moral temperature. "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit."

But the cure effected by the great Healer is more than an expulsion of the fever. It is a defence against it when contagion is prowling about. It is the man with pronounced weaknesses who becomes the victim.

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“Some low fever, ranging round to spy
The weakness of the people.....found the girl,
And flung her down upon a couch of fire.”

It is the spiritually weak who are liable to perilous spiritual fevers. Now union with the Christ turns our weakness into strength. Fellowship ripens into blessed intimacy. We delight in our companionship, and “the joy of the Lord is our strength.” In that companionship we shall find that the word of the Psalmist is confirmed, only with an unspeakably richer meaning: “Thou shalt not be afraid for the pestilence that walketh in darkness”; “neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.” Perhaps we may sum up the cooling ministry in a word, which we may borrow from the Prophet Isaiah: “He that believeth shall not make haste.” He shall not become feverish, or get into a panic. He shall remain calm and cool amid all the dangers of the common day.

III. A Grateful Ministry.

“She arose and ministered unto Him.”

May we not with advantage accept the suggestion which is contained in these words? The fever-stricken woman was healed by the Saviour; and then, when she was delivered from her fever, “She arose and ministered unto Him.” She had been

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lifted out of sickness into sanity, out of aches and pains into peace, out of feverishness into comfort, out of unrest into a healthy calm, and now she uses her restored strength to minister to her Saviour. It is ever the way of the healed and invincible life. We shall best preserve our health by serving our Lord. As to what that service shall be, He has given us a broad and spacious conception in His own Word. "I was an hungred, and ye gave Me meat." "Lord, when saw we Thee an hungred?" When did we minister unto Thee? "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these, ye did it unto Me."

"Calm me, my God, and keep me calm,
While these hot breezes blow;
Be like the night-dew's cooling balm
Upon earth's fevered brow."

xxii.

The Fruits of Godly Fear.

Psalm xxv. 12—15

“*What man is he that feareth the Lord?*” “The fear of God” is a familiar expression in the Scriptures. Perhaps our very intimacy with the phrase has somewhat impoverished our sense of its content. Let us seek to lay hold of one element in the spacious word. When we profoundly fear a thing we are haunted by it. It affects everything. It throws a shadow into the sunniest hour, and brings a chill into the gayest feast. May we transfer any of this meaning into our interpretation of the fear of God? To fear God is to be God-haunted, God-possessed. But immediately we see the defectiveness of the figure. In all fruitful fear of God there is no cringing, no slavishness, no paralysing terror. Perfect love “casteth out” this type of fear. Let us, then, change our figure. We speak of being haunted by

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an air of music. We have listened to some sweet melody, and we cannot escape from its gracious thralldom. It pervades the entire day. It interweaves itself with all our changing affairs. We hear it in our work and in our leisure ; when we retire to rest and when we awake. It haunts us. The analogy may help us to some apprehension of what is meant by the fear of God. The man who fears God is haunted by God's presence. God is an abiding consciousness. God is "continually before him." Everything is seen in relationship to God. The Divine presence pervades the mind and shapes and colours the judgment. Here are two descriptions from the Word of God, in the contrast of which the meaning will be made quite clear. "God is not in all his thoughts." The Eternal does not haunt his mind. Everything is secularised, and nothing is referred to the arbitrament of the Divine Will. He is not God-possessed. "Pray without ceasing." Here is the contrasted mind from which the sense of God is never absent. Like an air of penetrating music the divine presence pervades the exercise of all his powers. He is God-haunted, and in the consciousness of that presence he lives and moves and has his being. He fears God.

What would be the fruits of such a fear? If God haunts the life, and His presence is welcomed,

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what will be the gracious issues? The succeeding verses give some outline of the spacious ministry.

"Him shall He teach in the way that he shall choose." He shall be guided in his choices. He shall have the gift of enlightenment. His discernment shall be refined so as to perceive the right way when the ways are many. His judgment shall be illumined. I use the word judgment with a full and comprehensive meaning. The moral judgment shall be instructed. Its perceptions shall be rendered more microscopic. It shall be able to discern among scruples; it shall become more and more scrupulous. It shall truthfully detect that which is least. The moral choice shall be firm and sure. But it is not only the moral judgment which shall be put to school. The practical judgment shall also be nurtured and refined in the Lord's school. Such qualities as these are among the fruits of the education—tact, discretion, insight, foresight, shrewdness. I do not yield the distribution of these gifts to the sovereignty of the devil. They are among the gifts of the Spirit. Practical sagacity is one of the bequests of the Lord. "If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God." The enlightenment covers the entire field of human life. "He shall *teach*." The word is full of comforting suggestion. He will come down to my level. He will search out the needs of the individual scholar. He will begin

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where I am able to begin. He will break things up and make them clear to me. He will come to tender shoots like "small rain."

"His soul shall dwell at ease." Restlessness and worry shall be abolished. "He shall lodge in the chamber of content." The sense of the companionship of God will make every place the realm of promise, and in every place he will find the riches of grace. Every variety of condition into which his life may pass shall provide its own feast. He will not fret or be worried even though he be led into a place that abounds with antagonisms. He will still be "at ease." "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." That is a wonderfully heartening testimony! When the foes are all about him, and his besetment appears to be perilous, in the very midst of it all he sits down to feast with God. And so he "dwells at ease," wherever his lot is cast. Is not this only a paraphrase of the apostolic word, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content." If the dwelling-place be one of tribulation, even in this dark spot the Lord's treasure may be found. "Tribulation worketh patience, and patience hope." Such are the jewels to be found in this black mine. The God-haunted man is restful in every place because the all-sufficient resource accompanies him

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in the abiding companionship of God. "With Christ in the vessel, he smiles at the storm."

