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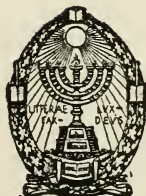
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OLD TRUTHS
NEWLY &
ILLUSTRATED
BY
HENRY GRAHAM, D.D.

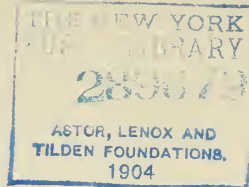
OLD TRUTHS

NEWLY ILLUSTRATED

BY
HENRY GRAHAM, D.D.



NEW YORK: EATON & MAINS
CINCINNATI: JENNINGS & GRAHAM



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★ Publishers' Weekly

17 Oct. 04

PREFACE

THIS is not a pretentious volume. Its principal aim is to incorporate for public use more than three hundred original illustrations which the writer has found useful during a ministry of over thirty years in applying divine truth to the audiences which he has been privileged to address. His thought is that it will be especially valuable to ministers and teachers of spiritual truth, who are welcome to use the illustrations in their own way.

At the same time the truths illustrated are the old truths of the Gospel of Christ, and it is hoped that in their present form they may be helpful to all Christians.

The illustrations are all original, unless in a few instances the writer's memory has proved treacherous. Where legends, incidents, and historical and scientific facts are used, they are, of course, not original, but the application of them, so far as the writer can remember, has not been suggested by another.

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OLD TRUTHS NEWLY ILLUSTRATED

Afflictions

THE perfection of seamanship is not to reduce the tempest, or to lighten the ship by throwing the cargo overboard, but so to strengthen the ship and manage her that she shall carry her load and ride the heaviest sea. If a man should build a vessel and offer it for sale as a ship that could sail well in fine weather, he would hardly find a buyer. If a man should seek employment as a sailor who could climb the shrouds beautifully in sunshine, he would look long for an employer. But if a man should advertise for sale a ship that could outride the fiercest gales with all her cargo undamaged, and could prove that she really could do so, every shipowner would want his vessel at any price; and if a man should seek employment, not as a summer sailor, but as a winter sailor—one who could walk the slippery decks and climb the icy shrouds in the teeth of the wildest tempest—every shipmaster would want him in his employ.

It is not God's purpose to teach us to bear the ills

of life by reducing those ills, but his purpose seems to be to pile on the burdens, and at the same time gird us with divine strength to bear them. It is not his purpose to spare us all disaster, and loss, and sorrow, and trouble, but to use these things for our spiritual growth and development. He wants a tried people. Who would not rather be a giant, though compelled to carry heavy burdens, than to be a weakling and carry no burdens? God gives to his children a discipline which is designed to make the most of them; to show to themselves, to the world, and to high heaven that they are the stuff of which heroes are made. If a man should proclaim from the housetop that he is a fair-weather Christian, and will be faithful while the sun shines and flowers perfume his pathway, but will give no assurance of fidelity if crosses and troubles beset him, the churches would keep clear of him, and it is doubtful if he would commend himself to the great Head of the Church.

"Appearances Are Often Deceiving"

One cold, blustering April day, when the broken clouds were flying rapidly by in the sky and the sun was struggling to break through now and then with his light and warmth, a man looked up at the scene overhead and remarked: "This day is trying very hard to be decent—with only partial success." Such a day, in which storm and fair weather are struggling for the mastery, is very like some people who are making an equally desperate struggle to be decent—with about the same measure of success. We ought not to expect

too much of an April day; and we ought not to expect too much of some kinds of people.

In traveling through the country in the autumn time I remember to have seen in the distance an old tumble-down barn of very forbidding appearance. The timbers were rotten, and it was leaning badly. The shingles in many places were torn from the roof by the wind, and those that remained were decayed and covered with moss. The clapboards were split and broken, and in many places entirely wanting. The doors were off their hinges, and patched with boards and slabs, and propped together with an old rotten rail. The gangway had rotted and sunk far below the level of the floor, and in every way it was a most forlorn-looking building. It seemed ready to blow down or to sink by its own weight. I expected to find it empty, of course, but to my surprise, after climbing into it with some trouble, I found it filled to the very roof with well-cured hay and grain—a very valuable old establishment after all.

And some men are equally forbidding in external appearance and equally well-stored within. It is the peculiarity of some natures that they always present the worst side to view. If they do a good deed they do it in some uncouth or outlandish way that is apt to blind men to the value of the deed itself. Henry Ward Beecher said, "Many Christians are like chestnuts, very pleasant nuts, but inclosed in very prickly burs."

Sugar refiners put into the boiling syrup some albuminous substance, which coagulates and forms a kind

of network that seizes upon all the impurities in the sugar and brings them to the top in the form of a thick black scum. Those who see only the surface of the sugar might consider it of no value; but this would be a great mistake. The scum always rises to the top of a boiling pot; and there is something analogous to this in the lives of some men. The evil within constantly rises to the surface, and that alone is seen.

I once knew a very benevolent, kind-hearted man who was rather proud of his roughness and rudeness of manner. He used to slaughter a great many sheep in the autumn, and gave many a carcass to a poor family; but instead of carrying it into the house as he drove along, or calling some one to come out and get it, he would throw it down in the dirty road and with an oath tell them to come and get it. He carried a load of hay to a poor widow, and, instead of putting it into the barn, as others would have done, he carried it down into the cellar of the house, telling her the preachers would steal it if he left it in sight.

Some men are so unfortunately constituted as always to present the worst side to view. The heart is really better than the life appears to be. God will doubtless find good where we see only evil. The Lord of the harvest will find wheat where we see only chaff. The all-seeing eye can detect fruit where we find only weeds. Man looks on the outward appearance, the Lord looks into the heart. Faults stand out more prominently than virtues. The weeds wave in the wind the potatoes are out of sight in the ground.

Opposite the little village of Bingen on the Rhine is a broad mountain side, about twelve hundred feet high and a mile or two in extent, covered with vineyards from the river bank to the summit. The ascent is very steep, and to prevent the soil from rattling down when it is cultivated the whole mountain side has been terraced by building a succession of stone walls above each other, making the entire mountain side a great flight of stairs from bottom to top. The vines are planted on the tops of these terrace steps. Looking at the mountain side from the low level of the river, one can see little else than hard, forbidding stone walls rising one above the other. The walls hide the vines. Looking down from the top of the mountain, however, the stone walls are hidden from view, and there is little visible but thick green vines covered with rich clusters of grapes. The vines hide the walls.

And so God, looking down into the hearts of men from above, will see fruits growing and ripening there, when we, from the low level of earth, can see no prospect of fruit. Every character has its heavenward side and its earthward side. God sees the heavenward side; we can see only the earthward side. The heavenward side undoubtedly best represents the real man.

Apostasy

Why should not the loss of religion bring unhappiness? It is told of the great orators Cicero and Demosthenes, when they fell under the displeasure of their countrymen and were banished from Rome and

Athens, that they never looked toward their native country without weeping; and shall it seem strange that a man should feel sorrow in his soul when he looks back to the Cross and gets a glimpse of the Saviour he has forsaken?

The man who was once rich, but has lost all and is compelled to pick up a living as best he can, can never forget the days of plenty, or look back to them without a pang. I knew a poor woman who was a pensioner on the funds of the church, and she never received help without pathetically reminding us of the days when she had plenty of money and was able to help others. And the man who has ever known the love of God in his soul cannot miss it without the deepest sorrow.

I was once riding quite a distance on a summer evening when I overtook a man walking and asked him to ride. We chatted about the weather and the crops, as two strangers would; and as we neared the village where we must separate I thought I would say a word about religion, and so asked him if he were a Christian. He said: "I once was. I used to attend the prayer meetings and enjoy them as well as any man; and I knew what it was to have the love of God shed abroad in my heart, but I have got back and lost it all." And then he added: "I have never had a happy hour, day or night, from that time to this." That was the saddest testimony I ever heard.

Neglect is very often the cause of apostasy. A well of water can be kept fresh and sweet only by daily use;

and it is equally true of the "well of water springing up into everlasting life." Neglect a plant, and it will die; neglect a crop, and the weeds will choke it; neglect a road, and it is soon out of repair; neglect a fire, and it will go out; neglect a fence, and it is soon on the ground; neglect a house, and it will rot down; neglect a business, and it will soon run out; and if a man neglects his religion it will be gone before he is well aware of it.

Lying in the hospital, I learned the important lesson that joints unused for only a few weeks become hard and stiff and cannot be used, and it is the work of months to limber them up again. My experience led me to think that if a man should lie flat down on his back, with limbs stretched downward, without moving a muscle for two or three months, he would be unable to bend a joint. And if a Christian should cease prayer, Bible reading, communion with God, church attendance, and should not indulge in a religious thought or emotion for the same length of time, he would be as helpless religiously as the other would be physically.

Backsliders

The leaves of a tree generally drop off when they are dead; not so all members of the church. You may sometimes see the dead leaves clinging to a tree all through the desolate winter. Beech and oak trees have this peculiarity. These dead leaves are the same size as live ones, and the same shape, and when the wind blows they will make far more noise; yet there is no

vital relation between those dead leaves and the tree. While the tree is alive the leaves are dead, and they only cling to it mechanically, to mar its beauty and give it the appearance of death.

There are many persons clinging to Christ in the same fashion, while there is no vital, saving relation between them and Christ. There was once, but the vital relation has been severed. They still belong to the church, like real Christians, and make the same professions, only to mar the beauty of the church and give it the appearance of death, and awaken the criticism of the world. The new life and new leaves of the springtime push off these dead leaves, and the tree renews its beauty. So a live church should have power betimes to push off these dead members and renew its beauty.

Bad Business

I well remember a young man who wanted to be a Christian, but he carried bottled ale around to hotels and saloons, and felt that his business was in the way, yet feared that he could not support his family if he gave it up. The result was that he halted and hesitated, but finally went on with the business, and his religious impressions disappeared.

Another young man made a desperate attempt to reform a life of intemperance, even considering the propriety of becoming a Christian; but he used to fiddle for dances during the winter season, and the associations always led him astray—he always came home intoxicated from these parties. After repeated

conversations he decided to go on with the bad business, while sobriety and religion were abandoned, on the ground that he could not support his family in any other way.

In all such cases I have strongly advised to cut loose from everything evil, do right, and trust God for the result. It is well that people understand that a Christian man is out of place on a beer wagon and has no place in a saloon, on either side of the counter.

Bible Study

Scripture is a gold mine of untold dimensions. The gold in some places lies nearer the surface than at others; but in every case great labor will be required to exhaust the resources of this mine. Well-equipped men have been digging for centuries, but there is still enough for all. It could not be expected that a divine revelation would yield up its treasures without the most patient investigation.

Men devote a lifetime to a single science, or a phase of philosophic thought, or an astronomical theory; is it unreasonable to ask that they give equal time and attention to the mystery of godliness? No man can exhaust this mine, but he can dig enough to enrich himself eternally. Bible truth must be dug out of the mine and incorporated into the memory before it becomes available for practical use. Scripture committed to memory is change in the pocket which can be put to use at a moment's notice, while Scripture uncommitted is the gold still in the mine, which must be dug

out and minted before it can be used. It is very convenient to have plenty of change in the pocket, and it is very useful to have plenty of Scripture in the memory. If a friend writes a letter and we leave it unopened for months it is our own fault if we do not know its contents.

Bible study must lead us to Christ or it is largely useless. To ramble over the pages of the Bible without finding Christ is like the tourist strolling through the aisles and corridors of Westminster Abbey without finding the famous chapel of Henry the Seventh. It is there, somewhere within those ancient walls, a thing of beauty—perhaps the finest piece of Gothic architecture in the world—and the thing which the traveler most desires to see in this celebrated abbey. But there are many other objects of interest to draw him aside. He may linger in the cloisters, over the gray tombs of abbots and bishops, he may tarry long over the moldering ashes of warlike knights and barons, or he may muse in the Poets' Corner among the sleeping bards until the shades of evening gather, and never penetrate to the central glory of the abbey—this wonderful chapel.

And there are in the Bible poetry, eloquence, history, philosophy, beauty, sublimity which may engross our attention and delay our researches until night gathers, and we have never found the highest glory of the Bible—the royal Christ. Better visit the chapel first, and give what time is left to the shady aisles and Poets' Corner. Better find Christ first, and afterward

search for the poetry and eloquence and literary beauty of the Bible.

Bible study may fall far short of the mark. It is the broad steps that lead up to the palace of the King. But if we climb up to the very top step and sit down there we are not in the palace. We are still outside, and the hot sun of summer will beat upon our heads, the fierce storms of winter will buffet us; we shall freeze to death at the very threshold of comfort and deliverance.

Bible study is Jacob's ladder, stretching from earth to heaven. Though we may climb far up this ladder, and stand on a round near the top, we are not yet in heaven; and a position on a round of a ladder is a very uncomfortable one.

It is said that a Scotchman committed the whole Bible to memory but had no saving knowledge of its blessed truths. Unless Bible study brings us to Christ as a personal Saviour it misses the very mark that is aimed at. Some of the greatest Bible scholars have done most to discredit the Bible. The steps are necessary to reach the palace, but the steps are not the palace.

Blind People—What They May Do

I saw a blind man standing at a desk on a street of London reading from his raised-letter Bible to the passers-by. As that busy, anxious, weary crowd swept along the street of the world's metropolis the words of the blessed Christ fell on their ears, in the halting accents of the blind man: "Come unto me, all ye that

labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Chance seed it was, sown at random; but God's word does not return unto him void.

I had as a parishioner a blind man who walked half a mile to church twice every Sunday; and every prayer meeting evening his voice was heard in testimony. As he felt his way along with a walking-stick he preached very loudly to those who looked out of their windows and knew well where he was going.

Blossoms and Fruit

In raising fruit-bearing trees and vines the thing aimed at is *fruit*, and it will not avail to stop short of this. When an apple tree or a grapevine is covered with blossoms in the springtime it is a charming sight, and the fragrance is exquisite, but this is not the object sought after. These beautiful blossoms are only a fragrant promise, a poetic prophecy of something better in the autumn time. If this promise is blighted, if this prophecy is a delusion, the tree or vine is a failure.

Some fruit trees have this peculiarity: there is a profusion of blossoms in the springtime, but the most of them drop off after awakening delusive hopes; or, after the fruit has set, it blasts and falls to the ground. Other trees have fewer blossoms; but every blossom represents an apple in the autumn.

When the blossoms drop off and become fruitless there is always a cause for it. The processes of growth somehow fail to gather for the issue the resources of nature; there is a lack of vitality to complete what was so well commenced.

All this aptly illustrates the experiences of the Christian life. With some Christians there is an abundance of blossoms, but they mostly fall off and amount to nothing; while others, with much less of promise, bear a full measure of fruit.

And in the Christian life there is always a cause for the failure. As the fruitless vine fails to make use of the resources of nature, so the fruitless Christian fails to maintain a vital connection with Christ and use his almighty resources.

Branches Broken Off

I saw by the roadside a large branch that had been broken from an apple tree in the late summer by a fierce gale. It was covered with apples, but they were only about one third grown, and as soon as the branch was broken off they ceased to grow and began to shrivel to even smaller size. The leaves also had withered, and every sign of life had disappeared from the broken branch. By the time the snows of winter were falling it would be brought to the house for fuel. Christ says, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." Broken branches disfigure the tree from which they

are broken, and disfigure the landscape, and so are put out of sight.

The church is surrounded by withered branches, its outskirts are hedged by them. These withered branches were once on the tree, but they have been broken off, and they lie about to trip people who want to get into the church. Whoever gets in is obliged to break through a hedge of broken branches surrounding the church.

Christian nurture might save many branches partially broken off, but harsh treatment will surely sever them completely from the tree. I have sometimes saved the branches of choice flowers that were crushed and broken, and sometimes have failed to do so. We are apt to think that it is worth while trying to save a broken branch.

My heart has been made to ache many times by the harsh treatment accorded wounded Christians. A brother gets hurt in the workings of the church, and begins to waver. He inclines to turn away from the church and from Christ, and some zealous Christian, disgusted with such boyish conduct, takes hold of him, gives him a good shaking, scolds him roundly, tells him he isn't worth bothering with, and he is seen in the church no more. I have found scores of broken branches lying around the church that were completely severed by harsh treatment, when tender nursing might have saved them to the church and to Christ.

Care of Converts

I heard of a young man who said he made a great mistake when he joined the church, for while the revival was in progress, and while he was on probation, the members used to shake hands with him and invite him to tea, and made a great deal of him; but after he had joined the church all this ceased—no more attentions, and no more tea—and he wished he had remained on probation.

Had he remained on probation more than six months the young man would have discovered the attentions falling away, for a chronic probationer soon comes to be an old story, as well as a full member. No person should join the church with the expectation of being petted continually. He should be ambitious to help the church, while receiving encouragement and help from the church.

Church membership affords a splendid opportunity for a young man to make the most of himself; and it is just as easy to be somebody as to be nobody, to do something as to do nothing. The church should afford care and culture to its members, and each should be proud to contribute his share for the benefit of others.

Carrying Everything to God

I was calling at a house, in my pastoral work, when a little girl came in from school. She had had trouble with a schoolmate, and was trying to choke back the sobs, while her cheeks were wet with tears. She hung

about the corners of the room as we talked ; and at last her mother said, "Why don't you go out and play?"

There was no response, yet she did not go, but rather crept slowly around the room nearer to where her mother sat.

At length the mother said, "What is the matter?" Taking this as an invitation, the little one ran to her mother and whispered all her troubles in her ear. The mother wiped away her tears, kissed her, told her to be brave and not mind little things; and she ran out to play with a happy heart.

I thought it a beautiful picture of how hundreds are going every day to the great Father in their sorrow and trouble; and he wipes away their tears, tells them to cheer up, and sends them away to meet the further experiences of life.

Changing Opinions

All men are conscious of a constant change of opinion. A subject drops out of mind for ten years, and when it comes back we find that our views upon it have entirely changed without our being aware of it. In life's journey, with downcast head, we have traveled around to the other side of the mountain, and viewing it at a different angle, under another condition of sky, and with an older heart, it does not look like the same peak. We will continue our journey and in after years get back to the point of starting, and perhaps like the first view better than any other.

Sometimes a man outgrows his opinions, as a youth

outgrows his garments; but we must not suppose, as is quite a common notion, that a man outgrows all the opinions he sets aside. The man may shrink, or grow out of proportion, as old men are apt to do, so that his intellectual garments no longer fit him; but the fault may be with the man and not the opinions.

Children for Christ

A little girl of nine years came forward and gave herself to Christ, with the remark, "I have waited too long already." I received two sisters into the church seven and nine years of age, children of a noble Christian man. They gave intelligent answers to all my inquiries, and their subsequent lives proved that no mistake was made. One of them, after a few years of consistent Christian living, went home to heaven; the other grew to womanhood, and was for many years an active worker in the church.

One of the most beautiful Christians I have ever known was a little girl who died in Christian triumph when about six years of age. Her faith was something marvelous. She comforted her sorrowing parents with the assurance that only her body would be in the ground; that her spirit would go to be with Christ. Her sick room for several days was like heaven itself, while words fell from her lips which would befit a mature saint. No one who witnessed her closing days on earth, and heard her marvelous words, can ever doubt the reality of child piety or fail to encourage it.

At a revival meeting when I was a small lad I heard sinners appealed to with great earnestness, and I knew very well what it meant. Selecting a number of young men of my acquaintance, I wished in my heart that they might come to Christ, and thought how sorry they would be on the deathbed or at the judgment if they did not come. One in particular, who was about twenty-five years of age, said he meant to be a Christian sometime, but not then. At seventy-five he was still unsaved. The preacher in all the services said nothing about children coming to Christ, and so I stayed away, although greatly moved by the truth presented in his sermons.

A lady told me that when her little boy was twelve years of age he wanted to take up the Christian life publicly and join the church, but she thought him too young, and held him back. When she told me the story he was forty-two years old, and a very wicked man. She expressed the deepest regret that she had not encouraged him to come to Christ when his inclinations led him that way.

Childhood Trust

There is no more beautiful sight than a child resting in its father's arms. And that rest means something more than physical rest, which mere sleep might secure. If this were all the child would better rest in its crib, which would be much more comfortable. There is a far deeper meaning in the longing which the child has to creep into its father's arms and go to sleep.

Even when the child has been punished, it will at once climb into the father's arms, and with a deep sigh cuddle down to rest. It is spiritual rest which the child craves, and it rests in the father's love more sweetly than in his arms.

Let this child grow up to be a young man just entering life, just beginning to battle with the realities of life; and you will see him now and then returning, weary, disheartened, almost discouraged, to have a good talk with the old gray-haired father in whose arms he lay in infancy, and who has been along the rugged path of life before him.

This father love is not a permanent thing, and we learn by it to look higher, to a heavenly Father who never grows old. Christians may look to God with the same confidence and trust which children have for earthly parents. They may rest in his smile and may fly to his arms even when his chastisements fall.

Choosing Our Destiny

Men try in various ways to dodge the terrible responsibility which God has put upon them of choosing their own destiny. A man takes liquor and as a consequence is made drunk; but he says, "I don't choose drunkenness; I choose the liquor," when he very well knows that to choose the liquor means drunkenness. A man is sick and refuses to send for a physician or take medicine; but he says, "I don't choose to die; I simply refuse to take the medicine." A man knows that a precipice lies directly across his path, but he shuts

his eyes and marches straight forward; then he says, "I don't choose to go over a precipice; but I am determined to go in this direction."

And the sinner knows that sin leads to death. God's word declares it: "The wages of sin is death;" "Sin when it is finished bringeth forth death." But the sinner says, "I don't choose death; I simply choose to follow my own inclinations and do as I please." Men cannot shirk their responsibility in any such way, but must work out their own destinies.

Shakespeare says, "Our bodies are our gardens, to the which our wills are gardeners: so that if we plant nettles, or sow lettuce; set hyssop, or weed up thyme; supply it with one gender of herbs, or distract it with many, either to have it sterile with idleness, or manured with industry—why, the power and corrigible authority of this lies in our wills."

Another says, "I don't choose at all in the matter; I simply do nothing, and let things take their course." But we must choose to do nothing.

Christ a Universal Saviour

It has been the boast of Christians that our Saviour with divine wisdom and tact adapts himself to all classes and conditions of men. As he revealed himself to his disciples little by little as they were able to bear it, so he reveals himself to all men as they are able to receive him. Simrock, the Rhine poet, has a brief poem which beautifully illustrates this thought. I have turned it into English as follows:

The legend have you never heard,
So famous in all lands,
About the image of our Lord,
That in Vienna stands?
They say it grows to be as tall
As are the tallest who adore it,
And yet it stoops to be as small
As any child who stands before it.

I know not whether there be such
An image, but believe
That Christ himself appears to each
What each can best receive.
A child with children he has been,
And so the children need not fear him;
With men he was the Prince of men,
And so the strongest gladly hear him.

Christ's Gospel

The Gospel centers around Him whose name it bears. It is emphatically the Gospel of Christ.

The sunlight derives its peculiarities from the sun, and is different from all other lights. It goes where earthly lights cannot go. It penetrates the dark forest, it flashes along the murky alleys, it creeps behind closed shutters, it finds its way into the cellars and garrets of earth to cheer their dismal inmates. We try to provide substitutes for it in the nighttime, but what miserable work we make of it. We can light up a room, or a few rods of space about us, but darkness envelops the earth in spite of our best endeavors. Darkness is death, and earthly lights would not suffice to keep animals and vegetables alive for any length of time. But the sun arises, and a world of vegetation smiles be-

neath its influence; animals and men flourish and grow in the blessed sunlight.

In like manner the Sun of righteousness arises on our moral world—not an earthly light, but a heavenly—to scatter moral darkness, and promote spiritual light in the hearts of men. Christ comes to do what Plato, and Buddha, and Zoroaster, and Mohammed could not do; and beneath the light of this heavenly Sun the spiritual desert is made to “rejoice, and blossom as the rose.”

Christ in Us

The fact that we find him in our souls is a proof that God’s favor rests upon us. And if he dwells there we shall know it. Our hearts are not so large that Christ can dwell there without making himself known. The King with his royal train cannot enter the cotter’s hut without a revolution; the glorious sunlight cannot enter a darkened room without a transformation. And when He whom the heavens cannot limit comes into these hearts of ours it will cause such a commotion that we shall know something has taken place.

He comes to cleanse from sin, and as well may we be unconscious of house-cleaning as of the fact that a divine agent is working in our souls to cleanse them from the defilements of sin. The absence of some of our former guests will be a sign of his presence. He will bring with him a royal train of heavenly graces, and these will declare his presence. New friends, new guests, will certify the great change which his coming has wrought.

And then the indwelling Christ will speak to us, and we shall learn to distinguish his voice from all others. "My sheep hear my voice." Would it not be strange if it were otherwise? I heard of a man who lived in the same house with his brother, and worked with him in the same fields, and did not speak to him for ten years. Christ does not dwell in our hearts after this fashion. If he dwells there at all he will speak to us; there will be conscious and friendly communion.

