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HERALD · SERMONS ·

BY

GEORGE H. HEPWORTH





Parisienne. Mme. James's accent is the accent of Maine, and Mme. Melba's that of Stratford-atte-Bowe compared with that of this gallicized Californian. Her light music was cleverly sung and her *parlante*—for there is more of rhythmical speech than tune in the measures that Massenet has written in place of the spoken words originally allotted to *Manon* and *Des Grieux*—exquisite. She has art enough, too, to simulate what, I fear, she does not always feel, *etc.*, the emotion that pervades her love scenes with *Des Grieux*. As a genuine French opera comique artist, Miss Sanderson is all that a generous fancy can have painted her.

"Manon" being presented as a "grand opera" at the Metropolitan, the question arises, however, should Miss Sanderson be viewed as a grand opera prima donna? If I thought she would go no further than she has gone, I should defer answering the query, and rest my estimate of the songstress upon the pleasant memories of her performance in "Manon." Miss Sanderson, though, migrated recently from the Paris Opera Comique to the Grand Opera, and she is to come forth, I believe, in heavier works than "Manon" before the actual season terminates. So I fear that I must extend the field of vision and border upon prophecy. Miss Sanderson scarcely ranks with the vocalists associated with grand opera and its traditions. Her voice is relatively small; not very even and somewhat wiry; she uses it cleverly and effectively, but as to richness, variety of timbre, flexibility, brilliancy and power, it is but an inferior organ. In style, too, Miss Sanderson lacks the finish of the typical prima donna, the temperament of emotional depth. I should not

TOWN

people of the most acute hearing could distinguish the voice in flections. The Letty Lind mimicry was nothing more than dead silence. Miss Loftus then chose to represent for us a negro dell-neator named Eugene Stratton. Mr. Stratton must be an albino, On the evidence of Miss Loftus he talks less like a negro than any mere white man would be able to do. The imitation of Vette Guilbert was a more distinct and convincing piece of work, and I hope it was something like its model, whom I have not yet looked upon. The scene in which the characteristics of Mme. Sara Bernhardt were displayed was a tedious spell of senseless endeavor. I never had the least suspicion that Miss Loftus could be so inexpressibly colorless. It seemed to me that some indiscreet mother had chosen to show off her frightened child in the drawing-room, to the dismay of her astonished guests. It was almost pathetic.

THE new Minerva on the top of the *Herald* office is, I believe, still in a bag; but Mr. Bennett's newspaper needs no bush, and the "Personals" and the Hepworth sermons continue to run on together. The "Personals," so far as I know, have never been gathered in book form, "Herald Sermons," however, is now issued in a cheerful volume (E. P. Dutton & Co.), and Dr. Hepworth, in a heartiest introduction, tells us how it came about that he was permitted to send these jewels of Christian literature broadcast in a grateful world. Says the Doctor:

Just before his return to Europe on one of his visits, Mr. Bennett entered my room in the downtown office, and after a few casual remarks about the conduct of the paper asked this question:

"If the *Herald* is helpful on secular subjects during the week, why should it not be helpful on Sunday in matters pertaining to religion?" Not quite understanding the drift of his question, I asked him to state it once more. He answered:

"My idea of a great journal is that it should satisfy the spiritual as well as the intellectual needs of its readers. If we publish a paper on Sunday, why should we not have a leader in which some religious topic is discussed? Religion is worth as much as the tariff or any other political issue. Why, then, should it be ignored as it is by all the newspapers of the country?"

"It would be an invasion of the field occupied by papers specially devoted to that purpose," I replied, cautiously.

"But there are tens of thousands who never see a religious newspaper," he replied, "and tens of thousands more who never go to church. Why should not the *Herald* supply them with wholesome suggestions concerning the present and the future?"

"It would be a bold experiment," I said, with some hesitation.

For a moment he sat in silence, and then, as though he had suddenly reached a conclusion, he said:

"It is an experiment worth trying."

And so the matter was decided.

"I wish you," he added, with an unusual impressiveness of manner, "to avoid everything in the shape of controversy. Take a broad and liberal view of all denominations. You must not be sectarian. Treat the unbeliever as generously as you do the believer. Dig down below the foundations of mere dogma, and simply tell the people what is necessary to an honest life. There must be a good many things which everybody either accepts or would like to accept as true, and they will furnish you with topics enough."

So the *Herald* religious editorials were started, with the object to satisfy the spiritual as well as the intellectual needs of the people. That was the beginning of the *Herald*'s noble endeavor to turn a weak humanity from those ways of crookedness of which the Doctor's own legs may well stand as the physical symbol. Every Sunday, broadly speaking, the leading editorial column opened upon the "Personals." In a sense it was the *Herald* angel belaboring the *Herald* devil. It is impossible to say just how hard Mr. Bennett desired to have his devil beaten. As a matter of fact the evil creature has thriven. The Doctor wrote "About Heaven" and "More About Heaven," and followed up the assault with articles on home, and resignation, and Christmas, and Easter; but the devil remained popular in the counting room, and every Sunday he showed up about as long as the Doctor's sermon, and evinced no signs of weakening. The Doctor went at him anew. He hurled in rapid succession leaders entitled "A Happy New Year," "Shall We Know Each Other There?" and "The Immortal Soul," but the devil remained strong in the publication office, and he came up smiling on the first page of the *Herald* not only every Sunday morning, but every morning in the week. The Doctor tried him with "A Wasted Life," "The Ministry of Angels," "Views of Death," and "The Bible," and the result was not appreciable. Nor was any better effect obtained with "Man's Littleness and Greatness," "God's Love and Man's," "Prayer," "Judging Kindly," and "The Problem of Poverty." There never was such a devil for capacity of resistance. "Only a Step to Heaven" failed to dislodge him, and he gave no signs of weakening under "Feed My Lambs," "The Best Kind of Religion," "Why Do We Suffer?" and "All Men are Self-Made." It might well be supposed that the Doctor himself would be beset by some pronouncements of a hopeless feeling, but if his heart faltered there are no indications of it. He tried "Heroes and Heroines," "Bearing Good Fruit," "The Discipline of Life," and "Little People Who Live Little Lives." He must have felt the joy of a warrior who has delivered stout blows, but the devil continued to appear on the first page. "Vital Religion: What Is It?" did not oust him, neither did "Do What You Think Is Right," "You Shall Have Strength," "The Best Thing to Do," and "Searching After God." It is a curious reflection that during all this warfare the Doctor's salary as a leader writer was very likely paid out of the devil's contributions. There rises here a rather curious question in morals. It seems odd enough for a Doctor of Divinity to be taking the devil's money, still, if the money in question is to be used at all, it may well be asked how it could be better applied than in hiring somebody to make the devil thoroughly uncomfortable. The particular disappointment in the case in hand seems to arise from the circumstance that the devil does not appear to have been made in the least uncomfortable by the terrible leaders printed in the same paper with him. The Doctor smote him with "When We Come and When We Go," and again with "How to Bear Burdens," "One Fold and One Shepherd," "False Ideas of Salvation," and "An Age of Religious Inquiry," but apparently he never minded it at all. "Science and the Soul" had no perceptible effect upon him, and he was not even stirred by "A Man and a Woman," "The Value of Money," "Theatres and their Influence," "A Providential Man," and "The Duty of the Church." There is no telling, of course, what another volume of the leaders may accomplish. We must be permitted to cheer ourselves with the hope that the *Herald* devil is not absolutely invulnerable. It is a painful circumstance that certain mutterings, directed against the Doctor's leaders, have lately made themselves heard among the *Herald* subscribers. One might well believe that the *Herald* devil had instigated this curious demonstration, but the subscribers themselves say that they object to the Sunday leaders solely on account of their extreme foolishness. A number of the protesting subscribers have characterized them as "rot," an objectionable word in regard to which it is to be said that it is hard to see why anybody should be moved to apply it to any particular feature of the *Herald*. Perhaps the protestations do not come from subscribers at all, but are the utterances of the Doctor's fellow editorial writers, who have given way to the promptings of a natural jealousy. I can tell them, if they think they can write better than the Doctor, that they are mistaken. The Sunday leaders are entirely becoming to the *Herald* editorial page, which is not to be dominated, on one day of the week at least, either by the Personal Intelligence man or by the girl who tries to indicate the state of the weather. I hope the Doctor will break up the devil eventually.

Mrs. H. M. Olcott

6 Nov 1911

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HERALD SERMONS

BY

GEORGE H. HEPWORTH

AUTHOR OF "HIRAM GOLF'S RELIGION," "THEY MET IN HEAVEN,"
"THE LIFE BEYOND," ETC.

NEW YORK



E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY
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INTRODUCTION.

IT will naturally be supposed, since I am a clergyman, that the idea of printing sermons in the Sunday edition of the *Herald*, instead of a leading editorial on some news topic, originated with myself. That, however, is not the case, and I hasten to place the credit for this journalistic innovation where it belongs.

Just before his return to Europe, on one occasion, Mr. Bennett entered my room in the downtown office, and after a few casual remarks about the conduct of the paper asked this question:

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the shape of controversy. Take a broad and liberal view of all denominations. You must not be sectarian. Treat the unbeliever as generously as you do the believer. Dig down below the foundations of mere dogma, and simply tell the people what is necessary to an honest life. There must be a good many things which everybody either accepts or would like to accept as true, and they will furnish you with topics enough."

These large instructions I have tried to obey. They are quite within the line of my work while in the ministry. I know very little about theology and care less for it. The Sermon on the Mount is about all I need, and I have found during a prolonged career that to heed its admonitions keeps me very busy and leaves slender leisure for theological speculation.

There are men and women in the world who are entangled by strange perplexities and overburdened by struggles and sorrows. They are tempted and tried in many ways. If they had a larger faith they would be happier. If they could be assured that the pains of the present are not without a providential significance; that a future awaits them in which they will have a larger op-

portunity; that God is not neglectful of their interests; that Christ is ready to extend a helping hand; that the angels of heaven are within call, and will render whatever assistance they may—if they can be persuaded of these truths, they will have all they want, and theological dogmas would only be useless lumber.

These sermons have been written with the hope of smoothing the pathway of the troubled and furnishing them with stepping-stones to higher things. If in any degree they achieve that end, I shall be more than satisfied with the task I have undertaken.

Mr. Bennett, I am sure, will permit me to dedicate this little volume to him in token of a friendship which has lasted many years.

GEORGE H. HEPWORTH.

HERALD SERMONS.

WHERE IS HEAVEN ?

“ And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.”—2 Kings vi. 17.

NOBODY knows where heaven is, but everybody hopes there is a heaven somewhere. To say that it is a condition of mind is a misleading use of language, an intangible abstraction of no practical use. It is either a place or it is an hallucination.

If a heavenly frame of mind is all there is of heaven, then the possession is nothing to boast of and may end with the last gasp of life; but if it is a place whose boundary-line we cross at the moment of death, in which our intellectual and spiritual activity will have unbounded scope, where souls can grow unhampered by the cruel

and repressing limitations of the body, then we have a series of motives which irradiate the present and fill the future with the glow and promise of a sunrise after the sunset.

We cannot see heaven, and for that reason a doubt hangs in the sky. But there are so many things which we cannot see that such an argument becomes enfeebled. On an ordinary night we can see perhaps two or three thousand separate stars; with a good field-glass the number may easily be increased tenfold; with the Lick telescope on Mount Hamilton at least a million are visible. Our imperfect vision can discover but a small part of the wonders of creation. There are invisible worlds all round us, revealed by optical instruments; and still other worlds which no instruments yet invented can discover. What we can see, therefore, is by no means the limit of what is.

It is interesting to ask whether any one, under any circumstances, has seen what is to most of us invisible. The text we have chosen contains a marvelous statement. The prophet and the youth were side by side. There was no defect in the vision of the latter, for he could see the hills and the clouds as clearly as the former. But the

prophet's eyes were gifted with a faculty unknown to the stripling who attended him. He saw what was in the air as well as what was on the ground, and the sight gave him courage. The young man was dismayed, for a host of Syrians with spears had come to make them prisoners; but the prophet was calm and serene and sure of the victory.

Then something happened to the young man's eyes, and for a brief moment he saw what he had never before looked upon, and what he probably never looked upon thereafter. They were the same eyes that he had always used, but an additional faculty had been given them, and they caught a glimpse of the horses and chariots, the army of spiritual creatures who, as Milton asserts, walk the earth unseen both when we wake and when we sleep.

If it is possible to believe, first, that heaven is just as truly a locality as any one of the United States, and, second, that though we may not be able to see the citizens of this celestial commonwealth they can see us, we are traveling along the highway to some very important truths. If heaven is correctly described in these statements,

it becomes vivid and thrilling. We have "a heart for any fate"; can pass through any experience unscathed; can even open the door of the tomb and lay the tired sleeper on one of the shelves of its recesses; can go back to our duties and struggles with an aching but a hopeful heart; can banish the word "farewell" from our vocabulary, with the conviction that the departing member of the family has simply gone on a journey, at the end of which he will await our coming. The sun has risen for us, and its fructifying light penetrates every nook and corner of our sorrows.

Whether we are privileged to see what Elisha's attendant saw or not, if we feel sure that he really saw what is recorded we may be content to remain blind. We do not care so much to see heaven for ourselves as to be certain that somebody has seen it, either prophet or servant. If heaven is there, we ask no more.

There is a wild and almost reckless interest in this topic nowadays. Above the din and confusion of our material life we hear voices which tell us that heaven is not far off and that the two worlds can talk to each other. Bands of earnest men and women gather when the day's work is

over in the belief that these voices come across the wild waste and bear messages of affection and advice.

Human nature has an intense longing, a burning thirst, an unappeased hunger for facts of this kind. Even reason is sometimes held in abeyance, or chained up for the time being, that the emotions may have full and free play. Discrimination is paralyzed, and the doors of the heart are thrown wide open for folly as well as wisdom to enter.

There are men and women who tell us of incredible experiences; but these experiences are not to be judged as false merely because they are incredible. On the contrary, we are inclined to ask if anything is incredible, and, if so, who shall fix the limit of belief. There are men of science of large reputations, whose word has weight the globe over, who look us straight in the face and tell us wonderful stories. There are psychical societies whose members are cold investigators, and, while they throw aside much that is floating about, call our attention to a residue that needs explanation. Society is ablaze with this sort of thing, and assuredly there are a thousand extravagances in the air.

But the real question is behind all this. Is it true that in this latter quarter of the nineteenth century there is a spiritual as well as a material revelation? While some have stumbled on inventions which have altered the whole complexion of our social life, have others discovered truths which render the spiritual life more brilliant and hopeful?

Here, then, we find ourselves groping through the darkness. Heaven is a place or it is nothing. Heaven is peopled with beings who may not be seen because our eyes are not fitted for that kind of vision. But some have seen them in the past, and others, in the present, declare that they have been equally privileged. If we take the first step we must finish the journey. There is no halting spot where we can say, Thus far and no farther. Either heaven is round about us, and the possibility of communication is a fact, or we have been led strangely astray.

The affirmation ennobles all things; the denial leaves us wringing our hands in mute despair.

MORE ABOUT HEAVEN.

“ But is passed from death unto life.”—John v. 24.

THE editorial of last Sunday on heaven has caused so much suggestive comment on the part of our readers that we are inclined to look at another phase of the subject.

The careful student discovers that a belief in immortality is inherent in the human race; that it is equally the peculiarity of the most cultured nations, as the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Romans, and the most barbarous tribes, as the American Indians, the Zulus, and the New Zealanders.

This belief takes fantastic shapes at times, but that is matter of little consequence. We may even smile at the childlike credulity with which the savage places on the grave of his chief the food to which he has been accustomed, and murders a stalwart comrade that he may carry the news of a recently fought battle to the dead warrior, who is

still interested in earthly affairs; but the important fact is that he believes in the future quite as firmly as he believes in the present, and has no doubt whatever that the departed have a local habitation, between which and their old homes there is possibility of communication.

If we may not say positively that there is neither a race nor a tribe which is an exception to this rule, we may safely assert that no race and no tribe has yet been found, even in the profoundest depths of barbarism, where some crude notions of a future life do not prevail.

The general conception may be illustrated by a legend from the Tonga Islands. It runs that long ago a canoe on its way home from Fiji was caught in a gale and driven to Bolotu, where it was supposed the gods dwelt. The explorers found the island covered with beautiful flowers and the juiciest fruits, the air filled with indescribable fragrance, birds of exquisite plumage, wild animals which were immortal except when killed for the gods to eat. When they landed, they found it impossible to pluck the fruit because it was only shadowy fruit; they walked through shadowy houses and trees as through the air, but were so

affected by what they had seen that soon after they reached home they died.

This is all fabulous and all whimsical, but some such realistic story, with a thousand modifications, according to climate and tribal peculiarities, is to be found in all quarters of the globe.

In Madagascar a table covered with delicacies was regularly set in the dead king's mausoleum, under the notion that the spirit of the monarch would occasionally return and partake of the food he was fond of during his lifetime.

If these odd customs were found only in certain localities we might brush them aside as of little importance. But when you learn that crude conceptions of heaven are coeval with the exercise of human intelligence—that man no sooner thought of this life than he began to think of another life, as though it was impossible to believe in the one without believing in the other—you cannot resist the feeling that immortality is something more than a mere longing in dogmatic shape, and that it is just as natural to look forward as to look backward.

We may have little interest in the Persian idea of heaven, or in the conception of the peasant of

Babylon or Nineveh, or in that of the scholar of Egypt or the warrior crowd that filled the streets of Athens or Rome, but the fact that every one of these people had some idea, and that civilization, so far from crushing it out, simply gave it a nobler form, is a matter of very great consequence.

The Norwegian's Valhalla is nothing to us. The doings of the gods on Olympus may not meet our approval. The custom of the Chinese to light a lantern when they make a feast in honor of the dead, that the beggars and lepers of the other world may find their way to the banquet; the habit of the Hottentot, who shuts the door when his parent dies, makes a hole through the side of the house, and removes the body in that way because he is afraid of ghosts and does not want the dead to come back—these peculiarities have no weight with us, except as they show the universality of belief in another life and the irresistible conviction that death does not destroy and can only remove.

The Christian religion is lacking in a detailed description of heaven. The rough realism of other systems is not found there. This is one of its pe-

cularities. Christ was reticent on the subject. He simply said he came from Heaven, and then added that after the crucifixion He should return. He told His friends on one occasion that He should prepare a place for them, that they and He might dwell together; and on another occasion He promised the thief who was suffering death at His side that that very day he should be with Him in Paradise. He also rebuked Peter by reminding him that if He needed help after the shadows of Gethsemane He had the power to call upon legions of angels who would come to His assistance. Beyond these hints we have almost nothing. We are not satisfied, indeed, for we should be glad to know more; but if we are sure of the fact that there is a heaven, why need we trouble ourselves as to where it is situated—whether close to the earth, or in the interstellar spaces, or in some region unknown to astronomy?

The world has always believed that we shall not die, but simply lift the veil and enter a new territory. That belief has been a potent factor in the conduct of all races; has made men resigned under burdens, courageous on the battle-field, equal to any sacrifice. It has created and encouraged

the heroic element of human nature, and made the last day of earth the best day of life, because the soul opens a door on the other side of the tomb and enters a world where there are no more tears. Is not that enough?

OUR HOMES.

“ And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there.”—Matt. xxi. 17.

AFTER a day of continuous harassment in Jerusalem Jesus needed the repose which only confident friendship could furnish. By the light of the stars he found his way to the little village of Bethany, two miles distant, and enjoyed the hospitality of a household consisting of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus.

It is left to the imagination to picture that group of four, for history has given us only broad outlines and is neglectful of details. What comfort came to that tired heart, what subjects were discussed, what hopes or fears were indulged in during the evening's conversation, we shall never know. But we may venture to say that this Son of God found rest and strength within the walls of that happy Hebrew home. It was like a strain of

soft music to the traveler who has sought his couch, and he sank into dreamless sleep under its soothing influence.

The home is our asylum, and the love of dear ones is our defense. In the plan of Divine Providence the home occupies a position of conspicuous importance. A happy home is the prophecy of a useful life for every child reared under its benignant watchfulness; a home in which discord prevails sends its boys and girls into the world with handicapped aspirations.

The child who carries sweet memories with him carries also a shield for protection; but he who bears embittered memories falls easier prey to the evils which will attack. A happy home in the background throws a radiance on each succeeding day, even though the day be stormy and tempestuous.

The good father lives in the life of the boy long after that father has crossed the threshold of a cemetery, and the good mother still speaks to the daughter when that daughter has children of her own.

No mortal can have a better starting-point than a pious and soul-satisfying home. It is a thou-

sand times better to have an honest father and a true-hearted mother than to inherit riches or social position. An empty wallet and a father's blessing, a gingham gown and a mother's love, are a safer equipment for the attainment of happiness than millions of money without the blessing and the love.

We are making some serious mistakes on this subject, and they will cost us many a heartache by and by. We are too ambitious for our children in the direction of social prominence and too neglectful of them in the direction of character.

Daughters are brought up to believe that the chief end of life is to marry a bank-account and an equipage rather than a man. When the surplus becomes a deficit, however, as it sometimes does, and the equipage is sold under the hammer, the poor girl wakes up to the discovery that she has had an establishment for a few years, but not a home. The logic of events is relentless, and mutual affection, which is the only thing worth living for, since it sweetens and deepens with adversity, is found to be wanting. A love that depends for its continuance on good fortune has very small value, and yet marriage vows are taken every day

which have their origin in avarice, and will certainly be broken unless the avarice continues to be satisfied.

There is no other foundation for a true home than the union of two souls by the bonds of holy affection. Other experiments have been tried, but no substitute for that affection has yet been found, nor is it likely that it will be.

The end to be sought is happiness, and if you fail in that you fail in everything. A wounded heart is not healed by costly medicament, and riches never yet suppressed a sigh. Grief over withered hopes cannot be assuaged by diamonds and splendor, and many a woman has been driven to desperation and wrong-doing because, in spite of her credit at the bankers', she found it impossible to live on indifference and neglect.

We must throw our financial theories to the winds and be brave enough to obey natural law. A man is a man, and a woman is a woman. Whatever else he needs, the man needs love most of all, for this is a hard life and love alone keeps him in trim for the contest. If he cannot have it he takes excitement instead, and then the end is not far off. Whatever else the woman craves, it is all subor-

dinate, whether she knows it or not, to the confiding affection of a manly man; and if that is denied her her nature becomes volcanic and irrepressible.

Without the restraining influence of love we all become more or less demoniac. But if we have it we can part with everything besides and still be content. That is the verdict of the generations, and it cannot be reversed.

In your home, therefore, and regarding your children, you should so teach the boys and girls that they will develop independence of character and moral principle. What the world may say should influence them very little, but what they themselves think is right should influence them a great deal. Plain and solid common sense is worth more than anything else. Of two lovers a good poor man is better than a bad rich man. Pictures and furniture and rugs and footmen are desirable in their way, but you cannot afford to give a human heart for them. It may be unpleasant to live in a side-street, but a side-street with peace is better than the avenue with misery. Your acquaintances may shrug their shoulders—it is their privilege to do so if they choose—but if the home is bright and cheerful what care you?

If fathers and mothers would see to it that their homes are made happy, and have no other desire than that their children should make happy homes for themselves, this barter and sale which enters so largely into our views of marriage would cease, and the millennium would come this way.

What this old world needs is sterling and unwavering moral principle, and the independence to stand by it. These grand qualities of character must be taught in the home by parents who believe in them and exemplify them in their own lives, or they will never be acquired at all.

After that you can trust both sons and daughters to reach a safe conclusion when they are called upon to leave the hearthstone of their childhood and make a new home for themselves.

They will have already learned that though riches and happiness sometimes go together, it is better to depend on happiness rather than riches for a safe journey through life.

RESIGNATION.

“ O my Father, thy will be done.”—Matt. xxvi. 42.

THE man of faith lives with more satisfaction to himself and with greater benefit to his kind than the man of doubt.

We do not refer to the man whose brain contains a mere muddle of beliefs, who has prejudices and superstitions instead of convictions, but to him who feels sure that there is an eternal right and an eternal wrong, that the right is worthy of his support at all hazards, and the wrong will bring him to physical and spiritual bankruptcy in the long run.

We do not need a long creed, but we do need a few verities as a basis for action. The Thirty-nine Articles may seem very prolix, and the Institutes of Calvin may not commend themselves to our best judgment, but our rejection of them does not constitute us heretics in the sight of God, although men may excommunicate us.

