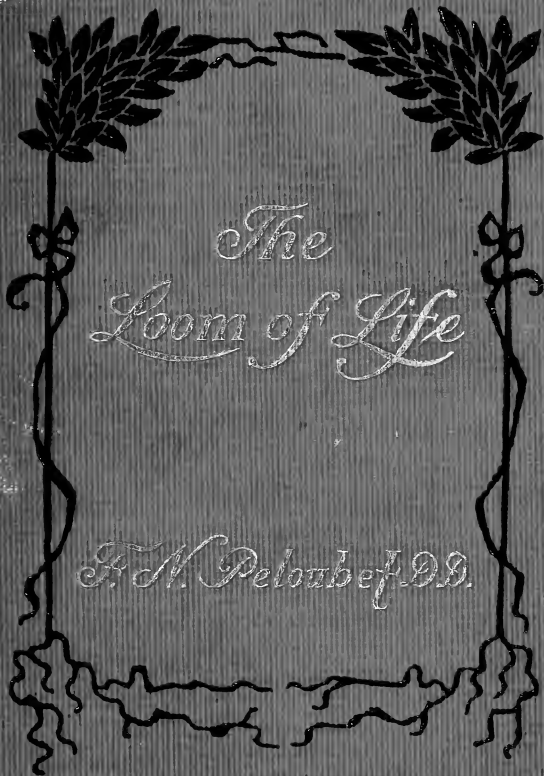


BV

4501

.P466



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

---

Chap. .... Copyright No. ....

Sheet .....

---

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.





# The Loom of Life

AND

## If Christ Were a Guest in Our Home

By

Rev. F. N. Peloubet, D. D.

Author of "Select Notes," etc.



United Society of Christian Endeavor  
Boston and Chicago

BV4501

56124

. P466

Library of Congress
NO. COPIES RECEIVED
OCT 4 1900
Copyright entry
Oct. 4, 1900
No. <u>A24398</u>
SECOND COPY.
Delivered to
ORDER DIVISION,
OCT 18 1900

Copyright, 1900,  
by the  
UNITED SOCIETY OF CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR

## THE TAPESTRY-WEAVERS.

LET us take to our hearts a lesson—no lesson can  
braver be—

From the ways of the tapestry-weavers on the other  
side of the sea.

Above their heads the pattern hangs : they study it  
with care.

The while their fingers deftly work, their eyes are  
fastened there.

They tell this curious thing beside of the patient,  
plodding weaver :

He works on the wrong side evermore, but works  
for the right side ever.

It is only when the weaving stops, and the web is  
loosed and turned,

That he sees his real handiwork, that his marvellous  
skill is learned.

Ah ! the sight of its delicate beauty, how it pays him  
for all his cost !

No rarer, daintier work than his was ever done by  
the frost.

Then the master bringeth him golden hire, and giveth  
him praise as well ;

And how happy the heart of the weaver is no tongue  
but his own can tell.

The years of man are the looms of God, let down  
from the place of the sun,  
Wherein we are weaving alway, till the mystic web  
is done,—

Weaving blindly, but weaving surely, each for him-  
self his fate.

We may not see how the right side looks : we can  
only weave and wait.

But, looking above for the pattern, no weaver need  
have fear.

Only let him look clear into heaven,—the perfect  
Pattern is there.

If he keeps the face of our Saviour forever and always  
in sight,  
His toil shall be sweeter than honey, his weaving is  
sure to be right.

And, when his task is ended, and the web is turned  
and shown,  
He shall hear the voice of the Master ; it shall say to  
him, “ Well done ! ”

And the white-winged angels of heaven, to bear him  
thence, come down ;  
And God for his wage shall give him, not coin, but a  
golden crown.

—*Anson G. Chester.*



## The Loom of Life.

**I** WAS visiting one of the largest factories in this country, and watched for the first time the famous Jacquard looms weaving Brussels and velvet carpets as the simple threads of the woof and the bright lines of the warp were combining in the most beautiful designs of color and of form.

But the most wonderful thing about this weaving was the fact that, while low before our eyes lay the warp, and the shuttle playing to and fro between the changing threads, the pattern to be woven was decided above. Overhead in the upper part of the loom were rows of perforated cards on which was written, in a language I could not understand, the exact pattern which the shuttle was weaving below. Thus, while the shuttle moving back and forth seemed to make all

those beautiful forms, in reality the whole design of the weaving was decided and controlled from above.

There, thought I, is a type of our lives. Man's free will and God's control are set forth by these wonderful looms. Our free wills, like these shuttles, carry the threads of our choices, our purposes, and our deeds through the divine warp of our lives,—the circumstances and influences that surround us, the laws by which we live, the endowments and powers of our natures. For, choose, determine, and plan all we may, feel we never so strong and wise to control our own destiny and work out our own success, yet God holds the warp of our lives in his own hands, and there are a thousand things in every life as much beyond our control as the march of the stars through the sky.

Yet there is much that we do control; and the divine pattern God has drawn as the best possible for us will not be woven in the loom of life unless we send the right threads through his warp, and weave faith and love and honesty and purity and

truth through the changing threads of the divine providence.

I have watched the weavers in the famous Gobelin factories at Paris making those exquisitely beautiful tapestries, in which woollen threads have been woven by hand into pictures almost as delicately shaded and perfect in form as the best paintings wrought by the hand of genius.

Almost every representative scene on earth, from the carnage of war to those "everlasting gardens where angels walk and seraphs are the wardens," from the hate of the persecutor to the heroism of the martyr,—all have been woven in simple looms from threads of wool.

I stood beside the most beautiful of the Aubusson tapestries, made to adorn the walls of a palace, and on my asking the attendant to show me the reverse side, he took down instead a miniature loom on which was a tapestry partly woven. The back was covered with the ends of the artist's threads, a confused jumble of colors without order or meaning, and resembling the picture on the right side

only as the tuning of an organ resembles an oratorio.

The artist, he said, stands behind his web, and does all his weaving from this reverse side. He does not see the picture as it comes into being. But with the material at his side, and the copy he is to follow above him, by imitating that exactly in every form and color, though working on the wrong side where he cannot see his unfolding work, he yet weaves the true picture in his loom.

The comparison of life to spinning or weaving is almost as old as literature. The ancient Greeks saw the three Fates spinning the thread of human life, Clotho, with a crown of seven stars and a robe like the rainbow, holding the distaff; Lachesis twisting and allotting the thread; and Atropos cutting it off by death.