Christ's Kingdom

When England and Scotland were separate kingdoms they had separate thrones, and all the appliances of distinct governments. But when the kingdom of England absorbed that of Scotland, and the two nations were consolidated into one empire, then the throne, crown, and regalia of Scotland went to enhance the glory of British royalty; and a magic stone on which the kings of Scotland were crowned for centuries is the seat on which English sovereigns now sit for coronation; while the poetry and philosophy of Scotland have added largely to the glory of the empire and its inhabitants have greatly strengthened the nation.

And when Christ's kingdom shall be delivered up to the Father it will most grandly enhance the glory of the Sovereign of the universe. It will add the great company of the redeemed to his loyal subjects; it will send out multitudes of happy spirits to rejoice in the works of God; it will add millions of voices to the

great choir that is filling the universe with praise. Christ did not come to earth for nothing. His mission was a success, and he returns laden with immortal spoils.

Christ Our Judge

Christ's qualifications for the duties of judge are found in the fact that he is the equal of both parties in the contest, and allied to both. He has a Godward side and a manward side, and is in full sympathy with both God and man. This is a very important matter, if he is to judge between them.

A judge may be the equal of both parties in a suit, and may be equally allied by blood to both, and yet have no sympathy with either party; or he may have sympathy with one but not with the other. Where this is the case the ends of justice can never be fully met. A judge must be absolutely impartial. He must have equal sympathy with both parties. If he has a prejudice against either that party is likely to suffer in his decision.

An English judge would find it difficult to decide impartially between an Englishman and a Russian, or between an Englishman and an American.

In the Geneva Award arbitration and the Canadian Fishery Commission it was noticeable that the American and English commissioners always voted in favor of their own country, while the commissioners from other countries, who were supposed to be impartial, had to give the casting vote.

And in the celebrated Electoral Commission which

decided whether Mr. Hayes or Mr. Tilden was elected to the Presidency it was a subject of universal regret that on every vital point the judges, some of them members of the Supreme Court, voted every time in favor of their own political party. Neither side could blame the other, for both did it. We have too many evidences that human judges, even of the highest character and qualifications, are not always impartial.

Christ as judge gave overwhelming evidence while on earth that he is in full sympathy with the benevolent plans of God for the salvation of men. He and the Father are one. They think the same thoughts and work the same works.

On the other hand, it will need no argument to satisfy us that Christ is in full sympathy with fallen humanity. He took our nature that he might suffer and die in our interests; and left this one unanswered and unanswerable challenge: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." We may depend upon it that our Judge will be impartial.

Christ Our Pattern

In some of the brush factories of Lansingburg are machines for cutting brush handles into a given shape. In doing this there is always a pattern handle, neatly carved to the shape required, and the others are modeled after this. A rough piece of wood is placed in the machine, and then it is pressed against the pattern, following it through all its curves and angles, while the saws and knives cut it into the exact shape of the

model. The success of the operation depends on accurately following the outline of the pattern.

Christian discipline is intended to conform us to the perfect divine pattern which is presented to us in the life and character of Christ. We cannot improve on this pattern, and we shall go astray if we vary from it. Too many lose sight of the heavenly pattern and follow some human model that looms up before them.

During our civil war a soldier marching in line made a curve to avoid a pool of water that was in his path, and the captain called out, "Keep in line there." The soldier could only answer that he was following his file leader. We are very apt to go around the hard places, instead of stepping exactly where Christ stepped, and then point to some other delinquent as an excuse.

In marked contrast was the course of another soldier, a tent-mate and very dear friend. In the presence of the enemy the line was commanded to lie down for the night with accouterments on, in the place which had been designated. This soldier found that his place in the line was in the middle of a puddle of water, and in the puddle he spread his blanket and lay down; neither backward nor forward, to the right nor to the left, but exactly on the post of duty he took his place, however disagreeable it might be. We can surely afford to stand where Christ stood, and go where he went. We shall make no mistake if we follow our Divine Pattern.

Christ the Light of the World

In the practice of medicine in these days physicians are more and more ordering their patients to leave the darkness and get into the light; come out from the shade of trees and curtained rooms into the bright sunshine. The sun bath is a favorite and valuable remedy for many sick people.

In spiritual sickness there are health and joy in the light of the Sun of righteousness.

Christ is the inner light of the soul. We are to "put on" Christ as our external beauty, but first we must have Christ formed within. There is little use trying to decorate the exterior while the soul is in darkness.

During the Centennial year people decorated their houses very extensively, and illuminated at night. The curtains were drawn to the full height, the blinds were thrown back, mottoes, colored lanterns, and decorations were hung in the windows, and everything was prepared for a gorgeous display. Night came on, and all the houses looked alike in the darkness. The decorations were there, but they were invisible. Then the gas was lit inside, and a brilliant spectacle was the result.

In like manner the light of Christ shining in the human soul brings into conspicuous beauty the physical and intellectual endowments of human nature. Christ in the soul brightens the countenance, sharpens the intellect, refines the taste, and every way tends to make people more brilliant and lovely.

I knew an awkward, ugly-looking, ignorant man who admitted Christ to his soul, and forthwith he turned up an usher in the church, bowing people to their seats with grace and dignity, and his little talks in prayer meetings contained more of Scripture than did any others.

Christian Fellowship

The members of a family come to know each other thoroughly. There is little room for concealment. Each family has its secrets, but they are known to all the members of the household. And the family enjoys gathering about the fireside and talking over matters that pertain to themselves alone. It is these close social relations that cause us to look back to childhood as the happiest period of life.

As a member of a large family, I well recall how brothers and sisters, when the labors of the day were ended, used to gather close together, in the "gloaming," to talk and visit as only brothers and sisters can. And when a part of the family had grown to manhood and womanhood, and gone forth to life's duties, we used for many years to have a reunion once a year, during the vacation days of summer, when, during a few weeks, we would wander over the old farm to live over again the happy days of childhood.

But there came a time when the family was scattered over this great country, and for many years these reunions did not take place; and now the ranks are broken and we shall never all meet again on earth.

The Church of God is a family of a larger sort and

wider experience. The members of this great family ought to know and love each other thoroughly.

And I sometimes think that Methodist preachers are peculiarly fortunate; for they go to a place for a few years and form the acquaintance of the best people in town; then they go to another place and another, until at the end of a long ministry they have made the acquaintance of hundreds of the choicest spirits of earth. And when they get to heaven they will not be strangers there; for they will find a great number gone on before whose friendship they formed on earth; and many more will follow after.

It is not a stretch of fancy that these friendships formed on earth can be perfected and perpetuated in the better country. The family of God will come in from the outskirts, when life's day is done, and gather closer about the good Father's throne. This must mean a fuller knowledge of each other, a closer intimacy and fellowship; and these will inevitably lead to better appreciation, warmer friendship, and profounder love. It must be that when God's children come to know each other fully they will appreciate and love each other as they cannot here, where so many misunderstandings arise and so many screens necessarily separate them from each other.

Christian Philanthropy

Christian philanthropy has a character all its own. A stranger comes to me in want of relief. I hear his story and conclude that he is really needy, deciding at

the same time that I will help him because he is a fellow-man and needs my help. Before I have time to announce my decision he takes from his pocket an autograph letter from the dearest friend I have on earth—one I love, and have confidence in, and would do very much to please. The letter reads: "I am acquainted with the bearer of this, and know him to be really needy. I am interested in him, and any favor you may show him will be regarded as a favor to your friend."

I now have two motives for helping this man; first, because he is a fellow-man, and, second, because my friend has indorsed him; so that I can help the man and honor my friend in the same act. Likewise the Christian helps his fellow-man because he is a fellow-man, and also because Christ has asked him to do it, and will accept the favor as done to himself. He both helps his fellow and honors his Saviour in the same act.

There are many who help their fellows, but have no thought of Christ in what they do. Their works of charity may well be commended, but the motives are all human. They do not look Godward in what they do. Men have a duty to their fellows which they cannot escape, but they have a duty to God likewise; and doing the one duty does not perform the other. If I owe both George Smith and John Jones, paying Smith does not pay Jones. When our attitude toward God and our fellows may be such that we can perform our duties to both in the same act it would seem best to have it so.

Church of God

By the Church of God is meant not any particular corporation that bears such a name, but the entire company of believers of every name and nation. As all the oceans constitute but one body of water, so the children of God of all names and climes constitute the universal Church which is the object of God's special love.

The tide reaches all oceans, bays, and inlets along the shores of all continents and islands; and so the Spirit's blessed influence reaches every body of Christians and every individual Christian.

The tide rises higher in some bays than in others, to be sure, and rushes on with a more majestic flow; but it is the same celestial influence which rests on Christians everywhere; there is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" for the entire Church of God.

Church of God a Light

The Church is necessarily a beacon to guide men. Multitudes are ready to follow the teachings and example of the Church; so that it becomes either a true light or a false. A railroad train is sweeping along the track at the rate of fifty miles an hour. It nears a signal station where a light is run up to indicate that the track is clear and all right ahead. The train sweeps past the switch, rushes over rivers and through valleys, and reaches its distant destination in safety. But if that light had been a false light, indicating that all was well when all was not well, the thundering

train would have taken the wrong track and swept on to certain destruction.

Such a signal station is a church in every community. As the rapid tide of human society sweeps past it is a signal light to guide in the right or the wrong direction. If the church teaches in its doctrines and by the example of its members the pure truths of Christianity, it is a true light, pointing the multitudes to the path of safety; but if its teachings are misleading, and its example vicious, it is a false light which will lure the people to destruction.

Communion with God

What men need is some means of communication with God that is unmistakable. They need some voice which shall be known to be the voice of God speaking to them, for the human cannot bear to be cut loose from the divine. The soul of man must hear the voice of God or it dwells in desolation.

There is a tradition among the Hindus that man was made at first so tall that his head brushed the heavens, and he could converse with the inhabitants of heaven. When he fell he could still hear the conversation of heaven, and it so distressed him that God in mercy shortened him down to his present stature.

But now, under the Gospel, we are growing tall again, so that our conversation shall be in heaven as of old, and men are listening for the voice of God once more.

Some open the pages of the sacred book and listen there for the divine voice.

Some put their ear against the breast of nature, and listen for the beatings of the great divine heart. Mrs. Browning says:

“Earth’s crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God;
But only he who sees takes off his shoes.”

Wordsworth develops the thought at greater length:

“I have seen
A curious child, who dwelt upon a tract
Of upland ground, applying to his ear
The convolutions of a smooth-lipped shell,
To which, in silence hushed, his very soul
Listened intensely; and his countenance soon
Brightened with joy; for from within were heard
Murmurings, whereby the monitor expressed
Mysterious union with its native sea.
Even such a shell the universe itself
Is to the ear of faith; and there are times,
I doubt not, when to you it doth impart
Authentic tidings of invisible things:
Of ebb and flow, and ever-during power;
And central peace, subsisting at the heart
Of endless agitation. Here you stand,
Adore and worship, when you know it not;
Pious beyond the intention of your thought;
Devout above the meaning of your will.”

The Christian hears the voice of God speaking from the pages of his word; he hears it whispering or thundering from the great sounding-board of nature; but, better than all this, he may hear the still small voice

of the Spirit speaking to him, and may hold communion with God in the secret depths of his own nature.

Concealment

The ever-varying face of a child will reveal every thought that passes in the mind. If anger stirs there the face will flush in a moment, and hot words will break from the lips. Envy will leave its dark shadow on the features. Sudden surprise brings with it the look and attitude of astonishment. Grief and disappointment sadden the features, while pleasure or joy brightens them with the radiance of sunshine. Thus the face of the child is an index by which we can read the changing moods of the heart.

But the child does not live many years until it learns that it is very inconvenient to have people read all the thoughts and emotions that pass in the breast. And so it begins to teach its face to tell falsehoods, or at least to conceal the truth. The result of this kind of schooling varies in different individuals, but in those most thoroughly disciplined it induces a marble expression of countenance which is never changed by the changing emotions of the heart. Envy, hatred, joy, sorrow, surprise, thankfulness, love, fear, hope cause not the slightest ripple on the frozen surface.

Every minister of Christ preaches to such statues. I preached in a strange church and a man with such a blank face sat near the front, and during the entire service there was not the least change of expression. He produced a depressing effect, for I could not shut

out that blank face from my view. I was greatly surprised at the close of the sermon when he came forward and, with the same expressionless countenance, told me how much he had enjoyed the sermon.

Within certain limits this self-concealment is a proper self-control, but it must not be carried so far as to become wicked deception. We may agree with the shrewd remark of Bacon, that the face ought to let the tongue do the talking. We must be honest, but need not be transparent. A piece of ground glass is just as honest as a window pane, but people cannot see through it as well. The friction of life is very apt to grind the transparency from the surface, so that people cannot see through us at their pleasure, but no experiences must be suffered to destroy thorough honesty of soul.

Conflicts of Truth

What keeps the ocean from becoming corrupt has been an interesting and not easily answered question. Science intimates that the purity of its waters is due to the salt it contains and to the currents that flow through it. This answer makes it necessary to raise a further question respecting the cause of the currents of the ocean; for the ocean has its rivers as well as the land. This question has not been so satisfactorily answered.

One answer has been given which, whether correct or not, will serve as an illustration of a great truth. It is asserted by some that the salt is the cause of the currents, and consequently the salt is the sole cause of

the purity of the ocean. It is asserted that evaporation takes only pure water from the ocean and leaves all the salt behind. As evaporation takes place much more rapidly at the equator than elsewhere the waters at this part of the ocean are constantly becoming more and more salt, and consequently heavier. Being heavier, they will sink down and leave space at the surface which the surrounding waters will flow in to fill. In this way there is a constant flow of heavier waters toward the poles and a constant flow of lighter surface waters toward the equator. Thus the ocean is kept in continual agitation by these currents.

Whether this be a true theory or not, it is a good illustration of the influence of Christianity in the world. The salt of the Gospel has from the beginning produced great commotion. It has filled the world with currents and counter-currents. Christ predicted that families should be divided, and brother rise against brother. It can hardly be otherwise. Truth and error are face to face in deadly array; and so long as there is evil in the world, and Christianity tries to cure the evil, there will be commotion. When commotion ceases we may be sure that either the Church or the world has given up the contest.

Consciousness of God's Presence

I was making quite a long journey in a carriage with one of our children when she was only a few years old. Night came on, and I put my arm about her, and drew her close to my side, and in that position

she went to sleep. After a while she waked up, and the first question was, "Papa, where is your hand?" It was about her as firmly as ever, but it had been there so long that she had lost the consciousness of its presence. I gave her a squeeze with it, which restored her consciousness, and she said no more.

I thought it an apt illustration of how we lose the consciousness of God's protecting care. We have become so accustomed to the ordinary protection of his providence as to forget that his arm is about us all the time. The everyday mercies of life count for nothing, and we cry out in fear, "Where is the divine hand?" Then in mercy God tightens the loving arm, and we discover that it has been about us all the time, but our earthly senses had become so dull as no longer to feel the pressure.

Courage

Phrenologists in reading men's characters by the "bumps" of the head estimate their courage by two different standards. They will mark the courage when passive by one figure, and the courage when aroused by a much higher figure. Great cowards will do heroic deeds when under a powerful impulse. Many well-meaning men are moral cowards, who need to keep their courage thoroughly aroused and use means to accomplish that desirable end. It is not uncommon to hear persons, when under religious excitement, declare that they would not give up the religion of Christ for ten thousand worlds like this; and while under that impulse it is probable that they would not. Yet many

such persons, in an unguarded moment, will let a schoolmate, or a fellow-workman, or a companion frighten them out of their religion. Such persons ought to know their weakness, and keep themselves under a religious impulse all the time.

A young Swede was converted in meetings that I was holding, and so far as man can judge got a good start in the religious life, which continued for some months. But fellow-workmen taunted him day after day, until, losing his patience, he broke forth into profane curses, and that was the end of religion for him. No amount of persuasion could induce him to return to his Christian duties.

Criticism in the Social Meetings

There are no circumstances where criticism is more out of place than in the social meetings of the church. The Indians used to compel their prisoners to run the gauntlet. The warriors were drawn up in two lines, facing each other, while the unarmed prisoner was compelled to run between the lines, and as he passed each redskin hurled his spear or tomahawk at him. If the man came through alive it proved that he was made of good stuff.

If a man or woman must pray and speak in the social meetings in the face of the fact that what he says will be canvassed by the hearers on their way home, and criticised in an unfriendly spirit, only the most heroic will subject themselves to such an experience. Many persons thoughtlessly allow themselves to crit-

icise what is said in the social meetings without considering how much mischief may result from such a course.

A brother once wanted a local preacher's license, and asked the privilege of speaking to the people some evening so that they might judge whether he was worthy. One prayer meeting night the pastor was sick, and said to the brother, "The meeting is yours to-night; go ahead and speak to the people." He read a very ornate kind of a discourse, and spoiled the meeting for everybody but himself. As he was closing the meeting he rubbed his hands together in glee, and said, "I hope you have all had a good meeting; I have, for one."

He had had a good meeting because he made the meeting himself and was in sympathy with his own work. The rest all had a miserable meeting because they came to watch him, and criticise him, and were not in sympathy with him or what he was saying. If a Christian is to enjoy the social meetings of the church he must be in sympathy with those who sit about him and with what is going on.

Crosses

Crosses affect different people very differently. If a log is thrown across a narrow stream the water does not hesitate a moment to press against it, and boil under and over it with great commotion. When an obstacle is thrown across the current of a man's life the result is very much the same. He resents it, and is

likely to make much noise and commotion. Whatever crosses his plans and purposes is counted as an enemy. Some men never learn better, but continue to fight whatever opposes them as long as the power to fight remains. Others learn by experience that obstacles which check or turn the current of their thoughts and purposes may be the greatest blessings.

I heard a commonplace man say in prayer meeting, "I should hate to have my own way." I thought it at the time a strange remark, but have come to consider it an unusual exhibition of common sense. Most people want nothing so much as their own way. It is only the few who learn that their way may be the very worst way. At any rate, when it is made clearly manifest that God is crossing our plans and purposes we ought to welcome the crosses.

Cross-bearing

In the Sunday school room of a church I had the pleasure of studying an engraving which very aptly illustrates cross-bearing. A variegated landscape is presented, with a pathway leading across it; and at the farther end of the path, in the dim distance, is an illumination to represent heaven. There is a pile of crosses in the foreground; and an angel stands by them holding a cross in one hand and with the other points up the path, as if to say, "There is the road to heaven, but you must take a cross with you."

A number of persons, each carrying a cross, are already traveling along this road; and, true to life, the

one farthest along the road to the celestial city is a woman. Next we see a man and a woman traveling side by side—a beautiful sight. Just behind them is a man down on his knees with a saw, trying to saw off a piece of his cross. It is too heavy. Then comes a little girl clasping a cross across her breast as if she loved it. Then there is a man who has picked up a cross, and he stands leaning against it, with his back toward heaven and his face toward the world.

Another man stands by the pile of crosses with his hand up to his head, and a look of distress on his countenance. A large cross lies before him, but he seems to think it too heavy. In marked contrast two little children are running up to the crosses, eager to bear them. Just behind them a proud-looking man is walking away. The whole matter seems entirely beneath his notice.

Another man is trying to get to the crosses, but a woman is holding him back. Every pastor has seen this sad sight a few times in his ministry. Still others—young ladies and gentlemen—have looked the crosses over, but are walking away together. It is no uncommon thing for love affairs to keep persons from the religious life.

This engraving may not be a work of art of great merit, but it represents with great faithfulness what may be seen in the history of every church.

Death No Respector of Persons

One day, in a filthy garret of a great city, a little infant died of smallpox, in squalor and misery, and was buried in the potter's field. On the same day, of the same disease, died the infant son of Thebaw, the Burmese king. This child slept in a cradle of gold incrustured with diamonds, rubies, sapphires, and emeralds, of incredible value. Vast sums were spent on the child, and all the people living near the palace stockade were required to buy new cooking kettles, lest the smell of rancid oil from the old ones should offend his tender little nostrils. Death called for him and the beggar's child the same day, and by the same loathsome messenger.

In a New York village lived side by side for forty or fifty years a very rich man and a very poor woman. His life was spent in raking together riches, and he met with large success. He was not very careful about the means employed, and some of his wealth properly belonged to his poor neighbors. Her life was spent in toiling early and late for the bare necessities of life, and sometimes her friends came to her assistance. Once when she was especially destitute her neighbors undertook to raise something for her, and they went to this rich man for a little aid, but he refused.

One cold, boisterous March, when fatal diseases were very prevalent, they both contracted the same disease and died about the same time. His last words were, "Give me a receipt; I demand the money." One

sweep of death's scythe cut them both down, like a rose and a thistle which had long been neighbors.

Denominations of Christians

The best way to put our whole broad country under thorough cultivation is for each farmer thoroughly to cultivate his own patch. If a farmer should say, "I'll take broad views of the welfare of the country, and not confine myself to one little farm," and in harmony with this theory should cultivate everywhere in general and nowhere in particular, he would fail as a farmer, and probably come to want.

His broad theory of the thorough cultivation of the whole country is a good one; but the best way to carry it out is to cultivate his own farm thoroughly and let his neighbors do the same. He must not envy his neighbors, or hate them, or quarrel with them, but let them do their work and he do his. In this way a wholesome rivalry among the farmers would result in larger crops and a better cultivation of the soil. All this applies to the various branches of the Church.

A man can best help the universal Church by putting all his energies into some particular branch of it, and into some local church organization. It is not given to many men to exert an influence over the broad universal Church. Our voices are not loud enough to reach the ends of the earth; our influence is not great enough to be felt in all lands; we must do our work within a smaller circumference. Neighboring workmen in the great spiritual vineyard should not envy

each other, or hate each other, or quarrel with each other; but love each other, and incite each other to good works.

Discouragement

Discouragement very frequently arises from meeting obstacles that were not anticipated. A traveler sees in the distance a bold mountain peak stretching up into the clouds of heaven, and is filled with a noble ambition to climb it. It looks like an easy task. It seems only a short distance, and only necessary to walk up the green sloping side, and the task is accomplished. He begins the ascent, but before he has proceeded far he finds himself running into deep ravines, which lead hither and thither. The mountain top is lost to view, and he cannot tell whether he is going up or down. The farther he proceeds the more tangled and rugged the way becomes. His strength begins to fail, and a feeling takes possession of his mind that the worst is yet before him, and he cannot accomplish the task. He turns away and leaves unaccomplished what recently seemed so desirable.

It must be a perpetual humiliation to live at the base of a mountain which one has tried in vain to climb, and see its proud peak smile down contemptuously day after day. Yet many men live all their lives under the shadow of mountains which they have failed to climb. They must continually look back to something which they commenced but were not able to finish, because they became discouraged and ceased to make an effort.

The folly of such discouragement lies in the fact that it very frequently leads men to give up the contest when they are very near victory. The most and greatest obstacles generally lie at the beginning of an enterprise; and men often struggle on till they are almost through the difficulties, and then give up in despair, when a few more efforts would have brought success. A man tried to cross a marsh in the nighttime. He floundered on through mud and water for a half mile or more, and thinking he would never get across it became discouraged, and floundered all the way back again. The next morning he was chagrined to find that he had got almost across the night before, and had he gone a few rods farther he would have reached solid ground.

Men bore for oil to great depths in the earth. The drill makes its way down through the solid rock many hundreds of feet. Six inches more, perhaps, will bring it to the oil reservoir, and abundantly repay their months of toil. But they do not know that fact, and in discouragement move their machinery to another field. Here they drill long and laboriously, but get discouraged, and go to another place. Thus they continue to drill holes in the ground without accomplishing any definite result or reaching any reward. Such is the lifework of many men—many things attempted but nothing accomplished.

This is only too common a spectacle in the Christian life. Many commence well—and many commence well more than once—but become discouraged and

make a failure of that which reasonable effort and persistence might have accomplished.

Divine Guidance

I remember a strange experience while sailing on Loch Lomond, the most beautiful of the Scottish lakes. It is a charming sheet of water, full of small rocky islands, while the shore is a series of points and headlands that run out into the lake. At no place can you see a great expanse of water, but are led along from one basin to another, now passing near the shore, now almost grazing a dangerous rock, and now darting through a narrow channel between rocky islands into clear water again.

Many times it seemed as if we were running into an angle of the land and must be dashed to pieces; but at the last moment, by a happy turn of the wheel, we rounded some point and found a narrow channel of escape. We were no sooner out of one dilemma than we were into another; but there was in the end a way out of them all, and we reached our destination in safety. The pilot knew the way out of every difficulty, though we did not.

I thought it a beautiful picture of God's guidance over his children. They must meet dangers and troubles, they must be at their wit's end many times, but God will at length find them a way out of all dangers, and they will safely make the harbor by and by. God never lets us see far ahead, but he does better; he sees far ahead and teaches us to trust him.

Divine Power in the Church

Many years ago I visited the Burden Iron Works in South Troy and looked with wonder at a mighty water wheel, sixty feet in diameter, which slowly and majestically revolved on its axis and kept in motion the entire system of machinery with the power of two thousand horses. I tried to listen for the tumbling waters which could drive such a vast wheel, but could hear nothing. I went about the building several times to find the mighty Niagara which could turn such a water wheel. At length my attention was attracted to a cylinder about three feet in diameter, whose moist appearance indicated that it contained water. A guard told me that the water which turned the wheel passed through this cylinder.