If we believe that the universe is ruled by love as well as power; that the outcome of virtue is happiness and the result of evil is misery; if we see a Providence in the events of life and feel that we can communicate with that Providence by means of what is called prayer; if we have faith in another life where the freed soul will have larger opportunities than its environment has permitted here; if we absorb the spirit of brotherly love and helpfulness which was incarnated in the Christ—we need have no fears as to our fate in the future.

Man's creed is apt to be a long one; God's creed is very short. Short as it is, however, you will have no time to spare if you shape your years according to its requirements.

Your life, everybody's life, has its pathetic side, and you will need the sympathy of God if you are to do good work.

There are times when you are appalled by the situation in which you find yourself. There is no light anywhere, but darkness everywhere. A score of friends stand by you and give you what comfort can be contained in words, but they have lives of their own to live, and they cannot help you as you

must be helped if you are to recover from the disaster.

Human friendship is precious, but much more is wanted. Human love mingles its sighs and tears with yours, but still there is an empty place in your heart which neither friendship nor love can fill.

We have all had that experience—a heaviness which no arm can lighten, a dread which no words can dissipate, a weariness which no one within reach can brighten with hope.

Is there no comfort anywhere, no consolation, no unseen influence that will steal into the soul with transfiguring power?

The agnostic shakes his head in an emergency like that, and does not speak, because he has nothing to say. He can furnish you with additional despair, but with no thought which will afford you resignation.

“What kind of a world is this,” you ask yourself, “in which what one craves most is beyond one’s reach?” Is there no remedy anywhere for your disease of mind? Are you left alone to struggle as you can, to find your way out of the grief by the slow process of forgetfulness?

We think not. Else it were a misfortune to be

born, and the chief blessing is to get rid of it all in childhood, before you learn that life is nothing better than a tragedy.

Your father has fallen asleep, perchance, and when you call him he will not answer. The eyes will never open again, the lips are like lips of marble. There is a frightful stillness in the house, broken only by the muffled beating of your own heart and your unrepressed moans. Is that the end? Has the story been all told? Is the volume of filial affection closed, and clasped with an iron clasp? Have you said farewell forever, and has the dear one taken a sudden departure into the region of black nothingness?

Then what is life worth? What is the use of loving if the most sacred ties are snapped when Death taps at the door? He is better off than you who never loved at all, for he will suffer less, and the less love we bestow on any one the larger are our chances of happiness. Let us henceforth care for self alone and pay no heed to others.

Or it may be that a child, the light of your home, your joy and pride, lies in your arms with raging, consuming, relentless fever. Its little eyes look into yours imploringly; its little arms are

tightly clasped about your neck. Hope dies out of your heart, and the inevitable, like the shadow of a setting sun, throws its gloom over the scene. The babe is slipping away from you, and carrying with it the best part of your own life; for in all the earth there is nothing so beautiful, so sublime, or so impressive as a mother's love.

What say you? What has any one to say? The man of doubt is at your side, a tender-hearted man, full of human sympathy, and willing to do what he can to assuage your grief; but what can he honestly say to give you comfort? Has he any balm for your wounds, any solace for your distress? Then he were better absent than present.

But Christ comes, or some kind friend who bears His message, and tells you of the house not built with hands, of the grave as the bronze gate through which we enter heaven, of a time of meeting beyond this time of parting, of that Being who does what is best even when He causes the tears to flow, only asking you to wait patiently in faith that some day you will see that He was right.

What a change comes over your soul! God's magic has hidden a smile under your tears, a hope under your despair. In reposeful faith you say,

“Thy will be done,” and, standing at the grave of father or of child, you lift your eyes to the blue sky and cry, “For a time, good-by; we shall meet again yonder.”

The sad side of life has a rainbow, and hope makes sorrow easier to bear.

THE IMMORTAL SOUL.

“ If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.”—1 Cor. xv. 19.

IF a man lives in the conviction that there is nothing for him in the future he has very little to complain of when the time comes to be annihilated, because he has had all he expected to get. If, however, a man is promised another life on what he deems good authority, and makes great sacrifices in order to fit himself for it, but is told when nearing the end that the promise cannot be kept, he is “ of all men most miserable.” St. Paul was quite right in declaring that such a disappointment overtops all other kinds.

How brief is the span of human life! It is at best only an isthmus 'twixt two boundless seas, the past, the future—two eternities. Our days and months and years go by so noiselessly that we scarcely note the footfalls of their coming or their going. Childhood passes into youth in the

twinkling of an eye. A little laughter, an hour's play with a few toys, and the time arrives when childish things must be put away. Youth, exuberant youth, shortly sobers into manhood. A dream or two, a few castles in the air, a fleeting vision of divine possibilities, then the shoulders broaden to bear heavier burdens, and the heart recognizes the graver responsibilities of life. Manhood changes to old age like a flash of lightning in a summer cloud. Some hard work, some short years of earnest toil, some days of bitter disappointment, some nights of weary weeping, and then the nerves grow dull, the sight becomes dim, the snows of winter are scattered over the head, the hopes of earlier days have either ripened or withered. The sun sets, we linger in the twilight for a few moments, and then the night comes down, in which we can neither walk nor work.

You cannot hold on to your years, however strong your grasp may be. They will slip away from you in spite of entreaty or menace. When you have stood on the sea-shore you have perhaps tried to hold a handful of sand. What a useless task it is! It falls between your fingers in spite of your utmost endeavor, and after a while, when

you open your hand, only a few silvery or golden grains are left. So life escapes, and every present day becomes a yesterday. The clock ticks the time away whether you are hungry or well fed, and the pendulum swings relentlessly whether you are rich or poor. "And the same thing," says Solomon, "happeneth to us all."

Now here is a curious fact. The elm by the roadside outlives us. The rusty sword that hangs on your library wall, telling you of the heroic deeds of a former generation, will be received by your children's children after you have been laid in your resting-place. The pebble which you kick off the sidewalk, if it had a tongue, would tell you the story of this earth when it was in its very infancy, more years ago than your imagination can conceive.

The elm, the rusty sword, the worthless pebble have a kind of eternal life, but you must die. What a marvelous statement! How incredible it seems!

Is it not stranger than words can express that any thoughtful man should assert that the soul is fenced in by death, and that the road it has traveled ends at the grave? The body may be satis-

fied with seventy years, but not the mind. The soul's keen appetite is just whetted when it is told that there is nothing more to eat. Bodies are easily sated, but by the time they are ready to drop the soul within them has just begun to learn how to live. Why, then, should both die at the same moment?

Why was the soul made so large, if this life is all? If you were told that Niagara was made to drive the farmer's grist-mill for a single day and nothing more, you could not believe it. If you were told that a Corliss engine was invented to move the machinery which makes a single pin, and after that is of no further use, what would you say? Can it, then, be true that the soul of man will live just long enough to find out that it can do something, and then be told that it shall never have an opportunity to do this something?

So odd an anomaly is beyond our credence. There is a pitiless irony in the statement that we no sooner gather our aspirations together and set ourselves sternly to some noble task than our day's work is over, and we must lay aside the tools and the materials with which we know we can build.

Let us give an illustration. Yonder is a vessel

about to be launched. The plan has been carefully drawn by the architect, and the contractor has chosen his timber from a dozen forests. Now she stands complete, and the workmen with their sledges loosen the wedges, and she slips down the ways and for the first time embraces the mighty deep which is to be her home. How gracefully she floats—a thing of life and beauty! How promising is her future! She is able to bear a thousand tons' burden across a wintry ocean, in spite of mountainous waves and northern gale. She will laugh at the tempest, for she is brave and strong.

We board her for a trial-trip. Her white sails waft us by the forts and through the Narrows and around the light-ship. Then she comes back and is anchored in some convenient place. Suppose we tell you that her whole mission is accomplished and there is nothing more for her to do. You ask in wonder, "Why build her, then? Is it not folly to take so much pains for a trial-trip, and then leave her at her anchorage to rot and sink?"

The same may be said of the soul. This brief life is only the trial-trip. We pass by a few buoys in the harbor of eternal life, we stem the ebb or

flood tide for a few hours, we just get a glimpse of the ocean that spreads beyond our vision, and then what we call death intervenes. With the great Atlantic of immortality ahead of us shall we come to anchor in the grave?

It cannot be true. We were made for eternity, and the great ambitions which throb in our souls cannot be stilled by death. The funeral procession leaves us at the mouth of the harbor, and when our friends return to their homes we spread invisible canvas and sail on and on toward the throne of God.

THE MYSTERY OF CHRISTMAS.

“ We have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him.”—Matt. ii. 2.

A SCIENTIFIC man will listen respectfully to a new theory, because there are many unsolved problems in the universe. But he holds the theory in abeyance until he sees how it works. If it settles a few vexed questions he will say it is likely to be a true theory ; if it settles a large proportion of these questions he will be inclined to adopt it ; if it satisfactorily disposes of all the perplexities which he has heretofore encountered he will whistle his old theory down the wind and accept the new one without hesitation.

His rule is that what produces the best results must needs be true, and when a new theory has been successfully put to that practical test he has no prejudice against an acknowledgment of its claims.

Let us give an illustration which is furnished

by astronomy. Up to the beginning of the seventeenth century the planetary orbits were supposed to be circles—that is to say, the path around the sun in which all the members of our solar system moved, from Mercury to Neptune, was thought to be circular. There were some difficulties, however, which the circle failed to solve, and these increased until astronomers were in despair.

When Kepler came he declared that the orbits were not circles but ellipses. Perhaps no proposition ever created more astonishment. It was daring to the edge of rashness, and for some time was held at arm's-length. Later on, though, it was discovered that Kepler's theory disposed of all the difficulties which had attended the notion of circular orbits. Experiments were made with it by the score, but it never failed to vindicate itself. It worked, it produced results, and from that hour to this it has never been blurred by a doubt.

The rule is a good one to apply to society, to civilization, and to religion, as well as to astronomy. When we hear of Christianity as a new moral and spiritual theory its beauty and comeliness attract the intellect and move the heart.

But we cannot fairly judge either of its worth or its truth until we find out what kind of a community, what kind of men and women, it can make.

Mere arguments are seldom conclusive, for in a debate the brighter or more strategic mind takes the lead ; but when instead of arguments you have facts, and can say to the world, " Christianity has done this or that ; it has caused the people to create these or those institutions, political or charitable," then you demonstrate its worth or its worthlessness. If it can do the best work then it proves itself true ; but if it fails to do this we are like the astronomers in the time of Copernicus, who were not satisfied with the planetary circle and waited patiently for some new teacher, Kepler and his ellipse.

If we contrast Christianity with Mohammedanism or Brahmanism, regarding them all as theories of life, the weight of argument would be in favor of Christianity, for taken as a whole Christ's teachings are peculiarly unworldly and uplifting. But when we place modern Europe by the side of Arabia or India, regarding them as elements of human progress, as exponents of the best that can be done by three conspicuous forms of religion,

argument becomes dumb and the matter is decided by results.

In such a competition Christianity has nothing to fear. Whether it be considered as human or divine is just now a matter of secondary importance. We look simply at the prerogatives which men enjoy under it; at the kind of ambition which spurs men to action; at the moral tone of society at large; at the institutions which are the logical consequence of belief in Christ; at the literature in which the people delight; and at the sympathy for those who are unfortunate which prevails.

Brush your theological creeds aside and look at Christianity as a dynamic force; measure its influence in the career of any one who has been consecrated by its spirit; note its encouragement of public and private virtue, its insistence on a high standard of honor, its injunction to provide for the helpless and care for the needy, its promise or pledge that when we leave the body we shall take up our residence in "a house not made with hands." Then compare these peculiarities with the general teaching of any other religious system on the planet, and you will be compelled to admit

that in the production of a noble life Christianity leads all the rest.

It is not strange, therefore, that this higher thought was ushered in by an overture in which angels predicted peace on earth and good-will to men. Nor need we wonder if He who bore the sacred message from heaven healed the sick or raised the dead by a word of command. The Person who could project Himself into the life of eighteen centuries and give shape to more than fifty generations would find it an easy task to master the mysteries of disease and death.

We do well, therefore, to set apart one day in the year, that we may celebrate with songs of praise and family reunions the advent of One who brought such glad tidings of great joy.

EASTER MORNING.

“ And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day.”
—1 Cor. xv. 4.

THERE is no single incident in the history of the human race which sends the blood in such rushing torrents through our veins as this one does. If it had not occurred Christianity would long ago have been numbered among the many reforms which have lived their little day and then died. The Master would have taken His place in the group of great souls who, like flashes of lightning, have illuminated our human life for an instant and then left us to grope in the old uncertain way.

That incident has changed our entire outlook; taught us that the horizon line is not the limit of our journey, and that there are other horizons when this one has been reached. It has given such buoyancy to our thoughts that they are no

longer satisfied with earth, but take an eagle's flight toward heaven. It has furnished us with a series of impelling motives which make it almost easy to bear the ills which lie in ambush, since we are making ready, not to say "Good-night," and then fall into sleep, but to say "Good-morning," when another dawn shall gild the hilltops beyond the cemetery.

If the Roman soldiers had leaned against the door of that tomb so heavily that the angels could not have opened it the words of Christ might have been gathered by admiring scholarship and published as a new philosophy, but they would never have taken the shape of a new religion. The Preacher in homespun who was followed by multitudes about the shores of Galilee and hated by the self-seekers of Jerusalem might have left the impress of His personality on His generation, but He would not have become the founder of a kingdom which has outlived the embattled turmoil of twenty centuries.

Others have been bravely defiant of circumstance and wrung a hard-earned victory from fate, but to "the last enemy" they have surrendered without conditions, deeming death too strong a

foe for successful attack. But Christ disdained the lesser conflict, and assured His disciples that he who conquers death will by that act conquer life also. While these words were still ringing in the ears of the haughty officials of the temple and of the wondering and astounded peasantry, He disappeared in the darkness, and on the third day came forth, bringing both life and immortality into the light.

This is why we gather flowers to-day and decorate our homes and our churches. This is why the organ sends forth its peals upon the vibrating air, and why the people in countless throngs crowd their several places of worship. The cry heard everywhere is, "The Lord is risen!" and the response comes back from all quarters of the globe, "He is risen indeed!"

Have you watched by the bedside of a father whose increasing feebleness gave you a sharper pang day by day? With slippered feet have you ministered to his comfort, dreading the hour when "the silver cord shall be loosed" and "the golden bowl be broken"? Have you felt that when this flickering flame shall be extinguished a part of

your own life will go out with it and that your lips will sing no more songs? Would you make any sacrifice if you could bring back the old light into those eyes, roll the years away, and fill the cheeks with ruddy health once more? And do you tremble when you think of the parting which is so near at hand?

Listen, then, for through the ages comes a voice saying, "I am the resurrection." It does not falter or waver, but is clear and strong. If that voice is true you may even rejoice at separation, for the doors of another home are swinging wide, and dear ones, long since departed, stand at the threshold to welcome the new-comer. He who goes on this journey will add one more to the number who in good time will await your coming with the same warm welcome.

Or perhaps a child has left your fireside—a youth with bright hopes and fair prospects, upon whose strong arm you hoped to lean when the twilight of your day shall predict approaching night. No affliction is harder to bear than that, for the young seem to have a right to many years. When they are suddenly summoned we are half

convinced that a kind of wrong has been committed. The heart rebels, and it is next to impossible to submit with resignation.

But if truth be told no one has any claim. God's providence takes no note of years. The rose may demand to live as long as the oak; but it is neither for oak nor rose to protest, for what is best is best, and if we differ in judgment from the Almighty and plead to have our way the answered prayer might work us greater harm than the affliction we deplore. God's will is the only will, and behind that will is a beneficent purpose. We may not understand the purpose, but faith commands us to accept the will in place of our own. We are not God, and do not know as He knows, but we are His children and can accept the decrees of His wisdom.

So stands the case. Troubles are many and sorrows are burdensome. Life is a prolonged struggle, and he who would find content must seek for it in a firm faith that God makes no mistakes.

Above these troubles, sorrows, bereavements which fill the world with murmurings and regrets is the still small voice of Him who said, "I go to prepare a place for you."

To-day may be tempestuous, but to-morrow will be calm and bright. To-day we visit our graves, but to-morrow we shall go to heaven and there discover our dear ones. We can be quiet, for though life is hard the reunion will give us back all whom we have lost.

A HAPPY NEW-YEAR.

“ But this I say, brethren, the time is short.”—1 Cor. vii. 29.

ALL years are not alike in value to the race or the individual; neither are all days. There are black days and white days; weeks that are burdensome and weeks that are like a merry chime of bells; months that rumble with the thunder of defeat and months that resound with the shouts of victory.

There is no monotony in time. It varies as does the landscape. In one period it is as level as a Western prairie, with no special experiences to mark its passage; in another changes come and events occur which make the weeks resemble the Alleghanies—mountain-heights gathered together like a great company of giants whose shining helmets are visible though you have traveled far away and stand on your horizon line; in still another some day or week with its wondrous happenings rises from the plain of memory like a veritable

Mont Blanc, and though seventy years be counted in your calendar you still see its summit and say, "That was the hour when my new life began." It may mark a great catastrophe or an unspeakable happiness, but there it stands, in gloom or grandeur, and when you are about to close your eyes in the last sleep they will rest on that event which made you other than you were.

In our boyhood time walks, in middle life it ambles, and in old age it pants in breathless haste to reach the goal and have done with us. A day is a week to the child, and a week is but a day to the aged. In our halcyon youth, when we live on dreams, we wish the time away, and, like an impetuous rider, spur the days to greater speed. We have such treasure of them that we are spendthrift and long to reach the future, which beckons us to high achievement. But at the other end of life, when the number of weeks in our coffers runs low, and to replenish is impossible, we use them with increasing economy, if not with parsimony. We begrudge the expenditure of time, for there is much to be done and only a few enfeebled years left in which to do it.

And yet what matters it after all? We go, but

the world remains. We are not necessary, for no one is indispensable to progress. If we are missed for a while we are greatly privileged. Though we have stood at the helm and guided the ship of state through many a storm, another and perhaps a sturdier hand will take the wheel when death bids us retire. Great men are never wanting, and however proud the position we hold there is some one waiting—it may be without being conscious that he is the coming hero, for the opportunity has not yet come to him—there is always some one waiting to fill it with a larger plan or wiser counsel.

Nature disdains the assertion that her resources are exhausted. She can make a giant at a moment's notice whenever the emergency requires. There are Bismarcks and Gladstones and Lincolns and Grants in every nook and corner of the universe. When the convulsion comes the leader comes with it. And no matter how great the convulsion, some leader is found who can master it.

What shall we say, then, of lesser folk? They are pawns on the chess-board, who serve a purpose at the beginning of the game, but after a little are removed, piled together in a huddled heap, and are never thought of again until a new game is to

be played. The pawns are nothing, but the game goes on to victory or defeat. Most of us are pawns. There are rooks and bishops and knights and queens, the loss of which, in that particular game, is to be deplored; but we are pawns, and whether we are on the board, a part of the opposing forces, or on the table, our mission ended, is matter of little consequence. We are thrust aside, and the players play on without heeding our fate.

“Until a new game is to be played.” But is there a new game, or are we the rank and file of one game only and then laid aside forever? Analogies may be logically dangerous, and yet we may venture the assertion that when these present players grow weary, close the board for the night, throw the pieces into the box, and retire for rest and refreshment, the mission of pawns and bishops has not ceased. The game has not been abolished because the two contestants slumber. There shall come others who like chess as well as they, and who play as skilfully; and when some future evening shadows fall the board will be reopened, the knights and rooks and pawns shall take their places again, and the same old contest will still go on. There is an infinite differ-

ence between chess and any particular game of chess. The latter ends when the clock strikes twelve, but the former will be played for a thousand years to come, and even the pawns may proudly say, "We are no longer needed for this evening's enjoyment, but there will come other evenings, and we shall be needed then as much as now."

If that be so we may take heart in the midst of our New-year greetings. The months may speed as they will; the days may come and go like lightning-flashes; age may creep on apace, and youth hasten to middle life; November blasts may chill and December snows cover the sod like a shroud—it matters little. There will be other years in other climes, and the work we leave unfinished will be brought to completion after the grass has grown on our graves.

So bright a hope must give us good cheer, and it throws a heartiness, if, indeed, it throws also a pathos, into the wish with which friend meets friend: "A happy New-year to you, here or elsewhere!"

SHALL WE KNOW EACH OTHER THERE?

“But then shall I know even as also I am known.”—1 Cor. xiii. 12.

THERE is not as much skepticism in the world nowadays as there was twenty years ago.

A careful survey of the times will convince you that the old lines of doubt have been abandoned and that men are thinking affirmatively about the future life.

Not that men are going back to church dogmas. On the contrary, they are getting farther from them, if possible.

But they are silently formulating a religion of their own—a peculiar kind of religion, which the clergy are inclined to look at askance, but which contains the essential principles on which an honest life here and the hope of a life hereafter are securely based.

The people were never more averse to creeds

than now. That is a rather startling characteristic of the age. Thoughtful men have feared that the multitude, after slipping the moorings of Calvinism, would drift out to sea or on a lee shore, because it frequently happens that when one gives up his old faith he lives the rest of his life without any faith at all.

This danger, however, has been safely passed. The tendency is toward a wider and deeper faith than we have ever had. If the church would recognize this fact and fit itself to the new condition of affairs it could easily become the leader of the people in their explorations. But if the church persists in emphasizing the formulas of other days, and continues to ignore all sources of information except those to which it has been accustomed, the people will go on without it and find leaders among themselves.

In illustration of this general statement, and also in proof of it, we may safely assert that at no hour in the world's history has there been so much interest in the subject of man's immortality as now. Nor has there ever before been so much legitimate curiosity as to the conditions which will prevail in that other life to which we are hastening.

Whether this is the result of that odd movement called spiritualism—which started in the forties and spread like a prairie fire—which loudly declares that communion between the two worlds is a privilege to be enjoyed by every shadowed home, or whether it came from a combination of other causes, is a matter of inferior consequence. When the thirsty man has water to drink he simply drinks it and is thankful, not stopping to inquire from what mountain-range the river flows on whose green banks he reposes in peace.

But besides the bare fact of continued life we desire to know what our relations to each other will be after we cross the golden threshold. Is our love a merely temporary contrivance, a volatile element which will evaporate at death, a bond of union, based on the necessity of perpetuating the race, which will be broken at the grave? or is it the mutual attraction of souls which have luckily found each other in this life, and which will continue in force in all other lives which may lie ahead of us?

Much depends on the answer to that question. If love is an earthly convenience, and only that, then practically the end comes when the curtain drops on our little drama—comedy or tragedy, as

the case may be. But if the mother's love or the lover's love, being a love of souls and not of bodies, is a part of the soul itself, then both we who remain a little longer and they who go amid our sighs and tears can wait patiently, as one waits in Europe for the coming of the dear one or waits in America for the return home.

The problem is not difficult to solve if we face facts bravely. That we shall recognize each other in the life beyond needs no argument. Common sense simply says, "Of course we shall," and that ends all controversy. That we shall know each other better than we do now goes without saying. That we shall see through all disguises, even as we shall be seen, seems to be very certain. There will be no deceptions, for soul will look at soul and motives cannot be concealed.

That this clearer sight will alter a great many of our relationships becomes perfectly evident, just as it is evident that if our hearts were laid bare in this life our relations to each other would be changed.

If love, therefore—our present love—is connected in any way with our physical passions, or is at all dependent on them, then death, which de-

prives us of our bodies, will bring that love to an end. We may know each other there, but the peculiar attraction which now binds us will cease to exist. There will be no fuel for its flame, and the flame must needs die out. Clearly that kind of love is a merely earthly expedient or incident or even accident, and will have fulfilled its mission when the breath leaves the body. It cannot go hence when we go, but must be left behind because there is no element of immortality in it.

But the other kind of love, which rests on unity of purpose, on divine sympathy, on admiration for qualities of character—the love which has its origin in what the loved one is, not in what he has—that is as much a part of the soul as ambition is, or courage, and can no more die than the soul itself can die. Those who love each other in an earthly way may soon become strangers over yonder; but they who love in this higher way will come closer together when they reach the shore beyond the shadow.

This, then, is the truth—that we shall know each other without a doubt; that we shall love each other throughout eternity, provided our love is that of souls rather than of bodies.

A WASTED LIFE.