"*His seed shall inherit the earth.*" Children become heirs when parents become pious. The God-possessed transmits a legacy of blessing. Our children fare the better when we fear the Lord. It would be a fruitful subject of meditation for us to sit down and quietly think about the bequests of piety. It would be a profitable exercise to calculate what one may inherit because another man was good. The men and women who are haunted by God and live in His fear bequeath pure vital force, rare moral energy, and a spiritual atmosphere in which sin becomes more difficult. But among the legacies of the pious there are ministries other than these. "Nevertheless I will not do it for David thy father's sake." Is that suggestive of a common ministry in human life? Is judgment withheld from the son because of the sanctity of the parent? Is the son blessed because the father prayed? What vistas are opened out by the application of the principle! All that I have that is worth anything may be a deposit from the prayerfulness of a consecrated parent. I may have an inheritance because he walked with God. "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children to such as keep His covenant." When I fear the

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Lord, I bequeath a spiritual inheritance to my seed.

"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant." They are taken into intimate fellowship. They become the familiar friends of God. It is always a sign of deepening friendship when people begin to open their inner rooms to us. To be made the depository of a rare secret is to be sealed as a friend. When anyone tells us a secret joy, it is a mark of intimacy; when they unveil to us a secret grief, it is a proof of the closest fellowship. When we are taken from the suburbs of a man's being to the centre, it is a proof of an enriching communion. "No longer do I call you servants, but friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father, I have made known unto you." Is there not something tenderly suggestive in the word which tells us that "when they were alone, He expounded unto them"? When He had got His familiar friends to Himself, He told them His secrets and showed them His covenant. And so it is the saint who is the spiritual expert. The merely intellectual athlete may be in the remote suburb of truth, while the illiterate saint may dwell in its very heart. There are many illiterate saints who are grand expositors. The Lord "shows them" His covenant. He unveils to them rare glimpses of redemptive glory,

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and what is hid from the merely wise and prudent is revealed unto babes.

Here, then, are some of the fruits of the God-possessed life. How can we become God-haunted? Let us begin by deliberately consulting God in the individual movements of our busy life. Let us refer everything to His decision. Let us make Him a partner in all our affairs. Let us begin by distinct acts of volition, and what began at first with strained deliberateness may become at length an easy-fitting habit, and may even ripen still further into the spontaneity of an instinct. The Lord will be "continually before us."

xxiii.

The Heavy Laden.

“Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”—*Matt. xi. 28, 29.*

THIS exquisite passage is like a flower which one is almost afraid to touch, lest he should spoil the delicate bloom. Yet to disturb the flower may awake a fragrance and distribute it to others. My treatment shall be a gentle shaking of the flower, if perchance its inherent fragrance may captivate our spiritual senses and allure us to the heart of its gracious truth.

“*Ye that labour and are heavy-laden.*” And who are the “labouring”? There is an intense force and significance in the word. We may discover one aspect of its wealthy content in the familiar verse, “Jesus being *wearied* with His journey, sat

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thus on the well." Perhaps the Master was employing the figure of a poor beast carrying too heavy a load, with its heaving sides and hanging head, and strength almost spent; a beast ready to sink. That is the inherent meaning of the word "labour." It suggests a life sinking beneath a weight which is beyond its strength. And who are the "heavy laden"? The figure is taken from an over-cargoed boat, a boat that is burdened to the extent of peril, almost to the point of submergence. Here, then is the force of our Lord's appeal. All ye that are exhausted, whose strength is well nigh spent, who are carrying gigantic weights which are beyond your power, ye who are sinking in the hopeless task, "come unto Me, and I will give you rest!" All ye that are like over-cargoed boats, whose minds are burdened with anxieties and cares, or with the heavy and lumbering traditions of men, and who are nigh to being swamped, living in perpetual fear of submersion, "come unto Me, and I will give you rest."

Are there such souls? Are there any sinking, sunken, despairing hearts? Are there over-cargoed men and women, beset by hungry waves ever seeking to engulf them? Is life a merry maytime, a sunny round of lightsome games in a flower-decked meadow? Or is life full of steep and difficult highways, hard, dry, and dust-covered? And is it that

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wherever we turn our eyes, we may see a horse down, a panting beast of burden, spent beneath its load? Turn where we will, do we not gaze upon some poor soul sunk into despair, crushed into the dry choking dust by a weight that has broken the heart? What shall we legislate for, a picnic or a shambles? If life is a picnic, a Redeemer is superfluous, but if sin has made life a shambles, if sorrow has changed the old home into a galling prison, then we need a Redeemer, and He comes with the right word when He says, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest."

I think if we could gather together all the scattered army of the sinking and the heavy-laden, and marshal them in ranks, they would form a procession which would surely melt the hardest heart. Who would be found in that vast procession?

One big regiment would be formed of those who are sinking under the burdening sense of guilt. Does that sound like fiction? Have we never heard of men and women who have spent the forces of mind and soul, and who are sinking in sheer exhaustion because of the load of guilt which they drag after them to-day? If, when we have lived to-day, to-day were done, men might walk with airy step, but the guilt of to-day is added to the heavy baggage-waggon which constitutes our load, and at length men sink in sheer collapse. "Oh,

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full of scorpions is my mind." That is an expression of common experience. We do a deed and so welcome a scorpion, and the scorpion embitters the life and racks it with unending pain. Here is another picture of the heavy-laden. "And behold a woman in the city which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, came and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet." There, I say, is a heavy-laden soul, dragging her guilt like a galling chain. Now there is no exhaustion like the exhaustion created by the sense of guilt. It is accompanied by terrible drain and strain. Hope fades away from life like the light from the evening sky, and there is nothing left but the burden of the chain.