But my wonder was only increased, for the cylinder, instead of pointing down on to the wheel from above, pointed up from below, the water being much lower than the wheel. The first question to suggest itself was, If this water drives the wheel, what power drives the water up on to the wheel? This question was answered when I learned that the fountain head from which the water came was off among the distant hills, far above the whole establishment; and I remembered the principle of physics that water confined in tubes has power to rise as high as its source.

All these years this great water wheel has illustrated to me the Church of God, which is run not by human, but by divine, power. Men and women neither gifted,

nor eloquent, nor attractive, accomplish most marvelous results in saving and lifting up mankind, and it is a common thing to ask what is the secret of their power. Many answers are given, but there is only one true answer: The mighty power of God is working in them and through them. The Church is a power for good in the world only so far as it commands the saving power of God for sinful men.

The question of Mr. Moody's success has been under discussion for years. There is only one answer: He, somehow, commanded divine power for his work.

Environment

We must believe that many of the poorest and humblest here will shine most brightly in heaven. The circumstances of the present life do not afford them favorable opportunities. The same principle is illustrated in the affairs of the world. A boy at work on the farm was pronounced lazy and inefficient, but sent to school he soon took first rank as a scholar and rose to distinction in a professional career.

Our civil war showed this most plainly. A company of men went from the same town, and this was the record: Those who were considered as most talented, and leaders in civil life, often sank into insignificance as soldiers; while those of the humblest pretensions at home often rose to be the best soldiers. It likewise appears in the case of the generals of the war: Those who, from their previous positions, stepped into command of the army at the commencement of the

war very soon sank out of sight; while men quickly rose from obscurity to stand at the head of affairs. So inadequately do the circumstances of life afford the proper opportunities for success that one has ventured the remark that "the world knows nothing of its greatest men;" and the poet has daringly said of a humble country churchyard:

"Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
Hands that the rod of empire might have swayed,
Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre.

"Some village Hampden, that, with dauntless breast,
The little tyrant of his fields withstood;
Some mute, inglorious Milton here may rest;
Some Cromwell, guiltless of his country's blood."

If this principle is manifest in the experiences of earth, much more when heaven is taken into the account. The difference between the circumstances of earth and heaven may well justify the declaration of Christ, "Behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last." The circumstances of earthly life are not such as to bring into prominence every great man.

Some of the most telling talks I ever heard in prayer meeting were those of a Scotsman whose hands were hard and black from working in a foundry; and he took no pains to hide them, but swung them with vigor, while great thoughts fell from his lips. I used to get an intellectual and spiritual uplift from that man's talks every prayer meeting night. He had been cheated

out of all his property—as he thought—by a wealthy and prominent business man, a member of the same church, who said in his dying hours that he used to enjoy religion but had lost it all. But he never brought his grievances into prayer meeting, but rather came there with a rich Christian experience which ranged far higher and stretched far wider than business matters, leaving his earthly wrongs to be righted in God's great day of settlement.

Every One for Himself

Strange as it may seem, there are persons in the world who expect to be saved because they have pious wives, or parents. Probably every minister has met such people. It is not uncommon to see a fruitless and a fruit-bearing tree growing so close together that the trunks look almost like one, and the branches are so interlocked that the fruit seems to be growing on both. I remember carefully studying two such trees by the roadside. As well might that fruitless tree expect to be spared by the ax because it was growing so near a fruitful tree. Its nearness was no advantage to either itself or the fruit-bearing tree. The Saviour says, "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire."

The papers reported that a man had lost everything by a financial failure except his religion, and one who knew him remarked, "Yes, and that is in his wife's name."

Example

Both animals and men possess an instinct of imitation, and do many things for no better reason than that others of their species are doing them. Small animals wear a narrow path because they yield to the impulse to go where others have gone. Deer, and other large animals of the forest, have runways which are formed by following each other year after year. A man breaks a way through the forest. He may do no more than stir up the dead leaves a little, and break off a twig here and there in his first passage; but another, bound for the same destination, finds it easier to walk in his footsteps; and one continues to follow another until the bushes are worn away and the path beaten hard, so that it is very easy to follow. This footpath may develop into a bridle path, and finally into a carriage road—each one following this particular way because many others have taken it before him.

This road may not be in the best place; it may not be the shortest or least rugged that could be found through the forest, yet each finds it much easier to follow it than to break a new and better road for himself. In like manner, one breaking a path through the tangled forest of error does the world a positive service, because others bound in the same direction will find it easier to walk in his footsteps. This is true of every effort made in the right direction, however feeble. Every blow struck in the cause of truth; every effort made to resist evil; every word spoken for

the advancement of morals and religion, helps to strengthen the current of right doing, and beat harder and make more easy the narrow path that leads to everlasting life.

The examples men look at and are influenced by may be good or bad. Tyranny of fashion is based on this imitative instinct; and this thing men call fashion marches with conquering tread over national boundaries and establishes its dominion throughout the whole civilized globe. It is not altogether to be condemned, yet men and women often do the most absurd things, which no one would seriously undertake to defend, simply because it is the fashion—that is, because everybody is doing so.

National customs and peculiarities have the same origin. The members of the same race or nation do things in a certain way because their fathers did so before them; and the tyranny of national custom is almost absolute. Many of these customs are the most foolish and inconvenient that it is possible to conceive; but it is next to impossible to change them. In fact, easy-going human nature has invented a proverb to meet the case. It says, "When in Rome do as the Romans do." There are some conveniences in such a course; but if the customs of the Romans involve wrong they ought not to be followed.

We may hope that the day will not be forever delayed when Christians will not be compelled to fight against prevailing example—when it will be in fashion to be good, and true, and pious; when the customs of

all nations will enjoin honesty, and purity, and temperance, and Christlike character.

Experience

Too many regard their religious experience as a profound secret which they must sedulously keep to themselves. An aged Baptist minister told me he had praying parents, but they were not forward in talking to him of the religion which they professed, and so failed to lead him to Christ. By some outside instrumentality he at length found his Saviour when he had almost reached manhood. With the characteristic zeal of a young convert he sat down by his mother's side and told her the story. She wept over the simple narrative, for it carried her back to the days when she gave her own heart to God; and then, unlocking her long-hidden secret, she told him, in turn, for the first time, the story of her own conversion—a simple, beautiful, touching story, and gave quite a lengthened account of her inner religious life. The boy listened with delight, and, when she had finished the story, said, "O mother, why didn't you tell me this before?"

I can remember as a boy that I learned more of the religious experience of my parents from chance remarks which they dropped to others than from anything they ever said directly to myself. They talked enough about religious things in a general way, but seldom or never talked about their own religious experience; and I well remember that when any word was dropped I valued it more than any general religious

instruction. Though both my parents were Christians I never heard the story of their conversion, nor any account of the struggles they met with in the religious life. I longed to hear it, but did not dare ask questions, and the impression left on my mind was that religious experience was a secret which should not be inquired after nor revealed. Religious experience is no doubt a sacred thing, but it may be choked, like a spring, for want of outflow, and can be a means of refreshment to others if properly used.

Failure in Christian Work

History scarcely furnishes us another instance of such utter failure, judged by human standards, as that of the prophet Jeremiah. He was not able to persuade the people to do anything that God wanted them to do. Shall we pronounce Jeremiah a failure? If so, Noah goes into the same class. Pronounce no man either a success or a failure until God has been heard from. Jeremiah was not the only man who offended man in obeying God.

The lighthouse on a dangerous coast which is kept burning at its best every night, from dark till daylight, is not a failure though every careless sea captain runs his vessel over the rocks. God counts that man a success who goes at his bidding, whether or not men are willing to listen to his voice.

Yet Christians are very apt to become disheartened in doing the humdrum duties of the Christian life. I heard a faithful Christian woman say in prayer meet-

ing one evening that she had often felt that her testimony did not amount to anything. Year after year she had witnessed for Christ, but had seen no results; and she had been tempted to let it drop out as something that would not be missed. And I heard a weary class leader say that he felt like giving up his class unless he could see something more than a routine of songs and prayers and testimonies week after week. What is the value of these routine Christian duties?

Soldiers at the tap of the drum are brought out early every morning to roll call. Just a roll call—nothing more. No fighting is required of them at such times; they do not even wear their arms and accouterments. No other duties are laid upon them; they just stand up straight in line, clothes clean, shoulder to shoulder, and answer to their names; that is all.

Just a roll call. The names are called one by one, and each man answers, "Present."

What if a soldier should say, "I am tired of the monotony of this roll call every morning; nothing comes of it; I shall not be missed; I will stay away."

Why, they would send an officer at once to his tent to see if he were sick or dead. It would be an unheard-of proceeding; an utter violation of military discipline. Everything depends on his answering "Present" every morning. It is only thus that the general knows whether he has an army or not. All he can depend on are those who are present at roll call every morning. Those in the hospital, or on furlough, or absent without leave do not count in the army.

“Present”—“Present”—“Present” morning after morning means everything.

“Present” for service when service is required. Ready for any emergency that may arise; and emergencies arise without warning in the army.

“Present” for battle when the day of battle comes. Arms bright, cartridge box full, gun loaded, ready for defense or advance whenever the order is given.

And if it should fall to the lot of a soldier, as it may, although it seldom does, to do little else than answer “Present” every morning, year after year, he has done his duty—all that his country required—and his faithful attendance at roll call will not fail of its reward.

And the man who has stood in his place in the church year after year to answer, “Here am I,” will never know how much good he has accomplished until God’s books are opened. Then it will appear that there is no such thing as failure to the man who has done his duty. Duty done leaves an impress on the soul which is its own reward, though no effects may be produced on others.

Faith and Sight

Not every Christian is ready to believe that an invisible Holy Spirit is better than a visible Shekinah. I remember hearing a disciple weak in the faith express a wish that we might have some such visible guide in these days. A man with two good eyes may stumble and fall in broad daylight, and when night

comes on, and the ground is uneven, he hardly dares venture out at all.

Now, if a man were made without eyes and placed in a world whose surface was a dead level, with no hills, or valleys, or rocks, or trees to stumble him, and nothing whatever to harm him, he could travel about in perfect safety. Such is the state of the Christian within the bounds of the broad realm of divine Providence. He cannot see, he has no eyes to see, for God's ways are hidden from his view. But he has no need to see, for God does the seeing, and has cleared all obstacles out of his path. All he need do is to march resolutely forward under the matchless promise, "All things work together for good to them that love God." We should avoid two mistakes: having faith that all will be well when we do not love God, and not having faith when we do love him.

Faith and Works

Some things were never meant to subsist alone. Faith and works are not two things that can live apart, like a house and a tree; they are rather like a tree and its leaves, which are necessary to each other. Faith cannot exist without its works; and the works of faith cannot exist without the faith to produce them. Works show whether faith exists. How do we know that spring has come? We see the springing grasses, the early flowers—daisies, crocuses, mayflowers—shooting up through the dead leaves; we feel the soft breath of the south wind; we hear the birds singing among

the trees. And worldly wisdom has gone so far as to declare that one swallow does not make a summer; we need many evidences that spring has come. The almanacs proclaim on the first of March that spring has come, but nobody believes them.

And when a man proclaims himself a man of faith we begin to look about for the fruits of faith, the works of faith, and, failing to see these, we justly doubt the existence of the faith.

The famous Siamese twins were grown together in a vital part, so that the life of one was necessary to the life of the other. They thus lived together till old age, but no surgeon dared to cut them apart. English surgeons were appealed to to attempt the operation but refused to undertake it; and finally, when one of the twins died, the other lived only two hours. So faith and works may live, and grow, and bear fruit when united; but no spiritual surgeon has been able to separate them so skillfully but that both have died in the operation; and whenever one has died the other died immediately after.

Falling

I met a good brother one winter day on the slippery hillsides of Albany, coming down the ice on a sliding run, and as we passed he called out, "It's easy going downhill." I called back, "Yes, and it's dangerous too."

A fall then might be a serious matter. I have known a man slide a whole block on the icy sidewalk of a

Hudson River city by trying to run down the steep hill, and find himself in a dilapidated condition at the first crosswalk.

It is not so easy going up a slippery hill, but it is much safer. Though a man may fall it is with his face uphill, and he gets up and goes on again. It makes all the difference in the world which way a man is headed when he falls. When a Christian goes down in this slippery world he is facing uphill, and he gets up again and goes the way he was going before. And why should he not? Should he lie in the dirt forever because he has fallen?

I was once walking along a country highway and, without knowing it, came to some ice that was covered by a thin coating of snow, and in an instant, without any warning, I was flat on my back. There was only one thing to do—get up, brush off the snow, and go on the way I was going before the fall.

Yet some Christians when they fall say, "I've fallen before, and if I get up and try to walk in this slippery world I will only fall down again; so I will lie here the rest of my life." The attitude of the Church toward the fallen should be that of forgiveness and help, even to "seventy times seven times."

Family Influence

Example in the family is a most deadly influence when it is given for evil. A Christian woman mourned for years over a godless husband, and her testimony was, "God only knows what I have suffered." He was

a kind man and good neighbor; would drive with her to church on Sabbath, and spend the hour in chatting with friends in the village tavern while she was worshipping God. A beautiful Sabbath in summer he took his wife to the little church as usual, and went himself to the tavern, not to drink, but to chat with companions as careless as himself. The next Sabbath he was lying in his grave, and she was mourning over an unsaved husband. The son followed in the footsteps of his father, and went much farther in the path of evil.

A family that I knew left their young daughter to burn up with a fever until her flesh was livid and Death had already set his seal upon her—then sent for a physician. The physician looked on with horror; called in the neighbors to see the ghastly spectacle; branded them as murderers; and in a few hours the fair girl was dead. The neighbors shuddered when they passed the door of that house, and regarded those parents with loathing.

Yet parents can let their children rot and die with moral and spiritual leprosy, and no one looks on with any horror. They will teach them by their own example a course of life that leads to spiritual and eternal death, and those who look on are not greatly shocked at the sight.

A young man on the gallows, just about to be launched into eternity, raised his hand to heaven and cursed his aged mother as the means of bringing him there. It sent a thrill of horror through me to read his words. And what he charged her with was noth-

ing more than sinners in general are doing—a frivolous life, a life of sin, and a neglect to warn him of the dangers of sin.

Fellowship of Christ's Sufferings

I have seen a Christian minister sit by a dying man—sent for at midnight—a man so sick that it was agony to be in the room with him; and the sick man clung to him for days together, and looked to him for salvation; while the servant of Christ, with burdened soul and trembling frame, tried to point him to “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” And as the minister with shaking nerves and reeling brain left that sick chamber he felt that he had given a part of his life to that dying man.

On another occasion he spent an entire afternoon pleading with a young woman to give herself to Christ; and as the long, intense interview ended in profound nervous exhaustion he had the depressing feeling that he had done all he could for her but that all was not sufficient. Thirty years after she is still unsaved.

I knew a layman who, when in feeble health, sat by a man for an hour and pleaded with him to come to Christ, pointing out the way of repentance and faith, throwing his soul under the sinner's burden, until, when the work was accomplished and the soul saved, this Christian man was so weak that he could hardly walk.

A man was saved from intemperance, and joined a

church; but one Saturday night he fell, and Sunday morning in a state of wild intoxication he got a livery team and started out for a spree, racing up and down the street like a madman. A well-dressed, well-to-do Christian man, on his way to church, caught sight of him, and hailed him, and before the drunken man was really aware, and against his will, was in the buggy beside him.

And this Christian man stuck to him for some hours, in spite of threats and persuasions, on the public streets of the city, until at last he got him home, sobered, and started again on a career of sobriety and piety.

And I have known this same Christian man to follow his workmen, during the small hours of the night, from saloon to saloon through the dark, dirty, and dangerous streets of the city, that he might save them from intemperance. If any persons think there is no suffering connected with this kind of work, they need only try it for themselves to be thoroughly undeceived.

Fickleness

I have in mind a man who had stumbled many times already, and should have learned the lesson of his own weakness; but when he made a fresh start he was as confident as ever, and even boastful; so much so that I quoted the words of Peter, "Though all should forsake thee, yet will not I," and added some words of warning. Within four months he was following his old ways.

Sudden lapses and sudden recovery mark the reli-

gious history of many persons. In the *Atlantic Monthly* there appeared many years ago (1869) a quaint story called "The Brick Moon," which represented some persons as building an immense globe of bricks, which, by some accident, was projected into space, with several persons upon it, and, commencing a revolution around the earth, became a second moon in our system.

These persons at length were enabled to signal to their friends on earth; and among other things sent this message: "When we want to change climate we can walk in less than a minute from midsummer to the depth of winter." This was on account of the smallness of the globe on which they lived.

I noted it at the time as an illustration of the religious experiences of many persons. It requires only a short time to go from midsummer to midwinter; and they are back again as soon. Persons of this temperament exhibit great fluctuations and strange irregularities in their religious experience; and the best thing about them is that they generally get up again, no matter how often they fall.

"Follow the Rule"

Every science has its rules by which its problems are solved and its results reached. Chemistry has its formulas by which elementary substances are combined and certain valuable compounds secured; and unless the rule is carefully followed a deadly poison may be the result instead of a healing medicine.

Arithmetic has its rules by which its problems are solved, and by carefully following these rules the correct result will be reached.

Some persons require much more time than others to solve a problem in arithmetic, but, whether slowly or rapidly, if the rule be followed the correct result will be obtained. I well remember working a whole winter on one example, but in the end secured the correct result.

It is not necessary to understand all the reasons why following the rule will give the right answer. A child can solve a difficult problem by following the rule long before it can explain the reasons for the transaction.

Mistakes in the operation vitiate this result, and then the schoolboy is sent back to do the work over again. Many times over the careless boy has been obliged to work the same example before reaching the correct answer.

And the student will know when he has reached the correct result. There are methods of proving the work to make sure of its accuracy.

God has given us in the Bible certain rules for the salvation of sinful men; and the conditions which attach to the solution of a problem in arithmetic will also attend the solution of the great problem of salvation.

The jailer asked, "What must I do to be saved?" and the answer was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." In another place the conditions of salvation are given in fuller form, as "Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus

Christ." Let those who honestly ask the question of the jailer apply this rule patiently and thoroughly and they will get the correct result.

Some may be longer in solving the problem than others.

It is not necessary to understand all the whys and wherefores of the plan of salvation in order to apply the rule.

Mistakes will vitiate the result, and in such a case it is necessary to try again.

And every person will know when he has reached the correct result. There is an unmistakable witness to the fact of salvation.

Force Indestructible

Some scientific truths may illustrate some spiritual truths.

A scientist has described an experiment which shows the power of little things. If a block of iron and a pith ball are hung from the ceiling by cords a short distance apart, and the pith ball be drawn back and let fall on the block of iron over and over again, the iron will soon begin to sway backward and forward, moved by nothing more powerful than a little pith ball, which a child's breath might blow aside.

The child that strikes a blow with a hammer in its sport has exerted a force that will never cease to operate in the universe, unless God shall change the present order of things. We sometimes think we do not amount to anything, when the fact is that we do not

lift a foot or finger without in some degree affecting the universe of God.

A man of science declares that not a word could be spoken, or whisper breathed, that did not leave an impress on the solid rocks. And another has ventured the opinion that if one atom of matter were blotted out of existence it would unsettle the balance of things, and the universe would rush to chaos.

The universe is bound into one bundle by common laws. The slightest change in our relation to the sun would destroy the order of the seasons, and make the earth uninhabitable. Disturbances on the surface of the sun are immediately felt on the surface of the earth.

The volcanic eruption of Krakatoa sent oceanic waves to desolate shores for hundreds of miles around; produced a volume of sound that was heard in opposite directions nearly two thirds around the globe; started an atmospheric wave that encircled the earth and returned to the place of starting; and carried volumes of dust twenty miles into the sky, which produced most brilliant sunsets for more than a year all over the globe.

And we surely know that earth is bound together in one bundle. The American civil war produced distress all over the world. The Franco-German war caused a fall of American securities on the Continent of Europe. The mere rumor of a Turkish war caused a rise in the grain market in Chicago. The failure of one heavy business firm may occasion a financial panic all over the land.

This law of interdependence and indestructibility is

not less obvious in morals and religion. Our sins are affecting our friends, and neighbors, and the community where we live; and some men have been so powerful for evil as to contaminate whole nations, and even the entire world.

Every sin is like a thistle seed. The first year it springs up as a single stalk, with a beautiful blossom on its top—a picture of the pleasures of sin—but with many a sharp thorn beneath, a picture of sin's penalties. In the autumn time this stalk dies and is buried and we think we have seen the last of it; but the seeds have ripened and been scattered in every direction by the changing winds. When spring comes these seeds grow up for miles around; and a few years suffice to spread such a pestiferous weed all over the land. I remember when a boy the first white daisies that appeared on my father's farm; and in ten years' time the fields were white with them.

Every sin is a spiritual force let loose in the universe, which is as indestructible as a physical force. It may disappear where it was first committed, but it breaks out again in distant ages and countries. The man who lives a life of sin may die and be buried out of sight, but his example and influence have been incorporated into the streams of human life to make the current stronger in the wrong direction.

When a wicked man sees his children and his neighbors' children running into sin, and the whole community following evil ways, he may justly say to himself, "This is in some measure my doings; this crop of

evil has sprung in part from my sowing." Can any sane man doubt it? One day a parent dropped a careless word, the next day his little girl was repeating it. Some one is watching us, repeating our remarks, doing our deeds over again, following our footsteps, determined to live as we live and share our destiny.

Forgetting God

The Bible pronounces it a great sin to forget God. It says of the wicked man that God is not in all his thoughts; he thinks of everything rather than God. The things we think about are the things we desire most and love most. A man's thoughts are the best test of his character. If we can find out what a man thinks about when he is alone, we will have the best possible estimate of the man.

The psalmist says that he remembered God upon his bed, and meditated upon him in the night watches. There are many men who do not follow his example.

Forget God! What a strange procedure. The greatest slight we can put upon a man is to forget him; it proves that we do not think much about him, or care much for him. If we have a social gathering, and in making up the list of invited guests leave off a name, and then go to the person and say, "I would have invited you, but I forgot all about you," you give him at once your estimate of him. It would be better to make no excuse at all.

In making up such a list we put down first those we think most of, and so think most about—those we

could not forget if we tried to do so. Then we add the names of those we think less of; and the man who is forgotten is the one who is not much in our thoughts. And the fact that we forget him reveals precisely our state of feeling toward him.

And when we forget God it proves that we think nothing about him, and care nothing for him, and have nothing in common with him. We could not offend him more grievously than to forget him.

Though unseen, he lives and operates everywhere, and will never forget us. We ought to cultivate the power to think about the unseen and spiritual. Men want object lessons to help them think. This is a popular way of teaching children, but men ought to get beyond it. The man who can think about nothing but what he sees and handles is low down in the scale of being; and the proverb, "Out of sight, out of mind," expresses his thought.

Abstract thought is regarded as the highest test of mental power. The man who can think about unseen things; commune with God, commune with his own heart; consider truth, duty, love, heaven, has mounted above the common level, and proved his kinship with his divine Maker.

Foundations

In laying the foundations of the new Capitol building at Albany, since they could not find solid rock on which to place it, they made a foundation as nearly like rock as possible. They dug down to a very great

depth, and laid a uniform substratum of broken rock and cement; and upon this they laid immense flat stones ten or twelve feet in length, upon which the heavy walls of the structure were placed. Even this was not equal to a foundation of solid rock, for it is reported that they did not dare erect the lofty tower which was to crown the structure.

In erecting a large cathedral they found not the solid rock, but treacherous quicksand underneath, and were obliged to drive hundreds of piles down deep below the quicksand on which the walls might rest.

I passed one summer through a section of country where a wild tornado had swept. Some barns were turned entirely about on their foundations; the loose stone foundations of others had given way, and the buildings were crushed in a shapeless mass on the ground. The old barn in which I played in childhood rested on an insecure foundation, and it went down into a heap of rubbish. The most of the buildings in the region, however, rested on secure foundations, and withstood the full fury of the blast.

Christ has pointed out the advantages of a rock foundation over one of sand. It is the winds and storms of life that are to test our religious structure. Men seem to get along very well without religion in pleasant weather; but when the storms of life come their "refuge of lies" goes to fragments. We must have a religious experience that will stand the test of losses, and crosses, and troubles; of long and wearing sickness; of open graves and the dying hour. Houses

tumble down in fierce hurricanes; and religious structures go to pieces when the tempests of life overwhelm us.

I was once called to the dying bed of a man who had all his life scouted at Christianity, and with oaths denounced a profession of religion. He was sure that all were going to be saved. God was too good to punish anybody. When it became certain that he was going to die his religious views vanished like a puff of smoke. He cried to God for mercy; sent for the superintendent of the Sunday school and myself before breakfast, and would not permit us to leave his bedside so long as consciousness remained. He tired us out praying for him and singing with him. He had never wanted ministers or Christians about him before; he could take care of himself; his theory served him very well until death came, and then the house built on the sand went to pieces.