“ And there wasted his substance with riotous living.”—Luke xv. 13.

IT is appalling to think of the vast amount of unused and misused energy there is in the world.

If all men could be persuaded to do their best, and do it with might and main, we should soon have a race of gods on the earth.

There is no more painful contrast in human life than that between what we are capable of doing and what we really accomplish.

Perhaps there is not a single instance in history of a man who worked up to his utmost mental or spiritual capacity.

The noblest man that lives can do no more than furnish a suggestion of the soul's aspiring possibilities before he is called hence by the tolling of funeral bells. He leaves his task only half done, his song only half sung, when the reverend clergy pronounce the solemn words, “ Dust to dust, ashes to ashes.”

In this we are notably different from other created things. The beasts of the field, the birds of the air, the trees of the forest, accomplish their perfect work, and could do no more if they had added centuries in which to develop. The thrush would still sing his plaintive notes, the eagle would soar to no higher altitude, the maple and birch would have no brighter colors after the autumnal frost.

Man alone is endowed with the tremendous prerogatives of imperfection. He alone can say at death, "My horizon line is as far away as ever."

And beneath this consciousness of neglected duties which brings the red blood to his cheeks is the curious conviction that even if he had worked with entire faithfulness, and lost neither time nor opportunity, his years are still too few and his limitations too many to allow him to achieve the best of which he is capable.

He can do more if another life and a better environment are furnished. He has a right to think it strange, therefore, that the Being who made him to become great should call him away from his task before he can possibly achieve greatness; that He who filled him with magnificent abilities should

close his eyes in an eternal sleep just as he begins to appreciate them. Immortality is an absolute necessity, unless we are willing to admit that the creation of man is an unaccountable blunder. As soon make a violin and then destroy it when only a few of the simplest airs have been played.

But apart from all this is the fact that there are men who run riot with themselves, and at death have nothing to carry to heaven except an armful of regrets. Their lives are like a prairie fire, which consumes everything as it goes and leaves nothing behind but blackened ashes. In the resurrection they will stand before the bar of judgment as spiritual ruins, and must needs unlearn nearly all they ever learned in this life before they can make any progress. They have found their happiness in physical indulgence, and will feel curiously out of place when they step out of their bodies and can have no more pleasures of the grosser sort.

The disadvantage with which they will begin the other life is too great for even the imagination to contemplate. Happiness will certainly be out of the question until by slow degrees and painful experience they effect a radical change in themselves. The hell of theology has no pangs which

will compare with the remorse they must suffer when they see things in their right light and come to a full consciousness that they have deliberately unfitted themselves for their environment. The fiery lake would be almost a relief, for God has decreed no punishment so great as that which encompasses a soul that has lived for the body only and does not know how to live without it.

For instance, what will happen to the poor creature who has lived a besotted life, or the man whose years have been a continuous fraud on himself? What profounder depths of personal wretchedness can one conceive of than he is driven into when he looks back on what he has been, and then gets a glimpse of what he might have been? Put such a man into a position in which all his faculties will be thoroughly awakened, in which he will see himself as he is, and be forced to view the falling tears of a heart-broken wife, the fateful and ruinous tendencies he transmitted to his children, which have forced them into lives equally shameful as his own. What must be his condition of mind? The flaming tempests of the bottomless pit seem, by way of contrast, like an asylum built by pity. He must undo the wrongs he has committed, and

endure agony until those wrongs have been righted.

It is a serious thing to carry a wasted life with all its consequences into the other world.

What precious emphasis is given by these facts to the divine mission and the encouraging doctrines of the New Testament! How gently and with what solemn persuasiveness Jesus dealt with the fallen! He saw in the outcast a brother or a sister, and though He scornfully bade those who were without sin to cast the first stone, there must have been a melting sorrow in His tone when He whispered to the offender, "Go, and sin no more."

He never condoned crime, but was always sorry for the criminal. The poor creature had already lost so much in the way of character and happiness that it was unnecessary to add to his burden the so-called anger of God. No one knows better than the remorseful sinner himself that God's grief is far more painful to contemplate than His avenging wrath, and if the church would tell us less about the unsheathed sword and more about the relentless regrets which every disembodied soul must needs endure in consequence of its earthly shortcomings and misdeeds, it would have a larger, a

more potential, and a more wholesome influence on the world.

If any one truth taught by the Master has conspicuous prominence, it is the truth of God's love for us all, and His sympathetic pity for the sinner who has gone astray. The text is from a parable which represents the joy of the angels when the misguided boy sees the folly of wasting his substance with riotous living, and returns to the father's house in the sad consciousness that he is no longer worthy to be called a son; and there is a deeper warning in that pathetic story, more that appeals to the nobler elements of human nature, than can be found in all the imprecatory theology that was ever formulated.

THE MINISTRY OF ANGELS.

“ For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.”—Ps. xci. 11.

“ And, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him.”—Matt. iv. 11.

“ Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels ? ”—Matt. xxvi. 53.

THE ministry of unseen beings is one of the most important doctrines of the Christian church ; it is also one of the most neglected.

A great many, even among the thoughtful, will be surprised at the statement that the intervention of angels in human affairs is a very conspicuous element in the Sacred Books and that hardly a great event is recorded there in which they have not been prominent actors.

There is even a widely prevalent prejudice against the doctrine, especially among Protestants, which is perhaps the result of a reaction from those medieval days when the providence of God was almost lost sight of in the activities of His agents.

It is not difficult for us to believe that the Father is within reach of our prayers, and that Christ can keep His promise to come and take up His abode with us in seasons of stress and dismay; but for some reason we falter in our faith that round about us are multitudes of angels, who are not only able but ready to do us a great service; are watchful of our interests and eager to impress our minds with what it is right and best to do.

And yet that is a natural if not a necessary inference from the general tenor of the Bible. If it is logical to assert that God has not withdrawn into the eternal solitudes, but is as close to-day as in the olden time when His voice of warning or command rang through the history of the Jews, it is equally logical and not more daring to declare that His angels are our guardians as they were the guardians of our ancestors. No change has taken place either in our human needs or in His methods. What infinite wisdom and goodness decreed for our fathers holds good for us. If messengers from on high could visit Abraham and make their presence known to Elisha there is no reason to suppose that they are unwilling to come to our assistance; and if they offered their ministrations to our

Lord, why may they not be expected to do us a like service, since we have been made heirs of the Lord's privileges?

A whole sect of curious folk has arisen within the last fifty years whose only ground for existence is the possibility of some kind of communication between the earth and the upper air. They call themselves by the unique name of spiritualists, for the simple reason that they believe in the continued love and helpfulness of the departed. They have revived the ancient faith, and boldly assert what every personage of the New and every prophet of the Old Testament would assert, that heaven is within speaking-distance and that the conscious companionship of angels is one of the inalienable rights of aspiring souls. If Christians had thoroughly believed the Bible and accepted its revelations in this regard spiritualism would never have been born. There would have been no more demand for it than for a class of scientists who should announce their faith in the law of gravitation.

This sect has spread with wonderful rapidity. Its organized membership makes a remarkable showing so far as numbers and literature and influ-

ence are concerned, and its unorganized membership is to be found in every church of every denomination, and in every village and hamlet throughout the earth.

We may not agree with some of the wild extravagances of this body of men and women, and may close our ears to many of the incredible experiences which they relate; but the fact remains that they are a necessary element of our present religious life, because they satisfy a spiritual longing which the church has either ignored or refused to foster. If they were not wanted they would not remain; if their doctrines were unwelcome or unreasonable they would diminish in numbers and after a little fall to pieces.

But the truth is that they have appropriated one of the most excellent and needful truths, which, for some reason or other, our pulpits have thrown aside, and on that one truth have built an enormous structure under whose roof thousands and tens of thousands find shelter from the storms of life. The great mass of people in this hard workaday world need all the comfort and encouragement which religion can afford. Their burdens are heavy, and too often their eyes are red with weeping. There

are cares and anxieties which gall the shoulders, and bereavements which break the heart. Tell it how you will, the story has a line of tragedy running through it, and one goes but a little way before he stumbles on a disappointment or a grave.

In other words, men and women must have help. If their only company is stern doubts, if they walk alone, laden with many negations, they sing few songs, and not even these with a merry voice. There is not much difference between a doubt and a viper if you must carry either in your bosom.

On the other hand, to know that above you are multitudes of spirits, some, perhaps, the spirits of your dear ones of long ago; that it is a part of God's providence that they should accompany you in order "to keep thee in all thy ways"; that their mission is to lovingly influence you, though by subtle means beyond your ken; that they now and again creep so close to your consciousness that you are almost aware of their presence; and that at all times and in every strait they will serve you—what other effect can such a truth have than to check your mad impulse, give you serenity of mind amid disturbing experiences, enable you to bear inevitable sorrow with resignation, and render the

other life so real that you will sometime say your farewell without regret?

That is the doctrine of the Bible, and if you fail to heed it you blindly neglect one of the most important revelations of God.

VIEWS OF DEATH.

“ If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.”
—Rev. iii. 3.

THE death of President Carnot furnishes us with a very serious topic for consideration this morning.

For our present purpose we may ignore the fact that he was the loved and honored chief of the French Republic, and that he was the worthy representative of an ancient family whose record of probity and courage is unbroken. These serve to lend an added emphasis to the incident, but the impressive truth is that Death steals upon us unawares, with slippèred feet, and that neither wealth nor ancestry will stay his hand for a single instant.

He comes to all alike, and it makes no difference to him whether the person for whom he holds a summons lives in a palace, amid the elegant surroundings which sometimes make life the more

desirable, or in a hovel, where the only guests are want and hunger.

Death never yet took a bribe. He always achieves his purpose without hesitation. It matters nothing to him whether the body from which he has wrenched a soul lies in state, in the midst of a mourning populace, or is cheaply coffined and carried to an obscure corner of some country churchyard. He is an inexorable creature, and when he says "Come!" you instantly lay aside your work, however important it may seem to be, whisper a few hasty farewells, and then your tearful friends remark, with bated breath, "He has gone!"

The strange part of it all is that you cannot reckon on a year or a month or even a day with anything like certainty. You must be ready for this invisible messenger at all times. If, therefore, there is anything in philosophy or religion which will give you quietude and serenity of mind you must possess yourself of it at once and hold it for an emergency. It is worth more to you than riches, for riches have a way of deserting you in the pinch of fate. The fact that you are worth millions does not give you comfort when you are

in extremis; neither do you find consolation in the honors you have won or in the high position which you must vacate.

The Stoic of olden time ground his teeth when Death knocked at his door. He met the conqueror with grim defiance, and surrendered with a shrug of the shoulders. He summoned whatever indifference he could command, and died with a scowl on his face. It was better so than to cringe in cowardly fashion, and we cannot refrain from a certain degree of admiration for the man who believed in nothing and yet took whatever came without a groan. That brutal bravery is worthy of imitation, if we can get no nobler view of the subject.

The agnostics of to-day are the lineal descendants of these ancient Stoics. They must needs cling to life, for it is all they will ever have. To give it up is the gravest misfortune, but still a misfortune which must be met in a manly way. The future is eternal darkness, for body and soul disintegrate and resolve themselves into natural forces, as a tree does when it is riven by lightning, or as a house does when it is consumed by fire. There is nothing to look forward to, and when Death

comes he simply takes the record of your years and throws it into the waste-basket of the universe.

The agnostic does right to live with all his might, and if he lives recklessly we can scarcely blame him, for in the last analysis we must admit that if this life is all it is foolish to examine too closely into the character of our pleasures. The fact that they are pleasures ought to satisfy us, and a short life that is merry is better than a long life that is embittered. A few years more or less count for nothing, and if we can enjoy ourselves who cares what it may cost others? It is logical and consistent to get what we want without regarding the manner of getting it.

There is another way of looking at the matter, however. You may tell us, if you please, that Christianity is a tissue of fables and legends; but the reply is that a fable which makes a man more manly is better than a truth which makes a man cowardly. If the world is so constituted that a legend or a falsehood, accepted in good faith, will enable us to endure the ills of life with serenity of temper and die with a smile on our lips, while the truth makes us cold and hard and selfish, then by all means let us abandon the truth and adopt the

falsehood. We may possibly wonder how the universe got into such crooked shape, but if that is its shape we must make the best of things as we find them; and if the "Arabian Nights' Tales" are practically worth more than the propositions of Euclid, we do well to throw Euclid out of the window and read the "Arabian Nights' Tales" as our daily food.

But we may venture to declare that the universe is not crooked. The crook is in us. We dare to assert, also, that Christianity, with its warning to live honestly because there is another life in which we must give an account of ourselves, contains the highest spiritual truth that the mind of man ever contemplated. The kernel of corn which produces an ear of corn is true corn. The apple-seed which produces an apple-tree is a true seed. The idea which develops all the noblest qualities of manhood is a true idea. We judge from results, and it is safe to do so.

With the spirit of Christ in your heart and the principles He announced in your life you are ready for any fate. Your days come and go, bearing in their arms whatever experience God sees fit to send, and when the last one has been counted you

lie down, saying, "It is not the end, but the beginning." Death rings your bell and you bid him welcome, for he is only the doorkeeper who ushers you across the threshold of the present into the palace of eternity.

MAN'S LITTLENES AND GREATNESS.

“What is man, . . . that Thou shouldest set Thine heart upon him?”—Job vii. 17.

THE most thrilling, discouraging, and appalling thought that ever walks with crushing heels through the mind of a studious man is the thought of his own insignificance in the universe.

He comes, he goes. To-day he is a part of the world, his pulse beating with healthy life; to-morrow he will not be here, and neither eye nor telescope can penetrate the shadows into which he will disappear. The time allotted to him is so short that he no sooner becomes conscious of the opportunities by which he is surrounded and of his own ability to use them, than the trumpet-blast summons him and he bids the world farewell.

The earth swings in its orbit without him as well as with him, and is quite unconcerned whether he is here or elsewhere or nowhere. The sun blazes

for him if he is present, and blazes for some one else if he is absent. The sky is blue, the clouds float overhead, the rivers run, the ocean roars, the dawn comes, the twilight gathers, without any reference to him whatever. He may stay or depart—it is matter of small consequence to the changing seasons, which as willingly revolve over his grave as over his cradle.

If we compare the life of a man to the life of our solar system, with an estimated duration of twenty million years since it broke its fiery mass into planets, and a prophesied duration of ten million years more before it will be shattered in some celestial catastrophe, we are amazed at the pin's point of space which we occupy and the comparatively few minutes we are allowed to occupy it. A human life, we are told, is a thread in the great fabric, but a thousand such threads may be wafted from the loom of God without injury to the fabric itself. If ours is one of those threads we must needs walk in the valley of humiliation, for apparently we count for nothing or something less than nothing.

And yet there is another side to the picture. This mysterious atom called man, so microscopic

in proportions, is the greatest marvel and puzzle of the age. Science tells us that he is the last and best product of natural law. Religion adds that since he cannot accomplish his mission here, but always leaves his task unfinished, the law which produced him must provide a place where his mission can be completed. Else the universe has a seam of lead in its bulk of gold; else the plan which prevails everywhere has been invaded by un wisdom; else a cruel injustice is done in that we are created to perform a given work and then robbed of the opportunity to finish it.

Every arrangement has been made for our continuous development, and every experience, if rightly used, will contribute to our education. Nothing can happen, from the most volatile joy to the profoundest grief, which a man may not appropriate to his advantage. His seventy years are God's University, in which toil and pain, laughter and tears, success and defeat, poverty and wealth, are the text-books which he cannot diligently study without exceeding profit.

Life is given that we may learn how to live. Adversities accost us as knights of old rode against each other in the tournament, and we are either

unhorsed because we have not steeled our muscles to meet the foe, or are victors because we can trust our swords and our good right arms. We can grow so strong and bold, if we have been rightly trained, that no calamity can bear us down; and he alone has reached the highest type of manhood who can force the loss of fortune or a great bereavement to add to the beauty, the serenity, and the symmetry of his character.

Do we graduate from this God's University to make no use of what we have learned? Do we go through a long course of preparation for something only to be told that there is nothing to do? Do we painfully and wearily and with great labor and sacrifice get ready only to discover that there is nothing to get ready for? Then is our period of suffering a delusion, a hallucination, and we have developed all the finer qualities of our characters for no purpose whatever. We have not been permitted to enjoy this life, because we have been sternly at work in the struggle to make everything that has happened fit us for a life which our own interior natures have led us to expect and anticipate. What a strange disappointment, then, what a useless and stunning disappointment, to be

informed that all our discipline and labor have been for naught!

On the other hand, what a zest, what martyr-like enthusiasm we get from the promise that every hour of wretchedness and misery, every embattled year, every victorious contest with passion, every period of quiet endurance and calm resignation is a stepping-stone in that spiral staircase that leads to the realms of the invisible, that upper world into which we are ushered when we graduate with honor from this University, where griefs are the professors and sorrows the tutors!

If religion were only a dream it would still be a dream worth dreaming, for of such a dream comes true nobility, while those who dream no dreams, but have what they call the truth, live in license and die in weariness.

But if it is not a dream, if it is a truth, backed by the plan and the laws of the universe, if there is a God and a cross behind it, then are we cheered in our toil because the setting of the sun on to-day is the rising of the sun on the morrow, and the twilight of this life is the rosy dawn of the life that is to be.

GOD'S LOVE AND MAN'S.

“ And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three ; but the greatest of these is love.”—1 Cor. xiii. 13.

A MAN cannot live long in such a world as this without having his curiosity excited. He sees the clouds floating above his head, and the stars in the illimitable ether beyond. At one period the earth springs into new life, and the fields and orchards break into blossoms ; later on the sun pours out his torrid heat, and blossoms are magically changed into fruit ; with the passing of the months the chilling frosts stay the flow of sap in the forest, and Nature acts as though she had done her day's work and was preparing for rest ; then the snows fall, like a warm coverlet, and hills and valleys sink into a profound slumber.

It is all a mystery, and man cannot rest satisfied until he has partially explored it. He gathers a countless multitude of facts, arranges them in logical order, draws from them a host of inferences,

the most conspicuous among them being that the arrangement of the universe indicates a plan. Accident and chance are at once abolished, and in their stead is established universal law. Chance, cries the student, is to be found nowhere; law is to be found everywhere.

At the moment when accident retired and law stepped to the front the key to creation was found, and thenceforth science began to unlock door after door and to guess the puzzles which were hidden behind.

But the thoughtful took another step and declared that where there is a plan there must also be a Planner. If you look at the intricate mechanism of a watch it is impossible to believe that it made itself. The watch presumes a maker; the universe presumes a God. If there is a Being behind matter, they said boldly, if an obvious arrangement leads us back to One who must have made the arrangement, then it becomes important to know what relations may possibly exist between us and Him, what His plans are respecting us, what our manifest destiny is, and on what conditions that destiny can be achieved.

At that moment religion was born, and its mis-

sion is to go hand in hand with science on a tour of constant discovery. Shoulder to shoulder the two can solve the great problem. Working apart, with distrust of each other, they are comparatively powerless and can achieve but slender results.

One step more and the divinest impulse that ever thrilled human nature entered the soul with its transfiguring power. When religion stood before the assembled hosts and announced that the relation of this Planner to us was one of encouraging, pitying, forgiving, and consoling love; that as gravitation is the omnipotent energy in the physical, so love is the all-conquering force in the spiritual, world, we were at once equipped for the battle with varying circumstance and changing fortune.

Religion, when reduced to its last analysis, therefore, puts just these facts before you, and appeals to your common sense for strict obedience—namely, that there is a plan, and you are a conspicuous part of it; that the Planner's sole desire regarding you is that you shall be all you can be, and the best you can be; that in the Nazarene, God has furnished you with a standard of moral measurement; that in the Bible He has given you certain rules

which will make your task easier; and that in His unbounded love He has prepared a place for you when life's fitful fever is over. Religion is thus simplified and put within reach of the humblest man to whom the creed of the church may be a puzzle and a disappointment. God's way of saving the soul is one thing; man's theological amendments and addenda to that way are a very different thing.

Take love away and life would not be worth living. Blot out the sun and our system would fall back into chaos. In all its various forms our human love is the dynamic force of progress and civilization. The martyr dies at the stake for love of truth; the patriot dies on the field for love of country. Men become heroes when they love and fiends when they hate.

The young man is in the swirl of passion, careless of moral rectitude and indifferent to the demands of personal honor. Love comes, a pure emotion, and takes possession of his soul. It restrains him, gives him only the noblest aspirations, makes the former life distasteful, because the music of the new life is better than any song the sirens

have sung. He has a purpose, an ambition. The fairies have visited him, and like Cinderella he is clothed in new garments.

No man can be his best self until this entrancing mystery has overshadowed him. Not all the world can give him the equivalent of one true and loyal woman's love. Neither fame nor fortune can take its place, for they only serve to emphasize the fact that the one thing needful is not his. With that sublime possession, however, he builds a home, becomes the custodian of grave responsibilities, broadens into a higher conception of citizenship, listens to the claims of charity, and is ambitious for that integrity which will be the chief inheritance of his children.

God's love is our religion; human love is all there is of happiness, while it is also the prophecy of a hereafter. The grandest picture which the imagination can conceive is that of the cross, with the legend above it, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son;" and the next grandest is that of an earthly home in which the same kind of love draws father, mother, and children around the hearthstone to live their little lives

in mutual helpfulness and look forward to another Home, where there are no tears, by whose door no hearse ever rumbles, in whose vicinity is no churchyard, but where the departed wait for the coming of those who have not yet been summoned.

PRAYER.

“ Pray without ceasing.”—1 Thess. v. 17.

WE are frequently told that prayer is a duty, but it is vastly more than that—it is a privilege.

We might go still further and say that it is a necessity. All men pray either consciously or unconsciously—even the atheist, who recognizes a blind Force in the universe which may either fall with crushing weight or bear him to good fortune, and to that Force he utters an ejaculation in the emergency, as though it could hear and save.

Prayer is either an offering of gratitude or a petition for help. If the Christian's faith is genuine he keeps the way always open between himself and heaven; feels quite a liberty, under all circumstances, to state his case in his own terms; is sure that the Lord has not retired beyond hearing distance, and that what he asks for will be granted if on the whole it is best that it should be.

This relation between us and the upper world incites to noble action and mightily repels from vicious practices. To use a homely illustration: When a man is possessed by the grand passion of his life, the purity of the woman whom he loves is in some subtle way transferred to his own soul. That love both restrains and urges, not in her presence only, but also in her absence. She may be invisible for a time, but she still controls him. The deed which he would do without compunction if he had no such love becomes impossible because in imagination her eyes are always looking into his. A good woman's love, therefore, is the strongest moral force in any man's life, for in some mysterious way she has thrown his standard down and set up her own in its stead.

In like manner the knowledge that God is solicitous for your welfare; that the spirits of the departed, like "a cloud of witnesses," are round about you; that all heaven is nigh at hand, can scarcely fail to give that kind of dignity which makes baseness repulsive and virtue attractive.

The artist pupil draws a straight line when the master stands at his side, though he may be careless when he is alone. If the master has a per-

sonal interest in his pupil and says, "You will do grand work some day; I am always in the studio, consult me at your pleasure," the student is enkindled, and all the talent which nature endowed him with is brought to the surface.

To be able to call on the Father whenever our urgency requires His presence, and to feel that a whispered cry will bring to our aid a goodly company of those invisible beings who "walk the earth both when we wake and when we sleep," is to have our lives so changed by what seems to be magic and what is really mystery that our outlook is brighter, our ambition is higher, and even our afflictions are radiant with unwonted hopefulness.

There are some practical details in connection with this subject which are quite worth considering.

The value of a prayer does not depend in any degree upon its form or upon the attitude you assume, but solely on your filial confidence and your earnestness. You may kneel or stand or prostrate yourself, according to the demands of temperament or habit; you may use the words which have been formulated by others, and which

have been sanctified by the usage of generations, or you may express yourself in such language as you can summon at the moment—these matters are of no consequence whatever.

If your child feels grateful for the love you have bestowed, or wishes to ask a favor which you may or may not grant, according to your best judgment, it makes but little difference how he tells the story, provided his words come warm from his heart. But if he thanks you in a perfunctory way, and gives you the impression that he is performing a rather irksome duty, he may speak in choice language, but his voice has no music for your ear. Everything depends on his consciousness that you are his friend, and on his eager and complete appreciation of that fact.