"To-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day."

The outlook on the morrows is just a monotony of laden and hopeless gloom.

Now what can we do for such? Men attempt to alleviate the burdens of the guilt-bound by little fictions. "This is the very painting of your fears." Painting! "My worm dieth not, my fire is not quenched." Another little fiction is tried. "Maybe there is no God." No God! "I feel His terrible

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grip." Then a third little fiction may be applied. "There is no hell; it is only the creation of heated and unhealthy brains." And I think I hear the reply of the guilt-burdened:—"No hell? I am in it. I am there; I am tormented in this flame." No, there is no emollient in these petty fictions. There is only one hope for those who are sinking beneath the crushing burden of guilt, and that is to be found in the infinite power of the Divine forgiveness. He not only forgives, but forgets. I think in this Divine forgetfulness is the real luxury of my Father's forgiveness. When I remember my sins it is an unspeakable joy to know that the Father has forgotten them. "I will remember them no more for ever." This is the secret of rest.

Another regiment in the procession of the "labouring" soul would be composed of those who are heavy laden with the burdensome mystery of things, who are dragging along in the mire of fears and uncertainties, and who are looking about for some firm way of assurance and rest. A regiment of heavy-ladened gropers! Is there anything so exhausting as long and fruitless search? Men who are looking for work become more exhausted than if they were engaged in work. Work itself provides an element of rest, but looking for work is productive of nothing but exhaustion. The man who goes about all day, seeking for work, turns home

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again at night, weary and tired out. It is not otherwise with men and women who are groping for God. I think there is a very burdened and tired life behind the Old Testament cry, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him." That cry represents a labouring soul sinking like a spent and weary beast. It is to such as these that the Master makes His loving call, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest."

But the trouble is that men do not search for Him in the right place. "Ye search the Scriptures . . . and ye will not come unto *Me*." I have seen a tourist travelling through one of the loveliest parts of Scotland, who was so absorbed in his guide-book that he scarcely lifted his eyes to look at the scenery. "Ye search the Scriptures, and ye will not come unto *Me*." Men will search anywhere and do anything except turn in simple surrender to the Christ Himself. They weary themselves in intellectual exploration, and they will not lay their wills in childlike simplicity in lowly obeisance to the Master's call. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." The secrets are discovered in the way of devotion and reverent fear. "Come unto *Me*," ye sinking, exhausted seekers, "and I will give you rest."

Let me name one other regiment in this great army of the heavy-laden. How shall we describe

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them? They are burdened with religiousness. We can exhaust a horse by too much harness. We can put upon him so many trappings that he has no margin of strength for real and useful service. Harness is purposed to direct our strength to the most efficient use, but excessive harness may drain the very strength it was intended to preserve. It is even so in the religious life. Rules and regulations are purposed to aid us in spiritual efficiency, but excessive regulation may drain the spirit and despoil it of the power of fruitful ministry. Rules may become mere binding straps, which hold the soul in galling servitude. That was the condition of many of the Jews in the time of our Lord. They were "laden with burdens grievous to be borne." Their multitudinous rules made their spiritual life a bondage, and their souls were weary and spent. I am not sure that we are altogether free from peril even in our own day. I turn to Manuals of Devotion, and I find directions such as these:—"Forty-five rules for the suppression of Jealousy!" "Twenty rules for the cultivation of Charity!" Surely regulations so multiplied will act like burdensome harness, and will oppress the life they were purposed to help. Christ refused to give rules. He would not multiply small regulations. "Till seven times?" "I say not unto thee until seven times." He would lift the soul out of the bondage of small

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literalisms into the large opportunity of the Spirit. "Come unto Me," ye souls that are laden with regulations and trappings, "and I will give you rest."

And so rest is to be gained by finding Christ. How is it to be retained? How are we to keep our "rest" fresh and healthful? God does not want His bread to become stale; He wants it to be ever palatable and good to our taste. He does not want His "rest" to become stale, He wants it to remain fresh and sweet that I may experience it every day like a newly-discovered thing. He wants His "gift" to be a daily "find." "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me . . . and ye shall find rest." He wants His rest to be so fresh in experience that it may surprise me every day as though it were a thing I had newly found. He wants it to remain a novelty, and never become a commonplace. He wants his rest to be "new every morning." And this is how it is to be accomplished:—"Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me." Find out the Master's way of doing things. Dwell with Him and appropriate His Spirit. Approach everything from His stand-point. Do not confront anything in vanity and pride. Take up all your tasks and encounter all your sorrows in "meekness" and "lowliness"; and the rest He gave us when first we turned to Him we shall find

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in everything, and it will daily occasion us a glad and palatable surprise. What He gives us we may in "meekness" and "lowliness" continually re-find. Life will be a prolonged spiritual discovery in the peace and rest of God.

xxiv.

Overflowing Sympathies.

“A certain centurion.”—*Luke vii. 2.*

WHAT are my anticipations respecting the character of this Centurion? He is an educated Roman, and therefore I anticipate that he will be unsentimental, severely secular, crushing out all inclinations to the mystical. He is a Roman soldier, and therefore I anticipate that he may be proud, domineering, hard, and unsympathetic. He is a Roman slave-owner, and therefore I anticipate that he may be self-centred, supercilious, inconsiderate, and brutal. My anticipations do not shape for me a rich and enticing personality. He is a man living in the steely glare of imperial power, and I expect to find him power-benumbed, and absorbed in the hardening materialism of the fleeting day. He will be as a land of drought and barrenness, sandy, gritty, rasping, and unkindly. Instead of all which, he stands

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revealed to us as a land of springs, musical with streams, robed in soft and tender graces, and abounding in grateful shades. The soldier is delicately sensitive. The slave-owner is gentle and sympathetic. The educated Roman is reverent and worshipful. I expected stern and barren heights, and lo! grass is growing upon the mountains; imperial power is associated with tenderest grace. I want to dwell for a little time near this commanding personality, and rehearse some of its unexpected wealth.