“Clotho spin, Lachesis twist,  
Atropos the thread to sever;  
So weave the web of human life,—  
God’s looms go on forever.”

Just how much Job saw when he said,

“My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle,” I do not know ; but certainly for us there is a wide and deep meaning. You remember the picture Tennyson gives of the Lady of Shalott in her high tower by the river, weaving steadily.

“There she weaves by night and day  
A magic web with colors gay.  
And moving through a mirror clear  
That hangs before her all the year  
Shadows of the world appear.”

All the scenes of earth are reflected in her mirror and woven in her magic web. So all that is reflected in the mirror of our souls like the shadow pictures of a camera obscura, every scene, every thought, every emotion, every truth, is being woven into the web of our lives. If God should touch our senses as he did those of Elisha’s servant, so that we could see the invisible and hear the inaudible, this world would appear full of looms like a great factory ; the air would be filled with the hum of machinery ; every man, woman, and child would be seen busy at his loom weaving the web of his

own life. We should hear the clatter of the shuttles, and see the pictures which their lives have been spent in weaving, some just begun, others almost completed; some simple in their loveliness, others exquisitely beautiful; some, possibly, poorly and meanly done, and some so well wrought with threads of love and peace and self-denial and duty as to be worthy of a place in the King's palace near the throne.

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews is a catalogue, with brief descriptions, of some of the pictures woven by noble men of old. But each one of us is speeding the shuttle and weaving some kind of picture for eternity.

“There is a little spider  
Which weaves a web so fine,  
It might be lying at your feet  
With every thread in it complete,  
And you not see a line.

“But early morning shows it  
Agleam with pearly dew,  
And in the rising sun it lies  
Bright as the walls of Paradise  
With gems of every hue.

“So you and I are weavers,  
And only God can see  
The woof and warp of deed and thought  
By which the wondrous robe is wrought  
Which covers you and me.”

God has set a pattern the best possible for us to follow, and we can make it or mar it as we will.

The warp in these life-looms is that part of our lives which is beyond our control, the circumstances and influences in which we are placed, the natures with which we are endowed, the accidents that befall us, the temptations which test us, the opportunities which open their doors before us. Then our actions, the movements of our free wills, are the shuttles which draw the thread through the changes of the divine warp.

But note well, the shuttle is not the thread. It only draws the thread. The shuttle remains in the factory, the thread endures as a part of the picture. The forms of our actions, the sphere and the place where they are wrought, pass away; but the thread that

is woven by them into the life, that remains forever,—the motives that permeate the action, the love it expresses, the faithfulness, the truth, the honor, the courage,—these are the soul of our deeds and never die.

Honor is no more honorable in a palace than in a cottage. Piety, truth, love, are no nobler on a throne than in a factory, in the parlor than in the kitchen. A golden shuttle studded with rubies and diamonds may carry a mean, unworthy thread, and one of plain, homely wood may weave threads of gold. Actions on a splendid scale, in a high and glorious sphere, on the thrones and mountain-peaks of life, may indeed weave a noble thread, but may, too, weave a miserable one into that life which is gauged not by the grandeur of its sphere but by the purity of its motives, the nobility of its purposes, the love of the heart; while the narrowest sphere and the lowliest work, the deeds unknown, save to the angels and to God, may weave into the life a purity so perfect, a love so deep, such



devotion, such courage, such faith, such heroism, that all the great cloud of witnesses will repeat God's "Well done," and welcome us into the joy of our Lord.

There are certain truths which this subject enables us to see more clearly.

I. God has a plan for every person's life, the most beautiful and perfect possible for him; and the living this divine plan, and this only, makes a successful life.

Of Abraham, Joseph, David, Paul, it is expressly said that God had certain definite plans and purposes for their lives. But Christ has taught us, and all science confirms it, that God cares for the least as perfectly as for the greatest; that not only thrones and empires, but even sparrows, do not fall without our Father's care; and not only are apostles and prophets cared for, but even the hairs of our unworthy heads are all numbered. If there was a life-plan for Abraham, for Daniel, for Paul, there is a life-plan for us. We, like them, were chosen "before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in

love," and "that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy which he had afore prepared unto glory."

We have been too accustomed to look upon election, predestination, as a dismal and troublesome doctrine, an enigma, a stumbling-block, a rock of offence. We incline to put it out of our creeds, and wish it were not in the Bible, where it is stated more strongly than in most of our creeds.

But, when we see that election is the divine side of our life-plan, when we look upon it as the declaration that God has planned out the best possible life for each of us; that it is God, not chance, God, not demons, God, not men, that decides that part of our lives which is beyond our own control; that it is God's hand drawing for us the picture pattern for our lives, the most radiant in beauty, the most full of glory, of which our natures are capable; then we thank God for his electing love. I rejoice that all that comes to us from beyond ourselves, every

door opened, every accident, every sorrow, is controlled by his wisdom, love, and power. Here lies the power and comfort of the old Calvinism. It exaggerated the doctrine, it laid too much emphasis upon it. We cannot accept the forms in which it has been stated. Yet the essence of the doctrine of election has always made men mighty. The greatest men have believed that God elected them to their work. To believe that God thought enough of us to plan out each of our lives from all eternity ; that we are carrying out God's will, God's plan, in what we are doing ; that his will, his love, his power, are behind and underneath our lives,—cannot but make us strong and triumphant. It is the joy and glory and comfort and triumph of our lives.

Dr. Bushnell has well said : “ Every human soul has a complete and perfect plan cherished for it in the heart of God,—a divine biography marked out. This life, rightly unfolded, will be a complete and beautiful whole, an experience led on by God, and unfolded by his secret nurture

as trees and flowers by the secret nurture of the world ; a drama cast in the mould of a perfect art ; a divine study that shall forever unfold, in wondrous beauty, the love and faithfulness of God ; great in its conception, great in the divine skill by which it is shaped ; above all, great in the momentous and glorious issues it prepares."

The good Father has planned out the best possible picture for us to weave for eternity. There is not a single thread he puts in, of joy or of sorrow, of difficulty or of rest, of pain, sickness, loss, or of peace and prosperity, light or dark, brilliant or shaded ; not one thread he bids us weave into the web ; not a hard duty or self-denial or temptation to be overcome ; not one thread of love, joy, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, temperance, but, if we follow out the divine plan, will lead to the most perfect and beautiful life possible for us ; and every seeming evil and dark and trying touch will make the picture more lovely forevermore.