A great many prayers are not prayers at all. A great many winged words fly as high as the roof and then drop to the ground again. One can commit as grave an offense by praying insincerely as by not praying at all. A soul is neither saved nor helped by words without feeling, for such prayers are very close to mockery.

The true prayer is a quiet talk with the Almighty behind closed doors. Or one can sit in

solitude and commune with Him without uttering a word. An eager but unuttered thought will reach heaven more readily than the most golden form of speech that lacks either faith or confidence. Many of the prayers that have called a multitude of ministering spirits from the skies have had no other shape than that of a deep longing or a simple ejaculation.

If one is profoundly sure that the Infinite Presence envelops him, that an Infinite Providence guards and leads him, and accepts that Presence and Providence as the controlling power of his life, he prays "without ceasing," for the spirit of prayer pervades his life. His lips may never utter a word, and yet he communes with the Lord.

A great artist has painted a picture in which Christ, who is "the Light of the world," is represented standing at the door in the night-time with a lantern in His hand.

You mistake, therefore, when you think of prayer as a ladder up which the soul laboriously climbs to heaven. The Man with the Lantern is always near when the shadows fall, and if you pray you simply unbolt the door and bid Him enter. He hangs the lantern in your room, say-

ing, "While the night lasts you will need it; when the morning dawns I will return and take it to other homes which sorrow has darkened."

As St. Augustine said, "When we read the Word, God speaks to us; when we pray we speak to Him."

JUDGING KINDLY.

“Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.”—John viii. 11.

THIS is one of the most dramatic and pathetic incidents in the career of Christ.

There was no doubt that this woman had committed an offense for which, according to the Hebrew code, she merited death. The law was explicit and the punishment was relentlessly inflicted. It had been the habit of the people and the custom of the nation for twenty generations to hurl an immoral woman into eternity as one throws a stone from a sling.

The sneering scribes and haughty Pharisees thought to embarrass Christ in the presence of the multitude. They dragged the poor, trembling creature before Him, declared that she had been taken “in the very act,” and then with curled lips waited for His verdict. It was a test case. Would He acknowledge the authority of precedent, or

would He have the audacity to repudiate the law which had received the sanction of Jehovah? In other words, would He surrender in the pinch, or proclaim Himself superior to the Voice that thundered from Sinai?

Jesus stepped across the boundary line which divided the old from the new dispensation when He answered that question. The Jews had been taught to fear God; He would teach men to love God. To them God was the implacable Lawgiver, who, as Anne of Austria once said to Richelieu, "is a sure paymaster. He may not pay at the end of every week or month or year, but He pays in the end." Christ would have men believe that God is also a Father, and that we, as His children, are to judge each other generously, because under like circumstances we might yield to the same temptation.

To paraphrase, Christ said: "Let your law be obeyed if you will have it so. But this wretched criminal must not be put to death by men who have committed the same offense. If there are any among you who are wholly innocent let them execute judgment."

Then followed that remarkable sentence which

startled the moral sense of the world: "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." Perhaps the crowd were surprised; possibly many of them shook their heads with indignation. The more conservative among them may have felt that the dignity of the law had been outraged; that this Nazarene had blundered in abrogating the custom established by Moses and approved by the prophets.

But we can see that a new principle was announced. Nobody will assert that Jesus could do otherwise than condemn a criminal act. His whole career is a denial of such a statement. Neither will any one declare that He weakly yielded to the pathos of the occasion, or that He refused to condemn in order to defy the Pharisees and scribes.

No such motive, but a far nobler one, actuated Him. By the religion which He represented we are enjoined to judge the fallen with the consciousness that we too may fall some day; to hate the sin, but love the sinner, and offer a helping hand. We are to judge as one brother would judge another—not with indifference to guilt, but with pity for the offender.

This is a most thrilling doctrine, and it opens

up a series of duties which we may find it difficult to perform. It is an easy thing to condemn a sinner, send him to prison, and so forget all about him. It is a very different thing to look on a sinner with pitying eye, and, while condemning what he has done, make him feel that you are his friend and will help him to recover himself.

The habit of harsh judgment is ungracious, ungentle, and unchristian, but altogether too common among us. We are prone to attribute a bad motive even where it would be possible to see a good motive. It is not too much to say that we rather relish a rumor which tells against a neighbor, and find a morbid comfort in the thought that people are not so good as they pretend to be or seem to be.

If a man gives largely to a charity our first impulse is to declare that there is a purpose in it which is not quite as excellent as appearances would indicate. If a woman commits an indiscretion, either wilfully or through ignorance, we make it by our harsh criticism just as hard for her to heal the wound as possible. In a word, we are not helpful to each other, and are much more inclined to shove an offender downhill than to pull

him uphill. We are more apt to look on the darkest side of other people's lives and to think the worst of them than to look on the bright side and think the best of them. At the same time we would be glad to have them look at us leniently and find a good rather than a bad motive. Doing unto others, however, as you would have them do to you neither suits our convenience nor our appetite.

A painter of ancient times was commanded to make a portrait of his monarch. It so happened that his Majesty had a very ugly scar on his face which greatly disfigured him. The artist, with kindly diplomacy, asked his sitter to lean his head on his hand, saying it would give a finer pose. He then deftly arranged matters in such a way that the fingers of the monarch entirely covered the scar, and so the portrait was painted with no scar visible.

If we were to follow the example of the artist and charitably cover up the scars on the lives of our friends, or if, conscious that we need mercy ourselves, we should exercise that virtue toward others, or if, as commanded by Christ, we should make, not a weak, but a loving judgment of acts

which come within our notice, we should soon hear the rustle of angel wings in this hard world, and the sweet perfume of the millennium would be wafted earthward.

A kindly judgment is one of the rarest things on the earth, and it is also one of the most excellent.

THE PROBLEM OF POVERTY.

“ For ye have the poor always with you.”—Matt. xxvi. 11.

DOES this mean that there will be poor people to the end of time? Is there no ideal society toward which the race is moving, a society in which want will be unknown? Is it impossible to so arrange matters that there shall be plenty for all, or is civilization, even at its best, a broken harp, some of whose strings will forever jangle out of tune?

The question presses itself upon us just now, for hardly ever in the history of our industries has there been so much suffering as there promises to be during the coming winter. Men out of employment are not to be counted by the thousands, but by the hundreds of thousands, and they are to endure pangs from no fault of their own, but in consequence of an unfortunate condition through which the country is slowly working its way toward a larger prosperity.

That being the case we naturally ask what can be done in the way of relief; but the still larger problem to be solved is, Can society be so reorganized that these periods of misery, in which men and women have little or nothing to eat, may be avoided?

It is useless to say, as some do, that we are suffering from the blunders of a former administration, because that does not alter the fact. Our only concern is with poverty, however or by whomsoever caused. To throw the blame on Mr. Harrison or Mr. Cleveland may satisfy our partizanship, but it does not furnish a single loaf of bread for a starving family.

What we want to know and what we must know before we can set about righting our wrongs is whether wretchedness and misery are inherent elements of human progress; whether there is such a thing as progress whose ultimate end is universal peace and contentment? If we may sometime hope for better things, then we ought to begin now to shape our customs and laws for their fulfilment. If there is no hope, then we must needs make the best of our conditions and alleviate poverty in any way that may occur to us.

It is undoubtedly true that the race will always be divided into classes. The better off and the worse off will remain side by side until the millennial bell rings. The man of talent will forever accumulate, and the man with no talent will be his servant. Men were created neither free nor equal. That is a figment of the imagination which serves the purpose of the orator, but has no basis in fact. Inequalities of brain, of ambition, of shrewdness, of executive ability, are the first things one sees in the morning and the last things he sees at night. There is no reason to suppose that it will ever be otherwise. There will always be owners of mills and wage-earners who do their bidding.

The solution is not to be found, therefore, in any Utopian dream of making everybody's brain of the same weight or endowing him with the same moral or intellectual faculties. There are workers and overseers of workers—men who sit in their comfortable offices and plan a building, and men who carry the mortar and brick up the ladder.

It might not be well to have it otherwise. Drudgery will always have to be done and there must always be some one to do it.

But, since this is so, the state neglects its chief function when it ceases to be the providence of the poor. It is not our business to regard life as a scramble for whatever is within reach, no matter at what cost to others. That policy is barbaric and as far from the scriptural injunction as heaven is from the earth. The state should recognize the wage-earners, who are in the majority, as its special care, and exercise over them a kind of providential supervision. Laws should not discriminate against the unable and in favor of the able. Government should be paternal in its widest sense and offer every possible opportunity to its citizens to better their condition. The trend of state enactments ought not to help the strong to get more than their share, but to help the poor to get what they are entitled to.

Our charities are well enough in their way. They extend a helping hand to the miserable and so enable them to bridge over an emergency; but the better way would be to abolish the emergency, and then the poor would need no helping hand.

Our public-school system illustrates this statement. A hod-carrier is not more contented for being ignorant. Knowledge is power, because it

enables a man to keep his eyes open and make the highest use of his opportunities. We insist that every child shall learn something, and we drive him to school against his wishes because the time will come when what he knows will assist him to earn his bread.

Why should not the state establish schools for the mechanic arts and graduate every year a large number of skilled workmen? This has been done in some sections with grand results. A man who knows how is better equipped than one who does not know how. Education is the corner-stone of happiness, and if we could lift the under-classes by teaching them to do better work we should relieve half of the distress which excites our sympathy.

If brotherliness prevailed, if our religion were a matter of living instead of believing, there are a thousand evils which could be removed. We may always have the poor with us, but it is not necessary that they should starve, and when we become more Christian we shall see to it that they do not starve.

ONLY A STEP TO HEAVEN.

“And he said, Who art Thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.”—Acts ix. 5.

THE incident referred to opens a very wide door, and introduces us to a series of thoughts which are not more startling than they are helpful.

St. Paul was apparently a man of strong prejudices as well as strong convictions. He had a courage which extended to rashness. A conservative of fierce temper, he could tolerate no invasion of the old-time Hebraism which had been sanctified by the sufferings as well as the victories of many generations.

When this new religion of the Nazarene began to stir the people, it had a tendency to lessen their allegiance to the synagogue, its doctrines and its forms of worship. Paul, therefore, perhaps without inquiring into its merits, hated it with a deadly hatred. “Breathing out threatenings and slaughter,” armed with letters from the high priest giv-

ing him authority over both men and women, he was on the road to Damascus with a boundless fury in his heart and a determination to crush the spiritual rebellion by the most heroic measures.

Just before he reached the city a light shone round him which seemed to be supernatural, and the stillness of the air was broken by a Voice which came from the lips of some invisible personage. A communication was made to him which he evidently regarded as coming from the other world, for from that instant the whole plan of his life was changed. His desire to persecute the followers of the Master was transformed into a vow to defend them even at the hazard of his own life.

It is safe to say that this incident is as reliable as most others which have come to us from remote times. There is no good reason why we may not accept it as veritable history.

Moreover it is corroborated by similar experiences which have occurred from time to time since the days of Paul. There is hardly a household which cannot relate an incident of a like nature, and we are forced to the conclusion that there are more beings who are invisible than there are beings visible, and that the visible and the invisible

are supplied with means of communicating with each other.

It is useless for the Christian to declare that such miracles, if they are miracles, were confined to the limits of a given period. He must accept what happens to-day as well as what happened centuries ago. God has not changed His relations to men, and the necessities of human nature are just as urgent as ever. If angels talked with mortals from the time of Adam to the days succeeding the crucifixion, it is folly to suppose that the curtain dropped and we have ever since been left without the companionship of "a cloud of witnesses." We must either throw the Bible overboard as a tissue of imaginary events, or believe, as every generation has believed, that the great falsehood of history is that there is "a bourn from whence no traveler returns."

If God is really a presence in the world, then He must be a continuously revealing presence. There is a kind of absurdity in the statement that He has spoken, but refuses to do so any more. If He ever spoke it is certainly true that He still speaks. He has neither become indifferent nor has He retired to some distant corner of the uni-

verse whence His voice cannot be heard except as a dull and uncertain echo.

The upper air is peopled by the departed. Death does not destroy the whole of us; it simply separates by mysterious alchemy the mortal from the immortal, and it is only a short journey from this world to the other. While we are saying our good-night to the dying they are listening to a good-morning from those who have joined the majority.

We suffer from a sense of separation, but they enjoy the pleasures of reunion. To die is gain in a very broad sense, for it is an exchange of hampering conditions for a life without limitation. Death is merely the transportation of a peasant to a palace, the environment of which gives him opportunities he never dreamed of. We shed bitter tears at a grave, but there is more or less selfishness in our grief. If we had full faith in the future the muffled sound of sighs would be followed by a solemn conviction that, while we are somewhat the worse off by what we call bereavement, the departed loved one is much the better off.

That is the ideal religion, and because we have not yet attained to it we robe ourselves in mourn-

ing, as though some great disaster had befallen those who go as well as those who remain. If we had no thought of self we should dress in white rather than black, for the dead have won their victory and become immortal.

Still further, it is an inexpressible loss to the religious life that we do not realize the radiant fact that solicitous and helpful influences are round about us in our struggle with circumstances. Every loved one who has gone is as conscious of our doubts and fears as when he was at our side. Neither his affection nor his power to aid has been abated. In a thousand ways unknown to us he gives us strength for the conflict and peace of mind in our perplexity. By unspoken words he talks with us, and our souls and his hold intimate communion.

Were that not true, then our lives would be heavily and darkly overshadowed. But it is true, and we are compelled by many an unexplained experience to believe it. It is a doctrine of Holy Writ; it is verified by the history of every home; it is a component part of practical religion; it is a statement of fact which redeems us from despair and gives us good cheer because heaven and we are not far from each other.

“ FEED MY LAMBS.”

“ Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.”—Matt. xxv. 40.

IT is a strange statement that one can do his Prince a personal service by giving a loaf of bread to one of the hungry peasants of His kingdom.

It obliterates the traditional idea of caste, and holds the rich responsible for the condition of the poor.

The powerful are guardians of the weak under the sovereignty of God.

If you have enough and to spare—that is the teaching of Christian philosophy—your surplus is not your own; it belongs to those whose larders are empty.

The injunction to “ feed My lambs ” never rumbled more resonantly than now, and never seemed more like the commanding thunder of Sinai.

And be it also said in very truth, and to the credit of our city, no opportunity to extend a

generous and helping hand was ever more eagerly embraced by the citizens of New York.

A tidal wave of sympathy and pity is sweeping over the community, and the recognition of distress is being followed by a universal desire to alleviate its pangs.

One hundred thousand laborers are out of employment through no fault of their own. They are sturdy fellows, most of them, and many of them are fathers of families, with a stormy winter ahead and no coal for the stove and no work, except what chance may bring. Three quarters of them are steady-going men, who are always ready to exchange honest labor for honest wages, and have no other ambition than to demand of circumstances the means to purchase clothing and food for themselves, their wives, and their children. The world, they truly say, ought to give them enough for their toil to fill their mouths and furnish them with shelter.

And so it does in ordinary times. When no catastrophe befalls our industries there are no people on the round globe more contented than these.

And be it said, further, that the laboring classes,

this seventeen million of wage-earners scattered throughout the country, the producers of everything that goes to market, are exceptionally clean morally, and intellectually equal to the burden of political responsibility. They lead pure lives, and in many instances heroic lives. Their struggles are often knightly and their sacrifices are worthy of the poet's song. There is as much true manhood, as much honor, as great a bulk of common sense among them as can be found elsewhere in the community.

But once in a while an emergency arises which closes our mills, blocks manufacture, and changes industry from a rapid current to a stagnant eddy. The laborer is not to be blamed, but he is the chief sufferer. When the avalanche comes rushing down, the far-sighted are forewarned. They get out of its way and their homes are untouched. The ragged edge of the monster may sweep away part of their fortunes, but the wolf never comes near their doors. The poor, however, are always in the direct road of the avalanche, and there is no escape. When the mill-stream runs dry they have nothing to eat. When the looms are still the last penny takes flight.

And yet they must live. The question is, How? The terrors of poverty are upon them, and what can they do? That problem has stimulated the imagination of the political economist, but he has not yet solved it. Is there any higher law, are there any legislative enactments, by which these disasters may be averted? Is society badly organized or is the difficulty interwoven into the fibers of human nature? There is always plenty for the few: why should there be starvation for the many?

Something, some demon of exigency, has its iron fingers on our throat, and we gasp. Is there no way to kill the devil of disaster?

We have nothing to do with that matter just now; we simply deal with facts as we find them, and try to meet the case as it stands.

The *Herald* is working along the lines of public duty, which should also be regarded as public privilege. There is spare clothing enough in ten thousand closets to cover the nakedness of the city. Take it down and give it to the distressed. You will not miss it, but they may die for want of it. It is one of your luxuries; it is their necessity. While it hangs on the closet-peg it does no one

any good; in the hands of a discreet committee it may save some poor man the sorrow of a funeral.

And there is money enough in generous pockets to help this hundred thousand idlers to bridge the frosty winter. We are not encouraging a discontented mob—we are offering our sympathy to a struggling crowd who would not seek assistance but that their children are crying. These hungry folk, so Christ said, are of the same royal lineage with ourselves—unfortunate members of the same great family. We are alike in birth, in death, and in destiny. So large is His pity that He begs us to fly to their relief, saying that if we do a service to one of the least of these we do it to Him.

But we need not use the language of urgency. The people of New York are quite alive to the gravity of the situation. They have already given grandly, and thus far no abatement of their generosity can be detected.

The poor must be saved from suffering until better days dawn, and the people will see to it that nothing is wanting, either in funds or organization, to accomplish their noble and charitable purpose.

THE BEST KIND OF RELIGION.

“Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not.”—
Matt. xxi. 21.

IT is customary with preachers to tell their people that faith in certain revealed truths is a condition of acceptance with God in the hereafter.

If, however, one believes for the sake of going to heaven, he is a mercenary creature and does not deserve to go there.

In like manner, if one obeys the commandments in order to avoid the torments of another world, he is as far removed from any true idea of religion as the north pole is from the south.

In the one case a man yields to a subtle kind of bribery which promises to give what he most desires, and in the other he surrenders to a threat which he has been taught to dread and would like to avoid.

It must be true that in the plan of a just God

there is no such thing as bribery, either in the shape of a threat or a promise.

It is not the peculiarity of faith that it is the coin with which you purchase heaven, but that it so forms your character that you cannot be kept out of heaven because you have a right to go there.

And the peculiarity of habitual doubt is that the life which is produced by it demoralizes the character and renders it spiritually impossible for you to cross the threshold of heaven because you would not be in the company of your peers.

Every man here and hereafter finds his own place by a law of gravitation which is inexorable. It is the same kind of law which in physical concerns makes the apple fall to the ground and the balloon rise to the clouds.

We are so constituted—at least the large majority of mankind are—that certain affirmative ideas produce a largeness of soul, while opposite ideas produce opposite results. To secure the results, therefore, it is necessary to possess one's self of the ideas which correspond to them.

There is nothing arbitrary about this; it is simply a matter of logic and law. Religion does not

represent the caprice of a Creator who, "for his own pleasure," holds a damning thunderbolt in one hand and the promise of bliss in the other. On the contrary, it represents an omnipotent justice which has so arranged the tendencies of human living and thinking that every man drifts to the place he is best fitted to fill, and can by no chance occupy any other.

The value of faith lies wholly in the fact that it just as inevitably develops the noblest qualities as the apple-seed contains within itself the possibility of a tree, a blossom, and the rich, ripe fruit.

The horror of doubt lies in the fact that it reduces the soul or the character or the man—whichever you please—to a minimum, checks growth, and induces a spiritual frost which nips the bud and renders fruitage unattainable.

It is evident, then, that a man must believe in something in order to become something. Ideas make or unmake; they are both creative and destructive. To believe firmly in virtue is an incentive to become virtuous. Your pride in your honor will keep you honorable.

That law acknowledged, we have a foundation for religion—that is, a religion of common sense.

An unwavering faith in God, who places you here amid all sorts of obstacles that you may prepare yourself for the higher existence to which He will summon you by and by; a fixed belief that a pure life is worth all it may cost, however great that cost shall be; a calm and quiet trust in a Providence which never deserts you, and in the possibility of communicating by prayer with the Being who holds all things in the hollow of His hand; a joyful resignation to the Higher Will in the dire straits of affliction and bereavement, the result of your conviction that He would not send such things unless they were needed, and that He is helping you to bear up under the necessary burden—such a state of mind and heart is just as sure to soften and mellow and enrich and ennoble your nature as a seed is sure to grow when properly planted. The logical consequence of such faith is to widen and deepen your character, and that logic is irresistible.

On the other hand, to have no God, no Providence, no future life to look forward to; to have no belief that the right always pays and the wrong always hurts; to depend on chance for what you may get out of life, and on your own pluck and

will to bear its sorrows; to love, and yet feel that love does not survive, but that the dead child or wife is simply dead eternally—such a state of mind is not merely depressing, it is a powerful cause which will produce an unhappy effect. No hand can stay the results which must logically follow.

As a practical question for practical men to consider we assert that the difference between low and high ideas of duty is the difference between a clod and a god. Men may have metamorphosed the Christian religion into something forbidding and repulsive, but such men have done us great mischief and should not be heeded. The Christ of the New Testament is not the Christ of theology. The true Christ fills the heart with lofty ideals, conscious that from them nothing but lofty impulses can result, and that is true religion.

WHY DO WE SUFFER?

“Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.”—John xii. 27, 28.

THERE is a wonderful bit of philosophy in these words. They open up to our astonished vision a long series of ideas which we seldom recognize. We are lifted to the mountain's summit and get a glimpse of the world from an entirely new standpoint. We are amazed and startled, for Christ practically commands us to sacrifice ourselves in order to attain perfection.

You are a block of rough marble. You may some time come to be a statue of splendid proportions, but you must be chiseled and hammered before that consummation can be reached. Grief, struggle, disappointment, the whole range of sad experiences which fill life so full, are the tools with which the Great Artist will change your shape by

slow degrees and convert you from a mere block to a thing of beauty.

You may not enjoy the process by which you are made to assume a new form, and the hammer of God seems at times merciless in its blows; but every stroke of the Artist's arm has a distinct purpose, and in the Artist's heart is an ideal which He is compelling you to represent—an ideal which you will most certainly represent when He has fully accomplished His task.

You stand face to face with a most grievous sorrow. Your head is bowed, your very soul suffers a wrench. But you recognize facts; you are broad enough and thoughtful enough to see that there is a meaning in it all. Or if your eyes are so blinded with tears that you may not see, you still have a devout faith that His way is better than your way, and that submission, quiet, serene, trustful, is the noblest attitude your soul can assume. You believe that the Artist has no other purpose than to convert the rough block of marble into a beautiful statue; that He takes no pleasure in using the hammer, and is not governed by caprice, but is working with a plan in His mind.

Now, what will you say? Your first utterance is found in the text, "My soul is troubled." That is inevitable. You are human and cannot help shrinking from pain. He does not wish you to do otherwise, but He does wish you to submit, even though it be with a groan or a cry of agony. Will you, dare you say, "Save me from this hour"? What would become of the marble block if it should pray the Artist not to use the chisel or the hammer? Suppose the Artist should heed the prayer and lay His tools aside: what then? If you have in your body some malignant growth, will you beseech the surgeon to save you from the horrors of the knife? And would he be your friend if he replaced that knife in its case and left you to your fate?

One must have attained a certain spiritual altitude to be able to say to the Artist, "Do what you will, only see to it that when your task is finished I leave the workshop a statue of noble proportions;" or to the surgeon, "I tremble at thought of what you are about to do, but you must not heed my cry, and your hand must do its work with inexorable steadiness and relentless accuracy." But that must be the attitude of every

great soul which desires perfection and health instead of comfort and ease.

The hardest but the best thing to say is "Father!" in the time of trouble and bereavement. With the conviction that He is in very reality your Father well fixed in your mind, and the reposeful consciousness in your heart that your suffering is your opportunity; that souls which have never experienced agony are not equal to souls that have passed hours in Gethsemane; that climbing with weariness is better than living on the level plain of monotonous good-fortune, you are enabled to say as the Master did, "I pray you not to consider my wishes, but to do what is best, though it cost me dear. Make me all I can be, even though I protest."

Then you see things as God sees them. Then the pathetic side of life, the side that is clouded, has a rich significance. You are forced to look up for help, and looking up brings you that mysterious peace that passeth understanding.

It cannot be that we are grieved and wounded and bruised for nothing.