All I know is that he continued renouncing his former views, and pleading for mercy, until the dark shadow of unconsciousness passed over him, a short time before his death.

Freedom of Man

Let a scene from our civil war illustrate it. A company of men gathered from the surrounding country are listening to an orator. A recruiting office has been opened. The men are not to be drafted, but are asked to volunteer—to choose for themselves. The orator commences by gaining their assent to the fact that Fort

Sumter has been fired on. He tells them it is rebellion, and their intellects assent to it. He tells them that rebellion must be put down, or our country will go to pieces. He makes an argument in favor of the war, and carries his audience with him—their intellects assent to all he says; and if they do not he cannot influence them.

Then, after having gained the assent of their intellects, he makes an appeal to their feelings. He tells them how noble a thing it is to defend one's country, and a feeling of patriotism is awakened. He tells tales of heroism and suffering on the field, and melts his audience to tears. He has satisfied their intellects and stirred their feelings, and that in spite of themselves; they could not help assenting and feeling.

But what next? Does he enlist for them? No; they must do the rest. He simply asks them, "Will you enlist?" They must choose for themselves. If they all shake their heads and go home, we say their tears and hurrahs are very cheap. Why? Because their intellects were satisfied and their feelings stirred without any choice on their part. But they could say whether they would enlist or not, and at that point their merit or demerit commenced.

This may give us the right view of religion. It is not religion to think right; to have grand thoughts of God, and heaven, and human duty; to reason nobly respecting systems of theology; for our thoughts are not under our control. It is no virtue of ours to have great thoughts, or fault of ours to lack them. God

controls this department of the human mind, and gives us such power of thinking as he deems best. Nor is it religion to feel well; to have good desires and noble longings; to have the emotions stirred by glowing pictures and pathetic tales; to weep, or sigh, or laugh, or shout, or groan, or yield to any of the impulses or emotions of the mind; for these things are governed by laws which we do not control. God may give us large capacity for thinking and feeling, or small capacity—we have no responsibility in the matter. Some of the worst of men have had the largest power of thought and feeling, and some of the best men the smallest; it was neither a virtue nor a vice.

True religion is a thing of the will. It is not to think right, or to feel right, but to will right, to choose right, to act right. Right thoughts and feelings are good if they lead to right willing and doing, but they have no merit in themselves. And God gives us right thoughts and right feelings in order that we may be induced to will right and do right. While God operates normally on intellect and feelings, we have power to choose right and do right. God moves upon those faculties of mind which he has kept under his own control, so as to prompt us and help us to exercise wisely the one faculty which he has placed in our power, and we are responsible for the right use of it.

The fingers of the Almighty may sweep the strings of intellect and emotion, awakening a blissful melody of right thoughts and right feelings, but the strings of the will must forever remain silent until they

are touched by human fingers; and these human fingers if they will may stir sweet music there, in full harmony with the lofty melody which God's own fingers awaken in the soul of man. The proper melody of the human soul is a duet; God plays his part, and we must play our part in harmony with him.

Friendship

Whoever undertakes to maintain a fire of shavings will need to give his whole mind to it or it will be out before he is aware. A fire of hard wood must not be long forgotten or it will burn itself out. A fire of compact coal may burn all day without attention, but the next morning it must be renewed or it will also go out. Friendships are subject to much the same conditions. Temperaments have as great extremes as coal and shavings. Some must be fed with continual kindness and attention, or the friendship will die. A friend of this kind is really a great burden; and the only redeeming feature is that if shavings go out suddenly they can be kindled again without much trouble. Others, like the fire of wood, must be looked after often, but do not require constant attention. Still others, like a coal fire, may be for some time neglected, and the warmth of the friendship will not sensibly diminish; but if they are neglected too long, and the fire suffered to go out, or nearly out, it is a serious matter to kindle them again. Friendships among all temperaments will die out without the interchange of attentions more or less frequent. All fires will burn

out in time if more fuel is not added. "He that hath friends must show himself friendly."

Fruit Diseased

A physician claims to have discovered with a microscope the germs of diphtheria on apples, pears, lemons, and oranges. Some dangerous element, that is no part of the fruit, may attach itself to it, in this world of blight, mildew, and death.

Whether it be true or not that the germs of deadly disease attach themselves to fruit, it is certainly true that it is often covered with moss and mold, and eaten by worms, and thereby rendered very uninviting.

There is a lesson here for the Christian. His best fruits, which grow on the divine vine, may be so overlaid by human error, infirmity, or folly as to be distasteful to right-thinking people. Many a man, whose piety could not be questioned, has been largely discounted in the community by some weakness or folly that has attached to his life and obscured the luster and richness of his spiritual fruit. The Christian should aim not only to make himself acceptable to God, but also to all right-minded people.

Fruit in Abundance

The papers announce the discovery of the largest tree in the world on the Pacific coast. It is said to be one hundred and three feet in circumference at the ground, and ninety-six feet in circumference four feet above the ground. It stretches up into the sky nearly

one hundred and seventy-five feet, and is surmounted by an immense top. It is a cone-bearing tree, and the number of cones upon it is almost beyond the ordinary processes of computation.

One point has especial interest. It is reported that a little twig, at the extremity of one of the farthest branches, had on it nearly one hundred cones. The entire tree must have upon it thousands upon thousands of these cones. Each cone has in it from twenty-five to fifty seeds; and when they ripen and fall the winds must scatter many millions of seeds for a long distance around. Here is a picture of the true Church of God. Each branch, vitally connected with the true vine, brings forth fruit and scatters the seeds of truth far and wide. It is the glory of a tree that its branches bear fruit. The branches bear the fruit, but they derive their life from the tree. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit."

"Fruit to Perfection"

In the parable of the sower Christ says that those who are choked with the cares, riches, and pleasures of this life "bring no fruit to perfection." The machines which thrash and clean wheat contain fine wire sieves which no grain above a certain size can get through, while all below that size falls through and is thus separated from the valuable grain. If we look at the grain which has passed successfully over the sieve we will not find the kernels all of the same size, but we still call it all valuable wheat.

If, on the other hand, we look at that which has fallen through the sieve we find that much of it has the same shape as good wheat, but it is stunted, and shriveled, and if ground in the mill the result will be all bran and no flour. Christ intimates that many Christian fruits are largely valueless because they have not attained a reasonable standard of perfection. Very likely many of the current graces of religion are so small and shriveled as to fall through the sieve. When a rich man gives twenty-five or fifty cents to the missionary cause, and then quotes the story of the widow's mite, his gift will fall through the sieve. God is not a hard master, and we may be sure that whatever falls through his sieve is worthless.

"Fullness of God"

God's fullness has been compared to an ocean—able to fill everything else and in no danger of emptying itself in so doing. When there is such an ocean of Deity encircling the universe, pressing itself into every bay, and sound, and harbor, and inlet, calmly and majestically filling every channel that is open to it—when there is such an ocean of divine love, and joy, and power—why should not our poor empty hearts be filled? Why should they remain empty? Why should they remain half full? Why should we be content with a little spray which only the highest waves can dash over us now and then, when this majestic ocean-tide might surge through our souls, cleansing, and filling them with God? It can only be because we have

erected barriers before our hearts which this ocean will not break down.

There may be found along the ocean's shore rocky ledges or sand banks so high that the waves are not able to surmount them. Just back of these barriers may be found ground much lower, full of stagnant water. It is a strange thing that the ocean's shore is lined with stagnant pools and salt marshes. On the one side of these barriers are stagnation and pollution, on the other side the pure waters of the ocean are dashing. Perhaps in their sublimest surgings they hurl a little spray over the ledge to mingle with the stagnant waters, but not enough to redeem them from corruption. If we break down these barriers and let the ocean tide through, these stagnant pools are washed out, and filled to the brim with pure water, and kept full and kept pure, and made little appendages of the great ocean.

Such is our relation to God. He is ready with the vast ocean of his fullness to cleanse and fill the stagnant pools of our hearts, but we erect barriers to keep him out. If we will break down these barriers, and let the tide of Deity surge through our souls, we are brought into vital relation with God, and every movement of the great divine Spirit is felt in our spirits. It is a thought of untold significance that we are able to erect barriers and keep God out of our hearts. That God, who, like the ocean, presses naturally, necessarily, against every shore line, is shut out of human hearts by the human will, while he beats ceaselessly against the

barrier as the ocean beats against the coast. It is no doubt well that we can shut God out, but it is not well that we do shut him out.

Fullness of the Spirit

Fullness of the Spirit does not imply that we are capable of holding the entire Spirit of God, in all his attributes and perfections. It only means that we are to hold what we can. A tin cup cannot hold the ocean, but it can be filled to overflowing with ocean water; and we are to be filled with the Spirit of God, and let the divine presence and power overflow on every side. What is needed is an abounding salvation; and this is just what God desires. He is able to make all grace abound unto his children.

Full Salvation

A very ordinary man said in prayer meeting: "God has saved all there is of me." It is a very happy expression. If God saves all there is of us, be it more or less, that is full salvation for us. There may not be as much of us as there was of Paul, or Luther, or Wesley, or Spurgeon, or Simpson, or Moody, but if all there is of us is given to God, and used by him, that is the full measure of salvation for us.

God First

O that men could understand how grandly it pays—pays here, pays hereafter—to make God and his kingdom overwhelmingly first.

It is certainly not doing this to make the world first till we are seventy-five years old, or sixty, or fifty, and then, when the world begins to slip away in spite of us, to turn to God for rescue from the general wreck of all earthly things.

Too often the altars of life are fed night and day all through youth and vigorous manhood to Mammon, which is the God of this world; and then, when the offerings begin to fail, and the fires to burn low, the old polluted altars are rededicated to the worship of God; just as some old heathen temples were converted into Christian churches; just as some old buildings in these days that have been used for base purposes are sometimes cleaned up a little and devoted to God's work. It is not the honorable thing to devote the best part of life to money-making, and honor-chasing, and pleasure-seeking, and then ask God to be content with rheumatic joints, and shaking nerves, and failing eyesight, and a treacherous memory, and wasted powers of body and mind.

This is better than nothing, to be sure; but it is much better still to give God the strength, vigor, ardor, and enthusiasm of youth and young manhood.

God Our Father

Sometimes earthly fathers have not the ability to support their children. Continual sickness disables them, or they cannot procure employment. There is no sadder sight in all earth's complicated relations than an honest, hard-working father who loves his family

but is not able to provide for them. Society sympathizes with such a father, and is ready to lend a helping hand.

Nearly all parents, however, are able to support their families; and the most of earth's busy operations are carried on for this very purpose. Parents rise early and sit up late, they toil long and dreary hours, they go into the forest in the cold winter, they descend to the damp and dangerous mines, they live on the tumultuous ocean, they labor in mill, factory, and furnace, they delve and coax the barren soil, they toil on year after year, grimy, sweaty, dusty, weary, yet willing and happy, that they may support their children and give them proper education.

What marvelous power this sublime picture of human struggle gives to the words of our Saviour: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, *how much more* will your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"

God Our Portion

Man can never find complete satisfaction in anything but God. A *thing* can never satisfy the wants of a spirit. Flesh may feed on flesh, but spirit must feed on spirit. You can never satisfy the wants of an immortal spirit with that which is a mere *thing*. The soul cries out after God.

Give the entire world to man, and compel him to live on it alone, and he will be miserable beyond the power of expression. Select the brightest star in the firma-

ment, and give it to a man to be all his own, and he will find no happiness until he has brought some other spirit to view and enjoy his possessions.

When Adam stood alone on the earth God said, "It is not good for man to be alone." When a man has a house all to himself he is never satisfied till he has taken a wife to share his joys. Here is the basis of all the loves and friendships of earth—spirit must find its joy in spirit.

And this thought only reaches its highest, fullest meaning when we understand that our spirits can never find complete joy and satisfaction except in the great divine Spirit.

Faith is the appropriate process by which one spirit can feed on another and find its joy in another. We believe *in* Christ, not merely believe him. I may believe the veriest rascal, when he happens to tell the truth, without believing in him. When we believe in God we rest in him, and he becomes our portion.

God's Care

I can well remember as a child having a great dread of the darkness, but I always felt secure from ghosts or robbers when my strong father slept on the front side of the bed. Advancing knowledge taught me more and more that my earthly father, strong though he was, had not power to defend me from all dangers; but it has also brought the higher thought that the heavenly Father can defend us from all those who would rise up against us, for "he doeth according to

his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth."

"The Lord our God is clothed with might,
The winds obey his will;
He speaks, and in his heavenly height
The rolling sun stands still.

"Ye winds of night, your force combine;
Without his high behest
Ye shall not, in the mountain pine,
Disturb the sparrow's nest."

God Sees

The island of Arran, on the west coast of Scotland, is very mountainous. Near the center of the island is Goatfell, which is much higher than the other mountains. I remember rambling for many hours among the wild, desolate valleys of this island, and I observed that wherever I went the top of Goatfell was visible above the intervening mountains. Many times during the day I turned to gaze at the scenery, and was always surprised to see a small section of that blue summit looking calmly down upon me. The impression grew, and at length, turning suddenly in forgetfulness of the fact, I was startled once more; and the thought flashed through my mind, "That mountain top is watching all you do." I at once inquired, "Have I thought or done anything which I would not wish to be seen?" And then came the higher thought that the eye of God is far above every mountain top, and no valley is so deep as to screen us from his gaze.

God's Great Sacrifice

Can anyone who has studied the death of Christ doubt for one moment that it is a most amazing exhibition of God's love for sinful men? He "*so* loved the world *that* he gave his only begotten Son."

There are some persons who are in a condition to give some kind of an estimate of the terrible demands of this sacrifice. Parents watch night and day by the bedside of a sick child, beholding its agonies but utterly unable to relieve them, until it seems that their hearts will break. They take the little sufferer into their arms, while the scalding tears fall in silence, the agonizing prayer goes up to heaven, and the spirit is torn with anguish that is unsupportable. How gladly would they take all the agonies of the little one upon themselves if it were possible to do so.

Parents bear such anguish of heart because they must; but what if parents were called upon to submit a child to such agonies, of their own free choice, in order to save some other person, and that not a saint, but a sinner! There is probably not a parent on the broad earth who would make such a sacrifice.

And yet God submitted his Son to death for sinful men. He looked on while wicked men spit upon him, smote him with their hands, called him vile names, dragged him to Golgotha, and nailed him to the cruel cross. He heard the pleading cry, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" he listened to that last cry of agony, "My God, my God, why hast thou

forsaken me?" and he restrained himself, he held himself back. It was his only begotten Son; and who can tell the anguish that rent the Father's heart as he looked on this awful scene! "He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all;" he "gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Who will doubt that the death of Christ is a marvelous display of God's love, and ample grounds for the salvation of the world? And is it any wonder that when a penitent sinner comes to God in the name of Christ he is forgiven and saved?

God's Nearness

When our two girls were little more than babies their mother used to put them to bed, turn out the light, and leave them to go to sleep alone, telling them that she would be in the room below to answer any call. And regularly, every night, several times, before they got to sleep, they would call down the stairway, "Mamma, are you there?" and the answer would go back, "Yes, I am here; go to sleep." They did not really think that mamma would be untrue to her word, and go away, but it was such a comfort to hear the familiar voice saying once and again, "Yes, I am here," until they were lost in sleep.

We are all children in spiritual things. We know there is a Father in heaven; we know that he loves us, and hears our every cry, and is not far from any one of us; yet when troubles come, when darkness and

storms overtake us, it is a great comfort to call up through the darkness, "Father, are you there?" and to hear the answer come back, "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God."

God's nearness may become very real to us. He has said that if we draw nigh to him he will draw nigh to us. I was called upon to minister to a man thirty-five years old, or so, who had never thought much about God; the world had occupied his attention. But he fell into a decline, and had leisure to turn his thoughts Godward. The good Father responded to his approaches, and the man was astonished at the result. He said over and over, as I talked with him, "I didn't know God could come so near."

God Working through Men

The men who have done most for God and been most for God have not necessarily been the greatest scholars, or men of greatest intellectual power, but the men who have had the most intimate acquaintance with the Spirit, and the fullest endowment of his power. The great achievements in soul-saving have not been man's work, but the work of God operating through man.

The Romans built a number of vast aqueducts to supply their cities with water. These were simply large canals, extending in some cases fifty or sixty miles over hill and valley to carry the water of clear streams or fountains to distant thirsty cities. They did not seem to understand the principle of physics that

water confined in tubes will rise as high as its source; consequently they built open aqueducts, and were obliged to bore through hills, and fill up valleys, or raise the aqueduct on a series of arches one above another, to furnish a level bed, or a gentle decline down which the water might flow.

We have learned that we can carry water in strong iron pipes, over hill and through valley, without any leveling, so long as the fountain head is higher than any point of the course. This leveling up was man's work; driving the water uphill and down through the iron tube is God's work. Man's part is simply to attach his iron tube to God's law.

And this is the correct principle of Christian life and work. It simply requires that a human instrument—great or small, learned or unlearned—should make connections with the Spirit of God, and large results are sure to follow. Water can run through a crooked tube if the fountain is only high enough; and even feeble agencies can bring great things to pass when God is behind them and working through them.

Giving

There is one short, just rule for giving in the Bible: "As God hath prospered him." Unfortunately Christians are left to apply this rule for themselves, and they sometimes make strange work of it. In one pastorate a poor woman, who supported her family with the needle, gave regularly each year five dollars to the missionary cause. The richest man in the church at that

time, reputed to be worth about one hundred thousand dollars, refused at first to give anything; but I spent two hours with him one afternoon, arguing, pleading, and finally retired, exhausted, disgusted, unstrung, with five dollars for the cause of missions. The effort and nervous tax were so great that I concluded it would be cheaper to give an extra five dollars myself. Here were two members of the church applying this simple Scripture rule with such unequal results.

“Give Me a Shove”

The comparative value of personal effort and special revival services has often been discussed. Every pastor has led many to make the supreme decision by direct personal appeal; but he has found that many who could not be reached in this way have yielded to the impulse of revival services. An unusual impact from some source was needed. The boy sliding downhill says to his companion, “Give me a shove;” and so the inertia of a dead level is overcome, and he speeds on his way. Many persons declare that it was a little “push” at the critical moment that led them to take up the Christian life. Christians ought to stand ready to give this “push” wherever it is needed. It will call for great intelligence to know just when to give the push in each case; and much courage will be required to break in upon the life of another and influence his decisions.

One of the noblest Christian men I ever knew told me it was a personal invitation and grasp of the hand

in a revival meeting that led him to make the start, and he said he would probably have held back without that little "shove."

Grace Abundant

There can be no question that God has provided grace sufficient for all the needs of human salvation. Some men need much more than others, but there is an abundance for all. There is no condition or emergency which divine grace cannot meet; it can save the greatest sinner and the least, the oldest and the youngest.

And if it ever fails the fault is on the human side; there is a failure to connect the power of God with the need of man. And it may be feared that there is more or less of this failure in all our Christian experience.

We had a pump in our kitchen which connected with a filtered cistern which was full of good water. But the pump leaked, and did not work well. It had to be primed, and there was nothing but polluted river water from the faucet to do it with. After a time it was necessary to prime it two or three times and pump furiously in order to get water. And at last it entirely refused to work.

There was plenty of good water in the cistern, but we could not get it. A plumber came and fixed the pump, and then it was an easy matter to get all the water we needed.

And, if we fail to get the grace necessary to meet the emergencies of life, be sure there is trouble with the human machinery. There is a leak somewhere.

And under such circumstances increased human exertions will not supply the lack; we must make the necessary connection with the great reservoir of divine grace, and we shall find that sufficient.

Grasping at Shadows

Grasping at shadows, over and over again, yet never learning that there is no substance behind them—such is the result of worldly ambitions. When one of our children was a baby we held a hand glass before her for the first time. She took hold of it with her left hand, drew it toward her, and with her right hand tried to grasp the image in the glass. Many times she clutched behind the glass with her little hand, and at last turned the glass around, and looked behind it to see why she could not get hold of something. A look of utter astonishment came over her face when she discovered that there was nothing to clutch.

It seemed like a fine illustration of how men are clutching after the world and getting only emptiness. They get a vision of earthly happiness. It seems real. They chase it and clutch it, and are astonished that they get nothing. They get a glimpse of worldly honor. It is a charming halo. It floats just before them. They reach out after it, and get nothing. They reach again and get nothing. They grasp exactly where the halo was, but there is nothing there, and late in life they discover that they have been chasing shadows.

Grievances

If a man is wounded he puts a bandage over the wound and keeps it out of sight till it heals. If he takes the bandage off and shows it to everyone he meets it will never heal. And people do not like to have old sores shown to them. It is a disgusting spectacle. Not more so than to have persons uncover their old grievances and rehearse them to all they meet. Injuries ten, twenty years old are kept fresh and sore by this process, and people are disgusted by the recital of them.

Habit

Rivers are very useful things when they always run in the same channels. The proud steamboat floats along them, a thing of use and a thing of beauty. The bulky products of States and nations are readily transported from place to place. Farmhouses, towns, cities spring up along their banks, and the glimmering water adds a peculiar charm to the landscape. But if a river overpowers its banks, and forsakes its ancient bed, it ceases to have either use or beauty—it becomes an instrument of terror. An ordinary freshet strews its shores with desolation, and we can readily imagine what would be the condition of our country if its rivers should choose to run here and there at random instead of confining themselves to their usual courses. The Missouri River in time of high water sometimes plows its way through farms, and transfers territory from one State to another. The Hoang-Ho changed

its channel in time of freshet, and estimates placed the loss of life somewhere from one to seven millions.

All this serves to illustrate a principle common to human life. Men incline to run in grooves. As soon as a man chooses his lifework he begins to wear a channel for himself, and the more thoroughly he confines himself to that channel the larger will be his attainments in his chosen pursuit. The ablest lawyers were only lawyers—they aimed to be nothing else. The ablest preachers were only preachers. The ablest physicians were only physicians. The most noted scientists devoted themselves exclusively to science. In a certain Northern city was a colored man who was lawyer, preacher, whitewasher, and man of all work. He failed at everything.

The power of acquiring habits is inherent in man's nature; but, like all the blessings of the Creator, it may be turned to a curse. Habit has made and unmade men. If habit is our servant it is a most valuable assistant; if it is allowed to become our master it may grind us in the most abject slavery.

Hardship

Human history has fully proved that hardship is not a popular, but a very thorough and useful, schoolmaster. The experiences of our civil war were remarkably successful in developing strong men out of commonplace boys. Strange as it may seem, it was there demonstrated many times that going without food and water, sleeping on the frosty ground, march-

ing under a heavy knapsack through mud and snow, dragging a boat along a Southern bayou up to the middle in mud, riding on horseback one hundred miles a day, and going under the deadly cloud of the battlefield, would make a man out of poorer material than almost any other experience.

The great advantage of a soldier's discipline was that it was useless to complain; and any whining would only subject to laughter and ridicule. If such slashing discipline would not cure men of softness, self-conceit, and always having ague just at the time of battle, there was little hope that such soldiers would ever become men.

Parents often shield their children from all hardships, greatly to the detriment of the children. If parents wish their children to make a mark in life they will do well to throw them on their own resources, and let them understand that they must pursue some other business in life than hanging around home waiting for their parents to die.

I was passing through a forest one day and saw a young sapling growing out of the root of an old tree. There was plenty of good, rich soil all about, but that foolish sapling insisted on drawing its support from the parent stalk. I believe that trees never flourish which grow in that way.

And that young man will flourish most and produce most fruit who drops like seed into a fresh soil, strikes down roots for himself, shoots out branches for himself, and draws his nourishment from nature, rather

than to grow as a sucker at the root of the parental tree.

We have sometimes—not always—been able to see how the hardships of life have developed us and made the most of us. I raised some tomato plants in the house one spring and kept them carefully under cover till all the frosts and cold winds were past. In transplanting them into pots there was not room for some of the poorest and smallest, so I set them in the ground out of doors in the cold, while the choice ones I kept carefully in the house.

There were several frosts, and many fierce winds swept over the outdoor plants before warm weather came. I covered them up a little on very cold nights, hardly expecting they would live, and not caring whether they did or not. They looked purple and pinched for a time, but in the end they were the best plants I had. While the others were growing up thin and tall in the house, these were striking their roots down deep into the soil; and when the warm weather finally came they were ready to grow, while the others were not.

The children of hardship and struggle generally outstrip the children of ease and luxury.

Heaven

The poet sings:

“Then shall I see, and hear, and know
All I desired or wished below.”

Is that true? Of what measure of expansion will our intellects be capable? The circumference is very

near the center here; we reach darkness very near home here—how far shall we stretch out there? Will mysteries dissolve like mists before the morning sun, when the light of eternity breaks upon us; or will they hang about us as thick and impenetrable as they do in our earthly history?

Will all doubts be resolved? Will all problems unfold their solution to our minds? Will all our ignorance be chased away? Shall we be protected from all mistakes and errors there; or shall we grope along slowly, laboriously, unsatisfactorily, in the pursuit of knowledge as we do here?