And take note that this it is which

makes a successful life ; not the carrying out of our own plans, but of God's plan ; not the gaining of our own wishes, not the realizing of the visions of beauty we have pictured for our future ; but to live the life God has planned for us to live, to weave the picture whose pattern God has made for us. Nothing is good, nothing is success, which departs from God's plan.

If a common tyro should take his paint-brush into the art gallery, and undertake to improve a picture by one of the old masters, we should cry out, "Stop, let it alone ; every touch of yours is a disfigurement and a blunder." And if we, murmuring at our lot, undertake to improve on God's plan for our lives, the very angels cry out, "Stop, let it alone ! Do you think you can plan a better life than God has planned for you ? "

The weavers of tapestries rejoiced when they could have some genius like Raphael<sup>1</sup> paint the picture patterns for

<sup>1</sup>Twelve cartoons by Raphael for the tapestry-weavers are in existence, several in the National Museum at London.

their weaving. How blessed and grand it is to have God draw the pattern for our lives! How inspiring, how inspiring, to know that these seemingly commonplace lives of ours may be lived after a plan made by the wisdom and love of God! No life so lived is commonplace or dreary. Every such life is a joy and delight forever.

II. We learn another lesson from the position of the tapestry-weavers during their work. They do not stand in front of their web where they can see the picture as it comes into being, like the artists who use the brush on canvas; but they stand on the reverse side, where they see only the ends and thrums that cover the surface, a mystery of confusion and tangle, giving faint hint of the beautiful picture on the other side.

Thus, in large part, we see God's work in the moral world, on the reverse side. The world is full of sins and crimes and disorders, tornadoes of tumult and war, mighty tides of evil, with many a bright gleam of religion, of holy living, of blessed

deeds, and yet in such confusion and disorder that, with all the bright colors, we can see but a faint outline, a dim, misty foreshadowing of what God means the world to be.

But we are to remember that as yet we see chiefly the reverse side of God's work, the dispersing chaos of the new earth and the new heavens, the ends and thrums, and not the completed picture. But God knows what he is doing. He has given visions of it in the promises. He has opened windows in Isaiah, and shed gleams of its glory in Revelation. And we may rest assured that God's world is not a failure. One of the strangest things I have ever known is a man standing in a Christian pulpit, with one hand holding the cross, "the wisdom and the power of God," and with the other receiving the Pentecostal gift of the Holy Spirit,—and then declaring that the world is growing worse and worse under all that the wisdom and love of God can do for the redemption of man. It is a libel. It is contrary to fact. Out of the smoke

of the battle is crystallizing the crown of victory ; out of the confusion and discord are being formed the harmonies of the new song of triumph ; out of the clouds and darkness is arising the dawn ; out of the chaos the new heavens and the new earth are being born.

See how it has been in Armenia,—how the troubles and massacres are proclaiming to the world the glorious work of the foreign missionaries, making known even to the throne the gospel of Jesus. How they are uniting the factions, are showing us multitudes of martyrs who die for their religion, and have set as a light upon a mountain-top the heroism of the missionaries, like the apostles of old ! The new wine can never be put into the new bottles without commotions and upheavals, such as Jesus foretold to his disciples. Unrest, change, criticism of the past, are the sign of fuller life, of a new spirit of progress, of springtime, of growth. They are the bursting of the shell and husk, so that the seed may grow into a tree ; they are the opening of the



bud, that it may unfold into the flower. They are like the chambered nautilus, leaving "the past year's dwelling for the new." Only thus can we "hear the voice that sings"—

"Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,  
As the swift seasons roll !  
Leave thy low-vaulted past !  
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,  
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,  
Till thou at length art free,  
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting  
sea."

Satan has not outwitted the Creator.  
Evil is not king of this world.  
Sin is not triumphing over righteousness.

Jesus Christ has not died in vain.  
'Redeeming love has not failed of its purpose.

God will sometime show us the right side of the world's picture. He will hang up the completed picture before a gazing universe, "to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God."

Then, as we see the right side of the work God has been slowly weaving through the ages, we shall be rapt in admiration at the radiant and lovely picture; and once again shall "the morning stars sing together"; once again shall "all the sons of God shout for joy."

Then, too, we are weaving our own lives largely on the reverse side. There is much in every life of which we do not know the meaning. There are difficulties and losses and disappointments and failures. There are interrupted plans, broken threads, the dark lines of sickness and pain, and the black threads of death. We cannot see how all these can work out good for us. God does not reveal to us the completed picture of our lives. "We know not what we shall be," says the apostle. And Christ says to us as he said to Peter, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

No man ever yet, at the beginning, knew all the meaning and possibilities of his life. The child studying his A B C has not even a far-away dream of the

wonderful literature spelled out from the alphabet.

Robert Raikes, when he began his Sunday-school in Gloucester, saw no vision of the procession of twenty millions marching to the Sunday-schools of to-day.

John Bunyan, shut up in prison during the twelve best years of his life, while his soul was longing to preach the gospel, and multitudes were starving for want of the bread of life from his lips, could have no conception that by his "Pilgrim's Progress" he should preach to millions instead of thousands, and for centuries instead of years. And so we, shut up in the narrow schoolhouse of life, slowly spelling out the hard words and slowly learning our hard lessons, cannot see the larger spheres and grander living for which we are being fitted even in this life, much less in the blessed homeland beyond.

"So I go on not knowing. I would not if I might ;  
I would rather walk in the dark with God than go  
alone in the light ;  
I would rather walk with him by faith than walk  
alone by sight."

On the walls of the beautiful Harvard Memorial Hall are inscribed the names of those members of the University who died for their country in the late war. The walls are frescoed not only with the names of these heroes in bright colors, but with the most wonderful array of patriotic sentiments, noble and touching, that I have ever seen gathered together in one place. But almost every name and inscription is in Latin, and it is said that some of the workmen did not know the meaning of what they painted on those walls. They followed their copy. They made the letters and words, in colors bright or dark, as they were bidden, but without understanding what marvellous meaning lay hidden in their work.

So we work upon our lives. We weave in the bright colors and the dark. With duties and pleasures, with sorrows and joys, with cares and work, we write out our lives in an unknown language. But by and by, for every faithful one there will be read out in some heavenly tongue a biography we never dreamed was ours,

full of blessing and glory and immortality.