Here are rivers of rich and generous sympathy. I know their depth and fulness by the barriers they overleap. Sympathy is commonly confined within severer conventional limits. It is often like a lake in a private park, and not like the stream which weds together the private park and the village green. It is often the dialect of the hamlet rather than the speech of a people. It is parochial rather than national, sectarian instead of universal. There are stern, hoary walls within which its movements are enclosed, and beyond the enclosures the music of its influence is never heard. But sometimes the waters rise in a gracious flood; the imprisoning walls are submerged; the boundary marks of the little hamlet are washed out, and class and caste and sect are forgotten in a broad and fruitful union. Here is a man whose sympathies are at the flood,

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and the obstructing barriers have melted away. Caste and class fall before the impetuous stream. "*A certain centurion's slave who was dear unto him.*" A slave who was dear unto him! A servant who was very precious unto him! Here is one conventional barrier overthrown. Sympathy has paid no heed to social grades, and centurion and servant are one. The servant's ailment is the master's grief. I need not proclaim how stern and threatening is the barrier which commonly intervenes between class and class, and cleaves society into alienated and unsympathetic divisions. We speak of master *and* man, of mistress *and* servant, but the "and" too frequently represents no vital conjunction. It is a dead ligature, a kind of doll's arm connection. If it be wrenched there is no pain; if it be bruised there is no bleeding. But here was a conjunction between master and servant made out of living nerves, sensitive sympathies, and the pains and joys of the one thrilled and throbbled into the live mind and heart of the other. Their conjunction was not mere connection, it was a fellowship; it was not an expedient, it was a life. They were members one of another.

Mark the further advance of the gracious flood. "He loveth our nation!" What! the Roman loving the Jew? Here is another hoary rampart overthrown. "He loveth our nation." *Racial limits*

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are overpassed. A citizen of imperial Rome, nurtured in the glowing ambitions of a world-wide dominion, finding room in his sympathies for the undistinguished and unattractive people of the Jews! That is a type of sentiment by no means common and exuberant. Patriotism is usually sternly self-contained and exclusive. Its manifestations, beyond its own boundaries, are too commonly selfish and soured. It is like the juices of many trees, which, when they escape from their own enveloping bark, congeal into stiffness and bitterness. The cup of patriotism rarely flows over into cosmopolitanism. I am not quite sure that even we English people can claim a very exuberant love for other nations of the world. Our sympathies run broad and deep among the English-speaking peoples, and it is well and good, but I do not know that their exclusiveness is much vaster, and I am perfectly sure they do not include the Jews. Where is the Jew loved? And, yet, let us remember that in all essential characteristics he was the same in the time of the Master as in our own day. If he be repellent now, he was equally repellent then. If he be mean and grasping, if his name has become a synonym for treachery, the dark degeneracy has not occurred in the Christian centuries. He was what he is, and the centurion loved him. Profound sympathy discovered his wealth, discerned the lovely

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even among the base, sought fellowship with the lovely, and loved it. Roman patriotism did not congeal into Roman pride, but flowed out in discerning sympathy, paying no heed to racial limits, and finding home and sustenance in the universal good.

Can we trace the sympathy into yet finer issues? "Himself built us our synagogue." A Roman discerning the beauty in the worship of the Jew. "Himself built us our synagogue." *Ecclesiastical boundaries overflowed.* It is a welcome sign of broadening and enriching vision when we begin to take sympathetic interest in the religious aspirations and worships of others. It is a sure sign of dwarfed and crippled life when religious interests are self-contained and exclusive, when we cannot see the beauties in another mode of worship, nor find a single foothold for kinship and communion. But our sectarian fences are so emphatic and pronounced that it is difficult for our sympathies to get beyond them. Our boundaries are so apt to be made of spiked railings and barbed wire, instead of green and perfumed hedge-rows. When sympathy is refined, kinships are discerned, and even where there is much that is alien, we shall discover much that is common. Here, then, is the breadth and depth of the Centurion's sympathy. In its gracious comprehensiveness social barriers are submerged,

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and servant and master wedded in vital union, racial limits are submerged, and peoples of varied characteristics united in fruitful fellowship; ecclesiastical boundaries are submerged, and communion established with the wealth of an apparently alien faith. "His servant was dear unto him." "He loveth our nation." "Himself built us a synagogue."

Now I am not surprised to find that a man of such spacious sympathy is also *a man of profound humility*. That is not a mere coincidence, it is an inevitable moral consequence. Sympathy is creative of humility. Large sympathy; deep humility! No sympathy; colossal self-conceit! Sympathy means association, vision, comprehension, outlook. Large sympathy implies large spaciousness and far-reaching outlook. Absence of sympathy means absence of vision, lack of space, life confined to one's own court-yard. Now a little thing looks big when it is set in a small room. The piece of furniture which looked dwarfed in the warehouse assumes quite respectable proportions when set in the narrower surroundings of your own home. If you want a little thing to look big, put it into a small room. A fly is conspicuous on a saucer, it is lost on a lawn. A man of no sympathy, of no spacious vision, is set in a small place, and self bulks big, and becomes possessed by a swelling conceit. But

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when self is seen in large associations, in wide social spaces, when comparisons are disclosed by broader fields, then self assumes accurate proportions, and self-conceit subsides into a healthy self-esteem. Yes, sympathy is the key to life's proportions, and therefore the parent of humility. I am not surprised therefore that a man whose sympathies went out to the slave, to foreign peoples, and to alien sects, should manifest a character absolutely devoid of self-conceit, and characterised by profound humility. I am not surprised to hear him say, and I am sure he means it, "*I am not worthy* that Thou shouldest come under my roof, neither thought myself worthy to come unto Thee." Where sympathy abides, humility dwells.