Our eyes see the stars in the heavens as little specks of light. Our telescopes reveal the planets merely as large shining silver coins—with the stamp of God upon them, to be sure—but so far away that we cannot distinctly read the lettering. God undoubtedly sees a star a thousand million miles away as though it were present. Will we be invested with some such power? Will space be annihilated, or partially annihilated, in the other world, and distant and present come nearer together? Shall we approach nearer to omnipresence than we do now, or shall we be limited and hedged in as we are here? The great-minded Dr. Samuel Johnson indulged the thought that life is an endless progression; and this is undoubtedly the grandest conception of heaven.

And what expansion may we look for in our affectional natures? What laws will govern our sympathies and loves: the same as now? or shall we be

under the control of a new code? Shall we love the same persons as here, and for the same reasons, or must we start anew, and form new friendships under the guidance of different principles?

In this world persons thrown together come to like or dislike each other as the result of association. A law, whose operation we cannot explain, draws some together and repels others. Thus likes and dislikes are generated; thus loves and hates spring up. Under the operation of this law friendships are formed, the marriage relation is established, the family is perpetuated, kindred cling together, while neighbors, clans, tribes, often hate and fight each other. Will these same principles be in operation in the other world; or shall we have to begin all over again in adjusting our relations to our neighbors?

The flesh has something to do with earthly friendships and loves; will our celestial bodies interfere with the relations of our spirits, as our terrestrial bodies do?

If it were as easy to answer these questions as to ask them much of the mist that hangs over the great hereafter would have been cleared up many centuries ago.

Helping Others

A sick man was brought into the city from the country for treatment in the hospital. When the surgeons had done all they could for him he was discharged from the hospital, and it was necessary to get him back to his home, which was eight miles away.

The cars did not run there, he was too weak to ride in a carriage, and so eight strong men came with a stretcher—with mattress and pillow and awning overhead, for it was a very hot summer day—and they laid the invalid on the stretcher. Four men took hold of the handles and carried him, while the other four rode in a two-seated wagon behind. When these had carried till they were tired they changed places with the men in the wagon, and so all day long they alternated, and carried the sick man to his home, eight miles away.

They passed by my door early in the morning, and set the stretcher down to rest a moment. I went out to the gate, and looked on a scene that made a deep impression on my mind. My first feeling was one of sympathy for the eight men. It was intensely hot weather, and they were already mopping the perspiration from their foreheads, though it was early in the morning. I said to myself, though not to them, for I did not wish to discourage them: "You have undertaken to do a great deal for one of your fellows who needs help. Your arms will be longer to-night than they are now; your muscles will be sore; your tempers will be ruffled, and you may be sorry for this before the sun sets."

This was the surface view—the view we are apt to take when we see some of our fellows doing so much for others—wearing out their lives to save others—giving till their friends say, "You will catch cold and die before your time; or you will impoverish your-

selves and end your days in the poorhouse." There are such people in every community.

I told this story in a sermon at a church where I had formerly been a pastor, and at the close of the service one of the leading men said to me: "You described my daughter this morning. She has been running the streets in all kinds of weather, looking after all sorts of people, until she took cold, and had to go to bed and couldn't come to hear you this morning." He said this with an emphasis and impatience which clearly indicated that he thought she was going beyond all reason in such work. I was quite inclined to take the same view when I looked on these eight men.

But there came a second thought, not quite so obvious, but a much truer and better thought. I said to myself again, "I wonder if any one of these men would be willing to change places with the poor man on the stretcher, and become one who needs help rather than one who is able to help others?" I did not hesitate a moment to answer: "No; you could not persuade any one of these strong men to become one who is ministered unto rather than one who is able to minister to others. They are proud of the fact that they have strength to do just such work as this, hard work though it is, and they find the highest joy of life in doing it."

Then I remembered that Christ, "for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame;" and taught us the high lesson that if we are

determined to save our life we shall lose it, but if we are willing to lose our life in doing his work we shall find it. The noblest joy we ever know is the joy of helping and blessing and saving others.

Heredity

I sat working in my study in the early autumn, and often my meditations were disturbed by the dropping of unripe pears from the trees in a garden just outside the window. At very brief intervals the stillness would be broken by a heavy thud as a pear fell to the ground. They were falling before their time; they were diseased, worm-eaten. A fly had laid its egg in the blossom, and from the very beginning the worm was hatched in the core of the fruit; and this premature fall was the completion of that deadly work.

Here is an illustration of the progress of evil in human nature. It grows with the growth of the soul—festers in the very center of life, born there with the birth of the child, until at last spiritual death is the result; and often the sinner suddenly and prematurely goes down to the grave with a fall that startles the community in which he lives.

It is a peculiarity of a bean vine that it never grows in a straight line, but will grow round and round a pole which is set for it to run upon. Probably not one person in ten can tell, without looking, which way the bean vine twists about the pole, whether to the right or left.

The secret of this twist in the bean vine can be

traced back to the nature of the bean. It has been asserted that the little germ lying in the heart of the bean is already curved, and ready as soon as it grows to follow a curved line. I will not be responsible for the truth of this assertion. A person can soak a bean in water for a few hours, and open it, and determine for himself. At any rate, the secret of the twist in the bean vine lies in the very heart of the bean, and in other beans before it.

And if you search for the secret of a bad life you will find it in a bad heart. If you wonder why some families so persistently run into certain vices—one to drunkenness, another to dishonesty, another to licentiousness—you will find the explanation in certain biases which they inherited from their ancestors. There was a twist in the very germ of life within them when they were born.

Some one will say, at once, that the twist in a bean vine cannot be cured; it is in the very nature of the plant. You may try to wind it the other way around the pole as often as you like, and it will quietly slip down again, and begin to go up its own way. I have tried it more than once.

Certainly! Man cannot take the twist out of a bean vine. But God has never tried to do it. Let him who made it but put his hand upon it, and he could easily make it go the other way around the pole.

And it is God who undertakes to take the twist out of crooked human nature. It is the peculiarity of the Gospel method of salvation that God does the work;

and if that be the case no amount of depravity or crookedness can vitiate it.

Hoe-men

Their mission is to cut up weeds, and the process keeps them bright and sharp. We may oppose them, as the stone or baked earth opposes the progress of the hoe, but they will cut up weeds in spite of all opposition. Hoe-men are great benefactors of the race. In defiance of unpopularity they continue to uproot error and mellow the soil about truth. That they are often, perhaps always, unpopular is proof of their great utility. Men will often defend their vices much more courageously than they will their virtues. I am not sure that any of us enjoy seeing other people slash around in our gardens, even though they profess to be cutting down weeds. We prefer to do it ourselves; but the trouble is we often neglect it.

This process of hoeing only mellows the soil, to be sure, and weeds will spring up again with renewed vigor; but we are likely to get hoed again by *some* one, if we are not wise enough to do it ourselves. In the meantime, also, the plants are getting a good start.

Our best and most frequent hoeings come in youth. Almost anyone is willing to give us attention at this period of our existence. And we probably need it most at this period. The plants are small and tender, while the weeds are hardy and vigorous. As the summer of life advances our gardeners get weary, or, it may be, conceive a great respect for us, and so do not

quite dare to do their duty. This often happens. It is very unfortunate for a man to be habitually wrong and not know it himself, while he is so hedged about by a kind of false dignity that no one dares tell him of his faults. It is well for "that boy," and "that girl," that people do not hesitate to make a little more free with their misdoings.

Another reason why we are neglected later in life is because our gardeners see that the corn, and potatoes, and onions have got a good start, and they think themselves sure of a crop without further trouble. The difficulty of getting at the weeds at this season of the year also has some weight. The vegetables have become large and hide them. At first they looked for plants among the weeds, now they look for weeds among the plants. In this way many weeds are suffered to grow, and as summer passes on to autumn these weeds become tall and rank, and the vegetables are once more hidden from view. In fact, such a garden looks like one that has not been hoed at all. A casual observer might fail to see the difference. But there is a vast difference. If a garden has been thoroughly hoed during the early part of the summer it will bear some neglect during the latter part. And if the boy has been faithfully trained the man will not need so much attention.

In an unhoed garden there may be as many plants as in one thoroughly hoed, but they are tall, pale, and fruitless, hardly distinguishable from weeds, and practically no better than weeds. On the other hand, the

garden that has been hoed in early summer, although apparently full of weeds, is likewise full of fruits. Down among the weeds, if we will only look for it, there is a rich, ripe harvest. I once saw a man digging some potatoes by the roadside, and he first with a scythe mowed down a rank crop of weeds that was growing above the potatoes.

It often happens that old men's minds are very weedy; suffered to become so late in life, after the plants were well matured. Offensive habits become fastened on them; wrong views of life cut them off from all sympathy with the present; forbidding tempers repel all who approach, and they are looked upon as gardens containing nothing but weeds. If, however, we will take the trouble to enter fully into their acquaintance and history, if we will work our way in among the weeds, though we may get pricked by thistles, and covered with burs, we shall find an abundant harvest of good works.

Home

The true home is always a place of love; the atmosphere of love pervades the farthest corners of the house. There is not merely love in the family room, where the inmates gather together; but there is love at the table; there is love in the kitchen; and all through the hours of the night in every chamber the inmates are breathing the air of love. If a child awakens in the darkness it feels safe, for it is at home; father and mother are near by, brothers and sisters are

all around. If a cry of distress comes from the farthest room, of the highest story, at the midnight hour, the whole house is aroused in a moment. One makes a light, another quickens the fire, another goes for a physician, and everything is done that love and anxiety can suggest. And though the call of distress may come from the servants' rooms there are still the same tender solicitude and kind ministration.

So it is in the great home of God's children. Love pervades it. The good Father loves us more tenderly than words can express. And though we may have attained no dearer relation than that of servant, though we may sleep in the farthest attic of the universe, yet every cry of suffering catches the Father's ear and brings to our need his kindest ministrations. He has said, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him."

Humiliation of Christ

It was a spectacle of infinite love and self-sacrifice when the Son of God came down to save sinful men.

The lower, more sinful, more degraded the person we love, the more that love will cost us of humiliation and self-sacrifice. And so we are accustomed to choose our friends from among the virtuous and respectable, lest we should suffer too much on account of our love. We steer clear of those whose acquaintance and friendship will cost us very much of money, pride, or social standing. We hold the vile and degraded at a safe distance, because a love for such will

be a great load upon us. We will not let ourselves know the needs and sufferings of those about us for fear it will prove too great a tax on our purses and sympathies.

It is hard work so to love the degraded and sinful as to lift them up and save them. The most of men never do enough of this intense loving to get hardened to it. It is like straining muscles that are not accustomed to work.

Once in a great while we let our love fasten on some poor creature, and the result is that our feelings are deeply stirred, our sympathies are put on the rack, our purses are bled, and the chances are that we get tired of it before the task is finished, and would gladly turn it over to some one else. And when one such experience is ended we take a long rest before we enter upon another.

We need not be told how absolutely unlike all this was the voluntary humiliation and self-sacrifice of Christ. He came with help and salvation to all the sinful, sorrowing millions of earth; and he did not stop among the respectable classes of society, but stooped down to lift up the lowest and vilest; stooped down to such, when doing so turned the more respectable classes against him.

Immanence of God

The universe takes its dimensions from that God who fills it. It could not be less than boundless, or it would not contain God. God fills it, and fills it with

such a volume and intensity of presence that there is room in it for no other being like himself. There is room in it, however, for subordinate beings like ourselves, who live in God as a dwelling place, according to the daring illustration of the Bible. A vessel filled with large stones will hold no more stones, but there is yet room in it for water, or air, or fine seed. A building filled full with the atmosphere will yet find room for the sunlight.

In like manner, the universe has no room for two such beings as the Christian's God; but there is room for one such being, and subordinate beings like ourselves who live in him and by him.

The same is true of all material things. God pervades them, and upholds them, and is necessary to their existence. He finds rooms in the universe for the various forms of matter, which are distinct from him yet dependent on him. And it is most likely that all attempts to prove the unreality of material things will result in failure. Jealousy for the honor of God does not make it necessary to deny the actual existence of everything else in the universe.

Importunity in Prayer

Our children have sometimes asked me for something, and I did not respond at once, but kept the thing in mind, and the next day have said, "What was it you asked for yesterday?" They had forgotten all about it. Such wants are not very pressing.

If God should ask many of us, "What was it you

asked for yesterday?" or "last week?" it might trouble us to remember.

Once, however, the little girl broke her doll carriage, and brought it to me with tears in her eyes, to know if I could fix it. I looked it over and told her I thought I could. Then she wanted to know if I *would* fix it. I did not reply at once; so she clung to me, pleaded, and gave me no peace, until I finally said that I could not fix it at once, but would do so when I had time.

This satisfied her; but at short intervals she would say, "Papa, are you going to fix my carriage to-day?" "Papa, here is a letter for you; you didn't fix my carriage yet," until I had to fix it in self-defense. I found out that she wanted it fixed; and God may desire to find out if we really want anything.

Ingratitude

I once took some little trouble to open a gate and release a small dog that had been accidentally shut up in a narrow inclosure, and the animal was no sooner outside the gate than it turned and barked at me spitefully and furiously. Such ingratitude in a dog may be overlooked; but in respectable human beings gratitude is regarded as a natural and necessary virtue, and ingratitude has justly been called the basest of crimes. In the relations of men it is no uncommon thing for favors to be rewarded with ill will and injury, until many persons get discouraged in trying to do good.

The most widespread ingratitude, however, is, no doubt, on the part of men toward God. Multitudes receive his favors year after year and requite them with indifference, neglect, and often positive dislike. Men receive from God riches, honor, health, and happiness, and then willfully and persistently do what they know will displease the divine Giver. And in such a course they comfort themselves with the thought that God never gets discouraged in doing good to sinful men.

Knocking

Christ says, "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Bunyan represents Mercy as knocking at the wicket gate which leads to the way of life, and the only response for a time was the barking of a fierce dog within the gate, which greatly frightened her. This dog represents the obstacles that stand in our way when knocking at the gate of every blessing.

An incident of personal experience has fixed this fact in my mind as perhaps nothing else could. One beautiful summer morning I planned to climb Mount Skiddaw, in the north of England, and see the sunrise. It was necessary to start up the mountain about two o'clock in the morning—long before daylight—as the distance was great. I was a young man then, with a proud contempt of guides, and so went out of the village the night before toward the mountain, that I might learn the way so thoroughly as to be able to follow it in the darkness of the morning. About

two o'clock in the morning I started, but soon lost my way in the darkness. It was either come back or go straight up the mountain side without reference to paths. I decided to do the latter.

I soon came to the gate of a private castle, which I had seen the night before well up the side of the mountain, and determined to knock at the keeper's lodge for information. No sooner did the vigorous thumping on the gate break the stillness of night than a huge watch dog presented his head over the high wall and set up a vigorous and savage growling. I at once decided that I could do without information, and made my way up the mountain side as best I could, but did not reach the top till long after sunrise. I confess that all these years I have felt half ashamed of my retreat, but I had heard bad stories about English bulldogs.

Bunyan has truly represented the case. No sooner does the sinner knock at the gate of mercy than the devil begins to bark and frighten him away. Like the famous pilgrims, we must knock "more than once or twice," and at length the dog will cease to bark, and the gate will be opened to us.

Last Words

If a man is ever going to see things in their right light it is when he stands on the border of two worlds, one of which he is leaving and the other entering. He can look back over this life, and have the benefit that experience gives; while it seems to be a fact that a

clearer light shines on him from the other life while he occupies that position. It is this fact that leads men to listen when a dying man speaks.

A Christian man was stricken down by paralysis, and as I talked with him at his bedside he said to me, with great energy: "It's all right. I am learning some lessons here that I need to know before I can get my diploma." In a few weeks he finished his schooling on earth. Many a theologian has failed, through labored pages, to say it as well.

A faithful Christian woman was stricken by the same dread malady; and she had, in her helplessness, preeminently one sorrow and one joy. She enjoyed beyond measure the social meetings of the church, and her favorite hymn, which she often started, was, "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine." As I talked with her she wept in deep sorrow because she could not go to the prayer meeting any more; and in connection with that sorrow she said: "It is a great joy and comfort to me now that I did go when I could." It means a great deal to be able to say that in the dying hour.

Law of Love

It is true that we cannot make ourselves love Christ by an effort of the will, for love must seek its object in harmony with the laws of mind; but we can become acquainted with him, and the laws of mind will do the rest.

It is one of the laws of our being that persons thrown together come to love each other—unless there

is some radical and persistent incompatibility, which is a rare exception.

It is because of this law that persons are responsible for the love which so often leads to ill-assorted marriages. Persons should not associate with those whom they ought not to marry; it is hazardous business.

And it is this law which often saves loveless marriages from total wreck. Most persons come to love each other when they live together for a length of time.

There is a baby in the orphanage a year old. You do not love that baby. You care nothing about it; you know nothing about it. You cannot make yourself love that baby. But there is something you can do. You can adopt it as your own child, take it to your home, feed it, care for it, sleep with it, and at the end of six months you will love it so that you could not be induced to let it go out of your house.

I knew a poor man who took a little baby to keep for pay. He needed the money, and agreed to keep this little child for so much per week. After a few months the pay ceased; and this poor family fed, clothed, reared this child to manhood for nothing, though financially not able to do so, because they had learned to love it, and could not bear to let it go.

Apply this philosophy of human nature and human life to the Saviour, who has declared that he would draw all men unto him, and a love for Christ will be the inevitable result. I heard a young convert say in a love feast, "If any man does not love Jesus it is be-

cause he does not know him." That was a very wise remark. There is something so beautiful and lovable about Christ that if we will only know him he will take care of the rest.

"Let Your Light Shine"

I lived in a certain village where, in the absence of street lamps, the people used to put lamps in their front windows at night to light the passers-by. It was a beautiful custom, and illustrates a great spiritual truth.

As Christians we should not forget that our light is only borrowed light, and the light we shed on others is only reflected light. Christ is the sun, we are the moon, deriving our light from him.

The moon only shines because the sun shines upon it, and the sun's light is reflected by the moon, as a hand mirror will throw the light of the sun about in any direction. A dark corner, which the sun could not reach directly, can be lighted up by a reflector; but it is the sunlight that lights up the dark corner by means of the reflector.

A woman had been sick for a few days, and, when well enough to be about the room, saw her son playing in the street in front of the house. She wished to call him, but thought it imprudent to open a window or go to the door, and so took a hand mirror, which she held obliquely toward the sun, as it was shining directly in at the window. The hand glass threw the rays of the sun into the boy's face, and he looked up

to see where the light came from. By this means his mother was able to beckon to him to come into the house.

In like manner we may reflect the light of Christ upon others, and perchance may arrest their attention and beckon them to a higher and better life.

Now, there are two ways by which the light of the moon can be obscured for us; either when something gets between the sun and moon, or when something gets between us and the moon. An eclipse of the moon represents the former, and a cloud passing over the face of the moon represents the latter.

A hand mirror will represent the same interesting fact. The light of the sun falls on the mirror and is reflected to a dark corner which the sun cannot reach. The sunlight may be cut off from the dark corner in two ways: an object may be interposed between the mirror and the sun, or between the mirror and the dark corner. In either case the sunlight will be shut away from the dark corner.

All this illustrates the spiritual light which Christians may shed on their fellow-men. Whenever anything comes between the Christian and Christ the heavenly light is in a moment obscured, not only for himself, but for his fellow-men upon whom he may shine. He cannot shine upon others while Christ does not shine upon him. Again, the Christian's light is obscured for a fellow-man whenever anything comes between him and that fellow-man. Differences, misunderstandings, disputes may produce this result.

Peculiarities of temperament in a Christian may kill his influence with others, while yet the light of Christ falls on his own soul. It is necessary to keep the channel open both Godward and manward.

Life Eternal

What a joy it will be to get matters into just the right condition, and have them remain so. It will be a new experience, for such is not the case in this world.

A man grows to maturity; his physical and mental powers are at their best; he has a prosperous business, ample means, a comfortable home, and a pleasant family about him, and he says to himself, "Now I have got things where I want them, and all I ask is that they remain where they are." But that is not a rational expectation in this world.

In a few years his bodily powers begin to decline; his hand trembles so that he cannot carry a glass of water to his lips without being reminded that he is growing old; his step falters; his eyes grow dim, and he must disfigure his face with glasses; gray hairs appear; the mind is hampered by the declining body; the memory fails; protracted mental exertion becomes impossible, and he is compelled to admit that he is not what he once was.

In the meantime his family has grown up and gone from him. Some of them perhaps are lying in the grave; and his steps awaken dismal echoes in the old house which was once the scene of gladness. It may

be that in addition to all these changes his property has become impaired and he feels the pinch of poverty. But a wreck remains of all that was once so satisfactory.

How our hearts long for an experience that will abide! The glory of the other life is that it is eternal. We shall get things just as we want them, and just as God wants them, and they will stay so forever.

Life More Abundant

It is quite evident that the measure of vitality is not the same in any two persons. All are alive, but all have not the same fullness of life. The pulse is quicker and stronger in some than in others.

That the new birth does not endow all Christians with the same amount of spiritual life is likewise a matter of common observation. A brother minister used an illustration of this difference for which I gladly give him credit.

In the springtime two lambs make their appearance on the green earth, and one week after birth one of them is bounding over the pasture, kicking its heels into the air, so full of life that it can hardly contain itself; while the other is under the kitchen stove in a basket, wrapped up in cotton, just breathing, and little more. Both lambs are alive, but there is a vast difference in the amount of life they possess.

Christians exhibit the same variations in spiritual vitality. It will avail very little to ask the reasons why. It is more to the purpose to consider that the

lamb under the stove may recover from its feebleness and become as full of life as the other; and so may the weakest Christian grow to be strong, robust, and full of spiritual life.

Like Christ

It doesn't say that we shall be equal to Christ, but like him. We shall not be as great, not as exalted, not as wise, not as glorious as the matchless Christ, but like him; possessing the same elements of character in our humble measure that he possesses without measure.

The humblest man or woman may have as much character as an angel; and character is the supreme test. A small diamond may flash the sunlight as brilliantly as a large one; and a humble saint may reflect the Christ-likeness as perfectly as Paul or Luther or Wesley.

A gas jet looks like the sun. It is small indeed, and the sun is immense, but it has the true sun-likeness; is of the same essence as the sun; gives forth the same light and heat; and confers identically the same blessings on mankind in small measure as the sun does in superabundant measure. It resembles the sun as much as does a burning world. And the humblest saint may have the Christ-likeness as perfectly brought out as a prophet or an apostle.

And there are first that shall be last, and the last first. How trivial are the differences in earthly greatness! In comparing earthly fires with the sun it matters little whether we use a candle or a burning mountain;

both sink into insignificance, but they may equally have the sun-likeness.

And judged by the standard of Christ's likeness, in the great day, many apostles, and prophets, and martyrs, and great men of earth may fall to the rear; while some humble, unknown ones may come to the front as the most perfect types of Christians. Here is a kind of greatness that the humblest may strive for.

And it will be honor enough—glory enough—to be like Christ; think his thoughts; feel as he feels; and shine with the same beauty of character that has made him the admiration of the world. It will be heaven enough to be in our measure what Christ is in his.

Limiting God

Dr. Patrick Fairbairn, the celebrated Scotch divine, in a lecture before his class in the Free Church College, Glasgow, which I heard, told of a minister who was thrown into great perplexity respecting his duty in a certain matter, but after long praying and waiting could get no light. Finally he became impatient, and fixed a test to decide the matter. In going to a certain place he determined, if he found matters so and so, to decide one way, but if he found matters otherwise to decide the other way. When he reached his destination he found things entirely different from any of his forecasts, and was more puzzled than ever. Dr. Fairbairn thought it wrong to make such tests, and advised patient waiting for providential guidance, however long it might require.

Love for Christ

Love for Christ is the first grace planted in the soul at conversion, and it is often very intense at the very outset. The Saviour comes to our cold, dark natures to renovate them, and the first thing he does is to make a fire; and this fire serves to give light and warmth while other things are put to rights.

A company of pioneers go into a dense forest to clear the land and make for themselves a home. All is cold and gloomy and desolate about them. The first thing they do is to build a rousing fire in the midst of the desolation, to dispel the gloom, frighten away the wild beasts, and give light and warmth to those who are shivering in the cold.

It may be months, even years, before these trees will all be felled, the beasts destroyed, houses erected, and the land put under thorough cultivation; but they may have a cheerful fire from the very first, and this fire will be of great service in all their subsequent struggles.

In like manner, it will require many years to develop complete Christian characters, destroy all our spiritual enemies, and bring to perfection the graces of the soul; but in the meantime there may be a fire in the camp, the love of Christ may be burning brightly in our hearts from the hour of conversion until the hour of final triumph—a light to guide and a fire to warm us. This fire is a positive necessity. The affairs of life cannot be carried on without a fire;

no more can the processes of the Christian life go forward without the love of Christ burning in the soul. It is an assurance of salvation, a fitness for Christian work, a comfort in trouble, and a defense against the enemies of the Christian life.