Not long ago, I picked up in a stray book a poem, which so perfectly expresses the thought I wish to impress that I will quote it in part:—

“A weaver sat by the side of his loom,  
A-flinging the shuttle fast;  
And a thread that would last till the hour of doom  
Was added at every cast.

“His warp had been by the angels spun,  
And his weft was bright and new,  
Like threads which the morning upraids from the  
sun  
All jewelled over with dew.

“And fresh-lipped, bright-eyed, beautiful flowers  
In the soft rich web were bedded;  
And blithe to the weaver sped onward the hours;  
Not yet were Time’s feet leaded.

“But something there came slow stealing by,  
And a shade on the fabric fell;  
And I saw that the shuttle less blithely did fly;  
For thought has a wearisome spell.

“And anon I marked there a tear-drop’s stain  
Where the flowers had fallen away,  
But still the weaver kept weaving on,  
Though the fabric all was gray.

- “And things all strange were woven in,  
Sighs, down-crushed hopes and fears ;  
And the web was broken, and poor, and thin,  
And it dripped with living tears.
- “And the weaver fain would have flung it aside,  
But he knew it would be a sin;  
So in light and in gloom the shuttle he plied  
A-weaving those life-cords in.
- “He upward turned his eye to heaven,  
And still wove on—on—on!  
Till the last, last cord from his heart was riven  
And the tissue strange was done.
- “Then he threw it about his shoulders bowed,  
And about his grizzled head,  
And, gathering close the folds of his shroud,  
Laid him down among the dead.
- “And after, I saw, in a *robe of light*,  
That weaver in the sky;  
The angels’ wings were not more bright,  
And the stars grew pale, it nigh.
- “And I saw ’mid the folds all the iris-hued flowers  
That beneath his touch had sprung,  
More beautiful far than these stray ones of ours  
Which the angels have to us flung.
- “And wherever a tear had fallen down  
Gleamed out a diamond rare,  
And jewels befitting a monarch’s crown  
Were the footprints left by care.”

God will at length show us the right side of the picture, the completed scheme he has planned for us, so beautiful, of such exquisite glory and blessedness, that I sometimes think that the first thing we shall do when we reach our heavenly home will be to go straight to the Lord, and bowing before him, say, "Dear Lord, forgive the murmurings at my lot, and take my innermost thanks for the way in which thou didst lead me, and for the plan of life thou didst prepare for me."

III. It is a necessary consequence of our free wills, of the fact that the web of our life is woven in part by our own free choices, that we can mar and spoil God's proposed plan for us. We can break our threads; we can weave in the wrong colors of sinful pleasures; we can make demons instead of angels, the flames of remorse instead of the light of heaven, midnight revelry instead of the paradise of God. We can utterly spoil that picture which might have been the blessed result of our lives.

A German poem represents a good man

as coming, after his death, to the gates of heaven, and welcomed to its glories. An angel was commissioned to be his conductor and teacher. First he took him to a point where he could see the most fearful representation of sin when it had brought forth death. It was a fearful place, peopled with everything hateful, loathsome, and wretched. His guide bade him look still farther down the dismal vault, and farther still, where were objects more anguished, and loathsome, and haggard with wasting woe. He bade him concentrate his vision on an object more hideous and disgusting than he ever could have imagined. "That," said his conductor, "in the ages of eternity would have been you, had you not repented and believed. Behold the woe and degradation from which you have been saved by the compassion of your Saviour!" His guide then took him to a point from which could be seen the glories of the redeemed. He saw the highest ranks of angels, he heard their songs and hallelujahs, and was ravished. He was directed



to look far beyond all these, and there he beheld an object more beautiful than the highest saint who had been longest in heaven, more blissful than seraph or archangel. He heard music ineffably more sweet than any which flowed from the harps of the angels nearest the throne. The excess of glory overpowered him. Then said his conductor: "That beautiful and enraptured being is yourself many ages hence. Behold the glory and the bliss to which you are exalted through the salvation of the Redeemer."

It will be a sad thing to gaze forever on a ruined life, and to know that our own hands wrought the ruin. Here are two pictures hanging side by side. One is the picture of what God meant us to be, with all the possibilities of usefulness and blessing. There are all the good deeds, the loving words, the glorious traits of character, which God had planned for our lives, transcendently beautiful, a vision of shining glory. The other is a picture of the life we have lived, with its sins and errors, wrongs

done, duties omitted, opportunities neglected, its evil thoughts, its passionate words, its selfish deeds, its disobedience to God our Father,—a life scorched with the fires of the pit, and defiled with the smoke of its burning. To view forever those pictures, conscious that God wanted us to live the one, but that we wilfully chose the other,—that will be hell.

For we must remember that God never spoils a man's life. Circumstances never spoil a life. Trials, difficulties, temptations, battle-fields, mean victories; they mean character; they mean brighter crowns, higher thrones, sweeter harps; and we transform them into excuses for sin.

God has made no soul for hell, for ruin, for sin, but every soul for goodness and glory and heaven. And whosoever perishes is a moral suicide. Only his own hand can lock the gate of heaven against himself. He has stumbled over the very steps to glory.

IV. How may we succeed in carrying out God's plan for our lives? In the first

place, every one of us has put in so much that is wrong, and omitted so many duties, that there is no hope for us save in the cleansing blood of Christ, blotting out our sins.

Even then the thought troubles us, How can forgiveness take away the fact of the sin? No matter what is done for us, nor how lovingly we are welcomed to our Father's love, the fact of the sin remains. Peter denied his Lord; forgiveness and restoration did not blot out the fact, nor even the record of the fact known and read of all men. David was cleansed from his sin, and God blotted out his transgressions, and he was washed "whiter than snow," but the fact and the record are ever connected with his name.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> After this volume was in type, and long after it was written and named, a capital little book with the same title, by Rev. Oliver Huckel, came to my notice. It contains the following apt illustration, which did not occur to me, although I daily see in my home a picture of Penelope:—

"The old poet Homer in his tale of the Odyssey tells of Penelope's weaving in her island home at Ithaca. Her husband, the brave Ulysses, in his long sea-wanderings was reported lost. The years passed and Penelope was faithful to his memory. But eager

That charming book, "The Stars and the Earth," shows us how every deed is sending its picture out into the universe, and there is always some place where a sufficiently powerful eye can see the deed actually taking place. There is some star now that the rays from Abraham's sacrifice four thousand years ago have just reached, and a star where a keen eye could actually watch the workers under Nehemiah building the walls of the temple twenty-five hundred years ago. Every deed is written in the books of the universe, and how shall we escape it? How can we, so sinful, so weak, so full of errors, join the company of the angels and the martyrs and the saints, and look them in the face? Yet to do that is one of the sweetest joys of heaven. How

and impatient suitors came. For a long time Penelope put them off. Then at last she told them that she would wed when she had finished the web she was weaving. So she wove by day, and picked out the work at night, and through her woman's wit the web was never finished until Ulysses returned. But *our* weaving cannot be picked out again. What we have woven, we have woven. It is an irrevocable record, a life-history, a witness for and against us forever."

shall it be that, as to Richard III. in his last dream one injured one after another came before him, and said, "Let me sit heavy on thy soul to-night," so our sins shall not sit heavy on our souls forever?