If the stars in their courses are obedient to a physical law, then behind the stars is Some One

who made the law. If our days and years are marked by sighs and tears, by death that follows on the heels of birth, by graves which are within arm's-reach of cradles, by disappointments which cannot by any foresight be avoided, then these things must all be governed by a spiritual law, and behind the law must be Some One who ordained them for our good. Either this is true or the universe is a cruel and inexplicable despotism.

But it is true. Men never see the heaven above them except when their eyes are wet. Sufferings are the hammer and the chisel; God is the Artist who recognizes the possibilities that are hidden within us; we are the blocks of marble, and if we are conscious of what we may become we cannot cry, "Father, save me from this hour!" but must needs pray, "Father, glorify Thy name," and then angels will come from the upper air and minister to us.

ALL MEN ARE SELF-MADE.

“He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly.”—2 Cor. ix. 6.

EVERY man is the creator of a world, and therein he is supreme until death comes and orders him to abdicate.

There are as many worlds as there are men and women. Each one of them has been created out of the chaos of circumstance, and each one does credit or discredit to the miniature monarch who is its ruler.

When God endowed man with free agency it at once became possible for the recipient of this dangerous gift to make his little world a heaven or a hell.

Not even the Almighty could say him nay, for he was as absolute as the czar of Russia. God gave him two injunctions: “Do the right” and “Do no wrong,” then retired, leaving the little monarch to obey or not, as he chose, and to reap the consequences of his choosing.

So far as the Omnipotent is concerned He has distributed the really good things of life with an even hand. Let us be careful about this matter; we say the really good things.

Not money, nor yet fame, does He include in this category, and it is safe to presume that He had good reason therefor.

The opportunity to increase the size of the soul is universal, like the sunshine, and there is no niggardliness in any corner of the globe. Never yet lived a man, whether he slept under a thatched roof or in a palace, who lacked the chance to hammer his soul into some divine shape.

Neither poverty nor riches are necessary to character. One need not go to Congress, or paint a picture for the Salon, or write a poem which shall sing to posterity, or cross the threshold of the White House by invitation of the people, in order to be fitted for heaven.

God can make great men when He needs them as easily as we throw a handful of sand in the air, but not even He can make a soul that is worth looking at twice. That high prerogative rests with the man alone who is the owner of the soul.

In the eyes of the Almighty the hod-carrier who is honest is nobler than the statesman whose eloquence makes history but who sells his influence for cash or preferment.

It is not environment but purpose that makes a man large or small.

Many of us will find when we overstep the boundary of the beyond that we are not received with the envious acclamations which have greeted us here, and others will be surprised that they are cordially welcomed there, though here no one doffed his hat when they passed.

Our theory of life is not God's theory, and the things we work hardest for must be left behind when the time comes to put on our shroud.

But if the really good things are evenly distributed, so also are the sorrows of life. They are the fire and anvil in the smithy by which crude metal is changed to a Toledo blade.

Disease never asks concerning a man's bank-account when he rings the door-bell. He is equally indifferent to all, and is never swayed by favoritism. He is past all bribery, and has no compunction, but goes where he is sent.

The millionaire may give his child a gilded

crutch, but it is just as truly a crutch as that of the poor man's boy. A crutch is always a crutch, and neither poverty nor wealth can make it less.

The rich may place a costly monument on a grave and the poor no monument at all, but the sleepers sleep the same sleep, and the monument counts for nothing.

Bismarck for three years endured the pangs of royal neglect. No more unhappy man than he in all Europe. Like a caged lion he chafed. The man whose frown meant war, whose smile meant peace, was like the poorest peasant of Germany in this—he suffered.

The peasant boy was torn from his home to become a soldier; the statesman has been banished. The cup of the one and the bowl of the other were brimming full. They were both alike in their ill fortune. The first was a clumsy youth whom no one will ever hear of; the other was a prince who will never be forgotten. The difference between the two in the matter of happiness or misery is not perceptible.

Your surroundings count for very little; your character counts for a good deal. A man is not noble because he has a title and is permitted to

talk with kings. There are great souls dressed in tatters and small souls robed in purple.

By and by we shall see what our eyes are now too dull to perceive—that, whatever our station in life, we make our own misery and happiness, and neither wealth nor poverty has anything to do with them. The creative power is in the heart, the purpose, the aim.

Pity it is that we remain so long blinded to this fact.

HEROES AND HEROINES.

“ And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.”—Gen. i. 26.

THERE is something exceedingly encouraging in this statement with which the Bible opens, because it places man on a high level.

The work of creation was well-nigh finished; the myriads of stars had wheeled into line, ready for their march through the ages; the earth teemed with fruitfulness, every manner of creature rejoiced in life, and the whole machinery of the universe had been set in motion.

And yet a sense of incompleteness prevailed. Something was wanting which would give significance to the whole. Without that something all that had been done would fall short of perfection. Then came the imperative suggestion, “ Let us make man.” But what kind of a being should he be? The innumerable host of angels and arch-angels must have been filled with curiosity as they

looked on the wondrous spectacle of revolving worlds, conscious that the purpose of creation was yet to be revealed. The house had been built, but it was without an occupant. "What shall be the shape and what the characteristics of this new being?" they asked, and the answer came back, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."

Then he must be a creature with aspirations, with a thousand possibilities, with a royal nature, with the capacity for exercising sovereignty over physical forces and over himself—a very god in miniature, whose manifest destiny is the companionship which heaven provides.

It may be true that we are prone to evil, that we succumb to temptation, that we have accumulated an appalling amount of depravity, but the likeness to God is still in the soul and has not been effaced. Theologians may tell us that this depravity is total; but no man can sit in impartial judgment on himself without seeing that the elements of true greatness remain and can be so developed that he shall become wholly good instead of partly bad. The dignity of human nature is a persistent fact which no amount of theological

controversy can eliminate, and no man in all the multitude but feels at times the pulsing of higher hopes and the consciousness that he may yet fulfil his mission.

Men and women are nobler than we think. In the great fabric of the community are golden threads of personal heroism, of self-sacrifice, of calm and quiet endurance, never told by orator, never sung by poet. The heroes and heroines of ordinary life are too numerous for counting. Men and women are daily facing emergencies which require a loftier courage than was ever displayed on the field of battle. That physical daring which under excitement and the impulse of a love of glory stands amid shot and shell and bears the flag aloft through a shower of bullets may be altogether admirable, and is certainly worthy of the rewards of honor which it receives; but there is a nobler daring, and it deserves a far higher meed of praise, as when the young man catches a glimpse, by a flash of lightning through the darkness, of the inevitable results of his evil life, and with a mighty effort breaks from the entanglement of vicious habits, and in spite of cajoleries and gibes and jeers claims possession of himself and maintains

the claim with a will that no circumstances can break.

Who can tell how many experiences of this kind occur every year in a city like this? Few hear of them, for they are wrought in silence or solitude. Such a Hercules does not become famous by his achievement, but he is nobler than any Olympic god that ever found a place in history or mythology.

There are wives who bear the brunt of ill fortune without a murmur, husbands who struggle with poverty, or impending poverty, with a calm fortitude which excites the pity of the "cloud of witnesses" in the upper air; both men and women who have secret sufferings so great that their hearts are beating a dead-march to the grave, but from whose lips no word of complaint escapes; and girls by the score who keep themselves unspotted in spite of fate, preferring the loneliness of a dingy room with honesty for company to the gaudy surroundings which are bought with impurity of life.

These are not rare instances by any means. If you could peer into the souls of passers-by you would find them at every corner. These are the

silent gods and goddesses of our modern day, whose statues are not to be found in any Pantheon, but will certainly be found in the temple of eternity. They belong to the unrecognized nobility—to that peerage of God who are doomed to suffering to-day, but will rejoice with great gladness to-morrow.

One illustration will suffice. It is a pathetic story, but it is also a true one. The aged father needed constant care, and the daughter, thinking her first duty was to him, bade her suitors good-night. While watching at his side she developed a frightful and perhaps fatal malady. Though she might be saved by an operation she refused to submit lest anxiety should hasten the parent's death. "I am nothing," she said; "he is everything," and so the malady reinforced itself week by week. She deliberately and knowingly spent herself for him, and he fell into his last sleep unconscious of the sacrifice which that noble soul was making.

Total depravity? It is blasphemy to utter the words in such a connection. Better far the language of Genesis, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."

Human nature is like an armful of hickory in the fireplace, with an armful of pine underneath. The hickory needs only to be kindled and it will fill the room with genial heat. Men and women can do anything under the proper influence. The capacity is there; supply the motive, and there is no degree of heroism which may not be attained.

BEARING GOOD FRUIT.

“The truth of the gospel . . . bringeth forth fruit.”—Col. i. 5, 6.

EVERY tree that was designed to be fruit-bearing will accomplish its mission, but in its wild state it will produce very poor fruit. It may be a beautiful, symmetrical, and vigorous tree, but the apples or pears which load its branches are quite useless for domestic purposes.

The intelligent farmer recognizes the fact that he can change the character of his wild trees and force them to produce something of marketable value. In the course of a few years he can so alter the complexion of affairs that he will have a profitable orchard. He may possibly throw a few bushels of compost about the roots in order to give them a better opportunity, or, in the language of modern psychology, furnish them with a new environment, but something more is necessary. The

roots are perfectly willing to do their proper work, and the sap runs through the ordained channels with freedom and avidity, but the apples are still poor and small and bitter.

Then he purchases at some nursery a number of slips from a famous kind of fruit-bearer, whose apples are rosy and large and luscious. With his knife he lops off the branches of his wild apple-tree near the trunk and grafts thereon these purchased slips. The roots of the wild tree do not object to the change, for they send the sap to heal the wound and seem to be proud that the substitution has been made. In good time the useless wild apple-tree becomes the king of the orchard, and its fruit repays the farmer for all his trouble.

Human nature is also wild. Left to itself, unchecked by restraints, unimpelled by lofty aspirations, it is vigorous, and in many respects admirable, but it does not produce the best results of which it is capable.

Man has an unmeasured, if not an immeasurable, capacity for self-development, and it may be true, for aught we know, that with time enough he might gradually evolve into a philosopher and a

saint; but it is also true that by furnishing him with certain ideas and hopes and motives you can give him at once what it would require ages to acquire. In like manner it may be possible for the wild apple-tree to change its character and by slow improvement produce the kind of fruit which the farmer forces it to bear in three or four years by the process of grafting.

Now religion supplies us with the incentives which are necessary to the best quality of manhood. It takes our caprices and passions and recklessness and crude ambitions in hand, appeals first to the brain and then to the heart, places before us an ideal, tells us we are quite able to accomplish great things and to make our lives valuable to ourselves and to the community, and then commands us to fight the good fight like a chevalier without fear and without reproach.

The man who is not conscious of an obligation to leave something better in the world at his death than was to be found there at his birth does not understand the highest purpose of life. Every one's years and example and character ought to count for something. It may be more or it may be less, but it should be something. A purely

selfish life, even when it is crowned with a kind of success, such as wealth or literary achievement or fame in any of its shapes, is worth less in the way of general happiness than the life of the humblest artisan who has made the most of his environment and the best of himself.

The object of religion, then, is to draw out your finer qualities, and that is most effectively done by giving you ideas, moral principles, and such convictions as will represent a noble present and a hopeful future; for you must have a future in order to have a present. Say what you will, a belief in immortality is necessary to a thoroughly developed and symmetrical soul.

Well, which of the many systems of religion which prevail in different quarters of the globe will serve you best? Will you go to Buddhism for this divine impulse, or to Confucius, or to Zoroaster, or to Mohammed, or to Christianity? Remember, we have no prejudices either for or against any of these movements. We stand outside of them all, determined to judge with absolute impartiality. We look with a critical eye, because very important interests are involved in our decision. We have only one rule to judge by,

and that must be applied relentlessly. The rule is this: Whatever system of religious thought produces the best results is the one for us to adopt.

We shall not wait long before reaching a conclusion. A Christian civilization, with all its faults, is the highest yet known; a Christian public opinion is the fairest and most just; a Christian manhood is closest to the ideal. These facts are indisputable.

Throw your mere creeds to the winds, for they are a snare and they produce confusion. They have done more harm than good. You have no use for them, and they are only an impediment. But take the words of the Teacher, and incorporate them into your life. Begin with that love for your kind which makes every sufferer your neighbor; convince yourself that there is a meaning in all the events of life and that a kindly Providence would overrule them for your good; look forward to a life beyond, in which loved ones will meet. These truths are all you need. They will make you a good father, citizen, patriot, friend, and man. A life based on them will be the best life that the human mind can conceive.

Christianity rests solely on the fact that it can do more for us and make more of us than any other religion known to man. There is no mystery in it. It helps us to live honestly and to die bravely, therefore we defend and support it.

THE DISCIPLINE OF LIFE.

“ Before I was afflicted I went astray : but now have I kept Thy word.”—Ps. cxix. 67.

WHY we are so constituted that nobility of character can only be attained through the discipline of sorrow is as yet an unsolved problem.

That we must needs travel over the corduroy road of difficulty, successive obstacles, harsh circumstance, and continuous effort if we would reach the gate of Paradise or fit ourselves to cross its threshold is the moral puzzle of the universe.

In our unwisdom we think the macadamized and level highway a better means of progress, and are astounded when told that smooth roads make small men.

He who would get a glimpse of the widest landscape must climb the hill from which alone it can be seen. That is the first law in the statute-book of Providence.

The night is gruesome and lonely, but half the

universe is veiled from him who has not seen the stars as well as the sun, and darkness alone can render them visible.

This, too, is the law, namely, that you must sit amid the shadows of night if you would see the heavens at their best.

You cannot get music from the cello with loose strings. They must be stretched; and if they could they would cry out with pain, but the stretching until concert-pitch is reached is what gives the musician an instrument worthy of his skill.

A large fortune is the worst accident that can befall a youth, for his temptations are stronger than his ambitions. The boy with money inherited from his father, and, therefore, with nothing to work for, is already half conquered by evil passions. The youth with a high heart and wholesome poverty receives his inheritance from God, and God's gifts are better than man's.

God's denials are the best part of His providence. He gives nothing without its price, and that price is toil. We find fault at first, but later on discover that what is worth having is worth working for; that work gives dignity to the soul and is the equivalent of education.

That is the secret of omniscience which we find it hardest to learn.

The men who live in marble and bronze because they have done us such service that we cannot forget them, and would fain express our gratitude by means of the sculptor's art, are they who have borne the brunt of circumstance.

It is also true that personal sorrows, as the loss of dear ones, have an uplifting tendency. Bereavement forces the soul to recognize its destiny. Tears are sometimes telescopes with which other worlds are viewed. Aching hearts feel their helplessness and then call on God for the comfort that is not within reach. They see visions, have revelations, and doors are opened the key to which is forged out of some grief.

The ties of earth are loosened that we may be bound by stronger cords to heaven. The cruelty of death imbues us with a longing for immortality. The surgeon cuts in order to save the body, and when it is all over we bless the knife. God wounds because a wounded soul needs sympathy and consolation, and can only find them in thoughts of another life.

An artist had just finished a splendid fresco on

the ceiling of a cathedral. Pleased with his work, he stepped back to note the general effect. Forgetful of the dizzy height, he was about to take one step more—the fatal step—when his quick-witted assistant dashed a mass of color on the picture and ruined it. The painter sprang forward—his life was saved.

In like manner, God's severest discipline is always merciful. The only purpose is to compel us to see what He wishes us to see, and to see it as He sees it. If He ruins our hopes or gives our love a wrench or sends the dread Messenger to our household, the sad song we sing brings the angels nearer, and from the ashes of consumed desires springs a faith which draws the curtain aside and shows us a better life.

That God chastens because He loves is a hard saying, but they who have been chastened can oftentimes find in their agony a treasure which happiness is too blind to discover.

The end to be sought is largeness of soul, and this—so strangely are we made—is to be attained, not by having our own way, but by giving up our way and adopting God's way.

LITTLE PEOPLE WHO LIVE LITTLE LIVES.

“When thou wast little in thine own sight.”—1 Sam. xv. 17.

IF you happen to be strolling through the fields in the springtime of the year you are more than likely to run upon a bed of wild violets at the foot of a maple-tree in some obscure corner. No other eyes than yours have ever seen them, and no other eyes, perhaps, will ever see them again, for in a few days their little lives will be ended and they will have withered.

They have their mission, nevertheless, and who shall say that it is unimportant? They are fashioned in beauty; their slender stems bend with grace to the passing breeze; the conical leaves are of an exquisite shade of green, and the purple petals are painted with a skill which no artist can borrow. He who was at the pains to create them was not without a purpose in that act. He had a plan for this wild violet, on which He bestowed

no perfume, as well as for the honeysuckle, which fills the air with fragrance. And if it blossoms with fidelity and dies with resignation, as much credit may be accorded to it as will be given to the imperious oak or the stately elm, which attracts the attention of every traveler.

If you were learned in the language of flowers you might kneel on the sod and hear the complaint of some discontented violet. "I am of no consequence," it might say in despair, "and wonder why I was made. No one knows or cares that I am here. I live, I die; that is all the story I have to relate. No one is better for my coming and no one will miss me when I go."

And yet it is possible that that bed of violets, blossoming and withering under the maple, and upon which you have chanced in your aimless stroll, has set you upon serious thoughts. It is an epitome of the universe, as far beyond the reach of your power to make as blazing Arcturus in the evening sky. It is a clue to a thousand mysteries, and all unconsciously to itself it may lead you up the spiral staircase of logic until you lie reverent and prostrate in the awful presence of Deity.

The violet is a type of humanity. We, too,

wonder why we are here. We are so small, so insignificant; we can do so little; we are so slenderly gifted; we live such narrow lives and have such meager influence that we are overwhelmed with disappointment. What does it mean and what does it all amount to? A thousand times we ask the question, and get no answer. If we had conspicuous ability—could sing some song that would be remembered, or paint some picture that would be hung in the galleries of the future, or do some deed that would leave our name as a heritage—our lot would be plainly desirable. Or if, with lower ambition, we could affect the lives of those within the circle of our acquaintance—make them think and see more clearly, temper their souls for nobler tasks, contribute to their comfort and happiness in some essential way—we should feel that there was a purpose in our birth and an object in our lives. But to be simply commonplace—an odorless violet under a maple in an obscure corner—it gives us a sinking at the heart, and we grow weary and despondent.

How many of us have passed through this experience and reached the conclusion that we are of no value! How many of us have thoughtfully

summed up our lives and painfully declared to ourselves that we count for nothing!

But such sighs are based on a mistake. We misinterpret God, and are therefore led astray. We have a plan of our own, and wonder why the Almighty does not make His world to conform to it, instead of seeking His plan and persuading our wills to conform to that.

In the universe as constituted by Him the humble positions are vastly in the majority. We are neither expected nor asked to do much, but to do a little and do it well. It is not demanded of us that we shall stamp our characters on a generation, since the ability to do so has not been given; but if we keep our narrow house in order, greet the small duties of each coming day with cheerfulness, throw a kindly word to the passer-by, drop a penny into the beggar's hat, and maintain the calm serenity of a contented heart, the evening shadows will not fail to bring us our reward.

There is but one Niagara, but on every hillside is a rippling rill. As much credit is due to the rivulet that sings as to the cataract that roars—neither more nor less. Each was made for a specific purpose, and each must accomplish that pur-

pose. The rivulet has no right to complain, the cataract no right to be proud. Not ability, but excellence, determines the measure of merit.

Only Richard could wield a sword six feet long, but victory in the battle did not depend so much on Richard's sword as on the arrows of his brave army. He could work miracles of valor in single combat, and loud huzzas greeted his deeds of prowess, but after all it was the rank and file of stalwart yeomen twanging the bowstring who drove the enemy from the field and planted the banner of England there.

It is always so. The obscure make history when each man does his duty, and human progress is more the result of what takes place in private life than of what our giants do. The world consists of little people, each of whom is doing his little work; but the aggregate influence is an irresistible dynamic force for good. The best men and women are unknown. There is a long list of saints whose names will not be heard until the Day of Judgment—men who have made a hard fight with fate amid surroundings too lowly for recognition, and women who have sacrificed more than any one knows except One.

It is not the smallness of your life, but the quality of it, that is important. You cannot be an oak or an elm, but if you are a violet under a maple, drinking in the sunshine and the dew, you should be content, for in the providence of God humble lives cheerfully lived have infinite value.

VITAL RELIGION—WHAT IS IT?

“ Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father.”—
James i. 27.

NO more succinct statement of what is essential in the formation of a religious character was ever made.

We are told in simple language, which the humblest can understand, that God's requirements are few; that this life can be made worth living, and the other life anticipated with pleasure, by obeying two injunctions, namely, being helpful to those who are struggling with adversity, and keeping our souls clean and wholesome.

If “ pure religion and undefiled,” embodied in our daily actions, will insure the approval of God, and if it consists in doing all the good that lies in our power and in making for ourselves a record of impregnable honesty, then we must agree that religion is indispensable, and we can no more afford

to live without it than we can live without a roof over our heads or food for our table.

If the church will pardon us for the criticism, we should like to say that it has taught men to look at life from the wrong standpoint. It tells us that we must believe certain doctrines before we can lead a certain kind of life. These doctrines are of a complex character, and sharp controversy arises. If we must believe before we can live, then unless we believe we cannot live, and many a noble soul has lost its grip on the higher life because it could not make the doctrine intelligible or even reasonable. That is a misfortune of the gravest kind and one to be greatly deplored. When the church says to a man, "You must accept this and that dogma, and accept it with the shade of meaning which I ascribe to it," it makes religion too much of an intellectual process, while the spiritual process is lost. If a man rejects the dogma he is apt to think that dogma is an essential element of religion, whereas in very truth it is nothing of the kind. That mistake may prove to be fatal, and his whole life may be blighted.

On the other hand, when a man is told that since this is God's world, and he is God's child,

he must therefore seek the approval of God by being of service to his fellows—encouraging the weak, lifting up the downtrodden, defending the oppressed, setting an example of honorable dealing which will be attractive to others—there is no room for controversy, and the only debate possible is as to the best way of accomplishing these results. He may begin this work without any dogmas whatever, may not know that there is such a document as a creed in existence, but you cannot deny that he is a loyal follower of the Christ. He need not hesitate to carry his pure motives, his uprightness, his self-sacrifice to the foot of the Throne, and need have no fear that he will not be welcomed by angelic hosts.

Moreover he cannot long pursue such a course without becoming, in its best sense, a firm believer. He may not accept all of the Thirty-nine Articles, but that is of no consequence. He will accept the general principles on which the earthly career of Jesus was based, and the moral law which He proclaimed in such startling phrases that we can hardly resist calling it a revelation.

He will not only believe in a God who rules the world wisely and justly, and in a Providence

which overlooks the experiences which come to each one of us, but will perforce reach the conclusion that this God has arranged affairs in a fatherly way.

When he is seeking for an ideal life—the best conceivable life, the life after which it would be perfectly safe to model his own—he will find it in the Christ, and the record of it in the New Testament. That great example will impress itself on his mind, and his respect for the Nazarene will grow to admiration, and his admiration will increase until it becomes worship.

Further than this, he will see at a glance that there is a right and a wrong in the universe. He does not know how evil originated, neither does he care. It is sufficient that it exists and that he must avoid it if possible. It is plain to him that the right enlarges the soul and makes it strong, healthy, and happy, while the wrong hampers his action and makes him cowardly. It does not take long, then, to discover that it is always better, even though it be at great cost, to maintain the right than to surrender to the wrong.

Once more, he sees that no man completes his work in this life, and as incompleteness is an anom-

aly in a wisely governed world, he reaches the conclusion that beyond the confines of the present there must be a future ; that death is only another name for change, and that he has nothing to dread when that change comes.

He began by living a good life, but while living it he has gradually acquired a series of beliefs which constitute his creed. It is not the creed of the church, but it is quite sufficient for all his purposes. No church can afford to reject him, for he stands where St. James stood when he wrote the words of our text, and where Christ stood when He preached the Sermon on the Mount.

He has in his soul all the essentials of a vital religion, is equipped to live, and prepared for immortality.

DO WHAT YOU THINK IS RIGHT.

“ I know . . . that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.”
—Rom. xiv. 14.

WE have here a very broad and important principle of action. St. Paul applies the principle to only a few things, but there is no reason why we may not apply it to many things.