Sympathy is here; humility is here; then you have got *a fine discernment*. When you have in a life a broad surface of sympathy, allied with a deep and fruitful humility, you have obtained a sensitive plane of spirit, which, like the photographer's most exquisite plate, will register the finest impressions of light. Sympathy and humility are the conditions of moral and spiritual discernment. Let these be absent, and discernment and apprehension are blunted and impaired. Without sympathy and humility life is hardened, and a thousand mystic visitors may knock at our doors unheeded and ignored. But with their presence there is a fine

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alertness of surface which instinctively discerns the approach of the highest, and tremblingly thrills to its touch. "The humble shall hear thereof and be glad." "Shall hear," and shall know. How love can interpret a footfall! "That is my husband coming!" "How do you know?" "Oh, I know his step; I know the way he opens the door." The interpreting discernment of an alert and sacrificing affection! "The humble shall hear!" They shall know the Lord's footfall when He is about. They shall know His knock when He taps at the door of their life. I do not wonder that this humble, sympathetic centurion heard the footfall of an unearthly step. I do not wonder that he discerned the uncommonness of the Christ. I do not wonder that his spirit thrilled at the mystic Presence, as the leaves of the silver birch thrill in the light wind which stirs with the dawn. "I am not worthy that *Thou* shouldst come!" "Neither thought I myself worthy to come unto *Thee!*" "Thou! Thee!" He discerned the majesty of the wonderful Presence, and his soul fell prostrate in adoring homage and awe. If we wish to discern the King when He is about, we must keep our hearts soft and sympathetic. We must exercise our pities. We must send our hospitable thoughts over unfrequented fields. We must live in large spaces, in

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search of ever-widening fellowship, and in the humbleness of mind begotten of hungry sympathy, we shall discern the King in His beauty, and shall most assuredly love His appearing.

XXV.

Strife and Vain Glory.

“Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.”—*Philippians ii. 3.*

“LET nothing be done through strife or vain-glory.” Whom is the Apostle addressing? His words seem applicable to some violent political party, or to some ambitious and selfish state. They appear to be descriptive of the ways of the world, and yet they are pointed at a Christian Church. “Let nothing be done through strife and vain-glory.” Is the counsel irrelevant? Is the danger imaginary? Do not “Church” and “Strife” appear quite incongruous? I should have thought that when the fire-brand of strife sought introduction into the temple of the Lord, it would have been extinguished at the very threshold. And yet the Apostle suggests that even in the Church it may

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find sympathetic material. There is so much of the world still in the Church, that worldly fires have to be watched. Outside the Church, in the days of the Apostle, men were clamorous and proud. They lusted for authority. They stretched out both hands for power. Mastery was the only recognised human dignity. Humility was not yet canonised as a grace. Jesus of Nazareth had laid the hand of consecration upon the servile virtues, and had pronounced the beauty of humility and the beauty of sacrifice and patience and poverty of spirit, but in the loud ambitious streets of the world these were still only the badges of the slave. Men coveted command. They thirsted for personal triumph. The high head and the stiff neck were the physical types of an unbendingness which most men craved. The slave was at the bottom of the social grades, and all that was characteristic of the slave belonged to the same plane. Humility was degradation; to be servant of all was to be an outcast. That was the spirit of the world in the Apostle's time, as it is the spirit of the world to-day. Now this spirit steals into the Church. The fog that fills the streets of the city, obtrudes in the sanctuary. The lust of power burns in the Christian worker. Ambition for personal victory possesses the heart of the professed soldier of the Cross. The spirit of strife enters into the messenger of peace. Men do Chris-

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tian work because impelled by strife. Men persist in Christian service because impelled by vain-glory. Strife and vain-glory, the powers of the world, become motive powers in the Kingdom of God. That is the pity of it, and the tragedy of it, that a kingdom purposed for the destruction of self can be used for the fattening of self; a kingdom established for the annihilation of worldliness used for its enthronement. The gist of the whole matter is this. It is possible to make a worldly convenience of the Christ, to regard Him as an agent in the attainment of mere party ends, and to use Him with a single eye for our own glory. It is against this insidious and imminent peril that the Apostle warns us when he counsels us, in all the varied work of the Church, to "let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory."

What we have before us is a warning against the obtrusion of self in Christian service. Now the Apostle says that this obtrusion may reveal itself in one of two shapes, in strife or vain-glory. I think it will be well, in the place of both these words to substitute more modern equivalents, which will enable us to catch the Apostle's thought. What did the Apostle mean by strife? Party-spirit. What did he mean by vain-glory? Personal vanity. "Let nothing be done through party-spirit or personal vanity." Party-spirit! Personal vanity! Those

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are the two guises in which self is apt to intrude into Church life and crowd out the Christ. "Let nothing be done through party-spirit." What is party-spirit? I don't think we need pause to inquire as to the peculiar character of the party-spirit which broke out in the apostolic Church. It admits of a sufficiently precise definition, which has relevancy to all time. Party-spirit is that which seeks the luxury of a majority more than the enthronement of a truth. It aims at winning a contest rather than at advancing a cause. It works for sectarian triumph more than for spiritual growth. We are all agreed that this prevails in the warfare of the world. Political contests are often struggles in which the passion for numerical victory obscures the interests of truth. The declaration of the poll is for many men the announcement of the goal. Their interest centered in the figures, and their gladsome shout is the symbol of gratified strife. That is the very genius of a pernicious party-spirit—struggle above which there is no high sky, and before which there is no distant and beckoning horizon; struggle for the petty triumphs of a passing day. There must be parties, but it is possible to have parties without a pernicious party-spirit. There may be many parties, and yet all be for the State; the party-life dominated by a larger life; the sectional victory sought for in the interests of