A simple illustration has often comforted me. I have seen a black coal by the roadside. It was very black. I have seen the sun shine on that jet-black coal, and then I could no longer see its blackness because of the radiance reflected from it. It was no longer a spot of blackness; it was a star of glory. So, when we get to heaven, the wondrous wisdom and love of God in saving such sinners as we have been will make every one forget the sin in the radiance of redeeming love. We shall forget the battle and the wounds in the victory.

"Saint Augustine, well hast thou said  
That of our vices we can frame  
A ladder, if we will but tread  
Beneath our feet each deed of shame."

All can forget the sins and failures and weaknesses and errors, if only these be-

come the rungs of a ladder that reaches to heaven.

Then, after forgiveness our success depends on our working exactly according to God's pattern. Let no tempter persuade us to put in a line different from his command, or leave out one he has bidden us to put in. We cannot improve on God's copy. Many wrong things seem so precious, so attractive; but leave them all out. And many duties seem hard, many virtues difficult, but put them all in.

And so much of our lives, as God has planned them, seems commonplace. We long for wider spheres, grander work, more heroic duties. But we should remember that often the quiet and neutral tints, with the brighter spots of color God puts into every life, will often make the most lovely pattern, the most charming picture; and heroic deeds, and martyr's fires, and kingly power, often bring no more of divine beauty than a true life in a lowly home, or in honest daily toil. The sweet landscape of the valley has a charm denied to Alpine peaks or cathedral piles. The

secret of life is to do the lowliest work in the noblest spirit.

“If the dear Lord should send an angel down,  
A seraph radiant in his robes of light,  
To do some menial service in our streets,  
As braying stone, we'll say, from morn till  
night;  
Think you the faintest blush would rise  
To mar the whiteness of his holy face?  
Think you a thought of discontent would find  
Within his perfect heart abiding-place?

“I love to think the sweet will of his God  
Would seem as gracious in a seraph's eyes,  
In the dark and miry crowded lanes of earth,  
As in the ambrosial bowers of Paradise ;  
That those fair hands which lately swept the lyre  
Would not against their lowly work rebel,  
But, as they ever wrought his will in heaven,  
Would work it here as faithfully and well.”

God's plan is our best. And wheresoever our lot is cast, by doing the duties God bids us to do, by bearing the burdens his love lays upon us, by a heart overflowing with love, by a childlike trust in our Saviour, we are certain to weave a life that will be a joy and a blessing throughout the eternal ages, and

will win God's "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of thy Lord."

### SPINNING.

Like a blind spinner in the sun  
I tread my days;  
I know that all the threads will run  
Appointed ways;  
I know each day will bring its task,  
And, being blind, no more I ask.

I do not know the use or name  
Of that I spin;  
I only know that some one came  
And laid within  
My hand the thread, and said, "Since you  
Are blind, but one thing you can do."

Sometimes the threads so rough and fast  
And tangled fly,  
I know wild storms are sweeping past,  
And fear that I  
Shall fall; but dare not try to find  
A safer place, since I am blind.

I know not why, but I am sure  
That tint and place  
In some great fabric to endure  
Past time and race  
My threads will have; so from the first,  
Though blind, I never felt accursed.



I think perhaps this trust has sprung  
From one short word  
Said over me when I was young,—  
So young, I heard  
It knowing not that God's name signed  
My brow, and sealed me his, though blind.

But, whether this be seal or sign  
Within, without,  
It matters not. The bond divine  
I never doubt.  
I know he set me here, and still,  
And glad, and blind, I wait his will;

But listen, listen, day by day,  
To hear their tread  
Who bear the finished web away,  
And cut the thread,  
And bring God's message in the sun,  
"Thou poor blind spinner, work is done."  
—*Helen Hunt Jackson.*

### SONG OF HOPE.

Children of yesterday, heirs of to-morrow,  
What are you weaving? Labor and sorrow.  
Look at your loom again; faster and faster  
Fly the great shuttles prepared by the Master.  
There's life in the loom;  
Room for it!  
Room!

Children of yesterday, heirs of to-morrow,  
 Lighten your labor and sweeten your sorrow.  
 Now, while the shuttles fly faster and faster,  
 Up and be at it, at work for the Master.

He stands by your loom;

Room for him!

Room!

Children of yesterday, heirs of to-morrow,  
 Look at your fabric of labor and sorrow,  
 Seamy and dark with despair and disaster;  
 Turn it, and lo! the design of the Master.

The Lord's at the loom;

Room for him!

Room!

—*Mary A. Lathbury.*

### THE WEB OF LIFE.

A weaver standing at his loom one day  
 Wrought with uncertain hand some strange design;  
 A tangled mesh it seemed, line blurring line,  
 Unsuted contrasts—warp and woof astray.  
 Sometimes he paused, and pushed his work away.  
 “The task is hopeless,” said he, and sighed,  
 But patiently resumed; and one by one  
 The broken threads were mended.

When 't was done

He turned the frame, and lo! Upon that side  
 A radiant light his startled eyes did greet.

What seemed confusion had been hidden law,  
 And the designer's dream at last he saw,  
 Resulting, lovely, perfect, and complete!

Like that old weaver, troubled, faint with fear  
We weave the fabric which we call our life;  
And our ignoring fingers through the years  
Hold most incongruous threads—hard-knotted strife,  
Broken ambition, and entangled love,  
Faint hope, contrasting with intense despair,  
Dark hues of sorrow—all these things are there.

But, when the day shall dawn on heights above,  
Some gracious light upon our work may shine,  
Revealing clearly how the Master's hand  
Guided harmonious each discordant strand,  
And from the human fashioned the divine.