Love of Money

I knew a mechanic, a member of a Christian church, who was a faithful Christian while he was working for wages and living in a humble way. But he developed a love for money and an ability to get it. He used to buy old houses in the outskirts of the city and repair them for sale or rental. In this way he made large profits; but as money increased religion decreased. A mean, miserly spirit grew upon him. Stormy days he spent straightening crooked nails in the old buildings he had under repair; and after he became a rich man I have seen him riding through the streets of the city sitting on a board thrown across the top of a dilapidated one-horse wagon, with an old shabby coat on his back, and a tall, battered, ancient silk hat on his head, which dated back to the days of his piety and respectability.

He ceased to give to the cause of Christ, took no interest in the affairs of religion, and lost all hope of a blessed hereafter. When he drew near the end of life—a miserly, miserable, old rich man—he said that if he could be induced to give away all his money he might save his soul, but as it was he felt that he was going to perdition. He did not give away his money,

but died as he had lived during the latter years of his life.

The Bible says that the love of money is a "root of all evil." In fruit raising they take some hardy variety that will live in all climates, and bud into it any number of different varieties, so that one tree will bear many kinds of fruit. I have seen a pear tree whose every limb was a different variety. Such a hardy plant is this love of money. It will survive all circumstances, and live in all climates, and upon it may be grafted every species of evil. Almost every conceivable sin has been committed through love of money.

Love that Is Warm

There is no dearth of love, but it too often requires some great occasion to call it into exercise. We may strike fire with a flint, but it is a laborious way of making a fire. We may kindle a fire by rubbing two sticks together, but it is a long, tedious process. The ordinary experiences of life do not arouse us to action. We pass men by every day without a word of kindness; but if some great calamity falls upon them we pour out our sympathies in overabundance. We must see men on the brink of destruction before we will run to the rescue.

A wretched murderer in New Jersey was in prison awaiting his execution, and, as is usual, he was overrun by ministers and Christians urging him to repent and believe on Christ; but he put them fiercely away, saying he knew and cared nothing about Christ. And

then he made this terrible remark: "If I had received one tenth part of this attention twenty years ago I would never have been here." We wait too long, and then overdo the matter. We should take fire more easily. The love within us should be near the surface, where men can warm themselves by it in the daily intercourse of life.

Love that Saves Must Be Mutual

The love of God is the basis of human salvation; but the love must be returned if that object is accomplished. Mutual love is salvation.

This great truth respecting the relations of God and men is most beautifully illustrated by human relations. The law seems to be universal that love must be mutual if happiness is to flow from it. Love is a joyous thing when it is mutual, but if it exists on one side only the result is misery.

The Roman poet said many centuries ago:

"Yes, loving is a painful thrill,
And not to love more painful still;
But O, it is the worst of pain
To love and not be loved again."

If in the relation of husband and wife one loves but not the other there can be happiness to neither. Such a relation can be attended by nothing but pain and heartache.

And if parents love their children but the children do not return the love, or if children try to love cruel

and unloving parents, such a household will be the center of strife and misery.

The same great principle holds in the household of God—mutual love is the foundation of eternal happiness.

Surely there is no failure on God's part; he loves us with an infinite tenderness. As children of God we have this matchless consolation—God loves us. In all our toils, and sorrows, and sufferings; in pain, and sickness, and mourning, and death; in turmoil, and conflict, and defeat; in struggle, and failure, and loss; in hatreds, and jealousies, and strifes; in shortcomings, and wanderings, and sins, we have the supreme consolation that God loves us, whoever else does not.

What if it were otherwise? What if he hated us, as some earthly parents do their children? What if he were indifferent to our welfare? It would be the easiest thing in the world for him to plague, and thwart, and torment us, if his heart were cold toward his earthly children. We should be but babies in his hands.

But God loves us. The one great, blessed truth that is blazoned on nature and revelation is that "God is love." And this sublime truth shall survive "the wreck of matter and the crush of worlds." But, alas! this is not enough. A one-sided love even here is barren of salvation and joy. The love must be mutual if eternal happiness is to result from it. We must love God in return.

If it were possible for us to love God while he did

not love us; if he were a being that hated and despised us, and we in our helplessness should try to stretch up toward him with love and tenderness, our love would bring no happiness to him, while it would bring only anguish and despair to ourselves.

And God's great love for us only causes him to grieve and mourn over us, as a father does over a wayward son, so long as we do not return that love. This great thought may be powerless to move us, but we ought to be moved by the solemn and sad thought that God's unspeakable love cannot bring joy and salvation to us so long as we do not return that love. The ground of eternal happiness is a mutual love between God and his children.

Luggage

The athletes on the race course never thought of carrying luggage with them, and they even stripped themselves of clothing just as far as possible. This rendered their limbs free for rapid action. The same principle applies in all races. When horses are put on the track the harness and wagon are made as light as possible, and a driver of light weight secured. If horses have an advantage from age, or other circumstances, this is overcome by putting a weight upon them.

The great drawback to travel is luggage. All enjoyment is destroyed by worry over trunks, boxes, and bundles. And if anything is lost we are at once depressed in spirits. When a young man I traveled

all over Europe with no more luggage than I could carry in a valise in one hand, independent of cabs and porters; but I have never been so wise since.

Soldiers on the rapid march leave everything behind that can possibly be spared; and in setting out on a campaign knapsacks and tents are all packed up and put under guard, while they advance with just so much as is absolutely necessary and no more. In advancing on Port Hudson during the civil war all these things were left behind, and we never saw them again. And I have seen soldiers in the rapid charge, who could not keep up with the advancing line, throw away their last blanket. Keep up they must, though they strip themselves to barely clothing and arms. The line of march is always marked by luggage thrown away—especially if it is a forced march. People start out with far more than they have any need for.

Christians forget that they are running a race, or making a march, or a journey, or fighting a battle—all Scripture illustrations of the religious life—and that earthly luggage is the greatest hindrance to their progress. The path toward heaven is marked by luggage thrown away. Some are wise enough to do this, while others hold on to the luggage and thus make no progress. Much of this luggage cannot be carried to the better country; it must be left behind. Some of it may be sent on before, and we shall find it there on our arrival.

We can express our baggage ahead to a foreign

country, and find it when we arrive. Or we may forward money to a foreign bank, and draw on it when we reach that country. This seems to be the only way to get money to heaven. We cannot carry it with us. And most people know how to send money on ahead to the better country.

Trying to drag earth heavenward is fruitless business. It must either be sent on ahead or left behind.

“The bird let loose in Eastern skies,
When hastening fondly home,
Ne’er stoops to earth her wings, nor flies
Where idle warblers roam;
But high she shoots through air and light,
Above all low delay,
Where nothing earthly bounds her flight,
Nor shadow dims her way.

“So grant me, God, from every care
And stain of passion free,
Aloft, through virtue’s purer air,
To hold my course to thee!
No sin to cloud, no lure to stay
My soul as home she springs;
Thy sunshine on her joyful way,
Thy freedom in her wings.”

Marriage

Men instinctively and wisely seek wives quite the opposite of themselves in their leading characteristics. Strong, positive, self-willed men very generally get wives who are gentle and yielding; and “strong-minded” women are generally mated with men of “easy-going” disposition. It would not be safe to as-

sert that persons choose companions the opposite of themselves because they are not admirers of themselves. Humility is not at the bottom of this choice, but a God-given wisdom, for which men can claim no credit. "God is wiser than man," and his method seems to work well.

A vine and a tree can grow together in perfect harmony—the only danger being that the vine with its overtenderness may choke the tree to death. The vine may be either the man or the woman. But two great, strong trees growing too near together chafe and fret each other. In fact, it is on record that two such trees in a high wind chafed their branches together until they set each other on fire. Such results are not utterly unknown in human relations.

Men and Women in the Church

It is stated that in the Congregational Church there are twice as many women as men. In all the churches I have served the proportion is even larger. In two churches there were nearly three times as many women as men, and in another nearly four times as many. I looked carefully over the membership of four churches of which I was pastor and found twenty-five men whose wives were not Christians, and two hundred and thirty-nine wives whose husbands were not Christians. These figures tell their own story.

“Narrow Is the Way”

Our soldiers confined in the famous Libby Prison in Richmond succeeded in digging a small tunnel out under the prison wall, a tunnel so narrow that only by the most abject crawling could men get themselves through it; so narrow that knapsacks, blankets, canteens, and haversacks had to be all left behind; and if a man were unusually large it was necessary to strip off coat and overcoat in order to get through. It is not recorded that any of them complained because they were obliged to leave these things behind; they were glad on any terms to escape from a loathsome prison to the land of home and freedom.

The spiritual way is so narrow that men must strip off all their sins, and when they have done this they will not need so much room. The sinner needs a broad road, the Christian finds a narrow way sufficient. The narrow way was wide enough for Christ, and the disciple is not above his Lord.

The sinner's march along the broad way is like the progress of the days from summer to winter—each day a little shorter and darker, each night a little longer and more dismal, until storms and frost hem us round; while the Christian's march to heaven in the narrow way is like the progress of the days from winter to summer—each day longer, warmer, and more sunny than the last, until the snows begin to melt, and the streams to rush along; until the birds begin to sing, the grasses to spring from the earth, the flowers

to bloom, the trees to take on their beautiful foliage, and we break at last into the fragrance, melody, and glory of summer. The broad way grows narrower and darker; while the narrow way grows broader and brighter till it ends in the freedom and blessedness of heaven. It "shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

Nearsighted and Farsighted Christians

Some persons are nearsighted. They can see only things near at hand. The glories of the heavens above are shut out from their view; the beauties of a distant mountain landscape are not for them. It is a great misfortune.

Other persons are farsighted. For them the poet expressed a great truth when he said:

"'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view,
And robes the mountain in its azure hue."

Things near at hand are unobserved, or obscure, while things far away have a peculiar charm. Ancient and not modern history is their favorite study. Æsop in one of his fables tells of an astronomer who, while walking along one night gazing at the heavens, fell into a well. A neighbor helped him out, but in so doing advised him when studying the stars to keep one eye on the earth.

Both nearsightedness and farsightedness are diseases of the eye, and are great misfortunes. The perfect eye sees objects both near at hand and afar off with distinctness.

Some Christians are nearsighted in spiritual things. They can see the wants of those immediately about them, but are blind to the needs of those across the great water. They have warm hearts for the woes of those living in their own country, but are frigid toward all enterprises in foreign lands. They are ardent advocates of home missions, but will bluntly say that they have no interest in foreign missions.

Other Christians are farsighted. They let people starve on the same street with them, while their eyes stretch across all oceans, and they pray and plan for the salvation of the heathen. Struggling enterprises in their own country appeal to deaf ears, while their hearts melt at every cry for help from across the water.

Both of these conditions are defects of spiritual vision. The perfect Christian sees the needs of men at home and abroad, and subscribes to the greatest sentence that John Wesley uttered—"The world is my parish"—which is only a free translation of Christ's declaration, "The field is the world." Every intelligent Christian ought to aim to be broad enough and large enough every way to take Christ's view of the salvation of men.

Christ's view is the only true view. It has been said that some daring spirit is projecting a flying machine which shall shoot several miles up into the heavens, so as to survey the earth on a large scale in the interests of the weather bureau. We must mount up to heaven in order to get a correct view of earth—

Christ's view. And when we have secured Christ's view we need look no farther, but proceed to carry out his comprehensive plan for the salvation of the world.

Neutrality

In the Atlantic Ocean a conflict is continually going on between opposing streams of warm and cold water. Warm streams flow northward through the ocean carrying warmth and fruits and flowers to all the coasts; while there are counter currents from the north, in the ocean, which bring icebergs and fogs in their tracks.

In human life there are two great currents of thought continually opposing each other; one bringing warmth and life to men, the other desolation and death. Those who think they see some advantage in the advocacy of evil, and those who are sure that right is right, and ought to prevail and will prevail, are contending for the mastery. It is a deadly and an uncompromising conflict. No truce, no armistice, no adjustment, no peace till the right triumphs!

It becomes us to inquire to which great current of thought we contribute our little of influence and power. Are we contributing to lower the moral temperature of the world, or to elevate it? Is our influence arctic or tropical? Is the product of our lives fogs and icebergs, or flowers and fruits?

Who wants to be neutral in such a conflict? He unmans himself who entertains such a wish. A man cannot honorably maintain himself on the fence. It

is not meant to be a permanent place of abode. There is no house on the fence to live in; no chair to sit on; no bed to sleep in. It is not a place of comfort or safety; for there is constant danger of falling off. We can only honorably stay on a fence long enough to climb over from one side to the other—which we have a right to do. And we ought to get over quickly—for it is a suspicious attitude to maintain.

And if we are on the fence we are not neutral, after all, for that very attitude gives aid to the side of evil by withholding our influence from the side of right. Christ knocked all respectability and merit out of neutrality when he said, "He that is not with me is against me."

Let governments proclaim neutrality, if they will, when a strong nation is squeezing the life out of a weak one; but let men take sides in the great conflict that is going on in the world between right and wrong.

Novel-reading

A friend told me that she called at a farmhouse one summer day between four and five o'clock, and found the broom in the middle of the floor, with the dinner dishes on the table still unwashed, while the mistress of the house, in a slatternly dress, was sitting on the floor in a corner, reading a yellow-covered novel. I wish to confess that when about seventeen years old I read the *New York Ledger*, a famous story paper, one entire winter, and the time was worse than wasted. I lived an unreal life, in an unreal atmosphere, among

unreal characters; while I was weary of real life and sadly neglected its duties. I have great reason to be ashamed of that winter.

If a great character and a great life structure are to be erected, the period of youth must be given to something more solid than the ordinary novels that fill up our libraries. I saw in the morning sunlight a grand iceberg floating in mid-ocean. It was a hundred feet high, or more, and seemed like a huge crystal palace. It appeared to be light and airy, and seemed to rest gracefully on the surface of the water; but those who knew best estimated that fully three quarters of the mass of ice was under water, out of sight. It required three fourths, or more, of the whole to be buried out of sight as a foundation on which the other fourth might mount in beauty up into the sky.

It is thus with all grand and massive structures. They seem light and graceful, but they rest on broad and deep foundations. If youth is spent over solid studies, which serve as a substructure, out of sight, we may expect to see arise from such a foundation a noble character and a useful life.

Obedience the Test of Love

It is a very severe test. Whoever pledges absolute obedience will be called upon to do many things that seem to him unreasonable and unnecessary.

Soldiers in the army are routed up to march, without food, in the broiling sun for miles, simply to march back again, for no purpose that is visible to them.

They are placed in the most uncomfortable positions, and left there for hours and days, with apparently no purpose in view. It is do and undo, march up the hill and march down. But obedience is the first duty of a soldier, even though "some one has blundered;" and an army would be a mob without this obedience. The schoolboy concludes that there are many regulations which seem to him to have no meaning but to give him trouble and curtail his enjoyments.

But obedience is a necessary test in any relation where love is the bond that binds persons together. In the relation of friendship there must be compliance, which is only a softened term for obedience. If two persons are friends they must comply with each other's wishes, so far as is at all possible, or the friendship will soon die. Let two friends adopt the practice of saying *no* to every request, and it is safe to say that they will not long be friends. Nothing but a higher law of right and wrong, or an impossibility, or some overwhelming reason must run athwart this law of compliance, or friendship will soon fade away.

This is equally true in the marriage relation. Let husband and wife refuse to yield to each other's preferences, and exhibit a willful, contrary disposition, and a coldness will inevitably grow up between them. A true and happy conjugal love can thrive only on mutual compliance, and regard for each other's wishes.

This law will apply even more in the relation of

parents and children. No parents will long retain the love of their children who say *no* to all their requests, as some parents do. On the other hand, children must not suppose that they are maintaining a proper relation to their parents unless they render them perfect obedience.

Christ directly applies this principle to the love which exists between Saviour and saved. "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."

Old Age Bearing Fruit

A Turkish officer eighty years of age was urged, in the recent war with Greece, to dismount, so as not to draw the enemy's fire upon himself. He replied, "I never dismounted in the Russian war, why should I do so now?" and he rode on to his death. It is not wise for aged Christians to superannuate too soon. The Christian life may be one of progress to the very end. A deeper insight into the things of God, broader knowledge, mightier love, firmer faith, richer benevolence—these are the waymarks that indicate progress in spiritual things.

Omnipresence

A company of soldiers must march up in line to receive their rations one by one. A troop of children will make an attack on a father, climb to his knees, twine their arms about his neck, and all at once rapidly and loudly tell him what they want, until, confused and deafened, he is obliged to say, "Don't all

talk at once, then I can hear what you say." One of our little boys, when told that Solomon had six hundred wives, said that he would not know half of them if he met them on the street. Our love and care can extend to only a few and have any meaning. If we attempt too much it breaks utterly down.

It is one of the wonders of the divine mind that it can distinguish all the millions of earth, of all races and conditions, and not lose sight of the wants of the humblest. God never says to the myriads of his children, "Don't all talk at once," but rather he says to them, "Pray without ceasing;" and in response to the invitation a confused volume of prayer is ever going up to heaven, which would be only a meaningless jargon in human ears. But to the mind of God each prayer is distinct, and full of significance, and brings an unfailing response.

Opportunities Neglected

I heard a man near fifty years of age say that he had lived all his life within twenty miles of Niagara Falls and had never seen them. His only reason was, "O, I live so near I can go any time, and don't need to make a special trip." Thus he had lived a lifetime within a few miles of this great natural curiosity without seeing it, while thousands are crossing oceans and continents to look on this mighty waterfall. Likewise many persons live within less than twenty miles of the kingdom of God and have never entered it. And their only excuse is that they are so near they can

go any time. Every opportunity is thrown aside until the habit of neglect becomes a part of the character.

There is a strange legend respecting the far-famed philosopher's stone which was supposed to have the power to change to gold whatever it touched. This stone was much sought after, as we may well suppose, and the story runs that a certain man received superhuman intelligence that this stone lay somewhere along the seashore within certain limits. Accordingly, he began his journey along the shore, picking up every pebble that seemed to answer the description. He soon found the real stone, he thought, and his heart rose up in his throat, for he possessed the long-sought treasure. He held it up and looked at it, and soon became satisfied that he had made a mistake. With a feeling of petulance he gave the pebble a sling out into the water. And so he went on picking up pebbles along the shore, and when he saw they were not what he was searching for he threw them out into the water, until the habit grew so strong upon him that every stone he took up was impulsively thrown out into the ocean. At last, so the story goes, he actually found the true philosopher's stone—had it in his hand and looked at it—but from mere force of habit he gave it a sling with the rest, and it was buried in the depths of the sea, never more to be found.

So men cast aside one opportunity after another until the habit becomes confirmed, and the pearl of great price is thrown away with the rest.

Oppressing the Poor

I know a minister who raised some money for the poor of his church and left an order of several dollars with a groceryman, telling him to send the very best articles to their homes. The groceryman filled the order with refuse articles that other customers had sent back. This business man failed in his business afterward; but it is a fact that not all men who do such things fail in business, wherever else they may fail.

There is a systematic oppression of the poor in business matters. Business men generally charge more for an article if the customer takes only a little than if he takes a large quantity. The poor man who buys his coal by the pailful pays nearly twice as much for it as the man who buys it by the ton, or the hundred tons. The man who buys his potatoes and apples by the half peck or peck pays nearly twice as much as the man who buys them by the barrel. The man who is least able to pay the highest price is the very man who is compelled to do so by our business methods; and the man who is abundantly able to pay the highest price is not asked to do so.

“And the Lord saw it, and it displeased him.” One of the things that God especially dislikes is the very thing that is universally done in business. “He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want.”

Partiality

I heard a faithful Christian juryman say that he sat in the box with eleven fellow-jurymen in the county court and listened to a certain case on the calendar. A rather mean-looking and meanly-acting man was the plaintiff in a civil suit. He was plainly in the right, and proved his case most clearly; yet, when the jury retired, this juryman found the other eleven unanimously agreed to bring in a verdict against the plaintiff in spite of both law and evidence. Greatly surprised, he began to make inquiries, and found that the plaintiff was a neighbor of these eleven jurymen; that he was held to be a mean creature; that he had cheated them and all the rest of his neighbors out of various sums as he had opportunity, and they were determined to pay him off when they had an opportunity. He was in their power, and, right or wrong, they were going to punish him.

This Christian man appealed to their sense of justice, and won them all over to his way of thinking until they rose above their prejudices and unanimously brought in a verdict in favor of their enemy, because, in that particular case at least, he was clearly in the right.

Yet how few men—even Christian men—do rise entirely above prejudice, and judge righteously between man and man. A thing looks far worse in an enemy than in a friend, and the same evidence will serve to convict the one but not the other. The rea-

sons which lead jurymen to render their verdicts would sometimes disgrace them if made public, and justify the biting words of Pope:

“The hungry judges soon the sentence sign,
And wretches hang that jurymen may dine.”

But Christian men—in fact, all honest men—should rise above all such considerations, and respect neither high nor low, rich nor poor, and spare no pains to render a just verdict when civil duties are put upon them.

One of the most notorious exhibitions of invidious and cruel discrimination is in the case of fallen women. It is almost impossible to induce Christian people to do anything for them; in fact, it is almost impossible to keep Christian people from coldly turning their backs upon them. In an extensive revival in a church of which I was pastor one of the first to take up the Christian life was a woman of ill repute, the fallen daughter of a Methodist local preacher. She was thoroughly saved, as I judged, and exhibited the fact by closing out her place of business and returning to her father's home.

During the meetings she used to sit always in the same seat at the very front in the center of the church. One Sunday morning, after the church had been well filled, a man came in with his wife and son, all three being among the converts. They walked up the aisle in the presence of the congregation straight toward the seat where this woman was sitting, but when they

halted at the end of the seat and saw who was there they deliberately turned away and found a seat elsewhere. Sitting in the pulpit, I observed the transaction, and, sick at heart, I thought there was little encouragement for a pastor to welcome to the cross and to the church the worst of sinners when the members of the church will treat them after that fashion.

Pastoral Work

Pastoral work has its amusing side, as well as its serious side. In some cases the minister must first prove that he is not a tramp, and the most difficult part of the whole transaction is to gain admittance to the houses. He often knocks and rings, again and again, but there is no response. The people are not at home, or they are in the back part of the house and cannot hear, or the only one at home is hard of hearing, or they are not presentable, or they have moved away, or they have been fooled so many times that they will frankly confess they do not respond to the door bell. Occasionally he discovers that they really are at home by some slight noise within, or a gentle movement of the window curtain, but for some reason they do not wish to open the door. The minister, standing on the doorstep in the hot sun of summer, or biting wind of winter, has discovered all this, and it does not tend to elevate pastoral work in his estimation; but he at least learns the meaning of his Master's words, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock."

Sometimes the inmates, in response to his ring, call

through the door, "Who is there?" and he is obliged to explain himself, not only to those within, but to all passers-by as well. Sometimes when he rings the bell a head is thrust out of an upper window, and he must reveal his identity before he is admitted. And during the whole transaction sometimes the house dog inside the door is demanding to know who it is; or the house dog outside the door is snapping at his heels, and all the neighboring dogs from neighboring doorsteps are challenging his entrance.

And then, after spending as much time as he had to spare in getting into the house, he is often obliged to sit fifteen minutes in the parlor waiting for the lady to make an elaborate toilet. If there is ever a time when a pastor does not appreciate fine clothes it is under such circumstances. It is not wonderful that some ministers of peculiar temperament and precarious health decline to do any pastoral work. Let no one suppose that this is a fancy sketch; it is drawn from life.

Nevertheless it is a most profitable kind of work, both for the pastor and his people. Every true pastor has led many to Christ in this way, and has learned how to preach to the common people as he could learn in no other way. To get under everybody's burden will sometimes almost crush him to the earth; but it is the kind of work his Master did while on earth, and what was good enough for him is good enough for his ministers to-day. "The disciple is not above his Master."

Peace Within

Though the storms may lash the surface of the ocean to fury there are depths beneath the surface where the storms are never felt and the waters lie in the profoundest calm. The little nautilus ventures up to the surface of the ocean in pleasant weather, pushes up its tiny membranous sail, and the gentle breezes bear it over the deep blue waters. I have seen it floating on the long undulating waves, reflecting the colors of the rainbow from its little sail, too frail, too puny a thing, it would seem, to voyage over the trackless ocean.

But when a storm arises, and the winds begin to howl over the watery waste, it folds up its little sail, we are told, and sinks down to the calm depths of the ocean, where the power of the storm is never felt and all is quiet.

And so the Christian must live in a world of strife and storm; must meet the hostility of men on the surface of human life; but there are calm depths to which he may sink betimes where the power of earth's storms are never felt and the very peace of God rests on the soul. The Christian lives two lives—the one a surface life, such as other men live; but he lives another life, his real life, below the surface, shut in with God, where “the peace of God that passeth all understanding” quiets his troubled spirit.

“Peculiar People”

The hedgehog is covered with sharp quills pointing outward in every direction, and woe be to the living thing that runs against those quills. The quills are for its enemies. Some men are hedgehogs with their quills turned inward. Busy society, bustling men and women, worldly perplexities, and strange providences brush past them and over them, and they are continually pricked and wounded by their own weapons—stung and annoyed by their own peculiarities. They go through life in a condition of mind which causes them to be jostled, fretted, and made angry by all the experiences they meet. Their quills are for themselves.