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righteousness and truth. It is even so in the Church of the living God. Party-spirit is in the Church when the Christian fights harder for a sectarian triumph, than for the reign of the Lord. There are some members of the Christian Church who are never to be found in the battle-field, except when the struggle is an unfortunate contest between the Christian sects. They revel in sectarian strife. A fight stirs them to the depths. Some election will find them on the field, but the declaration of the poll marks the movement of their retirement, and they are not to be found in the ranks when the immediate contest is the incessant fight with all the powers of ill. I say that is the party-spirit the Apostle deplures, the spirit which enlists for a sect, but not for the Lord, which works feverishly for a sectarian victory, and is inclined to forget the august interests of our God. Sects there must be! Let us preserve them from this injurious party-spirit. Parties there may be; our spirit need not be partial. We can serve a party in the spirit of wholeness, in the spirit of holiness, a spirit which seeks the exaltation of all truth and beauty, by the enthronement of our Lord. "Let nothing be done through party-spirit."

"Or vain-glory," personal vanity! A man can be a sect to himself; he can be a party of one. He can seek his own triumphs, his own majorities. Such

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a man begins counting everything from himself, but the tragedy is that a man who begins by counting himself as "number one," never gets as far as "number two;" with "number one" the numeration ends. "Personal vanity," a life swollen with pride. The eyes are so "enclosed in fat" that "number two" is never seen. "Personal vanity," that is the obtrusion we have to fear and beware. Now the Apostle declares that this spirit of personal vanity may obtrude into the Church. Nay, he declares that men and women will come into the Church in order to feed it. They will use the holy ministries of the Church to fatten self. We can bow our heads to pray through sheer personal vanity. We can engage in services of philanthropy through sheer personal vanity. We can preach Christ crucified through sheer personal vanity. That is stern, hard and horrible, not as fiction but as fact, and we shall do well to face it. I can be in the Church of Christ like a huge sponge, a mere agent of suction, gathering and retaining solely to increase the weight of self. Now, Christian folk are not intended to be sponges. They are purposed to be channels, not prisons of possession, but agents of transmission; not bolstering up a personal vanity, but distributing a glory over all the fellowships of the redeemed. Our prayers must not be personal sponges, nor our spirit, nor our services, nor any of

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the manifold ministries of the Church's life. Our energies must be otherwise and other-born, not prompted either by strife or vain-glory, by party-spirit or by personal vanity, but for the good of our fellows and the glory of our God.

The warning against self-obtrusion is followed by a declaration as to how the obtrusive self may be suppressed. Here is transition from egotism to altruism. "But in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." It is the lowly spirit which discerns things in their true proportion and order. The lowly spirit sets me in the right attitude, and makes it possible for me to obtain accuracy of vision. People who are high-minded, in the sense of being supercilious, "look down" upon others. People who are lowly-minded "look up" to others, and discover their wealth and grace. It is the lowly place that gives us the point of vision for the spacious out-look. That may appear to be a contradiction, but it is one of the common experiences of the spiritual life. There is much food for meditation in the familiar phrase "The Valley of Vision." I could have readily understood it had it been "The Mount of Vision," but to have visions in valleys, to have panoramas breaking upon one's gaze in the place of humility, excites doubt and surprise. But the Scriptures abound in the suggestion. "Blessed are the poor in spirit," those who are

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furthest removed from pride, who are conscious of their poverty, who are more impressed by their sense of spiritual want than with their spiritual possessions; "for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." Whole countries of spiritual benedictions become their inheritance. They pass from discovery to discovery in the realm of knowledge and grace. Not least among the discoveries which are made are the discoveries of our fellows. The proud man cannot know his fellow-man. It is when we are lowly that we discover his worth. We esteem him, we give him priority over ourselves, we are willing and desirous that he should take the first place.

There is no way by which we can obtain this gracious disposition except by holding intimate companionship with Christ. In His presence "the mountains and hills are made low." In the light and warmth of His presence the ice of false pride melts away.

xxvi.

“He Calleth by Name.”

“He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.”—*John x. iii.*

“HE calleth His own sheep by name.” The unit is not lost in the indiscriminate mass. The colour of a personality is not merged in the monotonous grey of the multitude. The personalities are distinguished. “He calleth His own sheep by name.” He never mistakes one for another. We are not so much alike that we are treated as crowds. We are not repetitions of a type, uniform articles cast in a common and unvarying mould. We are individualities, every one original and unique, and bearing individual characteristics and name. “He calleth His own sheep by name.” He never confounds Thomas and John, or Peter and Nathaniel, or Mary and Martha. Each name suggests its special problem, and requires peculiar ministry. The ministries are

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varied and unequal, and in their inequality are to be found their grace and justice. In inequality is found the rarest equity. Equal bonds may mean unequal strain. Equal loads given to a dray-horse and a carriage-horse impose quite unequal burdens. One horse leaps to a sharp word, while another only responds to a heavy lash. You create the same pain by apparently unequal punishment. Therefore it is not similarity and equality of treatment that we require, but treatment guided by the discernment of the individual need. It is, therefore, a heartening evangel which comes to us from the Word of God, and which tells us that the Lord is acquainted with the individual need, and that from Him we receive the inequalities of mercy and grace. "He knew what was in man." "I know My sheep." "He calleth His own sheep by name."