### ONE STITCH.

One stitch dropped as the weaver drove  
His nimble shuttle to and fro,  
In and out, beneath, above,  
Till the pattern seems to bud and grow  
As if the fairies had helping been;  
And the one stitch dropping pulled the next stitch  
out,  
And a weak place in the fabric stout,  
And the perfect pattern was marred for aye  
By the one small stitch that was dropped that day.

One small life in God's great plan,  
How futile it seems as the ages roll,  
Do what it may, or strive how it can,  
To alter the sweep of the infinite whole!  
A single stitch in an endless web,  
A drop in the ocean's flow and ebb;

But the pattern is rent where the stitch is lost,  
 Or marred where the tangled threads have crossed;  
 And each life that fails of the true intent  
 Mars the perfect plan that its Master meant.

—*Susan Coolidge.*

### OUR PATTERN.

The colors we had to weave  
 Were bright in our early years ;  
 But we wove the tissue wrong, and stained  
 The woof with bitter tears.

We wove a web of doubt and fear —  
 Not faith, and hope, and love —  
 Because we looked at our work, and not  
 At our Pattern up above !

—*Phœbe Cary.*

“Think you the notes of holy song  
 On Milton’s tuneful ear have died ?  
 Think you that Raphael’s angel throng  
 Has vanished from his side ?

“O, no! we live our lives again,  
 All warmly touched or coldly done.  
 The pictures of the past remain,  
 Man’s works shall follow on.

“Still shall the soul around it call  
 The shadows that it gathered here;  
 And painted on the eternal wall  
 The past shall reappear.

“We shape ourselves the joy or fear  
Of which the coming life is made,  
And fill our future atmosphere  
With sunshine or with shade.

“The tissue of the life to be  
We weave in colors all our own,  
And in the field of destiny  
We reap what we have sown.”

---

“Through every web of life the dark threads run.  
O, why and whither God knows all.  
I only know that he is good,  
And whatever may befall,  
Or here or there, must be the best that could.”

---

Too long have I, methought, with tearful eye  
Pored o'er this tangled work of mine, and mused  
Above each stitch awry and thread confused;  
Now well I think on what in years gone by  
I heard of them that weave rare tapestry  
At royal looms, and how they constant use  
To work on the rough side, and still peruse  
The pictured pattern set above them high;  
So will I set my copy high above,  
And gaze, and gaze till on my spirit grows  
Its gracious impress; till some line of love,  
Transferred upon my canvas, faintly glows;  
Nor look too much on warp or woof, provide  
*He whom I work for sees their fairer side.*

—Author of “*Patience of Hope.*”

“The threads our hands in blindness spin  
Our self-determined plan weaves in;  
The shuttle of the unseen powers  
Works out a pattern not as ours.”

---

“All day, all night, I can hear the jar  
Of the loom of life; and near and far  
It thrills with its deep and muffled sound,  
As the tireless wheels go always round;  
Busily, ceaselessly, goes the loom,  
In the light of the day and the midnight's gloom,  
The wheels are turning early and late,  
And the woof is wound in the warp of fate.

“And now there's a thread of love wove in,  
And now another of wrong and sin;  
What a checkered thing will this life be,  
When we see it unrolled in eternity!  
Time, with her wings of mystery,  
And hands as busy as hands can be,  
Still sits at the loom, with arms outspread,  
To clutch in its meshes each glancing thread.

“O, when shall this wonderful web be done?  
In a thousand years, or perhaps in one,  
Or to-morrow,—who knoweth? nor you nor I;  
But the wheels run on and the shuttles fly.  
Ah, sad-eyed weavers, the years are slow,  
But each one is nearer the end, I know;  
*Some* day the last thread shall be woven in,—  
God grant it be *love* instead of sin.”

If Christ Were a Guest in  
Our Home.





## If Christ Were a Guest in Our Home.

---



FEW years ago (1894) there was published a volume by Mr. William T. Stead, the brilliant English reformer and editor, with the title,

“IF CHRIST CAME TO CHICAGO.”

Its title and dominant idea were suggested by James Russell Lowell's poem, “A Parable,” beginning,—

“Said Christ our Lord, ‘I will go and see  
How the men, my brothers, believe in me.’”

Coming to earth as a man, the glorious Son of God, he was welcomed with pomp and state by rulers and kings. Carpets of gold were spread for him to walk upon.

“And in palace-chambers lofty and rare  
They lodged him, and served him with kingly fare ;  
Great organs surged through arches dim  
Their jubilant floods in praise of him.”

But Christ turned away from all these, for he was looking to see what they had done with his poor brothers, how they treated the bodies and souls of those he had left in their care.

“Then Christ sought out an artisan,  
A low-browed, stunted, haggard man ;  
And a motherless girl, whose fingers thin  
Pushed from her faintly want and sin.

“These he set in the midst of them,  
And, as they drew back their garment hem  
For fear of defilement, ‘Lo, here,’ said he,  
‘The images ye have made of me.’”

Mr. Stead represents Christ as going down into the depths of sin in the great city, searching for “the images ye have made of me.” He looks into the prisons; he peers into the gambling-hells; he finds the haunts of the scarlet woman; he watches men worshipping “the Chicago trinity of multiple-millionaires,” like Neb-

uchadnezzar's image with heads of gold and feet of clay; he calls at the saloons where men are being changed into brutes, and sees the great Juggernaut of Intemperance crushing multitudes under its gilded car; he sees the bottomless pit of political corruption, and the buying and selling of votes; the police with one eye shut to sin, and the other open to bribes. He even sees the churches open one day in the week and divided all the days; and "tuning their music to their audiences"; he enters the dismal police-stations, where gather in winter, "like the frogs in the Egyptian plague," "the homeless wanderers in this desert of stone and steel."

In reading the book one feels as if he were walking with Dante, with his blanched face, in the seven circles of Purgatory, or in the deeper depths of the Inferno; or as if he were on a pilgrimage with Bunyan's Pilgrim, and saw only the huge burden of sin on his back, the terrors of the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and of angels only the dart-hurling and fire-breathing Apollyon. One

seems to be really dwelling in "Satan's Invisible World Revealed," the title of a later book by Mr. Stead on the corruptions of New York.

There are indeed some chapters at the close of the book on what Christ would do after he had seen all these things, and a vision of what the city might become in the twentieth century. But one does not see, in what Christ is represented as seeing, where, in all this jungle of thorns and poisonous weeds, there are any seeds which could grow into trees of life, or change this dismal swamp into the garden of Paradise.