I knew many years ago a young foreigner who came to this country with certain national and individual peculiarities not at all in harmony with the manners and customs of the American people. Our ways, habits, and manners of thought and action chafed and nettled him, and ran counter to all his ideas of propriety. Being quite intimate with him, I suggested in a friendly way that if he could recover himself from some of his peculiarities, and get into harmony with our ways and customs, he would get on much more smoothly, and have a pleasanter time among us.

No, no, he said; if people wanted to get on smoothly with him they must conform themselves to his ways and customs.

I mildly asked whether it would be more reasonable for him to change a few of his peculiarities in order to be in harmony with the people among whom he chose to live, or to require this entire nation of many millions of people to change their manners and customs for his convenience and pleasure.

It made no difference, he said; he proposed to be just what he was; the American people were all wrong and must come to his terms. He completely changed his mind in after years, and in some respects outdid the Americans themselves.

Personal Work

I shall not soon forget a little experience. Walking along the dusty highway of a foreign country, I came up with a wagoner who was cursing and belaboring his tired horse. The thought came into my mind, "This is a good time to reprove his profanity and point him to Christ." We were all alone, and there was no danger of interruption. We were going in the same direction and I could walk by his side. I had long before made the resolve to speak a word for Christ whenever opportunity offered, and had many times acted upon that resolve. But I was tired and in no mood to speak to anybody about anything. I was a stranger and a foreigner, and did not understand the ways of the people, and for these reasons excused myself and went on. A feeling of condemnation settled upon my mind which was relieved only by repentance and another resolve to do my duty.

Whenever we are brought face to face with a duty and an opportunity we must not fail. Unsaved men expect Christians to speak to them on the subject of religion, and are disappointed if they do not. I well remember hearing an unconverted man complain bitterly that he had lived by the side of a Christian for ten years, but not one word had ever been spoken to him about his soul's salvation. No worse reproach can fall upon a Christian man.

Pleasures that Are Base

The pleasure god may be high or low, refined or vulgar. It may be an idol decked with jewels, or an ugly image cut from a log of wood. The pleasures which attract may be entirely respectable; but multitudes devote themselves to the pursuit of those which are low and base. Two men were putting some coal into a church one summer day, and one remarked to the other, "If I could be sure of always having all the tobacco and whisky I want all the rest of my life I should be supremely happy." What an amazing spectacle—an immortal soul, created in the image of God, and hastening on to an eternal destiny, living for the pleasures of tobacco and whisky!

But these fires will burn out by and by, and leave nothing but a charred and degraded material body. I saw once an old burned-out iron furnace left to rot down, and thought it a picture of many men with passions burned out, and energies exhausted in the practice of the lowest vices.

Power of God

A man can attend to only one thing at a time and do it well; and not more than two or three things and do them very imperfectly. The business in the Pension Office at Washington is all the time two or three years behindhand. In the Court of Equity in New York State some years ago it was reported that the business was several years behindhand. A man presents his case to such a court and must wait years for a hearing. He might sicken and die and be beyond the reach of help before it would come.

After some of the great battles in the civil war the wounded were huddled together under tents or trees while the surgeons toiled night and day to dress their gaping wounds and save them from death. They aimed to attend to the most needy first; but many a brave fellow had to wait for hours, and even days, while the blood was unstanched and the fever eating up his life, and at last, with his mother's name upon his lips, and perhaps the name of his Saviour, to die without aid, because his physician could attend to only one at a time.

God is not limited, as man is, in his power to render aid to those who are covered with the "wounds and bruises and putrefying sores" of sin. Even an angel, though his wing were the lightning, would be helpless in the presence of such an appalling task, but we have a God who is everywhere present to help and save all the millions of his creatures, and is so little

hurried by the stupendous task that he can say, "Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear."

"Practice Makes Perfect"

Exceptionally fine results can be attained only as the outcome of long training. As I was riding on the New York Central Railroad one day I saw the brakeman light all the five lamps in the car with one match. He had to open the glass case overhead, light four jets, shut the case, go to the next lamp and do the same, shading the match with his hand as he went, and so to the entire five—and all with one match. But he made no false motions; every movement was just right. A man unaccustomed to the business would have used at least five matches. My immediate reflection was, "He has done that before; there is the result of training."

The stone that killed Goliath was not the first one that David had hurled. Constant and persistent practice is the price of skill and rapidity in work; and there is almost no limit to the marvelous results that may be attained.

When Bishop Newman first applied to a Quarterly Conference for license to preach it is said that his oratory was so crude that his application was rejected; but by patient, laborious, painstaking, persistent practice he became one of the greatest and most attractive orators of his generation. And in this experience he was only repeating the toils and protracted discipline

to which Demosthenes subjected himself that he might be the greatest orator of the human race.

It is related that when Edward A. Freeman, the great English historian, was a student in the university he wrote an essay on the Norman Conquest in a prize contest. It was a subject that he had studied a great deal, but another took the prize.

Forty years after he considered it very fortunate that he failed. He said: "Had I got it I might have been tempted to think that I knew all about the matter. As it was, I went on and learned something about it."

A few failures at the beginning may teach us the lesson that life's greatest prizes are won as a result of patient toil and long practice. Failures thus have their uses and may be the making of men. They work both ways, however: depressing and discouraging the weak, but inspiring and spurring the strong to those persistent efforts which are the price of great achievements. And small men have accomplished marvelous things by knowing this secret of success. A man can drill a hole into the granite rock with a basswood drill if he only drills long enough in one place.

Prayer for Others

A little girl four years of age had been instructed by her mother to pray for different persons in the family by name. One day she omitted the name of the servant in the kitchen, and when inquired of made answer that she didn't love her, and didn't want God

to bless her. Her mother told her such a spirit was not right, and persuaded her to include the girl in her prayer. At last she said, "Well, I have asked God to bless her, but I didn't want him to." It may be feared that prayer for others is too often of this sort. The prayer pulls one way and the wish another. I have seen foolish men hitch two teams of horses to opposite ends of a strong chain to see which team was the stronger. Nothing could come of such a test. At most one team could do no more than drag the other a few feet. It is often the case that men's prayers and their lives pull in opposite directions; and in such a case the lives will pull the prayers.

Praying for persons by name is hazardous business. A good sister once prayed very earnestly for a young man at family worship, and he said to her afterward, in a laughing way, that he thought it taking an undue advantage of a man to dress him down where he couldn't say a word for himself.

A member of my official board in a certain church had had some difficulty with a man, and he brought the matter up in the board, asking the advice of the brethren, and promising to do whatever they decided that he ought to do. They talked the matter over, and decided that he should go and pray with the man.

Accordingly, he invited me, as his pastor, to accompany him, and we drove out to the man's house. When we were seated in the parlor the brother who was to do penance told his antagonist in a sentence or two that the official board had sent him out to pray with

him, and dropping on his knees he told the Lord every mean thing this man had ever done, in the plainest terms, and asked that he might be led to see the error of his ways, and brought to a better life. I thought it was, indeed, taking an undue advantage of a man when he could not defend himself. It impressed me as one of the wickedest things I had ever seen done. Instead of adjusting their quarrel, such a proceeding would tend to make it permanent. Such prayer for others cannot bring blessing to them or ourselves, or be pleasing to God. I have seen so much blundering, or worse, in such prayers that I fall into an agony of apprehension whenever I hear anybody praying for people by name.

Prayer in the Family

A man may conceal his defects and failures from the world to a great extent, but his family will surely find them out. No shams can deceive very long in the intimacy of the family circle. The honest opinion of a man's family respecting his religious character is the very highest testimony. This honest opinion is very seldom expressed, however. A kind of loyalty to the head of the family restrains expressions of criticism. The opinion exists, nevertheless, and is making its influence felt on the family. A man's religion is often greatly at a discount among his own children. And family worship is one of the sharpest tests of a religious life. If parents shrink from this duty, or leave it undone through hurry, or indifference, the

children note the fact, and draw their own conclusions. And how common is the neglect of family worship.

I have passed the night many, many times in Christian families, as have doubtless all pastors, where no family worship was held—when I was not asked to conduct prayer. And I sat at the table of one of my members at dinner when he began serving the food without saying grace himself, or asking me to do so. To the credit of the clergy I ought to say that, while I have spent very many nights in the families of ministers, only in two or three cases did they fail to have family prayers.

This subject has seemed to me of greater importance, perhaps, from the fact that my father always had family worship immediately after breakfast. And he took plenty of time to make it a leisurely exercise, quite often reading a chapter and explaining it at considerable length. In the hurrying season of summer on the farm he used to call in several laborers, and occupy from a half to a full hour in reading and explaining the Bible, and in prayer. These men might have been at work in the hayfield; but I am sure he lost nothing, while both he and they were better for the time spent in religious exercises.

Prayer in Public

While prayer should undoubtedly be addressed to God alone, it is yet true that public prayer may be properly modified to suit the audience for whom or

with whom the prayer is offered. But many grave errors may be ruled out at once. It is out of taste to preach sermons, or make orations, or lectures, or exhortations, on our knees with our eyes shut. At the dedication of a church within the bounds of Troy Conference the man who made the dedicatory prayer occupied a half hour in imparting a vast deal of information to somebody. At the ordination of a minister of a certain denomination, when half a dozen men or more were standing in a very cramped position, with their hands on the head of the candidate, the minister who made the prayer kept them standing three quarters of an hour, while he gave somebody a history of ordinations from apostolic times down to date.

A man called at his neighbor's house one morning, and found that he was having family worship, so he remained quietly outside, listening to the prayer. Going in afterward he complimented his neighbor on the excellent prayer he had made. The man replied, "O, I would have prayed far better than that if I had known you were listening."

While the practice of hunting up beautiful phrases for public prayer cannot be commended, yet there is a kind of preparation which ought not to be omitted. Public prayer should follow private meditation and communion with God. We need to get into the mood of prayer before opening our lips in public. We have often heard persons pray in public when five minutes or more were consumed in getting started. Some pumps need priming before they will work properly.

The second pailful can be secured in much less time than the first. It is well to pump the first pailful in private meditation, and let the public have the second.

Prayer in Secret

Prayers in public may reasonably be short, but in secret much time may well be taken before God. It ought not to be a hurried exercise when ample time can possibly be taken. A man calls at his neighbor's door, and says, "I can't stop; I'm in a great hurry; I only called to say that my wife is sick, and would like you to come over if you can." How like this are many of our secret prayers. If we were as polite to God as to our neighbor, and as frank, we would say, "O Lord, I'm in a great hurry; I can't stop; I've only time to say, Take care of me to-day, and keep me from evil, and help me to do right"—and away we go to bed, or to breakfast, or to business.

Our houses ought to be so arranged as to make private prayer a convenience. It cannot be a hurried, interrupted exercise. Time is needed to compose the mind and get it into a praying frame. The harp is out of tune, and must be put in order before it will discourse music that will be grateful to the ear of heaven.

One of the hallowed memories of my childhood is that of having often, by mere accident, found my sainted mother, who died when I was a child, on her knees in the secret place before God; and it was her practice at such times to put her arm around me and

draw me down by her side. She always had a bonnet on her head—heeding the direction of the apostle that a woman should not pray uncovered. This is my most vivid and impressive recollection of a sainted mother.

In these secret devotions we may tell to God what we would shrink from revealing to our nearest earthly friends. A young man, who had been a Christian only a few months, said in prayer meeting: “I have learned to carry everything to God. I have asked him for some strange things since I came to Christ, and he has answered me every time.”

I once heard a Presbyterian minister, in a sermon of wonderful power on the meaning of afflictions, advise his people, when they could not be reconciled to their sorrows, to tell God frankly just how they felt about it. And for himself he said he had told God many things which might have caused the Assembly to reject him, and the Session to ask him to resign, if they had been known.

Preparation for Great Things

We must get ready for large results. They are most likely to come to those who are ready for them. The great inventors were generally looking for the things they found. Those who discover new planets and comets are they who sit long nights at the little end of the telescope.

We have not forgotten the long years that were employed in getting ready for the great explosion that

deepened the channel of the East River at New York. General Newton stored explosives in caverns at the bottom of the river, year after year, until the people almost forgot that he was at work there. But when all was ready his little girl with her tiny finger could press the button and blow the river bottom into fragments. He was simply storing up divine power for great results, and when all was ready the results followed.

We have plenty of small explosions. The Fourth of July is made boisterous by them. Cannon are fired and rocks are blasted every day. But here was something immense. This was the great explosion of the century; and it followed long years of preparation. May we not prepare ourselves to do God's greatest work, and see what will come of it? God chooses competent men for his great work; and the most available competency is a thorough preparation. The man who is ready generally gets the job.

Pride

Riding one day with two bright boys through a section of country where an extensive crop of rye was ripening, one of the boys remarked that the rye was very poor that year and not well filled. The other boy asked how he knew it was not well filled. "O," he said, "you can tell that by the heads standing up so straight." I looked, and, sure enough, fully three fourths of the heads pointed proudly up to the sky and waved majestically in the wind. They presented

a much finer appearance for standing up so straight—but they were empty.

In looking over a harvest field of men and women perhaps we can detect the empty heads in the same way. A man or woman who sweeps grandly along with an expression of supercilious contempt, disdain-ing to glance at the toiling throng, is not a person of very great consequence. A person too proud to notice or speak to the humblest of God's children is greatly lacking in brains and sense. The greatest men of earth have generally had the least pride. I knew a young man who wanted to change places with his class leader before he had been converted a year.

Mount Skiddaw, in the north of England, is surrounded by most charming scenery. There are beautiful lakes, rolling hills, quiet villages, and neat cottages as far as the eye can reach. As I ascended the base of the mountain all these spread themselves out before me and the rising sun shed a glory over them. It was a scene never to be forgotten. Going up still higher, I soon came among the dark clouds that were sweeping across the mountain top. Vegetation ceased, and there was only a verdureless waste of broken rocks; darkness closed around and the golden sunlight and golden valley were shut out from view; cold, damp, driving mists almost blinded the eyes, and it was only possible to grope along amid rubbish and desolation. I put a stone on the cairn, as others had done, and had merely the satisfaction of having reached the summit.

This was the mountain top, and I thought it a picture of the cold, desolate heights to which ambitious pride has lifted men to freeze and perish in their isolation. All this time the valley was resting beneath in the sunlight with its grains and fruits and flowers, a picture of the valley of humility, where the Christian finds sunlight and warmth and fruitfulness.

Probabilities

The following was given as a true story by the journals of the time. At Buffalo, New York, one beautiful day in the fall of 1871 the weather observer got orders from Washington to run up the danger signal. The warning caused a smile on the faces of many, for it was a most charming day, with no wind and not a cloud in the sky, except a very small one over on the Canada shore. The lake captains generally thought that "Old Probs" had missed it this time; but the greater part of them were prudent men, and did not venture out on the lake that night. A few, however, felt sure there could be no storm after such a charming day, and they put out from the harbor. During the night one of the most terrible storms on record swept over the Great Lakes, and every vessel that went out was wrecked, and all their crews drowned.

The Bible has hoisted a danger signal. It has given us not only the "probabilities," but the certainties, of a course of sin. But the sky is so clear, the sun shines so brightly, sin is so pleasant, its paths are so flowery,

that men disregard the warnings, and only find out when it is too late that the Bible has told them the solemn truth.

Procrastination

I was sent for to see a man who was fatally sick. He and his wife were not members of the church, but an adopted daughter was. They had a seat in church and attended quite regularly. He was in church the Sunday before he died. When I saw him he was in a stupor; and by the physician's orders they were trying to keep him awake. They had succeeded in partially arousing him, and his wife said, "The minister has come to see you." This seemed to arouse him fully, and he said: "So you think I am going to die. After the life I have lived I don't think it is right to send for a minister at the last hour." These were his last words. He extended his hand, which I took, and he soon relapsed into unconsciousness. He was considered by all who knew him as an estimable man, but made no profession of religion, considering that it was not necessary. It is not easy to decide whether his last remark indicated that he had lived a correct life and did not need the services of a minister in his dying hour, or was an admission that his life had not been right but that it was too late to mend matters. In either case it was too late to make any change.

A woman forty years of age, to whom I preached for several years, when she came to church, which was not often, deliberately said that "she didn't want to be pious any longer than she was obliged to; she wanted

to be comfortably wicked as long as she could, and then fix it up at last." She was taken with a fatal illness when about fifty years old, and how far she "fixed it up" she gave her friends no means of knowing.

Profession of Religion

A profession of religion lifts a man up before the public, and draws attention to him. He may have been comparatively unobserved before, but now people begin to look at him, watch him, criticise him, and see if he measures up in his life to the profession he makes. A profession of religion quadruples a man's influence for either good or evil. If a man puts out a sign as a lawyer, or a physician, people expect more of him than of ordinary men. He must make good his claim to know something of law or medicine. And if a man puts up a sign as a Christian, people expect him to be a Christian. He must be better than he was before, and better than other men who have not put up such a sign.

Punishment Hereafter

The papers are filled with accounts that stir the soul to cry aloud for justice. One newspaper heading was "A Monster Unhanged;" and this was the story: A brutal father sent out his five-year-old boy to steal wood, and, because he could not find any, dragged him from his bed and whipped him unmercifully. The next day he tied his hands behind his back; the following he tied him hand and foot and left him lying

under a table; the third day he tumbled him into a garret to lie all night in the cold on the floor. The next day he gave the child another whipping, until his body was a mass of bruises, the skin in places torn from the flesh, and he unable to stand erect. On his trial, when asked if he were not sorry he had treated the boy so, the cruel monster replied, "No; he has the spirit of his mother in him, and I'll take it out." Does anyone think that six months in a comfortable county jail is adequate punishment for such a wretch as this?

In a city where I preached the Gospel for several years a man whose wife was dying of consumption deliberately attempted to starve her to death, and as the event dragged on too slowly to please him he kicked, thrashed, and abused her, declaring he should feed her no longer—she had cost him enough already. Human law could merely step in and put him under bonds to abuse her no more and give her a comfortable support.

In one of our large cities a young man of large wealth and high social position ruined a poor girl, and when she came back with her child to his door in a starving condition he spurned her away, and returned to banquet with his friends, while she wandered out of the city into the woods with her little one to perish with cold and hunger. They found them there, mother and child, locked in each other's arms, and cold in death; and then they thought of him in his fine mansion, drinking wine with the fashionable people of the city. There were some who considered how

little our laws can do to right such a wrong as this, and they raised their hands to heaven and asked, "Is there a God anywhere who sees all this, and will do justice by and by—sometime, if not now?" If there is no punishment hereafter the moral government of the world is a farce.

Reading

Take two men of business. The one is a student. He has been occupied with business cares all the day. When night comes he sits down in his comfortable home, takes a book from his library, and spends the evening in the pursuit of knowledge. Perhaps the historian guides his footsteps down through the ages of the past, and he cons the lessons of God's guiding providence in the history of nations; or he may range the fields of poetry and gather the rarest flowers of human thought to beautify his own life; or it may be that the devout astronomer carries him among the stars reverently to read the evidences of God's creative power; better still, he may give the evening to that grandest of books, the Bible, where he may acquaint himself with God's revealed will; his family may join him in these studies, and the household retires to rest refreshed in spirit by the hours spent in study.

The other man is not a student. He goes with his family to the theater. Until late in the evening they are entertained and excited by unreal exhibitions of human passion, possibly of human goodness, but far more likely of human folly and crime; the mind

receiving a dangerous stimulant, rather than natural food. Can anyone question which man has received the higher rational enjoyment and profit?

If no others but the evening hours can be given to reading, though the days must be devoted to the stern task of breadwinning, yet a vast amount of solid satisfaction and a vast store of knowledge will be the result.

Ready for Heaven

An aged saint of God was told that he had an affection of the heart that might carry him away from earth at any moment, and he replied, "Thank the Lord, my trunk is packed." It is told of the noble old Roman, Cato, that when he was far advanced in years, almost on the edge of the grave, he began the study of the Greek language. Some one asked him why at such an advanced age he should undertake to learn so complicated and difficult a language. His reply was: "I understand that the Greek language is very rich and copious, and well adapted to the uses of conversation; and furthermore I understand that it is the language in which the gods converse, and when I go into the other world I wish to be able to converse with the gods in their own language."

It is well to reflect that heaven has its language, and if we make ourselves understood there we must learn that language. Whether the Greek, or the Hebrew, or the English language be used there is a matter of little consequence; but we are sure it is the language of love and worship, the language of prayer and

praise, a language full of Christ and his atoning work, and we must learn that language before we get there.

Red Like Crimson

The heavenly Alchemist is not limited in his skill, but though our spirits be stained to the utmost he can bleach them to heaven's own whiteness. No stain is deeper and more permanent than crimson, no whiteness is purer and more perfect than that of the crystal-line snow. The blackest sinner may become the whitest saint. The history of the Church has shown more than once that the result does not at all depend on the degree of pollution.

The housewife lays out a washing. Some of the garments are very much soiled, others not so badly, and still others seem hardly soiled at all; but her keen eye detects that all need washing; and if the work be thoroughly done you cannot tell, as you look at the shining garments, which were most soiled in the beginning.

And when God has cleansed a number of human souls they are all alike pure and white, and it will never be asked, "Which was originally the worst sinner?" Paul claimed preeminence as a sinner, but he also attained preeminence as a saint.

Reformation

Reformation is but an external thing, while the real difficulty with man is internal. To try to reform the life while the heart is unchanged is like turning

the hands of your watch every day to make it conform to the true time, while the works within are deranged. It is not impossible to lop off one sin after another, but a sad experience has taught us that it avails very little.

If one stalk of a geranium plant has grown too long for the others you can cut it off, and reduce the plant to a proper shape, and flatter yourself that it will remain so. But in a little time two or three new stalks will start out around the blackened stump, and they will grow faster and longer than before.

Reform may be illustrated by a plant that has been taken out of the ground. It very soon wilts, and the leaves and branches hang helplessly downward. But you may prop up the branches of this drooping plant—put a stick under each one and make them stand up straight. You may even sprinkle water upon it, and give it a temporary freshness, but it will die in spite of all your efforts. This is salvation by human effort.

You can take the same plant and set it back into the ground again, let its roots take hold of the strength of the soil and the sap course up through its fibers, and nature will renew the life of the drooping plant. This is God's method of salvation. The one is help from without, the other from within.

When our little girl was nearly four years old she had been very naughty, and had given her mother a great deal of trouble one day. When she was going to bed at night her mother prayed with her, and asked

God to give her a new heart—a good heart—so that she could do right and be a good girl. When the prayer was ended she faced her mother with a determined attitude, and said, “I’m going to be good all day to-morrow, and with a naughty heart too; I don’t want a new heart; I’m going to be good with a naughty heart;” and pointing with her finger at her mother she added, “Now you see if I don’t.” It is needless to say that she got into as much mischief as usual the next day.

Alas! this is not confined to childhood. Men are everywhere saying, “I don’t want a new heart; I’m going to be good with the heart I have,” and, like the child, they are failing. They attempt to reform the life while the heart is unchanged. They try to regenerate society while the men who make up society are unchanged. By theories of government, by education, a science of morals, temperance reform and anti-swearing societies they try to save men from their sins, while the moral nature, the fountain of evil within, remains unchanged. They are trying to kill a deadly plant by picking a leaf off here and there, when it needs to be dug up root and branch.

Reform Within the Church

The Church of God has not only carried on a fierce contest with the world, but it has been obliged to contend with evils at home. It has been rent with civil war, and has been obliged to put down rebels within its own borders. And there can be no doubt that the

Church is all the better for these struggles. Like the chrysalis of the caterpillar, the Church has burst the trammels of error only to rise to a higher life and put on more beautiful garments. Naturalists tell us that the transition from chrysalis to butterfly is one of great labor and pain. The caterpillar, a thing that crawls on the ground, can only become winged, and clothed with power to rise up into the air of heaven, by passing through the most painful struggles for a period of time.

Transition states in the Church have likewise been accompanied with great labor and commotion. Reforms are not generally effected in the midst of external quiet. There are agitation and pain. But pain is not the worst thing. It merely indicates that we are not wholly given over to disease. When the body is in pain we know that something is wrong, and that nature is struggling to right that wrong. The same is true in spiritual things. The absence of pain may be a most dangerous symptom. It may indicate that the Church has given up the contest with evil, and made peace with the enemies of truth and righteousness. When the Church consents to be a corrupt institution the salt has lost its savor and must be cast out.

Regeneration

Reformation is not the name for it. The struggles of the enslaved will against the enemies of the soul are but the beatings of a bird against the bars of its cage; we cannot escape from our bondage.

I knew a drunkard who came to the penitents' altar with the conviction that he was strong enough to overcome his besetting sin. He commenced the religious life under the impression that he was to deliver himself from sin; and in a few weeks he was walking in his old ways.