"He calleth his own sheep by name." But this was said of Him in the day of His gracious travail, when He walked the heavy road of pilgrimage and pain. This was spoken in the day of His humiliation, when He companied with men, when He visited their lowly dwellings, and moved amid their common haunts, and sympathetically knew the needs of the individual heart. "He calleth His own sheep by name." Will it be true of Him when He rises again on the third day, clothed in resurrection glory? In His humiliation He knew the individual

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heart; will exaltation create dimness and alienation? The gospel of my text is found amid the homely and companionable conditions of chapter x. But if we pass on through the deepening twilight and the hastening night, on through the darkness of chapter xix., by the terror of Calvary and the blackness of the tomb, on to the strange dawning of the Easter light, which breaks in chapter xx., shall we find Him changed? When the pilgrimage is trod, and death and the grave are left behind, when the humiliation is ended, and glory has begun, will He be the same companionable, discerning, sympathetic presence? Will He any longer know the individual life?

The same Loving Recognition after the Resurrection.

I turn to the wonderful record, with the music of my text ringing in my heart, “He calleth His own sheep by name,” and half-tremblingly I listen to His speech on the resurrection morn. “Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping . . . Jesus saith unto her, *Mary!*” “He calleth His sheep by name.” It is the same Master. And here is Thomas, trembling with misgiving, half stunned by the grim and unforgettable realities which he had seen on Calvary, with his hope buried in a sealed tomb, and despairing of any sweet and winsome

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morrow. "Jesus said unto him, *Thomas*, reach hither thy finger." "He calleth His own sheep by name." It is the same gracious look. And here is another of the prominent figures of the resurrection days, Simon Peter, consumed by self-distrust, fearful of vows and confessions, wanting to proclaim his love, and yet half afraid to look at the One he loved. "Jesus saith unto him, *Simon*, . . . lovest thou Me?" "He calleth His own sheep by name." It is the same unchanging and discerning sympathy. "Mary!" "Thomas!" "Simon!" It is the same Jesus, now clothed in the incorruptible, ministering to the individual life, applying His grace and comfort to the individual heart. "Mary!" There He is consoling a mourner. "Thomas!" There He is ministering to a doubter. "Simon!" There He is healing and restoring a denier. "I know my sheep." "Mary!" There the resurrection Lord is ministering to the pain of bereavement. "Thomas!" There the resurrection Lord is ministering to the pain of misgiving. "Simon!" There the resurrection Lord is ministering to the pain of treachery and denial. Is there not something beautiful and fruitfully helpful in a record which tells us that the wealth of the resurrection ministry was given to the individual heart? The glorified Lord made His way to the three dark lanes in human life—to bereavement, to misgiving, to self-contempt,

“He Calleth . . . by Name.”

and He sought to bring into each of the black ways the soft warm, cheery light of the Easter morn. “Mary!” “Thomas!” “Simon!” He called the troubled sheep by name and led them out.

(1) “Mary stood without at the sepulchre, weeping, and as she wept, . . . Mary!” She knew the tone! She had heard it too often to mistake it for another. How had she learnt the tone? “Mary Magdalene, out of whom the Lord had cast seven devils.” She had heard the voice then, a commanding voice, speaking in the midnight of her bondage. When her freedom was gained, when the devils had been expelled, she heard the voice then, a soothing; heartening voice, speaking in the soft, quiet dawn of her emancipation. And ever since the great enfranchisement, she had lived in the light and music of His gracious speech. And now at the grave she could not mistake the familiar tone. “She turned and said, Rabboni; which is to say, Master!” All this is not without its suggestion. If I want to be calmed by my Lord’s voice in the black crisis, I must familiarise myself with its tones in the common day. The mother hushes her little one in the dark midnight, with tones which have become familiar in the light. It is possible for one to be in the chilling midnight, and not to hear the tones of the speaking Lord! “Ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.” “My sheep

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hear My voice." I want to know the voice in the crisis! Happy the soul that can say, "I heard the voice when He called me out of darkness into light. I heard it on my birthday! And I shall know the tones again if He speaks when I stand by an open grave." Happy the soul that is so familiar with the voice, that it cannot mistake its music when the calm sunny day has passed into a troubled and tempestuous night.

"Jesus saith unto her, *Mary!*" What did the name mean when spoken by the Lord on that first day of the week? She was searching for death; she had met life! Perhaps the last time He had called her Mary was when He was toiling up Calvary's slope to the cross. And between then and now there had been the crucifixion, the death, the burial. And now again, "Mary." Then death was no blind alley, no impassable terminus, but a highway and a thoroughfare! She had seen Him enter, had seen Him emerge, and now the tones of His voice confirmed it. "Mary!" I think her conception of death was transfigured. Death is so imperious, its sovereignty appears to be so absolutely unconditioned. When we watch the dying, the transient is so obtrusive. We are held by the spectacle of the failing strength, the graspless memory, the dim discernment, the scanty breath; the brief flickering of the fading light; the expiration;

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the awful stillness. It all appears so final, with nothing suggestive of new beginnings and stronger days. But to hear the once-dead and buried Lord say “Mary,” is to have opened before one the gates of a glorious hope! “If He . . . emerged!” Then from that mighty premise I tremblingly draw a mighty inference, which He Himself has confirmed and justified in His own word. “If He,” . . . then I and mine! “Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.”

The Ministry of Retrospect.