While most of the statements made are probably according to fact, and it is well to have these evils clearly stated in order to arouse men to remove them, yet it is only a small part of the truth, like the very thin dummy volume in the library of Dickens at Gadshill, which he entitled "The Virtues of Our Ancestors."

But I cannot imagine the Jesus who walked in Galilee nineteen hundred years ago, and whose picture is presented in

the gospels, as going into any city and seeing only the evil therein. He did say, "Woe unto you," but that is a small part of the Gospel record. I cannot conceive of him as going among the people chiefly to criticise, as seeing the fading divisions of the churches, and not their growing unity, as condemning them for doing their work chiefly on Sundays and evenings, any more than one would condemn our educational plants because they keep school only five hours a day for five days in the week, or a dining-room because there is eating there only two or three hours a day, while in the strength of that food all hours are made useful. I cannot conceive of Jesus seeing only the thorns on a rosebush, and not the roses, or the fly on a church door, and not the church.

Nor can I conceive how Christ would find "the images ye have made of me" only in the downtrodden and the sinful and the starving, made so, not by the Christian people, but by the forces and influences that they, all too feebly indeed, are steadily and earnestly oppos-

ing. He would see the good men and women, the heroes in common life, the men of noble deeds and large giving, the self-denying laborers in the spiritual harvest fields, the martyrs of the hospital and the home, crucified on unseen crosses and burning in invisible flames; these, too, he would set in their midst, and say,

“Lo, here  
The images ye have made of me.”

The next year Rev. Dr. Edward Everett Hale wrote a book entitled

“IF JESUS CAME TO BOSTON.”

It did not contradict Mr. Stead, but presented the other side of the picture, which is as true of Chicago and New York as it is of Boston.

He represents Jesus as a Syrian stranger from over the sea, arriving in Boston in search of his long-lost brother. He is taken in charge, and visits every place in the city whose work is to save lost men from sin and suffering. Inquiries are made at the Associated Charities, the res-

cue missions, the college settlements, the churches, the Sunday-schools, the day-schools, the hospitals, the soup-kitchens, the kitchen-gardens, the Young Men's Christian Associations, the Young Women's Christian Associations, the Salvation Army, the evening-schools, the children's homes, the day-nurseries, the public libraries, the police-stations, the courthouses, the reformatories, the homes for the aged and the sick, and innumerable other places for the help of men. No one knows more about these things in Boston than does Dr. E. E. Hale, or has had more to do with them. But the half cannot be told. Not one person in a thousand of those who go daily to any great city know one-tenth, hardly one-hundredth part, of the efforts made to help our fellow men. In New York it takes a volume of five hundred pages to give simply the names and officers of the societies which are thus at work.

Dr. Hale closes with a telegraph despatch from the departing Syrian stranger, which would equally well apply to each

of our great cities:—"I have gone to Chicago. I find I have other sheep there. What you in Boston have been doing to the least of these my brethren and my sisters, you have done it unto me."

In February of that same year (1895) there passed away to his heavenly home one of the best-known and most useful of the Boston ministers, Rev. Dr. A. J. Gordon, pastor of the Clarendon Street Baptist Church. Since his death there has been published a book entitled,

"HOW CHRIST CAME TO CHURCH,"

which gives in his own words a part of his spiritual autobiography, and contains an experience so sweet, so marvellous, so full of power, that it comes like a benediction on all who read it. Even we who knew him in a measure were not aware of this experience, but only of its results. Whether his intimate friends knew about it, I do not know.

Twenty years before his death, and when he had been pastor about five years, there came to him a most vivid dream,



which, as really as Peter's vision on the house top, changed his whole life. "It was Saturday night, when wearied from the work of preparing Sunday's sermon, that I fell asleep and the dream came. I was in the pulpit before a full congregation, just ready to begin my sermon, when a stranger entered and passed slowly up the left aisle of the church, looking first to the one side and then to the other as though silently asking with his eyes that some one would give him a seat. He had proceeded nearly half-way up the aisle when a gentleman stepped out and offered him a place in his pew, which was quietly accepted. Excepting the face and features of the stranger, everything in the scene is distinctly remembered—the number of the pew, the Christian man who offered its hospitality, the exact seat which was occupied. Only the countenance of the visitor could never be recalled. That his face wore a peculiarly serious look, as of one who had known some great sorrow, is clearly impressed on my mind. His bearing, too, was ex-

ceeding humble, his dress poor and plain, and from the beginning to the end of the service he gave the most respectful attention to the preacher. Immediately as I began my sermon my attention became riveted on this hearer. If I would avert my eyes from him for a moment they would instinctively return to him, so that he held my attention rather than I held his till the discourse was ended.

“To myself I said constantly, ‘Who can that stranger be?’ and then I mentally resolved to find out by going to him and making his acquaintance as soon as the service should be over. But after the benediction had been given the departing congregation filed into the aisles, and before I could reach him the visitor had left the house. The gentleman with whom he had sat remained behind, however; and, approaching him with great eagerness, I asked: ‘Can you tell me who that stranger was who sat in your pew this morning?’ In the most matter-of-course way he replied: ‘Why, did you not know that man? It was Jesus of Nazareth.’

“With a sense of the keenest disappointment I said: ‘My dear sir, why did you let him go without introducing me to him? I was so desirous to speak with him.’

“And with the same nonchalant air the gentleman replied: ‘O, do not be troubled. He has been here to-day, and no doubt he will come again.’

“And now came an indescribable rush of emotion. As when a strong current is suddenly checked, the stream rolls back upon itself, and is choked in its own foam, so the intense curiosity which had been going out toward the mysterious hearer now returned upon the preacher: and the Lord himself, ‘whose I am and whom I serve,’ had been listening to me to-day. What was I saying? In what spirit did I preach? What did he think of our sanctuary? How was he impressed with the music and the order of worship? A lifetime, almost an eternity, of interest crowded into a single moment.”

That dream or vision changed not only his own life, but the life and spirit and

work of the church, as has been testified to me by those who were a part thereof.

Suppose now that in the light of these three books we should consider what would be the effect

IF JESUS WERE A GUEST IN OUR HOME, if he should come to us visibly and consciously, and make one of our family, as he was with Mary and Martha and Lazarus in their home at Bethany. He is really with us, though we see him not, as the scenery is around us, though the near-sighted man cannot perceive it, and as the angel legions were a guard around Elisha in Dothan, although invisible to his servant. But

“There are who like the seer of old  
Can see the helpers God has sent,  
And how life's rugged mountain-side  
Is white with many an angel tent.”