The Apostle says that some men esteem one day above another, while others regard all days alike. He further says that many regard certain articles of food as unclean, while others entertain a different opinion. Neither of these classes, he declares, is justified in condemning the other for following their convictions. No one man can be the judge for all the rest. Each must be “fully persuaded in his own mind,” and then do what he thinks is right. Paul carries his principle so far as to assert that if a given course is entirely inno-

cent in itself, still if you think it is wrong that settles the matter for you, and you commit a sin in following it.

You are to do what you yourself think is right—not what other people tell you is right.

You are to exercise your own best judgment when deciding what is harmful or innocent, and God will reckon with you on that basis.

If you have been endowed with reasoning faculties and with a moral nature you are by their exercise to erect a standard for yourself and to create an ideal which it shall be your purpose to attain. When you have made the standard you are to act in accordance with it, and when you have made your ideal you are to keep it in view with eyes that are loyal and steadfast.

In a single word, St. Paul would have you be yourself, even though you become unlike everybody else.

You are not to be as a drop of water in a bucket of water—undistinguishable from the general mass; but rather as one grain of sand on a sea-shore of sand, or as one leaden shot in a bagful of shot—in close relations with every other grain of sand or every other shot, but still maintaining

an individuality of your own which cannot be lost and with which you refuse to part.

This is only another way of saying that in the providence of God there is no such thing as a crowd to be treated as a whole, but that He wishes you to retain your peculiar personality under all circumstances, and will attend to your special needs in a special way.

You are to begin by being your simple self; you are to continue by thinking for yourself and hammering out convictions which are your personal property; you are to end by acting for yourself. Then when you get to heaven there will be only two questions for you to answer: Did you have a clear and distinct idea of what you ought to do? and, Did you do what you thought you ought to do?

Suppose we apply this rule to some of the ordinary matters of daily life. There is in the community an almost violent difference of opinion on the subject of theaters and of dancing and of riding for pleasure on a Sunday afternoon.

Now it is generally admitted that none of these things is wrong in itself, and yet a majority of the clergy frown with almost equal disfavor on them

all. And since the clergy are thoughtful folk, and make it their business to examine our pleasures from a moral standpoint, and are not to be suspected of personal motives, their opinions should have due weight. Not conclusive weight; because they cannot stand in our stead at the bar and shield us from the consequences of not following our own convictions. If they could the affair would assume an entirely different aspect. If we could feel that they are authorized to tell us what to do and what not to do; if they could simply say to the Lord, "We advised him and he followed our advice," and so settle the matter for us, we should then receive their warnings without hesitation. But that is not the case. We stand for ourselves, and there are no proxies in the other world. We therefore give their opinion the highest consideration when they denounce the theater, but remember that we ourselves are the court of last appeal.

Our decision, therefore, as to all these pastimes must come from the fact that we are fully persuaded in our own minds, not by somebody else's mind. There is not a human being who has been endowed with ordinary intelligence who does not

know to an absolute certainty whether an evening at the theater is demoralizing or not. If he thinks it a wrong to go, then it is undoubtedly a crime to go. If in his opinion eating flesh is sinful, then he will surely be held for a misdemeanor if he eats flesh. If he feels that he must apologize for going to the theater or for taking a ride on Sunday or for engaging in the dance, he is morally a coward and is guilty of an offense. No matter how innocent any pleasure may be in itself, if you are ashamed of indulging in it, but still indulge, you are accountable for the commission of a sin.

What dignity it adds to human nature to be thus made the judge of your own actions and to be weighted down with personal responsibility for them! How much healthier and stronger and freer and more progressive and more wholesome society would be if every man had an opinion of his own and the independence which conviction generates!

As it is, half the world does not know why it does this or why it refrains from doing that, and can give no good reason either for its beliefs or its doubts. It follows fashion as a flock of sheep follow the bell-wether; not only fashion in dress, even

when it is uncomely and disfiguring, but fashion in creeds and in politics and in all the other concerns of life.

But St. Paul tells you to use your brains, to use your moral nature honestly and fearlessly, and then to do what you think is honorable and right. If we followed his advice the world would be all the better for it.

YOU SHALL HAVE STRENGTH.

“And as thy days, so shall thy strength be.”—Deut. xxxiii. 25.

HUMAN nature is made of very strange material. We are constantly surprised at our ability to bear what seems to be unendurable. Under the pressure of a great incentive we can accomplish miracles, and when necessity compels we can endure anything.

No man is thoroughly acquainted with himself. There are depths and heights in his soul which he has never explored. In one environment he is a commonplace creature; in another he develops into a hero. The possibility of greatness is hidden somewhere in every man's nature. He is an unconscious giant, but will never do a giant's work until the emergency forces him to. Give him an ordinary road to travel, and he shambles along like a peasant; give him a hill to climb, then thunder

in his ear, "You must!" and he becomes transformed from a clod to a god.

It is the sternness of fate which makes man great. His inclination is to be small, to be comfortable rather than noble, to live easily rather than grandly. It is only when a compelling force on the outside drives him, or when he finds himself in a tangle of circumstances from which extrication seems impossible, that he rises to his full height and accomplishes the task which he has looked upon with trembling timidity. In a word, he is almost omnipotent, but does not know it, and never can know it until God proves it to him by giving him the impossible to do.

During the war the farmer's boy was thrilled by a spark of electric patriotism, but great deeds were beyond his thought. He had never seen the heroic element in his nature. He enlisted as a duty, and for months was only an ordinary soldier in the ranks. By and by, however, he faced a grave danger. There was death in the air. The bullets were flying fast, and he gave up all hope of seeing home again. But with danger came opportunity. That opportunity acted on him like magic. A farmer's boy no longer, he suddenly became a

hero, as though some fairy had swung her wand over his head. He was larger in soul than he ever dreamed of becoming, went into the thick of the fight, and unflinchingly did deeds of prowess. When the shadows of evening fell and the bloody work was over he had a captain's straps on his shoulders, and was by no means the same man who left the plow in the furrow to follow the tap of the drum. Opportunity is another name for metempsychosis, for there are times when we shed the commonplace and become Knights of the Round Table.

But we can endure as well as do when we must. No one knows how much he can bear until he is tried. Providence has made life hard because every man needs the test of fire. Why this is so it might be difficult to say, but that it is so no one can doubt. We are drowsy until some earthquake shock shakes us, and then we become men. Ill fortune is spiritually worth more than what we call good fortune. The rich man's son is apt to slide downhill, while the poor man's boy climbs to the top. If you have all you want your life is without value. If you have nothing that you want the desire to get the best there is is a trans-

figuring influence, though it involves sacrifice and tragedy.

You are content, and your home is a happy one. Wife and child sit at your winter fireside, and you contemplate your surroundings with grateful satisfaction. The sky is blue for you, and the sun always sets in beauty. But you recognize the fact that there are storms to be met, and though you have had immunity thus far you know that it cannot last forever. There are burdens to be borne, and you must fit your shoulders to some of them.

When you think of what may possibly happen the tears come to your eyes. Your income may take to itself wings and speed away, leaving you to sit in the ashes of bankruptcy. That seems hard enough, yet you have a feeling that you can bear it if it is inevitable. But when a white hearse rumbles by your door you know that some father's heart is breaking, and it comes to you that a like disaster may visit you. Life is so uncertain and Death is apparently so capricious. If he should look into the eyes of your little one he might want him. Death plucks beautiful flowers for the garden of God, and if he should pluck your flow-

er—the only one you have, mayhap—what would you do, what could you do? You shudder and grow pale. You fall upon prayer that no white hearse may ever stop at your door. Your life would go out like an extinguished candle. There would be nothing left. That misfortune you cannot bear. Anything else, but not that, you say—so have said many, and then they have wept because the prayer was not answered.

Then Death steals into your house unawares and your flower is gone. Are your shoulders broad enough for that heavy weight? You will sink under it and lie down by the side of the child in the same grave. No, not that; because “as thy days, so shall thy strength be.” When the time comes you find larger endurance of soul than you have credited yourself with, and though the future days may be gray days, and the sun never shines in quite the old way, you can bear the sorrow; you do bear it with a fortitude borrowed from the angels.

Much depends on your faith. No soul that looks at heaven can be crushed by anything that happens on the earth. Once get a glimpse of the future, once see the boy in the garments of the

immortals, and though your heart breaks you would not call him back. It is faith that lightens our load, while doubt doubles its weight. One glance at God, and fate can do you no further harm.

THE BEST THING TO DO.

“ And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.”—Heb. x. 24.

THE man who thinks only of himself and is forgetful of his obligations to others does not count for much either in this world or the next.

A purely selfish man, who wants everything and gives nothing, lives in the suburbs of purgatory and will not have far to go when he dies.

To recognize your rights and ignore your duties is to pursue a policy which angels deplore and devils rejoice at.

God can use a man to the best advantage when the soul which is prone to selfishness evicts its tenant and makes room for the occupancy of heavenly visitants.

The man who seeks for this world's goods exclusively, whose chief possession is a bank-account, will find himself out of place in heaven—a stranger in a strange land.

Money is a good thing to work for, but it is not the only thing, nor the best thing.

It is not well to despise money, but you should remember that while it will purchase much that is desirable it will buy neither character nor happiness. Unless you generously share it with those who are unfortunate it will make you narrow and mean.

The most pitiful spectacle that eye ever looked upon is the man who has more than he knows what to do with, but refuses to give his surplus to keep the wolf away from the door across the street.

The noblest men are those who give, not those who keep, and there is more satisfaction in seeing a poor man's children eat the bread which you have furnished than in sitting at your own table when plenty abounds, if you ignore the poor man's children and let them go hungry.

True religion is a very simple matter. You can get along without a creed, but you cannot get along without doing good to your fellow-creatures who need your help.

The world is full of sorrows and struggles. Tears fall like showers and sighs fill the air as

when the wind sweeps through a forest of pines. Those who suffer are part of the family to which you belong. You have no right to be indifferent. To be neglectful is a crime. If you can lend a helping hand, but refuse to do it on the ground that you wish to use both hands for yourself, you lose an opportunity which Providence has presented, and you will have difficulty in explaining your conduct when the hour of reckoning comes.

Doing good to others is the best way to get a blessing for yourself.

You will find the strongest proofs that the religion you believe in is from God if you will cease studying the theology which is in books and devote an equal time to God's poor in your neighborhood.

When a man gives cheer to another's heart the angels mysteriously put cheer into his own.

It is right and proper to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," but God asks a price for His answer, and that price is that you shall give some one else a share of the bread He gives to you.

If you are suffering from an affliction what will you do? How shall you seek relief? By asking God to lighten your burden? No; by doing what

you can to lighten the burden of some equally troubled soul. If you bring a smile to the trembling lips of another, you will soon discover that a smile is alighting on your own lips, like a butterfly on a flower.

Would you increase your faith? Would you dissipate your doubts? Would you convince yourself that life is very well worth living, even when the shadows throw their gloom on your path? Then visit those who are wearily plodding along, hopeless and friendless.

You will find yourself stronger by forgetting yourself and saying a kindly word to some poor creature who would think he was in heavenly surroundings if he lived under your roof and enjoyed your advantages.

When you are in the presence of the Lord, who was Himself poor and oppressed, and so lonely that He knelt in Gethsemane to ask for help, you will be poorly off if you have nothing better to say than that you accepted all the creeds of the church and kept yourself unspotted from the world. But you will be well off if you can assure Him that you kept some one else unspotted from the world at great pains and sacrifice.

Love God, love your neighbor, obey the command, "Feed My lambs," and you will get a warm welcome at the end of the journey after death.

It is not what you believe, but what you do, that will entitle you to a residence in the New Jerusalem.

You may be worth a million, but if you have done nothing to make the world better you will die a beggar.

You may be counted among the poor, but if you have been a brother to your fellow-men a group of angels will gather about your bed and usher you with songs into the presence of Him who said, "The first shall be last, and the last first."

No one ever yet loved God acceptably who did not love His children.

There is no room in the House not built with hands for a soul that has not made some sacrifice for others.

If you love your kind and manifest that love by generous deeds it will be but a step from your grave to heaven.

SEARCHING AFTER GOD.

“ In the beginning, God.”—Gen. i. 1.

IT is a very great convenience, from an intellectual point of view, to believe in God. It is so much easier to account for what is going on in the universe by assuming His existence than it is by having only chance and accident to deal with.

It is also very comforting, from a spiritual point of view, to feel sure that behind the tangle of life is One who sees it all as our blind eyes cannot, and who has so arranged matters that even tangles subserve a noble purpose.

Tears and struggles that are the result of accident are bitter tears and terrible struggles, but the struggles which are a preliminary to high achievement and the tears which enable the sun to paint a rainbow on our sky are ennobling.

A man may weep and still be glad if God's providence is guiding his destiny, and a man may

laugh and still be wretched if his only religion is a defiance of fate.

If it is a convenience and a comfort to believe, may we also declare that our faith is based on invincible reasoning? Can we logically find our way from the plan which is everywhere manifest to the throne on which sits the Planner?

Let us ask science to come to our aid. Some years ago De Perthes, while exploring the excavations made by his workmen, came across a few pieces of flint that had assumed the shape of arrow-heads. After careful search he found more flint of the same kind. His method of reasoning was very simple. He said: "These are true arrow-heads. It is impossible to be mistaken. They did not come to this particular spot by accident, nor did they take that special shape by chance. It is perfectly safe to assert that they were at some time in the past hammered into arrow-heads by a man who went to work with that purpose in view." De Perthes would have risked his reputation on the truth of that statement, and the whole scientific world would have declared that he was justified in doing so.

The process of reasoning was entirely sound.

The explorer was no more certain that the sun rose that morning than that flint cannot repeatedly take the exact shape of an arrow-head unless there is a man behind the flint with a hammer in his hand and a distinct purpose in his mind.

May we not be permitted to use the same kind of logic in theology, and need we be timid in declaring that this vast machinery and enginery of earth and heaven must be the product of infinite power in which infinite wisdom lies hidden? Shall we hesitate to use the word "must" in its most imperative sense?

It is true that we cannot know all about God, but is it not also true that we can know something about Him? We are told of the Phrygian Tantalus that he stood waist-deep in water, always trying to reach the fruit that was beyond his grasp; and every failure added to his remorse, his mortification, and his unhappiness. Reverse the picture, and you see what the Christian is doing. He is forever reaching up for the secret of God, but never quite grasps it; and yet the constant effort enlarges his soul and gives a sublime dignity to his faith in both the present and the future.

The bird that wings its way over New York, seeking, by a divine instinct, the sunny south when the coming frosts drive him from the northern zone, may have a very poor conception of what is meant by this aggregated population, and may be capable of knowing very little concerning the intricacies of our government; but if that bird were endowed with self-consciousness and imagination a single glimpse would suffice to convince it that the city exists and that something beyond its ken is being done by the people who live in it.

We cannot measure God, neither can we understand Him. He is hidden from us by the blinding mists of time and the equally blinding light of eternity. And yet there have been moments in your life when through the mists the finger-tips of an outstretched hand have pressed your forehead, and you have been forced to believe that behind the finger-tips was an Arm, and behind the arm a Form, and within the Form a heart of love. The man who has never had that experience and never reasoned in this way must be a strange sort of creature. We have repeated to ourselves the words, "Mine heart suspects more than mine eye can see," and felt secure in our faith.

Your search for God is like the ascent of Mont Blanc. Your weary feet plod along the narrow path, and you vainly hope to greet the rising sun from the ice-field that is above the clouds. The shadows of evening fall, darkness settles on the earth, and with your utmost effort you have only reached the little inn half-way to the summit. As you stand in the doorway and see the last violet rays reflected on the mirror of ice up yonder, are you disappointed because you have not accomplished all you hoped for? Can you say you know nothing of Mont Blanc? The struggle has given you an additional self-respect and filled you with a larger admiration of that royal peak.

In like manner the mysteries of God stretch far away to the stars. You would know much, and find that you can know but little. You climb, the unseen Hand in the mists guiding your faltering footsteps, and when the shadows deepen and your life has come to its close you humbly declare that the secret is beyond your reach. But you believe, for you have felt the finger-tips of His hand, and the effort to know Him has made you know yourself.

There is time enough in which to continue the search, for beyond the grave your opportunities will be greater and your faith will change to sight. After the night cometh the morning, and then we shall know more.

WHEN WE COME AND WHEN WE GO.

“For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.”—1 Tim. vi. 7.

IF this statement concerning the two “nothings,” one at the cradle and the other at the grave, were isolated from the context we should boldly assert that St. Paul was mistaken. It is entirely clear that we bring a great deal into this world and that we carry a great deal out of it. Unless we bring something we have no tools with which to accomplish the task that the Almighty has set us; unless we take something with us it would be manifestly unfair either to reward or condemn, for the condemnation and the reward must depend on what we have in our possession when we stand at the bar of judgment.

St. Paul, however, explains himself when he refers with great severity of rhetoric to a class of people who are under the delusion that “gain is

godliness," and his injunction, "From such withdraw thyself," is a warning not to spend too much time in gathering what you must leave behind, and too little in acquiring what you may take with you when you depart.

In other words, the object of revelation is to teach a man the difference between the riches which he must leave to his heirs and assigns and the wealth of character which is his inalienable possession, an integral part of himself both here and hereafter.

Death makes every man financially bankrupt. The moment he dies he becomes poor. There is nothing in the Beyond which he can purchase with cash. No shroud, therefore, has a pocket. The gold from no mine, the money from no mint, passes current in heaven. The angels carry no purses, and the jingle of coin is never heard. You will not get what you want by paying for it, neither will you lack what you need because you have no money. What you have and what you lack will depend wholly on your deserving.

It is very interesting, then, to discuss the two questions, What did we bring into this world? and, What can we carry out of it? for the answer

enables us to formulate that policy of action which will produce the best results.

The wise man will spend his greatest efforts in acquiring what he can keep, and it is folly to exhaust yourself in working for what Death will disdainfully tell you cannot be transported.

The purpose of religion is to inspire you with sound and broad ideas on this subject, to restrain you from wasting your efforts on matters of little moment. Religion and common sense, therefore, or, to put it still more forcibly, religion and the highest philosophy, are one and the same thing.

First, we brought our bodies into this world. This is of no special consequence, because we need them only while we are here and shall leave them in the grave when we go hence. The church has an odd theory that we shall take them with us, but it is to be hoped that this is an error. It is certainly a very undesirable thing to look forward to. By the time we get through with them they will be pretty well worn out. The body is only the soul's raiment, and when we reach heaven we shall need a change.

Second, we came into this world a bundle of undeveloped faculties. A child is a fagot of pos-

sibilities. Not what he is, but what he may become, gives him interest and value. We do not care so much for his environment as for what he will make out of it. His natural qualities are simply an unopened chest of tools, and the experiences through which he will pass are the material out of which he is to make something.

He may be born in a palace or he may be born in a hovel; these are mere accidents or incidents. With our false notions of good and ill fortune we exaggerate the importance of surroundings, but the eternal truth is that surroundings are of very little consequence.

A daily laborer can make as much out of his soul as his employer can make out of his. Neither riches nor poverty impede spiritual progress. One can be as noble in two humble rooms as in the costly mansion, for whether you are in the one or the other the same events happen to you, and they must be controlled by the same qualities of character.

Sorrow is sorrow wherever you find it, and no bank-account can purchase immunity. A grave is a grave, whether there is a costly monument above it or only a headstone of marble. When

you reckon with actual experiences you discover they are independent of wealth or poverty and come to all alike; and when you look at the hearts of men you find the same measure of human nature in them all.

Now, when we take our departure, what shall we carry with us?

Death is a terrible democrat. When he comes he takes no note of where or how you have lived. He ignores all class distinctions with a kind of contempt. He does not care whether your body is clothed in fine linen or in rags. He has been sent for your soul, your naked soul, pure or impure, and that alone will he take with him. He strips your environment from you as you would throw aside a tattered garment. The only thing he will allow you to carry—absolutely the only thing—is your character.

When you reach heaven you are what you are—neither more nor less—and your surroundings in this life are of no account whatever. If you have done well then you will have reason to be satisfied; if you have done ill you will see that you have made a mistake. That is the stern and relentless truth of the case.

When we came into the world we brought a great possibility. When we leave it we shall carry the record of what we have done, and whether that is to be little or much depends entirely upon ourselves.

HOW TO BEAR BURDENS.

“ And He bearing His cross went forth.”—John xix. 17.

“ The heart knoweth his own bitterness.”—Prov. xiv. 10.

A CROSS is part of the household furniture of every family. It is the decree of Providence that it shall be so. It would be very strange if you could find an exception to the rule.

There are many sweets in life, but there was never yet a heart that had no bitterness. There are pages in every book which are never read except by ourselves and One other. The rest of the volume is open to our friends and to the world. God and we have many secrets which are not confided to a third party. He understands us; no one else can. That is a peculiarity of our human life.

And fortunate it is that the veil which covers our hearts cannot be lifted. If we could see all that our neighbors suffer, and they could see what we suffer, the revelation would be very painful,

and life would have an added agony. We are graciously permitted, therefore, to have a place of concealment where we keep our special disappointments and our private griefs, the key to which is never lost or mislaid.

The true and noble make the best of life, and refuse to increase another's sorrow by the recital of their own. Small souls, like babbling brooks, tell everything as they go; but souls that see the plan of God tell all to Him alone and find a certain comfort in their reticence toward others.

The degree of happiness we enjoy, therefore, depends largely on ourselves. Our environment has less to do with happiness than we think. The important question is whether we have the necessary elements within the heart, and if that is decided in the affirmative it makes but little difference what our surroundings are.

It is hard to believe this, for we are living in an age of show and sham and display. In the decalogue of modern society the first law reads, Thou shalt worship no other god but gold. We spend our lives in a scramble for cash, and prove that we have succeeded by an exhibition which is little less than a personal advertisement, and the ob-

ject of which is to excite envy and stimulate avarice.

But we are making a colossal blunder. Happiness comes not from the pocket but from the heart. It cannot be created by wealth nor destroyed by poverty. Where love is there is contentment, and when love is perfect mere surroundings are regarded with something like disdain. It is when the heart is not satisfied that the nature of the environment assumes undue importance. Two rooms will do, if nothing better can be had, when love would build a home; but a palace is too small when the heart is aching. A rag-carpet on the floor and a single flower in blossom on the window-sill, if contentment sits at your fireside, are better than splendor, with distrust or suspicion as your guest.

Here, then, you have two facts which you must meet:

First, there is no life that is not burdened with a grief. It is a hopeless task to search for one, for it will never be found. This grief may come in any one of a thousand shapes, but in some shape it comes to all of us. Its mission is to teach us that there is One who is wiser than we, and to search until we find Him.

There is nothing in all the world that draws us to heaven so gently and yet so irresistibly as the sense of helplessness. Make life a round of pleasure, and the Lord's Prayer would never be uttered. But the smitten soul seeks shelter, as the frightened child rushes into its mother's arms. We may not understand why this is so, but true it is that the best elements of human character have been developed by sorrow rather than success.

Second, the happiness of life must greatly come from the way you look at life. If you jot down the things you want but cannot have it is easy to make yourself miserable. You can be envious until you become morbid and melancholy. If you believe that in being poor or afflicted you have been robbed of your rights no ray of sunshine will fall on your pathway.

A man may look at nature through smoked glass, and he can use smoked glass when looking at himself and his surroundings. Do but reckon your blessings instead of your miseries, and you halve the weight you carry. Form the habit of looking for a silver lining to every cloud, and the cloud itself will seem less dark. Some can be

happy with a farthing candle, while others mourn under the glare of an electric light.

And religion comforts and consoles because it furnishes a cheerful view of every change that comes. There is no hard-fisted and relentless Fate, but a Father in the upper air. It is not chance that robs us of the loved one, but Providence, which does what is best whether we will or no. Slender means are not the synonym of misery, for this world's goods are not to be compared with the other world's goods. You may have the earth and yet have nothing; but if you have heaven you have everything, and no man can take it away.

Therefore recognize the fact that you are to have disappointments and sorrows, but make the best of them, and speak of them only to your best Friend.

Believe that there is light even in darkness, and look for it until you find it. Make your life great and noble by making your soul noble and great. Then you will be glad that you have lived, and many will be sorry when you go.

ONE FOLD AND ONE SHEPHERD.

“ And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold.”—John x. 16.

DENOMINATIONAL pride is another name for religious weakness, and is proof of a small nature. A broad and generous man is in sympathy with all the sects of Christendom, and would not impose the form of worship which he personally prefers on any one, but insists that each man shall believe what he pleases, provided it results in an honest life.