Is it not a gracious thing that the witness of the risen Lord is first of all given to the weeping woman, bending near a grave? How much we need it! It is a dark lane, and the cold wind that sweeps across it blows out every earthly light! I am grateful for the gift of memory, and the gracious ministry of retrospect. To be able to sit in the twilight, before the lamps are lit, and just think about him, and about her, is to exercise a kindly gift of God. To live it all over again in memory, from the wooing days to the ministry of the last sickness, and the sacred fellowship of the declining day! It is very good of God to permit us to recall it all, to canonise our loved ones in the soft, transfiguring light of retrospect. But retrospect may be

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imprisoning; memory may paralyse me by vain regrets. If in the pensive twilight, while I recall my yesterdays, I hear the risen Lord call my name, the call awakes the thought of a wondrous tomorrow! When He calls *my* name, He calls my loved ones too, and my retrospect is transmuted into a glorious hope. My evening time is no longer a mere lingering over a sunset, but an eager watching for the dawn. My "good-bye" is softened into "good-night," and I await the morrow of a brighter and more spacious day. "Thanks be unto God, who has given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The Recognition of Thomas.

(2) "After eight days again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them."

"And Thomas with them." I am glad that Thomas was with them. I am glad he was permitted to retain his companionship. I am glad they had not cast him from their fellowship because he was a sceptic. He must have greatly wounded his fellow-disciples when he so stoutly disbelieved what their experience had witnessed and confirmed. But they retained him in their fellowship. It is a beautiful glimpse of their broadening tolerance and their comprehensive sympathy. I think it was one of the first fruits of the resurrection light. Perhaps

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their wonderful experience had made them all so painfully conscious of the sin of their recent desertion that they had lost the very roots of a harsh censoriousness.

And I am glad that Thomas himself had not turned his back upon those whom he regarded as his credulous fellow-disciples. It so frequently happens that, when a man cannot fully accept the faith of his fellows, he severs himself entirely from their companionship and communion. This doubter might have said, “For me the matter is settled. The evidence is overwhelming. My judgment is final. I saw the ghastly scenes on Calvary. I heard His groans, and that one great cry that filled us all with fear. I saw the spear-thrust, and the expiration of the last breath. For me the promising crusade is sunk in the abyss of an endless night.” “Except I shall see in His hand the print of the nails . . . I will not believe.” And yet “the disciples were within, and Thomas with them.” “Then came Jesus.”

“I know My sheep.” “He calleth His sheep by name.” And he knew and called Thomas. The risen Lord came to him with infinite tenderness. “Peace be unto you,” and I think perhaps He directed His look more particularly upon the doubter. Do you think the Master needed to have gone further? He had not yet shown His hands

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or His feet, but He had done enough. The breathing of the blessing of peace upon this band of faithless deserters was the grandest revelation of the risen Lord. "Thomas, reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into My side." I don't think Thomas ever did it. I think he tried to break in upon the speech of his Master, and check the painful repetition of his own proud speech. Indeed, the record reads to me as though Thomas leaped in with the interruption, "My Lord and my God!" He did not want the evidence of hands and feet. The great proof that the old Master was with them again was found in His marvellous love and undimmed friendship for a band of men who had deserted and betrayed Him! I go a little back in the dark story, and I read a phrase like this: "Art thou not then also one of this Man's disciples?" . . . "I am not." And I read again, "And they all forsook Him and fled." And now, the deserted Lord stands again in their midst, and His words fall upon them like gracious rain: "Peace be unto you." That is the revelation which won the heart and confidence of Thomas. And that is how Thomas will always be won; not by nail prints, not by the witness of any physical signs, but by the manifestation of spiritual glory! And so I would say to any soul troubled by misgivings to-day, Don't forsake the

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upper room ; don't break thy fellowship with thy fellows ; keep upon thy knees ; bow in reverence before the unspeakable presence ; watch for the signs of His coming in the realm of thy spirit ; watch for suggestions and powers which come to the secret places of the soul, and thou shalt be led into a strength and quietness of communion, which will be proof to thee of the breathings of the Master's peace.

Simon Peter's Reconciliation.

(3) “ So when they had dined Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon ! ” “ He calleth His sheep by name. ” I wonder what the risen Lord will say to him ? The denial was only a few steps back in the dark way. “ Art thou also one of His disciples ? ” “ I am not. ” That denial was never out of Peter's mind. He felt he could never make another vow. He was the first to spring out of the boat when the Lord called, but he knew not what to say. He longed that the dark yesterday might be all undone, blotted out, and that he might have another chance. What will the Lord say to him ? “ Simon, . . . lovest thou Me ? ” Was it half-critical, half-ironical, a little condemnatory ? Was it a sentence with an index pointing back to his denial ? It may have been. To Peter it was ; but whatever the Lord had said would have brought the dark hour back to

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Peter's mind and heart. But it was something deeper than all this. Christ wanted to comfort this poor, self-distrusting soul. "Lovest thou Me?" It is more than a question; it is an appeal, an expression of the Master's hunger. Only love hungers for love. Mere power hungers for obedience. When you do not love a person you care nothing for his love! But if you love, how you hunger for love! "Lovest thou Me?" The appeal for Peter's love expresses the Master's love. What the Saviour longed for He was giving. "Lovest thou Me?" implies "I love thee." The Lord saw the love that dare not confess itself. He beheld the springs of affection welling up in Peter's heart. But Peter was afraid to tell it! Yet the Lord wanted the confession. He knew that confession would break the alienation, and reconciliation would be complete. "Confess again, Simon!" The Lord saw in Peter a love that would be faithful unto death. In that self-distrustful soul before Him He beheld a martyred Peter wearing a martyr's crown. "Lovest thou Me?" "Thou knowest that I love Thee!" In that confession the alienation was ended, and the old confidence more than restored. "He knew what was in man." "He calleth His sheep by name."