In the first place I am sure that Jesus would be welcomed by all the good and all who longed to be good. A Methodist minister, so it is said, once declared that

none of our churches would accept Jesus as their pastor except the Methodist, and they would do it only because they could get rid of him at the end of a year. But that statement is the basest of slanders. Most of the church people would like to have Jesus to lead and guide them, to solve their doubts, to make plain what they ought to do and give, to direct their plans and inspire their hopes.

Jesus would make a most delightful guest and friend. There was something very charming and attractive about him, so that children were drawn toward him, and even publicans and sinners were attracted by his love that sympathized with their struggles, and fostered every hope and aspiration to be better. We have too often thought of our Heavenly Father, and in less measure of his Son Jesus, as a severe critic, as one who was forever searching for some fault or error, with ready reproof or policeman's club. I can well remember how to me as a little boy the words, "Thou God seest me,"

meant that God saw whatever wrong I might do, and was continually looking for it with a critic's eye. And this was the impression gained from the familiar story of the man going into his neighbor's orchard to steal apples, and looking in every direction to learn whether any one was watching him, when his little boy said, "Father, you forgot to look up."

Of course Jesus knows all our sins and mistakes, every evil thought, every wrong motive, every unholy desire cherished, every selfish feeling or action. If we are Christians, we want him to know them, so that he can forgive, and help us to get rid of them. God's presence was welcome to Adam and Eve in the Garden till they disobeyed him. Then they tried to hide from him. But to them and all their children he is welcome when they repent and turn to him. For he sees our sin as a physician sees the signs of disease in us, in order to cure; or as the gardener sees weeds among the flowers, in order to destroy them. In the third chapter of

First Corinthians there is a curious expression, "Ye are God's husbandry," which had little meaning to me in the common version. The Revised Version made it clearer when it read in the margin, "Ye are God's tilled land." Some one made it much plainer by translating it "Ye are God's farm," his garden. Jesus, looking at us as his garden, is seeking fruits and flowers. To these he gives all his care. And, if he finds weeds and thorns there, he roots them up, no matter how much disturbance it makes in the soil, but always for the sake of the fruits and flowers.

Jesus is a delightful companion to his disciples because he knows us just as we are in our inmost souls, in our longings, in our ideals, in our penitence for our failures and resolutions to overcome; and there are very few who can do this, even our most intimate friends.

O. W. Holmes, in "The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table," gives a shrewd illustration of the difficulty any two people have in understanding each other.

“When John and Thomas, for instance, are talking together, it is natural enough that among the *six* there should be more or less confusion and misapprehension.” (Here the auditors were astonished, and thought of Falstaff’s nine men in buckram grown out of two.) “I think I can make it plain that there are at least six personalities distinctly to be recognized as taking part in that dialogue between John and Thomas,—

- |                 |   |  |
|-----------------|---|--|
| Three Johns.    | { | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The real John, known only to his Maker.</li> <li>2. John’s ideal John, never the real one and often very unlike him.</li> <li>3. Thomas’s ideal John, never the real John, nor John’s John, but often very unlike either.</li> </ol> |
| Three Thomases. | { | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The real Thomas.</li> <li>2. Thomas’s ideal Thomas.</li> <li>3. John’s ideal Thomas.</li> </ol>  |

“Only one of the three Johns is taxed ; only one can be weighed on a platform balance, but the other two are just as important in the conversation. Let us suppose the real John to be old, dull, and ill-looking. . . . John conceives himself to



be youthful, witty, and fascinating, and talks from the point of view of this ideal. Thomas, again, believes him to be an artful rogue. . . . It follows that until a man can be found who knows himself as his Maker knows him, or sees himself as others see him, there must be at least six persons engaged in every dialogue between two. . . . No wonder two disputants often get angry, when there are six of them talking and listening all at the same time."

Jesus knows the real John and the real Thomas, with no mistakes, with no misunderstandings. The ice is broken between them. Teacher and pupils are as one, and this makes the most delightful friendship where one longs to teach and the other longs to be taught. Every disciple of Jesus can be "a favorite scholar."

I remember reading of an advertisement by a young man who sought a boarding-place "where his good Christian example would be a sufficient compensation." I have had many a person

at my house, and have known many more I would like to have, whose presence was such a benediction that it paid many times over for all cost or trouble. Jesus Christ is such a guest. His presence blesses us more than the ark blessed the house of Obed-edom. What an effect it would have upon our home life if we were conscious of Jesus' presence there! It would make such a change in the home as the dream of his presence wrought in Dr. Gordon's church. How pure and delightful our conversation would be! How courteous would be our intercourse with one another in such a presence! The speaking evil of others would cease. There would no scolding, no fretting, no exhibitions of bad temper. How helpful every child would be to father and mother! There would be Bible-study in that family, and family prayers, and an atmosphere of spiritual life. Each one would bring something bright and cheerful to the daily meals. Everything would be loving, harmonious, natural, cheerful, entertaining. Sports and games and witty

remarks, and all that gives brightness and restfulness, would be a part of the home life, but in the most pure and Christian spirit.

Many years ago I heard a sermon from a college professor on the two disciples at Emmaus constraining Jesus to abide with them. The notes I took were something like this:—

“The same principles apply as in the welcome of a guest. 1. We must feel our welcome with warm hearts. 2. We must express the desire and the invitation urgently. 3. We must put away whatever would be disagreeable to him. 4. We must entertain him with our best, and make his stay as delightful as possible. 5. We must be in sympathy with his plans and his work, and converse with him about them. Then will he abide in our hearts, our homes, and our churches.”

Jesus cannot consciously be a guest in our homes unless we constrain him to come. Then he will bring such blessing as will make our homes a training-school for heaven. They will be Paradise re-

gained. They will breathe the atmosphere of the city of God.

“Abide with me! fast falls the eventide,  
The darkness deepens. Lord, with me abide.  
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,  
Help of the helpless, O abide with me!

. . . . .

“Come, not to sojourn, but abide, with me.”



OCT 4 1900

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.  
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide  
Treatment Date: Oct. 2005

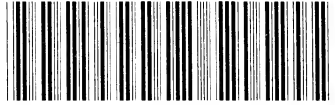
**PreservationTechnologies**

A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION

111 Thomson Park Drive  
Cranberry Township, PA 16066  
(724) 779-2111



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 017 043 754 8