God will never ask what special religious body you belonged to, but whether your faith made you a good citizen, a good father, a good friend, and a good man. There are no sectarians in heaven; they are all lovers of the noble and the true in every clime and in every system of religion known to struggling humanity. A Methodist or an Episcopalian or a Baptist angel cannot be found in the New Jerusalem.

The various sects which are scattered over the earth are simply so many ladders by which the people climb to the upper regions. The foot of each ladder is on the ground, while the other end rests firmly against the Throne. When we die we shall leave the ladders behind, because they will have achieved their purpose and we can have no further use for them.

The path by which you reach the top of a mountain is of no consequence whatever, and if your neighbor chooses to get there in some other way you are very ungracious if you denounce him for exercising his own judgment instead of following yours. His brains belong to him and your brains belong to you. You may do as you please and he may do as he pleases. If his eyes are fixed on the summit, and he is doing what he can to attain it, God will certainly regard him with favor, and you should do no less. The bigot can see only one way, and that is his own way. He lacks a very important element of character because he is not large enough to understand that different temperaments require different incentives, and that what is good for one may possibly be bad for another.

There is altogether too little charity in the world for those who do not find it easy to see things just as we see them. There are a thousand ways to do pretty nearly everything that is worth doing, and one way is as good as another. To call this man a heretic because he has his individual method of solving the puzzle of life, and that man orthodox because he happens to think as you do, is both unwise and unchristian.

If you have a well-developed soul you can worship in any church that was ever built, or you can worship without any church at all. He is a poor kind of creature who is so prejudiced that he cannot find words with which to tell the Lord how grateful he is, whether he sits in a Quaker meeting-house or a Catholic cathedral.

It is not the building, but the idea which it represents, that is important. It is of no consequence whatever that the clergyman wears a surplice or does not wear one; that the service is characterized by pomp and ceremony or conducted without these auxiliaries; that the edifice is the exponent of ecclesiastical architecture or only a barn in the backwoods. If you get the idea you get all you need and all you can ask for. If you are smitten

with remorse because your record has blots and smutches on it the mere robes of the priest who thus smites you will count for nothing; and if you resolve to lead a life of integrity the preacher has accomplished the task which the Lord Almighty gave him, whether he is a Methodist or a Baptist.

The object of the church is not to make a man a sectarian, but to make him loyal to the truth. At least that should be its object, and if it achieves that object, the fact that it belongs to this or that or the other denomination is not worth a second thought.

You should believe in something, and that something should furnish you with noble impulses, with charity for your fellow-men, with pity for the unfortunate, and with a desire to do all that lies in your power to make this old world better because you have lived in it. That much of a creed is absolutely necessary, and when you have that much you want no more. It will give you work enough to keep you busy until Death knocks at the door and sends you word that you are wanted somewhere.

A few convictions hammered out of your own sense of dependence, and the consciousness of your

daily need to be watched over and guided by the invisible beings who "walk the earth both when we wake and when we sleep," will serve you better than all the theology that was ever printed in books.

If you think that one sect serves your purpose better than any other, join it by all means; but be careful that you do not worship the ladder up which you climb instead of the heaven against which the upper end of the ladder rests. And, above all, don't criticize your neighbor because he is made of different stuff and chooses to get to heaven in some other way. If that neighbor is an honorable man and is doing the best his circumstances allow, give him your good wishes even if he goes to some other church than your own. And if he prefers to say his prayers at home or in the woods or in any of the other temples of God, still give him a helping hand and do not insult him because he cannot think as you do, or insult the Almighty because He made that man to do just as he is doing.

You cannot prescribe a diet that shall be equally beneficial to all. When you spread your banquet allow each guest to take what suits him. That is

the only true hospitality. If a man has any religion at all do not ask him what kind it is and sneer at him because it is not your kind, but be grateful because he and you are trying to get to the same place, though he takes one road and you another.

FALSE IDEAS OF SALVATION.

“ He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it.”—Matt. x. 39.

IT is very tiresome to be constantly told that the chief purpose in life is to save your soul.

There is a kind of subtle and poisonous selfishness in having reference to your own salvation in everything you do.

There can be as much selfishness in spiritual concerns as in worldly matters, and it is equally bad in both.

The religion which teaches you to save others is a great deal better than the religion which prompts you to save yourself.

If you do your duty you can trust your salvation to God and not give a thought to it.

The largest and broadest question for you to consider is not whether you will be all right in the future, but whether other people will be all right.

If you concern yourself with lending a helping

hand to all who are in trouble, you need not waste any time in wondering what will become of you after the judgment-day.

The man who on that occasion can honestly say, "Lord, I was too busy in saving others to think much about my own soul," will find himself in the best possible frame of mind to enjoy the peculiar pleasures of Paradise.

A person may be just as mean in the use he makes of religion as another person is in his use of the opportunities of financial success, and meanness is simply meanness, and therefore contemptible, in whatever department of life it makes itself manifest.

Here, for example, is an avaricious creature who is planning and plotting to get all the dollars that are within reach into his own pocket. He is not particular about the means he employs, if only his bank-account grows bigger and he is able to surround himself with all the comforts and luxuries which money can buy.

He contemplates the result of his labors with serene satisfaction and never gives either eye or ear to the misery which fills the world so full. He has enough to eat, and it matters little whether

others starve or not. He has a surplus which he does not need, but he never dreams of parting with it to charity or education. He lives in the attitude of grasping, and his sleep is not disturbed by the moans of wretchedness, the sighs of despair, or the sobbing of bereavement. He has saved himself, so far as this world is concerned, and as for the rest of mankind they may sink or swim for aught he cares.

We see these statements illustrated on every hand. The money of trade flows in some directions in wide and deep channels, and does not flow in other directions at all. The rich are reservoirs holding more than they can use, but it seldom happens that they lay a conduit from their reservoir to some college or charitable institution, to supply it with whatever will make it effective. The tendency of human nature is to keep what it has, even when it has more than it needs, and to become indifferent to any moral obligation to assist the poor and unfortunate.

The pulpit denounces that kind of selfishness as beneath the dignity of manliness and honor, and is quite right in its criticisms. But we are inclined to think that religion may be as much a perversion

as avarice. If it teaches you to pray for yourself instead of working for others; if you are indifferent to the wrongs from which mankind suffer; if you have never spent your time and energy to reclaim some one who has strayed in forbidden paths, you may possibly have a religion that is better than nothing, but you have not the kind of religion which Christ came to reveal.

No soul will be saved in the future world which has not tried to save some other soul besides itself in this world.

If the rich man who spends his money on himself is deserving of censure, so also is the religious man who hopes to get to heaven whether other people get there or not.

Do not fret about your personal salvation. Put the matter out of your mind as of no particular consequence. You will go where you belong. Nothing can interfere with that law of spiritual gravitation. It will be utterly impossible for you to get into the wrong place, for your deserts will either lift you up by their buoyancy or sink you down by their weight. If you have heavenly qualities of character you will assuredly go to heaven, and if you have not you will never get there.

What you are to seek, therefore, is the qualities of character and not your salvation. Do what is right by yourself; do what is right for others; live honorably and help your neighbors to live in the same way; smite evil and encourage truth; be the chivalrous friend of the defenseless and oppressed; give according to your means to those who have been overtaken by ill fortune; leave behind you a record of integrity and uprightness, and when you begin your flight into the future you will take as straight a path to the throne of God as the homing pigeon does to its distant cote.

When you pray, pray for the ability and the opportunity to be of service to your fellow-man, for in that way alone can you become truly great.

The man on a wreck who swims ashore on the sly and leaves his comrades in the lurch is a very cowardly sort of fellow, and the man who embraces religion because it will help him to get away from eternal fire, and who does not care whether others burn or not, has a very slender chance of winning the approval of Him who is Father to all His children alike. But if you can say, "I loved others," He will surely say in reply, "Therefore I love you."

AN AGE OF RELIGIOUS INQUIRY.

“ But the greatest of these is charity.”—1 Cor. xiii. 13.

THE future historian, now in his swaddling-clothes, will find himself very much interested in this last half of the nineteenth century and pronounce it unique in many important particulars.

In the matter of material development it is a marvel, and in the matter of spiritual research it holds a position of unrivaled excellence.

The laws of nature have been lassoed, tamed, and broken to harness. The resources of steam, which our grandfathers explored, which made them feel that they had stumbled on a series of miracles, and which changed the complexion of the world's commerce, forcing our white-winged fleet of sailing-vessels to come to anchor and give way to the magician who hid himself in the bunker of anthracite coal—these resources are well-nigh exhausted. The winds as a propelling power have become ob-

solete, have taken their place among the genii, the myths, the superstitions of the past. Steam is striking its tents and will soon fall into innocuous desuetude. Our needs have grown so pressing that it can no longer supply them. During the next fifty years it will become a reminiscence. The electric spark is to be the working energy of the twentieth century. It has just crossed our threshold with letters of introduction from students of scientific prestidigitation, and we have only had time to look at its face and its stature and to note its aggressive bearing; but it would not be strange if it were to achieve wonders which our children's children will regard with awe and admiration.

The world is not loitering; it is taking long strides. One wishes to live while these strange things are happening, for to die just now is like leaving the theater when the play is half finished.

But no less marvelous are the spiritual signs of the times. It might be safely asserted that there never was an age of such religious fervor as this. We are not optimists, but impartial critics, when we say that the average man is more interested in finding out whether or no he has a soul, and, if so,

what is to become of it, than ever before. The largest hall in New York can be readily filled if the subject discussed is the certainty of two worlds and the possibility of communication between them. The observer of current opinion is amazed at the attractive quality of these and similar topics, and is forced to the conclusion that the general appetite for information concerning the future has become almost abnormally whetted. In some respects it is the most devout and the most reverently inquisitive age of which history bears record. Skepticism veils its face because it is impotent; ridicule sneers in private, but seldom openly; sarcasm has discovered that the edge of its sword is dulled. Right or wrong, pleased with fables or not, this teased and fretted world is looking anxiously for some light which the pulpits of Christendom do not as yet furnish. The greed for facts concerning tomorrow, and the solicitude with which men and women watch for them, are so pathetic that they are almost tragic.

Accompanying this new phase of life is an indifference to theology and to conventional worship. Preachers are not apparently aware of the changes that are taking place in the public mind.

They wonder why their pews are not filled, and attribute it to the indifference of the people to spiritual things. But when two tables are spread, one with food that satisfies, the other with food that fails to do so, it is not surprising that the hungry go where they can get what they want; and it is mere blindness for the preacher to declare that no one is hungry because no one asks for the food he provides. There is no love of theology, no reverence for creeds, in this generation, but there is a longing for information on the subjects indicated. And if the clergyman insists on theological discussion he simply imperils his usefulness.

The new thought is not always wise, and frequently it is marked by recklessness and a want of common sense. What is called spiritualism and theosophy and Christian science and a score of other names is simply a cry for help. We may not accept any one of the theories which are advocated, we may find fault with them all as being partly alluring and partly hideous—that is a matter of small consequence. Watch the patient crowds that attend meetings where such subjects are treated and you will soon discover that a great religious revolution is in silent progress. That fact is one to which a thoughtful man must give

his attention, for it constitutes a sign of the times which no critic can afford to ignore.

It is not prudent to be overhasty in judgment. The wise man has no prejudices. What he thinks is wrong may turn out to be right, and charity will save him many a pang. This is a large world, and its mysteries are as yet unsolved. You have no right to say, "Believe as I do." That is tyranny and folly. There are other brains besides yours, and probably as good as yours.

If men are searching for truth in any direction encourage them. To have a desire to know the truth is itself elevating and ennobling, and if they have taken the wrong road they will find it out and return. If crowds like to hear a discourse on the destiny of the soul let them gather in whatever numbers they please. Ring the bells for them, even though you do not go yourself. Call it theosophy or what not—who cares if men are helped by it? Don't drink unless you are thirsty; but it is not necessary to grumble at others who are thirsty and therefore drink. Go your way with your own thoughts, but do not forget that your neighbor has the same right to go his way with his thoughts.

But the greatest of these is charity.

SCIENCE AND THE SOUL.

“ Our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”—
2 Tim. i. 10.

THIS is an intense statement. Death has been abolished, or rather all fear of death, by assuring men that their narrow existence on the earth is the beginning rather than the end of the soul's career. When the fact of immortality is brought into radiant prominence all the motives which govern us in this life are changed by being ennobled. We are not to work with the grave in view, but with the knowledge that heaven is just below the horizon. There is a kind of spiritual legerdemain in such a conviction. We suddenly become disrobed of our peasant's garb and are clothed in the raiment of princes.

When an old and grim Norse chieftain lay dying the priest asked him, among other things, if he could forgive his enemies. He feebly replied, “ I

have no enemies; I have killed them all." The holy father was astounded, and sought an explanation. The sufferer whispered, "I have killed my enemies by changing them into friends."

In like manner Death has been abolished, for he is no longer the grave-digger of the race, but the sentinel who stands with his hand on the door of another life, ready to open it when the summons comes to each of us in turn.

But if we close the Bible and seek for cheering arguments elsewhere, they are not difficult to find. Science very reverently corroborates the assertions of the text, and does it without hesitation or mental reservation. It ought to be so, and therefore it is so, for if there is a God's world and a God's Word, the two may not contradict each other if rightly interpreted. When science speaks, then revelation must needs cry Amen! And when revelation speaks, science must nod its head in approval.

In the matter of immortality the Word and the world teach the same lesson. For example, Professor Young, of Princeton, tells us some startling and suggestive truths about the solar system, its duration and its probable destiny. There seems

to be no doubt among astronomers that the sun is gradually cooling and that its shrinkage is about two hundred and fifty feet each year. Since the diameter of that body is more than eight hundred and fifty thousand miles this slight shrinkage seems of no consequence. It is not the rate of shrinkage, though, but the fact of shrinkage, which we are to consider; for however slow the process of decay may be, it still remains certain that at some time in the future the fire in the sun will go out, and when that event occurs the whole dependent system of worlds, from Mercury to Neptune, will go out with it.

Professor Young is very conservative in his estimate of duration, but he says that if we can assume the truth of certain statements, which it would be difficult to deny, it is safe to conclude "that the sun's past history must cover some fifteen or twenty million years." Then, turning to the future, he adds that at the present rate of radiation "the sun must within five or ten million years" become so changed that "life on the earth as we now know life would probably be impossible."

Now we approach the argument in which we

are all interested. It is clear "that the present system of stars and worlds is not an eternal one. If we carry our imagination backward we reach at last a beginning of things which has no intelligible antecedent; if forward, an end of things in stagnation. That by some process or other this end of things will result in 'a new heavens and a new earth' we can hardly doubt, but science has as yet no word of explanation."

That is to say, matter, energy, cannot be annihilated. The fashion of them may be altered, but destruction is impossible. The solar system may go to pieces, and certainly will do so, but its constituent elements will continue, and at some time or other will be gathered together again in the formation of "a new heavens and a new earth."

Can it be true, then, that the physical world may have a death and a resurrection, but for the spiritual energies of the human race there is to be neither a new heavens nor a new earth? Matter cannot be destroyed, but mind will be? The clod of earth by the roadside is guarded by eternal law—so jealously guarded that not an inhering element, however disguised, can suffer extinction. It may cease to be visible and hide itself from detec-

tion, but it exists in its entirety and will in the future find its place and continue.

Is it scientifically logical that all these subtle powers, aspirations, emotions, which constitute what we call the soul, are so nearly worthless that they count for nothing and may be dispensed with? Is the spirit of man the anomaly of the universe and will it die when all the rest of creation rushes on to a higher level of existence? Has a cobblestone or a cloud or a stroke of lightning so great an advantage over a man? Shall we go into darkness, while everything else goes into light? Can it be that the house in which we are living is eternal, but the resident who occupies the house is mortal?

That would hardly seem consistent with the divine order of things. The logic of the situation allows of no discrimination against that nobler form of energy which consciously hopes for immortality while other forms which are unconscious shall blindly live forever.

Science and revelation are at one on this point. They both declare that the soul continues after these few short years are told, and they announce "a new heavens and a new earth" for man as well as matter.

WHICH CHURCH IS CHRIST'S?

“ But I fear, lest . . . by any means your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”—2 Cor. xi. 3.

ST. PAUL was a careful student of human nature. He was scholar, critic, man of the world, and knightly defender of what he believed to be the truth.

When forecasting the future of the church at Corinth, he dreaded the tendency, everywhere prevalent, to depart from the simplicity of the gospel and change the new religion into a kind of philosophic theory which would open the door to all sorts of disputations. Against that tendency he warns his followers in this remarkable epistle.

If we had preserved this simplicity which St. Paul speaks of the Christian church would be the strongest force in the world to-day. But we have sadly departed from it, and the moral influence of the church has correspondingly decreased.

Churches are not for the people, but for the classes—an expensive edifice in which the wealthy may pray to *their* Father, and cheap churches in which the poor may pray to *theirs*.

The line is drawn as tightly between the rich and the poor in religion as in society. It is almost impossible to say of any church that it was built *for the people*—that is, for whomsoever may see fit to worship in it. The clergy will tell you that this is not true, but the experience of every poor man who would kneel by the side of his rich neighbor in a costly edifice proves that it is true, for his welcome is lukewarm, if not forbidding. Religion is apt to keep one eye on the gospel and the other on the wealthy members of the congregation. That which St. Paul feared has come to pass, and men have been “corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”

The Lord preached to all alike. Wealth was as kindly treated as poverty, or, to state the fact in other terms, Christ cared for neither wealth nor poverty, but for souls. He had a word to utter, a law to announce, a message to deliver, and it was needed by the members of the sanhedrim as much as by the poor Magdalen who

crouched at His feet. Nothing could be more simple, more beautiful, or more godlike than the way in which He ignored social environment, both that of the hut and that of the palace, and appealed to men as men. The open air was His temple, the sands of the sea-shore were His pulpit, the multitude was His congregation. He needed no choir to attract the people, no surpliced assistants, no announcement of a popular topic, none of the accessories which mark our modern worship.

Besides, His only creed consisted of a belief in the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. These two statements, which are within the comprehension of every creature on the globe, are like the sources of the Mississippi and the Amazon, whose floods irrigate whole continents and so fertilize the soil that it cheerfully brings forth crops for the sustenance of millions. Christ demanded honest lives and honest aspirations, pure hearts and truthful lips. If He rejected or received any one, it was on the broad basis of the saying, "He that is not with Me is against Me." You could have been counted as His follower in old Judea if you had simply believed that there is

a heaven above you, and a place for you there if you will earn the right to it by loving your neighbor as yourself. Nothing is more amazing than the simplicity of Christ's teachings, unless it be the manner in which they have been formulated by ecclesiastical councils, with the apparent purpose of excluding the large majority of mankind.

The question arises, therefore, and it is a very serious question: If the Lord, accompanied by His apostles, should revisit the earth, which of all the churches in the land would they approve as fairly representing His doctrine and divine purpose? Would the exceeding pomp and ceremonial which prevail be regarded as a corruption of the simplicity of the gospel as delivered by Him nineteen centuries ago? Is there any church of which He would say, "This is wholly mine"? or would He be so pained at the fashion and selfishness and worldliness which are evident everywhere that He would choose to preach at the street-corner or on the open square?

And if the apostles desired to become members of a church, could they tolerate the long creeds which would meet them at the threshold, or would

they rather say, "We love the Lord Jesus—that is all He requires of us, and if it is not enough we will go hence"?

We do not impeach the motives of any one. The pulpit is a great moral force and our churches are the bulwark of society. We are unstinted in our praise of what has been done, but we believe that if Christians more fully represented the simplicity of Christ, were more tolerant of each other, gave a more generous welcome to the poor instead of holding themselves aloof, broke down the barriers of sectarianism, and vied with each other in the noble rivalry of good works, the church would be infinitely more efficient than it is, and men would feel that it is "guide, philosopher, and friend." We make slender complaint, for we honor the clergy, but there is no reason why the church should not be as inclusive as Christ was, bidding all alike to come to the feast, and taking no account of a man's wealth or poverty.

Such a church, with no other creed than can be found in the Sermon on the Mount, would be built on eternal foundations and become the leader of the world in all good deeds. The indifference of

the community would change to enthusiasm, and even the agnostic would doff his hat as he passed the door and admit that its best vindication is found in the fact that "by their fruits ye shall know them."

THE BIBLE.

“ But My Word shall not pass away.”—Matt. xxiv. 35.

IF for no other reason, we must needs give respectful attention to the teachings of the Bible because they have stood the test of time and survived the adverse criticism of the ages.

If the law of the survival of the fittest holds good in the domain of literature, then the ideas which are still young and vigorous after eighteen centuries would seem to be founded on eternal truth.

It is safe to predict that the Bible will continue to control the lives of men until we reach the hither boundary of the millennium.

It has been an encouragement to the oppressed, a warning to the wrong-doer, and a consolation to the bereaved, and as long as oppression is to be borne, as long as warnings are needed, as long as human nature needs to be consoled in its sorrows, so long will the Bible occupy its place in the household as an indispensable volume.

It may contain chronological errors for aught we know; the authorship of its various parts may be disputed; we may shake our heads in doubt at the record of miracles which it contains; we may stoutly deny its verbal inspiration, and refuse to accept it as the direct and final Word of God to the race—these matters are of minor consequence and affect the value of the Book very little.

Agnostic and believer, thoughtful heathen and devout Christian, however, must needs acknowledge with one accord that it has occupied a prominent place in the history of civilization, and that not all the libraries of the planet can so entirely fill its place that we can afford to throw that one magnificent volume aside.

Take it as a whole, conform your life to its spirit, follow its injunctions, absorb its essential elements, accept its declaration that the unfettered soul shall rise from the enthrallment of bodily limitations and join the company of the departed in the land whose flowers never fade and whose joys are never overshadowed by sorrow, and your years will be a satisfaction to yourself and a benefit to your fellows.

All that is beyond a peradventure. The state-

ment has been proved true by a thousand times a thousand experiments. It is too late to deny the fact. Make the trial in your personal experience and you will become an enthusiast in its defense. The old Book holds its own just as a granite headland does against which the waves of countless storms have broken and only dashed themselves into starry spray.

If you visit the Patent Office in Washington you will observe three important facts: First, there are models of machinery which has far outlived the inventor, and if you ask why, the answer is that it is still useful. Second, there are models of contrivances which were useful for a time and then became relics and curiosities. Third, there are inventions which promised to be useful, but utterly failed in their purpose. They were thought by the inventor to be valuable, but when subjected to a practical test were found to be useless and were therefore discarded at once, and we have never given them a second thought.

Here, then, is the inexorable and relentless law—namely, that what is useful lives as long as it remains useful, and not a moment longer, while the useless raises its head above the water for an

instant only, and then sinks under the drowning wave, never to reappear.

That law is applied with despotic energy. The good remains; the bad is lost sight of. Nothing under heaven can keep an idea on the surface unless it rightfully belongs there, and it will hold its position only so long as it is valuable to the community. Some books are like snowflakes on a lake: they just touch the surface and then disappear. If, however, a book, any book, keeps at the front for twenty generations you may be perfectly sure that there is a good reason for it.

We do not treat the Bible with respect because the church tells us we must believe it to be the Word of God, but because it helps us to be noble men and women; because it is a purifying and elevating influence, and must therefore be, in some sense, God's revelation to the world.

Treat the Bible in a broad and generous and hospitable way. When you make a meal of fish a few bigots may tell you that you should eat bones and all. You exercise your common sense, however, and neither eat the bones nor throw the whole dish out of the window because some one has a stupid theory about it. You know well

enough that parts of the fish are palatable and nutritious, and the narrowness of the bigot will not make you choke yourself with the bones, nor will the adverse criticism of the doubter persuade you to go hungry.

Use the Bible as you do the fish. It is nourishing, strengthening, and health-giving. Make it your daily food, and if perchance you come across a bone don't try to swallow it, but lay it aside and go on with your meal.

Life is too short for argument, and sorrows are so sharp that we cannot get on without consolation if it can be found. Go where you will for comfort in your struggles, and God speed you in your search; but we doubt if you will find as much elsewhere as in the blessed Book on which so many sad heads have been pillowed, and in the promise it contains that after life's fitful fever you shall wake from sleep and be welcomed by greeting dear ones who have waited for you and for whom you have grieved these many long years.

CHRISTMAS DAY.

LITTLE wonder that the Hebrews were disappointed in the person and mission of Jesus, or that they listened to Him with something of bitterness.

His crucifixion was the inevitable result of their passionate patriotism. They longed for a masterful leader who would break the triumph of the hated Roman, and were ready to spend life and fortune to humble the Roman eagles; but they found in the Nazarene nothing more than a sad-eyed man who quenched their ardor by bidding them love their enemies.

The stories that clustered about His birth were well suited to excite high anticipations, for they were a prophecy of great achievements. It was a tradition that His coming would be unexpected, that He was to be born of a virgin, that miracles would attend His advent, and that Bethlehem would be conspicuous as the royal birthplace.

The humility of that insignificant village was to be encircled by a diadem.

When, therefore, the Preacher organized no crusade, disdained all plans of conquest, found His companionship among the peasantry, declared that He was indeed the Messiah, but that His kingdom was not of this world, a thrill of horror made the proud nation's blood run cold and forced them to proclaim Him an impostor. The shadow of Calvary fell athwart His path at the beginning of His ministry, when He uttered the words of the Sermon on the Mount, and from that moment until the cry went forth, "It is finished!" He walked along the rugged road of relentless martyrdom.

If we had been citizen merchants of Jerusalem, or priests of the Temple, or among the seventy-two senators who constituted the sanhedrim in that age of military achievement, and had been reared in the hope of deliverance from an ignominious yoke of tributary servitude, should we have borne patiently the repulse of our aspirations, the defeat of our lifelong hopes, or should we have joined the turbulent crowd in the Via Dolorosa? Should we have been far-sighted enough to see that His divine ideas would in time prove to be

stronger than Roman swords, and that the triumph of righteousness is grander than the triumph of arms, or should we have witnessed the crucifixion with the conviction that substantial justice had been done to a pretender?

There is, by the way, a beautiful astronomical fact—some would call it a fable—connected with the star of Bethlehem. Near the little star Kappa, in the constellation of Cassiopeia, was seen by Tycho Brahe in 1572 a temporary brilliant which for a while outshone every other star in the heavens, not excepting Sirius itself. In a few months it burned dimly, and in a year and a half it disappeared and has never been seen since. It is possible that the brilliant seen by Tycho may have a periodicity somewhat exceeding three hundred years. If we carry this periodical appearance backward it is easily supposed that its apparition may have occurred at the birth of Christ. It does not require much imagination to connect it with the Magi, who must have been astonished at its appearance, and with the event that took place when the angels sang their overture of peace and good-will.

But however critics may differ about historic

statements, there is a grateful agreement as to the value of Christian philosophy. It illuminates this life as the lantern in a lighthouse sends its rays into surrounding darkness, and with the same beneficent purpose. Christianity is the radiance of modern civilization. As the sun furnishes the light of the physical world, so the cross illuminates the present and dispels the mists of futurity. It is possible to the believer to feel that death is a friendly arm that lifts him to a higher level, and that churchyards are the resting-places of souls on their way to heaven.

If all this were a dream it would still be uplifting. If it had no basis in the logical faculty, and we were forced to repudiate it when we looked stern facts in the face, it would still appeal to the nobler elements of our nature, and urge us to wish that it might be true. But when it is founded on the best scholarship of all ages; when it collects about itself the profoundest thinkers of nineteen centuries, who have made it the theme of eloquence and song; when, by its adaptability to the wants of the race, it becomes the central impulse of a public opinion more charitable, more kindly, and more moral than has ever yet been known, we can

hardly fail to usher in the day that marked its advent with the ringing of bells and pæans of praise.

Christmas Day is encircled by solemn injunctions which fill life with hardy ambitions, and by unspeakable promises which temper the sorrow of bereavement and force the lips into a smile while the eyes are dim with tears. We do well to set it apart from the rest of the year and crown it with evergreen.

A MAN AND A WOMAN.

“Male and female created He them.”—Gen. i. 27.

THERE is no reason to suppose that in the economy of nature the Almighty has given to woman a place of inferior importance to that occupied by man.

She was not made to be his slave, but his equal; not merely to soothe him in his sorrows, but to share them; not to be the recipient of his bounty, but the divinely ordained partner of his ambitions.

In the history of the world it is as easy to discover the degree of civilization which has been reached in a given epoch by noting the position of woman as it is to tell the temperature of the air by looking at a thermometer.

In every age in which women are more or less subordinate, men are more or less brutal; and it is safe to predict that the highest type of manhood will never be attained except by association with the highest type of womanhood.

The legislation and public opinion which can break down all barriers of prejudice and give women an opportunity to develop whatever talents or faculties or genius they possess, will also have an ennobling influence on men, for the moral nature of a man is always even with the moral nature of the women with whom he keeps company. If you would make men better you must begin by making women better.

From the beginning of time until the close of this nineteenth century, the world has been almost exclusively a man's world. Circumstances have thrown him to the front, and he has maintained his dictatorship. He has decreed in his own interest that he may do as he pleases, and that woman shall do as she is told to. That has been the law, but it will probably be repealed before the twentieth century sinks in the west. Men have declared that there shall be a discrimination in the matter of vice, and that the discrimination shall be in their favor. If they fall under temptation it is a merely venial offense, not by any means to be counted against them, but rather to be taken as a matter of course. If a woman yields under a provocation a thousandfold greater the good Christ

must come to earth again, for He alone will give her pity. The law which men have made for purposes of self-protection is so elastic that it will stretch indefinitely, but they have made an entirely different law for women, and hammered it from unbending steel.

That is the anomaly of all time. It is right for a man to be vicious. More than that, it is rather praiseworthy. But viciousness in a woman is a crime which the worst man in the community will not condone. "For myself," he says, "all things are justifiable, but for you there is only contempt when you overstep the limit which I have chosen to draw."

The reason for this is perfectly plain, and in stating the reason we show its inherent injustice. The world has been a warring world. History is simply the story of successive battle-fields. Brawn, not brain, has been the chief factor of progress. For ages, therefore, the world was what men made it. The bow and arrow at first and later on the flash of gunpowder have settled all controversies. Women had small part in the conflict, because they were not fitted for the task. The man was thoroughly dominant, and being dominant he was des-

otic. He fashioned everything to suit himself, even public opinion. He was master of the situation, and solely because a woman could not stand by his side in war she was not allowed to stand by his side in peace.

But the complexion of affairs has changed after this long lapse of time. This is not at all the world in which our ancestors lived. It is as different in many essential respects as though we had been transported to Mars. As to the matters in which we are now interested, women and men are equals, and they stand side by side. The moment when warriors ceased to be heroes woman began to take her rightful place. The instant brains began to be the motive power of society woman proved her right to engage in the competition.

But even now, under the new régime, the old ideas prevail. They are giving way by degrees, but they are still persistent. Man claims rights which he denies to his wife, but he stammers an apology. It is no longer a man's world, but a man's and woman's world, at least in part. When it becomes wholly so it will be better than it is now.

We have about settled the question whether

there is any sex in vice, and once settled it will never vex us again. The preposterous statement that a woman is more guilty than a man for the same act is slowly slinking away from the criticisms of the age. It is a contemptible statement, which can be maintained by brute force, but not by fair argument.

Now the conclusion to be drawn from all this is that women are not to sink to the level of men, but that men must rise to the level of women. We seek for the ideal life, and men do not furnish it, but women do. Humiliating as the confession is, it is true that the average woman is purer than the average man. The change that is needed, therefore, is a change of standard. We must abolish the standard which men have set for themselves and substitute the standard which men have set for women. Not less purity for women should be the rule, but more purity for men.

If we understand the spirit of the New Testament, that is the requisition. There is nothing in this world as admirable as a woman whose heart and life are white, and there is no reason why she should not demand of the man who leads her to the altar a heart and life that are just as white as her own.

THE VALUE OF MONEY.

“ For wisdom is a defense, and money is a defense: but the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it.”—Eccl. vii. 12.

THERE is a word to be said to young men; not a harsh word, but a word of friendly and kindly counsel.

And here is the reason for it, namely, because a good start goes a long way toward a good ending. If the bullet leaves the rifle-barrel with only a slight divergence from the right direction, it may never hit the target at all, for the farther it goes the more wide of the mark it is; but if it leaves the barrel perfectly aimed for the center of the target, it is safe to predict a good shot.

If a young man is equipped with the right ideas, the chances are in favor of his being of some value to the world; but if when he stands on the threshold of life he has no controlling moral principle, he is like a chip on the surface of a freshet—that

is, he may, if he has rare good fortune, reach the sea, or he may be thrown on the bank at any turn of the current.

It is impossible, therefore, to exaggerate the necessity of a fine equipment, because the fate of the soul, long after this life has ended, may depend on it. While it is possible for a boy with a mind full of mistaken ideas to throw them aside one after the other as he proceeds on his journey, it is also true that he runs great risks and will probably end his career with an armful of regrets and a handful of real happiness.

Now there is no subject on which there are more false notions than on the subject of money. It is a good thing to have money and a good thing to work for it, but you must be careful not to pay too large a price for it. As the servant of a noble man money is exceedingly valuable, for it furnishes opportunities to enlarge the scope of charity and benevolence. As the master of a niggardly man it develops the meaner qualities of human nature and makes its possessor a mere caricature.

The world is all wrong in this matter, and you will require a deal of independence to put yourself right. There is in the community an overesti-

mate of wealth which is very demoralizing. The Preacher makes a catalogue in which wisdom stands at the head and money follows as of secondary importance; but modern society reverses the order and puts money first, with wisdom far below it. We doff our hats to one who has wealth but no character, and hardly recognize one who has an honest character but no money. The result is that we work too hard for money and have too light an opinion of character.

If truth be told, it is, after all, the men of character and not the men of money who have made the world what it is. That fact stands in the foreground of all thoughtful observation, like a towering monument against the sky. If we were compelled to do without the one or the other it would be sheer insanity to dispense with men of character and retain the men of money.

Let us be clear on this point. The clergy are apt to talk about "filthy lucre." But do not be led astray. Money is never filthy unless it makes the soul that seeks it filthy. It is your right to labor for it and your right to get it if you can. You are justified in laying plans for its acquisition, because there is a glorious satisfaction in the

thought that you will want for nothing in your old age and your dear ones will be amply provided for. But have a care that you do not come to think that your happiness depends on it, because after all is said there are more happy poor men than happy rich men. For that matter, it is a grave error to suppose that money can itself make you happy without the possession of other qualities which will enable you to enjoy it and do good with it.

The business of the world is closely related to the progress of the world. It is a noble calling, that of the business man, and one which God looks upon with tender regard. Money and philanthropy are twins, born of the same good mother, two children of beauty and grace. The merchant's work is just as providential as that of the clergyman, and his mission, if he rightly understands it, is just as important. If the consecrating hands of the Holy Spirit are laid on the head of the preacher, and he is thus devoted to a special task, so are the same hands laid in equal consecration on the head of the young man who starts on a business career, and he is laid under solemn obligations to be useful to his fellows. That is a truth

which cannot be too keenly appreciated. We cannot get along without money-making, and the one thing we insist on, therefore, is that the money-makers shall be honest in their dealings and keep their consciences in good trim.

More than that, the business man preaches the gospel of rectitude more effectively than the clergy can do it. A noble deed is better than a noble word. The word may incite to the deed, but when we get to heaven the merchant who has led a pure life will occupy as high a place as the minister who told him how to do it. George Peabody's life outweighs the sermons of a century. Such a man talks to the whole race, and his voice is not hushed when he dies. As the light of a distant star floods the earth long after the star itself has been extinguished, so the uprightness and integrity of the merchant exert untold influence long after a sorrowing people have laid him in his resting-place.

This, then, is the advice we offer: Let your ambition run high, and seek its realization by hard work, but remember that it is a man's soul and not his pocket-book which goes to heaven. You can get on without riches if need be, but you can-

not get on without a clean conscience. Make money, but do not worship it. Pay a good price for it, but not more than it is worth. Honest dollars hurt no one, but dishonest gains are a consuming fire.

THE DUTY OF THE CHURCH.

“The unity of the Spirit.”—Eph. iv. 3.

WE are all agreed that the Christian church is an indispensable factor of our civilization. However critical we may be of its defects, we must needs admit that it is the most conspicuous and important element of human progress.

It has encouraged our aspirations, defended a high standard of public and private virtue, denounced the vices and vicious tendencies of society, organized a thousand charities for the relief of the unfortunate, given comfort to the sorrowing, strength to the tempted, resignation to the bereaved. It represents our noblest impulses, our loftiest ambitions, and those hopes which in their upward flight are so daring that they search for another life when the resources of the present shall be exhausted.

But the church has of late years lost a part of its old prestige. The world has learned the lesson

which it aforetime taught, and is looking either for new truths or a new application of ancient truths. Neither life nor religion is quite the same thing that it was to our fathers, for both life and religion are more valuable, more significant than they have ever been. They should therefore produce larger results and furnish us with grander incentives. The church must recognize these facts and fit itself to the crucial emergency, or it will fall into innocuous desuetude.

What is needed above everything else is the unity of the Spirit. There are too many theological standards for an age which takes no pleasure in theology, and there is too much sectarianism at a time when men believe more firmly in brotherly love than they have done in any previous historic epoch. The tendency is toward a minimum of creed and a maximum of charity. We have more faith in an honest life than in an acceptance of the Five Institutes of Calvin, and would feel safer at the judgment-bar of God with an honorable business record behind us than with all the theological decisions of the Nicene Council. There is extant no repudiation of Christianity, but on the other hand a wide and deep loyalty to the moral law as

announced by Christ. It is not an age of doubt, but it is a thoughtful age. No men since the sun shone on Eden have ever had a more biting hunger or so unquenchable a thirst for God's truth, both respecting this life and the other, than now.

There is a universal wish, therefore, that the church, which has been so brave in times past, may take the leadership of the people, as Moses did, show them the way through this desert of hard work, and give them the promise of green fields beyond the Jordan of death.

Why should the church allow itself to be split into factions by theological differences when every faction has the same general purpose in view and all are working for the same object? The world asks for the bread of Christ, and receives the stone of sectarianism in its stead. It longs to hear of heaven, and will listen with patient ears to the proofs of immortality, but it has no interest in the competition and rivalry of sects, or in the dogmatic and doctrinal side of religion.

If we could relegate all creeds to the background, imprison them within the limits of the student's library, cause them to be regarded as simply fruitful subjects for investigation, but not

necessary to the moral progress of the community ; if we could bring into the foreground, as the only important matter for consideration, the best way to embody the Sermon on the Mount in our laws and the love of God and love of brother man in our public opinion, the church would really represent the Christ, and the revelations of the New Testament would become startlingly new and fresh to us. The clergy would find thrilling topics in our daily life—topics which would force from their lips the eloquence of warning or praise. Corruption would find in the pulpit its unrelenting enemy and official honor its mightiest defense. Religion would no longer be in the clouds, but would walk the earth armed *cap-a-pie* to do battle in the name of God and man.

In an orchestra there may be forty or fifty instruments, and they are all necessary to the production of effective music.

Suppose the first and second violins, instead of following the baton of the leader, should enter into rivalry with each other and play the score according to their personal preference, not according to instructions ; suppose the cello and the bass viol should exercise the same privilege ; suppose

the drums and the cornets and the flutes should demand an equal right—what would result? Not music, but intolerable discord. The capacity to render a symphony of Beethoven or Wagner is in that orchestra, and if its members are subject to the leader they will charm and inspire the audience. But if each one plays as he pleases the auditorium will soon be emptied.

The simile is not too strong when applied to the church. The different sects are playing the same melody, and the world is anxious to listen. But each plays as he thinks best—the Presbyterian in one key, the Methodist in another, and the Baptist in another. Men hope for harmony and find only discord. Little wonder that complaints of indifference are heard and churches are empty.

If the clergy will forget everything else and remember only this one thing—that men are hard pushed and need help and comfort and good cheer—then creeds will be whistled down the wind, sectarianism will be banished, and the world be all the better for it.

THEATERS AND THEIR INFLUENCE.

“ To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.”—Eccles. iii. 1.

THE place which the theater occupies in our modern society, whether we are to stoutly defend its claims or humbly apologize for it as a necessary evil—this is a question which is always in the air. It has excited almost as much controversy as religion, but while both parties have been equally honest they have not made much progress toward an agreement.

The peculiarity of the debate is one that obtains with no other subject under dispute, for while the advocates of the stage speak from a large personal experience, those who denounce it have generally had no personal experience whatever. If the clergy, whose motives are by no means to be impugned, should see Mr. Jefferson's *Rip Van Winkle* or Mr. Irving's *Becket*, and then declare that the spectacle lowers the moral tone of the audience,

we might differ with them in opinion, but their judgment would deservedly have exceeding weight.

It is not necessary for a man to visit a gambling-dive in order to discover that it is harmful, because it is universally conceded that games of chance are an unmitigated evil and cannot be defended by any show of argument. Dramatic representation has been wrongly classed in the same category, but assuredly it does not belong there. The drama is not essentially evil, and must therefore be criticized by the effects it produces on society and the individual.

What are some of these effects and to what extent are they to be deplored? There is no reason why we should not lay aside all prejudice and preconceptions and judge the case simply on its merits. We can always afford to be fair, and there is no good ground for being unjust.

First, then, it is charged that actors and actresses have a code of morals of their own, and that there is a degree of looseness in it which is not to be tolerated. This is at least partly true, and it is unfortunate that it is true. It is very desirable that both actors and actresses should be above reproach, but it is desirable that the men

and women who applaud them should be above reproach also. If every actor were a Bayard the stage would undoubtedly be different from what it is; but we are bound to add that if every man in the audience were a Bayard society would take on a different complexion. The rule which is applied to the stage should be used elsewhere, and it is not quite generous to spurn an actor for a course of life which is—such is the laxity of public morals—easily condoned in other people.

There is no excuse for immorality anywhere, neither on the stage nor in business life nor in the fashionable world. If, however, a genuine crusade were to be undertaken and the attempt made to reconstruct human nature, it might be well to begin with the stage, but it would never do to end with it; and we venture to say that we can name a score of actors and actresses who would hail such a movement with enthusiasm, for good men and women in a profession ought not to suffer for the shortcomings of the unworthy. This is true both behind and in front of the footlights.

We might refer to the late Mr. Booth's career in illustration of this fact. He was a noble, self-sacrificing, charitable, and patriotic citizen as well

as a great actor. Take his life as a whole and there are few men in any profession who have exerted a more manly and uplifting influence. He had a great soul, and richly deserved not only the fame he won, but also the respect of the world, which was so cheerfully and abundantly given.

Actors and actresses are public property. Whatever they do is known. If they have faults or if they commit a crime against existing customs it is at once spread broadcast. A business man, a lawyer, a doctor may be equally guilty, but his obliquity is hidden. The world sees the worst side of the actor's character always, and forms its judgment from that side; it sees the best side of every one else, and frequently overestimates his worth. The actor can hide nothing; other men in the community can hide a great deal.

We are defending no one by these statements, but simply trying to tell the plain, unvarnished truth. The stage is nothing more to us than one of the factors of our social life, which we would criticize with candor and a regard for the general welfare. But we must needs be careful not to overblame one class whose faults are made glaring by circumstances and ignore the faults of other

classes who have the opportunity to conceal their misdoings.

Second, it is charged that the theater is an unwholesome stimulant which cannot fail to do injury. If this be true it is a very serious matter. But is it true? It is a question which each one must answer for himself, and his answer should govern his conduct. If a thing is not wrong in itself, then it must be judged solely by the effects it produces.

It is not merely the love of amusement, but the actual necessity of it, which sends most people to the theater. A few hours' respite from business cares, and, so far as women are concerned, from the harassments of domestic life, is very desirable, and in most theaters it can be had without injury. A hearty laugh at a farce, an evening's nonsense which drags one out of the ruts of daily routine and forces one to forget for the time being that the morrow has heavy burdens, is not only innocent, but helpful.

We venture to declare that in this regard the stage is accomplishing great good, and fills a place for which there is no substitute. Instead of abolishing it, if society were itself pure enough to

demand only the best kind of drama, the theater would respond at once, for the manager is a business man, who must please the public in order to reap success. The theater never leads, but always follows its patrons. They find there just what pleases them, and are themselves responsible if the stage falls below par.

A clean play can harm no one; but an unclean play, and, for that matter, an unclean anything else, whether it is found in politics, in law, or in society, is not to be tolerated. That is the only rule by which our judgment should be controlled.

A PROVIDENTIAL MAN.

“ And the Lord shall guide thee continually.”—Isa. lviii. 11.

FEBRUARY 12th brings us once more to the anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth. The day will be crowded with associations of grave import to the citizens of this Republic, for under his leadership the country passed into an epoch of tragedy and through it to the grandest victory ever achieved by man for man.

Not opposing armies merely, but opposing ideas stood face to face on the battle-field, and when the struggle ended we were presented with this curious historic anomaly, namely, that the vanquished had been blessed by defeat and the victors by their triumph.

With a Southern oligarchy based on slavery, and a Northern republic based on freedom, occupying contiguous territory, the experiment of popular sovereignty would have been brought to speedy peril. The defeat of our enemies, there-

fore, was necessary not only to the perpetuity of the Union, but to their own moral and political salvation.

The thrones of Europe would have acquired a new lease of life had our cause suffered disaster. The victory of that cause has dimmed the jewels in every crown, doomed kings to exile, and vindicated the right of the people everywhere to govern themselves. If Lee had not surrendered his sword to Grant the French Republic might not have been born, and the people of the Continent might not have demanded an extended suffrage for a full century to come.

Lincoln's election was much less the act of our voters than it was the act of Providence. He was a man unknown and untried at a time when the rumblings of revolution made the nation tremble. That the emergency was threatening every one knew; that Lincoln would be great enough to meet it nobody knew. In the popular mind there was a disparity between the man and the occasion, and the lips of prophecy were sealed through timidity. We hoped for the best, but feared the worst.

If Lincoln had been possessed of antecedents

we might have been more hopeful, but he had none. He came from the gloaming of an unknown past, and, as he himself declared with a degree of sadness, had no ancestry at all, much less an ancestry to boast of. His youth had been spent in menial employment, his reputation was that of a country lawyer, and his election was apparently an accident of party politics.

But Abraham Lincoln was chosen to be President of the United States by the Almighty through the ballots of the American people. We did not know that at first, and indeed did not find it out until the fatal bullet transformed him into a martyr. When we looked at his stern face as he lay in state, however, and then recalled the past, the light fell on our eyes and we saw what God and our brave sons had done for us.

Lincoln was endowed with the wisdom of the situation. He was not the leader of the people, did not attempt to create public opinion by a policy of daring and assurance, but obscured himself in the shadow of the popular will. A smaller man would have issued the Proclamation of Emancipation months before it saw the light, but he waited. "I am your servant," he said to the North; "it is

for you, not me, to say when that aggressive step shall be taken." It was not Lincoln, therefore, who devised that marvelously strategic movement; it was the people themselves, and it was not adopted a single instant before they were ready for it. The radicals were restless, the conservatives groaned, but he simply said: "This is your war, not mine. Tell me when to do it and it shall be done."

It is our privilege to believe that God is interested in human affairs and that He is a factor in every great national exigency. Religion consists of worthless phraseology unless we can feel His presence in the concerns of life. Great men do not come of their own accord, nor are they the product of circumstances by a kind of spontaneous generation; they are created for a purpose and sent to achieve it. This is not man's world, but God's world, and events are guided to their ultimate issue as the pilot at the helm steers a stately ship into harbor.

It is impossible not to see God's providence in the life of Lincoln, and sacrilege to deny its potency. No other man in the country would have been suited to the hour. A larger man—that is, one more ambitious personally—or a smaller one

—that is, one less courageous—might have lost all for which we took up arms. He had the exact mental and moral stature required by the duty which fell to his lot.

Could such a happy union of man and occasion be an accident or even a coincidence? Was Washington a coincidence or an accident? When the right man comes at the right moment it is hard to believe that behind him is nothing but blind chance. On the contrary, it is easy to feel that an unseen Being is above us all, and that when something greatly needed is to be done He selects the man to do it.

Lincoln was God's choice as well as the choice of the American people. We elected him President, but God foresaw the struggle and prepared him to bring it to a successful issue. He was so exceptional a man that we cannot account for him in any other way.

Lincoln has gone, but the Being who gave him to us in our dire strait is still with us and will send other men to do their special work when the hour calls for them.





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