If a cask is full of water and we want it full of air we must turn the faucet and draw off the water and the air will come in and fill the cask. And so many persons think they must draw off their sins and then God will come in and fill their souls. But if a cask is full of air and we want to fill it with water it isn't necessary to turn the faucet and draw off the air, and it cannot be done; we may pour in the water, and the water will drive out the air; water is denser than air and will make room for itself. This is the divine method of salvation. Just let God come sweeping into human nature, and he will drive out our sins and make room for himself. Sin never leaves our souls any faster than God comes in to drive it out and take its place.

This divine regeneration is the very essence of Gospel salvation. It is a necessity. "Ye must be born again." I heard of a man who went into the forest to chop wood, and when he got to the tree he wished to cut down he looked about and found that he had left his ax at home—the very and only thing he needed. And we may safely conclude that many a man will knock at heaven's gate and find that he has left the really essential thing behind him.

And if God does the work of salvation we need not split hairs over the more or less of sin. It matters little how desperate is the condition of the human soul. If a man takes a broken-down machine to a mechanic for repairs he may say, "I can make a new one, but I can't mend this; it's too far gone." God never says this. He has made saints out of the worst of sinners.

Religion Brings Peace

People seem to expect that a Christian will be a man of peace. A young man of petulant disposition took up the Christian life, and almost the first remark he made to me was, "My wife will have a pleasanter time after this." Another man, who had quarreled with his neighbors, and cheated them, was soundly converted to Christ, and he spent several days going about among them paying his debts and settling his quarrels. The result was a Christian that everybody believed in. While a very wicked man before, he became an earnest, useful Christian man, whose praise was on every tongue. And I have authentic information respecting another man, who, after his conversion, traveled to the far West for the purpose of hunting up a man with whom he had quarreled, that he might be reconciled. Such acts speak louder than any verbal testimonies. There can be no doubt that if the Gospel of Christ can be allowed to produce its natural results in the hearts of men it will bring "peace on earth," as the angels announced at the birth of Christ.

If a man who professes to be a Christian is sour-hearted and quarrelsome, the most charitable thing that can be said about him is that Gospel grace has been allowed to do only a part of the gracious work which it was designed and is abundantly able to do. He stands in need of a further work as speedily as possible.

Religion that Speaks for Itself

A young man was converted, and his mother said to me, "I knew that a change had taken place from his manner, before he said a word about it." That is a choice variety of religious experience which tells its own story in a better temper, cleaner phraseology, and more careful living. The world will have little confidence in a man's piety when no one but himself finds out that he has any. More than once people have asked me if such and such a man was a member of my church. They had lived beside him for years and seen no evidence of piety, but had heard that he was a member of a Christian church, and wished to have the matter settled.

The Methodist Episcopal Church believes in a call to preach; and the church must hear the call as well as the candidate. If a man thinks he has a call to preach, and the church sees no evidence of his fitness, it will judge that the man was mistaken, and refuse him a license. There must be two witnesses, one to the candidate and another to the church.

In theory this same rule applies to laymen who apply for admission to the church. As the candidate

for admission stands before the altar, the whole church is asked to say whether there is any good reason why the man should not be received into Christ's church. I have never known, however, an objection to be raised even when many have been received who gave no evidence of spiritual life. Practically this arrangement amounts to very little, for people would shrink from rising in the church to make objections, even if they knew of valid objections; and no doubt all pastors, after receiving a large number into the church, have heard things about some of them which would have debarred them if made known before their reception. A double witness should be insisted on for every candidate who applies for admission to the church.

Religious Life

A man's religious life may be compared to the course of a great river. It has a small beginning, in some little spring or marshy tract at the foot of a mountain. The stream is very feeble, winding about in every direction, as though it hardly knew where to go; easily turned from its course by every stone or log that lies in its way; its waters often very muddy and turbulent, taking a hue and flavor from the earth through which it flows; now creeping lazily through some low meadow lands, apparently making no progress, and again dashing down some decline, and over ledges of rocks with rush and roar, and then suddenly losing itself in some dark forest of tangled vines and bushes, from which it emerges with a darker color,

but a stronger and steadier flow ; anon it is reinforced by other streams that flow into it, and it begins to wear a deeper, wider channel in the earth ; it is not easily turned from its course now, but sweeps over obstacles with ease, plows its way through the hardest soil, even cutting through solid rock that it may pursue its course ; its channel becomes straighter, its flow stronger and steadier, its volume of water resistless, until at length it sweeps grandly out into the mighty ocean.

Thus the great Mississippi takes its rise in a little lake in the wooded regions of northern Minnesota, twisting and turning a thousand times, until, fed by numberless tributaries, it sweeps out into the Gulf of Mexico.

Thus the Congo, which Stanley traced through its long course, has its beginnings on the lofty plateau of Central Africa, and after compassing nearly the whole Dark Continent in its windings, with a most astonishing volume of water, plunges down the western slopes into the broad Atlantic.

The Amazon has but a feeble beginning on the sloping sides of the Andes Mountains, but after a winding course of four thousand miles, it straightens itself in its broad channel, and sweeps into the ocean through a mouth nearly one hundred miles wide.

And a man's religious life is usually a thing of small beginnings and slow growth. At the outset he comes trembling and halting to the foot of the cross. He hardly knows whether Christ can save or not.

And when the light at length breaks upon him it is often faint and uncertain. He goes sometimes faster, sometimes slower, often turned aside, and making many windings; but as he proceeds each year tends to wear the channel deeper and broader; the current of his life sets more strongly Godward and heavenward; doubts are dispelled, and certainties accumulate; the channel of his life straightens; there is less of halting and wandering; the flow becomes even, steady, and majestic; obstacles are overborne, obstructions are worn away, and, in the face of all the hindrances that tend to check his progress, he sweeps grandly on to his eternal destiny.

Luther had his time of weakness and uncertainty at the beginning of his career, but he grew strong and firm and steady as he knew more of Christ's power to save. Wesley had his period of doubt and vacillation, but he left it far behind, and preached a full salvation, in full assurance of faith, and preached from the depths of his own experience.

There is no grander sight than an aged Christian who has passed the period of doubt and uncertainty and is ready, with full assurance, to sweep into eternity as a great river sweeps into the sea.

Reputation

One has said that a man's reputation is a shadow, which sometimes precedes him, sometimes follows him, is sometimes longer and sometimes shorter than he is. The shadow may be longer than the man at

morning and evening, and shorter at midday, but taking the whole day together the man and his reputation do each other no great injustice.

I knew a man who earned the reputation of being the meanest man in town. In court his neighbors, under oath, gave that as their opinion of him. This was his reputation. I asked a man once, about another whose services I needed: "Can he be depended upon? Will he certainly do what he undertakes?" "O yes," he said; "if he promises to be there you need give yourself no further trouble; he will attend to it without fail." This was the man's reputation; and I had heard as much before.

A member of a Christian church used to complain in prayer meeting that his neighbors thought him dishonest, and refused to trust him. It came to light afterward that he was dishonest. His reputation did him no injustice.

If a man is honest and true he will not need to defend his reputation; his character will take care of his reputation. It does not pay to throw stones at every dog that barks at you. You will probably lame your shoulder and not hit the dog after all. For three whole years I threw stones at dogs that annoyed me and destroyed my flower beds, and in all that time I hit only one dog, and that was so small an animal that I was ashamed of myself for doing it, while I missed many huge mastiffs which trotted away without harm.

Resisting God

Men resist God's gracious influences, and the longer they resist the greater their power of resistance becomes. And they can resist all the influences which God ever employs. God might compel men, to be sure; but he does not choose to compel them.

I have seen a man take hold of the handles of a small galvanic battery, and the first passage of the electric current made him twist and writhe like a wounded snake. He was almost ready to cry, "Enough." But he was a man of resolute will and steady nerve; and he held on while the current was increased little by little, until at length he could withstand the full power of the machine, and smile at those of us who cried, "Enough."

So men resist God, and grow strong by resisting, until they can withstand all the influences he ever brings to bear on intellect and feelings. They take hold of God by these two handles, the intellect and sensibility, and down through these channels he pours all of heaven's saving influences upon them, and they resist them all and go on in the ways of sin. It is a dreadful fact for the human mind to contemplate, that we are able to resist God and defeat all his benevolent purposes concerning us.

I have known two men who boasted of the number of revival meetings they had passed through without yielding to God. When the disciples of Christ were exhorting and urging them to become Christians they

smiled in their faces, and said, "We've seen it hotter than this." One of the men who said this lived about twenty years after, and then died without Christ. The other I have not been able to keep account of.

Resurrection from the Dead

There are some things in nature which prepare us for this doctrine. The tree shoots out its leaves in the springtime; they grow to full size, then turn yellow, wither, and fall off in the autumn. If we had not seen it take place we should never dream that the tree would leaf out again.

A bulb placed in the earth shoots out leaves and a blossom in the spring. We admire its beauty, but soon the flower fades. We comfort ourselves with the reflection, "The blossom is gone, to be sure, but the leaves yet remain; the plant is still alive." But before midsummer the leaves too have disappeared, and nothing of the once beautiful flower is visible; there is no sign of life for many months. Did we not know its history we should conclude that the charming plant had run its career, and disappeared from the realm of life.

Who that for the first time saw the sun sink in the west, and the darkness of night come on, would ever divine that there could be a sunrise and a glorious morning?

If a being from another sphere, who had never met our experiences, nor anything like them, should come to earth in midsummer, and see the days little by little

grow shorter and the nights longer, the heat gradually decline and the cold increase, he would inevitably conclude that the future had nothing in store but eternal darkness and frost.

A celestial being, who for countless ages has observed the larger operations of God's universe, may look for the resurrection day with no more anxiety than a child of earth watches for the morning, or the coming of spring.

Riches

I knew a prominent judge who, when a young man, deliberately said that he preferred riches to Christ. I knew him when he was nearly eighty years of age. He had riches and honors, and enjoyed the respect of his fellow-citizens, but he had no Christ. I gathered these facts respecting his early choice from a source which was considered trustworthy.

A very rich man used occasionally to attend the church of which I was pastor. In a conversation he frankly explained to me why he did not come oftener. He said it was perfect slavery for him to sit cooped up in a seat for an hour, and he became so restless that he could hardly endure it. He wanted to move about, and it suited him much better to go out into his stables and pat his fine horses, and hitch up a fast team for a drive.

I tried to tell him that if his heart was renewed by divine grace it would produce such a change that he would prefer the church to his stables on Sunday; but apparently no impression was made, for twenty years

later his riches had largely increased, but the church was abandoned altogether.

Ripening Christians

It takes a whole season to ripen fruit. There is first the blossom, which may be compared to conversion. It is very beautiful, but it is not fruit. Then the blossom blows off; the first flush of enthusiasm is gone, and the careless observer says, "There goes another Christian."

But there is something left—the little beginning of the fruit. It grows very slowly, and at midsummer we look again, and say, "Sure enough, there is fruit, after all." We taste it, perhaps, but it is flat, and sour, and bitter. We are tempted to curl up the face, dash the fruit on a stone, and call it worthless; but that would be a great mistake. Let it alone; God has his purpose in it. Let the sunlight fall upon it a while longer; let the breezes kiss it for a few more weeks; there is luscious fruit there if we will only wait and be patient.

And you have no doubt observed that it is the last few weeks, when the rich haze of autumn begins to come, that put the delicate blush on the peach, and give the exquisite flavor to the apple.

And who has not seen Christians ripen after just this fashion? A little sour, and flat for many long years—disappointing the hopes of those who were looking for perfect fruit—and ripening very rapidly as the haze of the other world gathered about them.

Risking the Soul

A soldier was stationed as sentinel on a fortification at the most important point, at the midnight hour. This fortification was the key to his country. An attack was expected; the enemy was known to be not far away; in an important sense everything depended on his vigilance—his own life, the safety of the fortification, and the safety of his country. For a time he paced up and down with a watchful eye, doing a soldier's full duty. It was a warm summer night, and after a time he began to be thirsty. There was a spring of cold water not far away in the rear and he was tempted to leave his post long enough to get a drink. He knew it was dangerous to leave his post for even a moment, so he banished the thought.

But the thirst increased, the temptation grew strong, and at length he began to reason with himself: "The spring is only a short distance away; I shall be gone only a moment; the chances are not one in ten thousand that the enemy will come at just the instant I am gone; I'll run the risk, and relieve my thirst." Just then he heard a noise in the distance, and he hesitated, peering into the darkness and listening intently for any further sound. There was nothing but profound stillness, and with the thought, "I'll be back in a moment," he hurried away to the spring.

Strange as it may seem, the enemy did come at just that moment; the fortification was captured, and he fell pierced with bayonets. As the lifeblood was flow-

ing from his many wounds he reflected: "How strange that they should come at just the moment I was gone! This is the result of one moment's carelessness; I've lost my life by taking one risk in ten thousand."

Many a man has trifled his soul away in just this manner. We are dealing with an enemy who watches for our moments of weakness, and takes advantage of every risk we run.

An oriental legend reads:

"A thousand years a poor man watched
Before the gate of Paradise;
But while one little nap he snatched,
It oped and shut. Ah! was he wise?"

Salvation for All

During our civil war a sergeant opened a recruiting station, and it soon became apparent that, while few of the citizens of standing enlisted, the ranks were filling up with the worst men in town. Some entire regiments were made up of this class of persons. It would not be fair to say that the sergeant chose these persons and preferred them for army service. They came, and he was glad enough to receive them. If they were bad men it was his purpose to transform them into good soldiers.

So Christ offered salvation to all men; the publicans and harlots came in large numbers; much was forgiven, they loved much, and became his substantial followers. He likewise offered his salvation to

the most respectable and moral, but large numbers of this class in all ages have chosen rather to reject it. It has come to pass that more time has been needed to convince many men that they are sinners than to persuade them to accept of Christ.

Salvation from Sin

The greatest question is not how to till the soil, or carry on manufactures; the greatest question is not tariff, or commerce, or money-making; the greatest question is not the construction of constitutions and laws for states and governments; the greatest question is not how to gather vast stores of knowledge, how to rob the earth of its treasures, how to compel the stars to give up their secrets, how to fathom the deep depths of philosophy.

O how helpless is human philosophy in the presence of the ravages of evil! It is but a barricade of rushes to keep out the roaring lion seeking whom he may devour; it is but a dike of straw to stop the ocean's resistless tide.

The autobiography of Solomon Maimon, a Polish Jew, who lived in the middle of the eighteenth century, has been translated and published in this country. He mastered the whole range of ancient and modern philosophy, wrote a large number of philosophical works, and was one of the most learned men of his age. But he neglected and failed to provide for his family, and pursued his studies in the midst of poverty, filth, and quarreling. At length he forsook

his family altogether, was legally separated from his wife, and became a veritable philosophical tramp. What little money came into his hands was spent in beastly drunkenness and filth, and at last he died, in the year 1800, in extreme poverty and wretchedness, a most glaring illustration of the utter helplessness of human learning as a cure for the moral ailments of human nature. In this man the lofty speculations of philosophy and the lowest depths of moral depravity dwelt side by side.

The greatest problem of human history is the salvation from sin which the Bible tells so much about. And the Gospel of Christ undertakes to solve this problem as no other gospel has done or can do.

Salvation Is of God

The delicate and complicated human spirit was made by a heavenly artist, and there is not a machinist on earth who can repair it when it gets out of order; it must be taken back to its divine Maker for repair.

Human skill is very great. These are days of marvelous invention. Men can repair old houses and make them look as well as new; they can repair wagons, sleighs, and mowing machines; they can mend the most intricate machinery in our mills and factories; they can even make anew a crushed and broken human body. The operations of modern surgery are simply marvelous. The blind are made to see, and the deaf to hear; missing bones are supplied, and crooked ones straightened; diseased brains and intestines are

removed, and no part of the body seems beyond the reach of human skill.

But man has discovered no surgery for the diseased human spirit. He may control physics, but not metaphysics. There is not a machine shop on earth to repair a seared conscience, or a demoralized will, or a polluted imagination. Does anybody know of any manufacturing establishment on earth that makes new wills for those who have ruined the ones God gave them, or new consciences for those who have polluted the ones they originally possessed? This is God's work, and not man's.

Sanctification of Human Nature

We cannot say just what effect sin produced on the human spirit; just what the disorder consists of; nor can we tell just what it is necessary for God to do in order to make a fallen spirit right again.

If a wagon breaks down we can look at it and see what the matter is; and we can say to the mechanic: "This wheel needs making over," "This axle needs straightening," or "This tire needs setting."

But the spirit of man is an invisible thing; and our knowledge of mental science is not sufficient to enable us to say just how sin has affected its powers and faculties, and just where the great Creator must put his hand to restore it to soundness again. Very likely all attempts to unearth the philosophy of regeneration will meet with failure; and all theories respecting the mode of sanctification will only surround the problem

with darkness. Perhaps it is nothing short of presumption for sinful men to undertake to tell the Almighty just how he shall save a sinful soul. It is very likely that he knows more about it than we do.

All we can safely do is to take the teaching of Scripture, that sin has deranged human nature, that it has filled the human mind with evil thoughts, with low and base motives, with wicked purposes and desires, which find their expression in equally wicked actions; and that God who made the human spirit in the beginning can restore man to spiritual soundness again.

And Christian experience attests the fact that when God has done this great work the evil thoughts fly away like a flock of frightened birds; the desires become pure and benevolent; the motives which are the very springs of action are made holy; all bitterness, and hatred, and selfishness, and meanness are driven from the heart; and the renewed man realizes the apostle's statement, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

Secret Sin

When a man supposes his wicked acts are all under cover he views them with the utmost composure. Indulging the thought that his evil desires, plans, and purposes are all unknown, with smiling face he will fold his hands over a breast as black as midnight and as loathsome as a dungeon. Many a man has lived in luxury and composure for years together on the fruits

of his stealing, without a thought of repentance or restitution while it was all unknown; but when discovery came, when the light was turned on, he has broken down in anguish and shame, and ended his days by suicide.

We can hardly doubt that if the secret sins of any community were exposed to the broad sunlight, some fine morning, many persons would kill themselves before night, and many more would leave town by the first train, never to return. It is no doubt a wise arrangement that our fellow-men cannot know all the secret sins of our lives.

Two things, however, are certain: We know them ourselves—and the remembrance often makes us hang our heads with shame—and God knows them. We stand face to face with One who can tell us all things that ever we did.

I preached to a man for three years who looked me unflinchingly in the face every Sunday, while I talked about defaulters and dishonest practices, and it afterward came to light that he was stealing all these years.

Seed-sowing

In the autumn time we may see stalks of grain still standing, from the heads of which the grain has fallen out, and a little green patch about the stalks will show that the kernels have again sprouted for another crop. Such stalks are emblems of Christians who have grown old in the service, and live to see a good crop springing up from their own sowing. It is the joy

of their old age that they can see their children and neighbors continuing the good work that they have loved.

Thistles likewise ripen early, and the winds carry their seeds far and wide, which spring up for a new crop while the old stalks still wave defiantly in the wind. Such are old worn-out sinners who live to see others following their example and doing evil because they have done evil. An old man of my acquaintance was a notorious drunkard all his mature years, and he lived to stand with three of his sons before the bar of a county tavern so drunk that they held on to each other to keep from falling.

Seizing Opportunities

The newspapers give an incident which has a lesson for men in spiritual things.

The Duke of Marlborough, with his prospective American bride and some friends, was strolling at Newport past the tent of a photographer, and the duke asked him if he thought he could take the group. The photographer replied that he took groups only at his rooms, some distance away. He had his little rule in this matter and did not wish to vary from it, so the party walked on. Many people tie themselves up by foolish rules, and cannot take advantage of opportunities.

A moment later a friend said to him, "You missed a splendid opportunity; that was the Duke of Marlborough." The photographer discovered when it was

too late that he had missed an opportunity that might have been a small fortune to him.

In higher, spiritual matters men fall into the habit of letting opportunities go by until at last there are no more opportunities. Some one has wisely and wittily said, "The people most in danger of going to hell are those who expect to start for heaven to-morrow." I once heard a layman say in a public meeting, "Perhaps some of you are planning to do something by and by; but the future is greatly overworked already." We are planning to do many things by and by that will never be done, because we let all opportunities slip by. When Christ knocks let us hasten to the door.

Service the Test of Greatness

The sun does not draw in light and heat to itself from the surrounding universe. It stands uncovered in the heavens and ceaselessly gives out floods of light and warmth for millions of miles around; and so many volumes of poetry have been written in praise of the sun.

Let me give two illustrations which came under my own observation. A wealthy and very generous Christian man died in a certain city, and as his body was borne to its last resting place the streets were lined with poor people who came from the alleys and workshops to do him honor. Dirty handkerchiefs wiped many a tear from dirty faces, as one after another said, "I have lost a friend."

I was compelled to attend the funeral of another

wealthy man, a member of a Christian church in a neighboring city, and was mortified to hear on every hand the expression, "He was the smallest, meanest man in the city;" and they brought facts to prove it.

Both men had had the same opportunity to show what they would do with wealth; the one was voted great and good, the other small and mean.

Sick-bed Repentance

As a pastor I have had a very discouraging experience with sick-bed repentance.

A young man of Christian parents was brought to the very verge of death by a severe accident, and fearing he might die he made a profession of religion, was baptized, and received into the church on probation. Slowly he recovered, and as slowly his religious experience faded away and his promises were forgotten.

I visited another under very similar circumstances. A dangerous wound brought him near to death, and after repeated conversations he professed to believe on Christ, and was anxious to get well that he might come to church and make a public profession of his faith. But he never came. It was all forgotten when health returned.

Still another young man I was called to visit in dangerous sickness. Greatly alarmed about himself, he spent his time in earnest prayer, planned a complete revolution of his life, was even going into the ministry, and consulted me respecting a course of study for

that purpose. But when he was restored to health no amount of urging could get him to church, his convictions faded away, and he drifted into skepticism.

These instances resulted in recovery; in other cases death ensued, and the outcome is with God. I have stood by the deathbed of many who left their preparation for eternity to the last moment; and I have heard them cry in agony, "I don't know how to believe on Christ; tell me how to believe on him."

I was called to the dying bed of a young man who would not have a minister so long as there was any hope of his recovery. When I first called his friends warned me to be very careful and not say too much about religion; but as death approached he became eager and anxious to converse on the subject. He sent for me two or three times a day to pray with him, and seemed somehow to think that the minister could save him. With panting breath he tried to join in the prayers offered and the hymns sung, while an expression of great anxiety and fear rested on his countenance. He was trying to find God, but did little more than cling to the minister.

I was sent for by a mother to see her daughter who was going into consumption; but the young lady hastened out of the back door as she saw me coming in. Later, however, she sent for me, when she found that death was fast approaching, and was ready to talk about the concerns of her immortal soul.

Many times I have been sent for to visit unsaved men in the dying hour after the dark pall of uncon-

sciousness had fallen upon them, and they could hear nothing that was said. It is a cruel inconsistency to place a minister of Christ in such a position. If people wait so long it would be just as well to wait longer.

Sin

Sin is like the unequal distribution of heat in nature which keeps the ocean in continual agitation and fills the air with gales and storms. Sin is an element of unrest everywhere. God has said that the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest. Sin has produced all the wars, and strifes, and turmoils, and hatreds of earth. There is no peace for men until they are beyond the dominion of sin.

Sin is out of place in human nature. It is a defilement upon that which should have been clean and beautiful. I went into my garden one beautiful Sunday morning in summer. The sun was shining in glory; the dew was sparkling on the grass; and the flowers were smiling in beauty on every side. It was a scene of exquisite loveliness.

But a snake had been seen in that beautiful garden. Could it be that so vile a reptile was in such a place of beauty? I searched about for a long time among the blooming flowers. There was nothing in their fragrance or beauty to indicate that a snake had ever been there. It seemed like the last place in the world where one could find a serpent.

But at last I found him, coiled up on top of a bunch of beautiful white lilies in the bright sunshine. I took

a hoe, and, softly approaching the reptile, with one vigorous blow laid him lifeless at my feet.

That snake coiled up among the white lily blossoms is a picture of sin in human nature; a stain, a blotch upon the fairest work of God, and entirely out of place.

Sin and Death

Sin leads to death. The railroad track leads to New York. If a man boards the train and follows the track he will reach the city. The train may stop at this station and stop at that; it may back up sometimes, and go faster or slower, but it will reach its destination by and by.

If a man should undertake to walk every foot of the way he would eventually reach his destination if he followed the track. It would require many days, but the great city would by and by come in sight without fail.

A snail may creep along by the side of the track, and the result is just as certain. It may pass two winters before the journey is completed, but if it persistently follows the track it will reach New York.

And if a man follows sin he will reach death by and by. He may halt and back up; run onto side tracks for a time; go faster, go slower; but if he persistently practices sin he will reach death in the end. Some go faster than others, but all go.

And under the present constitution of things a man ought not to expect that he can follow a course of sin and reach any other destination. A man ought not to

suppose that he can live in sin all his life and then fare as well as the man who has taken the trouble to obey God's laws.

Sin and Law

We live under an administration of law; and we do not complain of this, but think it a wise arrangement. Natural law touches us in every experience of life.

It is a law of nature that fire burns. If a man thrusts his hand into the fire he expects it to be burned; and we do not complain of this, we simply try to keep our hands out of the fire.

It is a law of nature that water will drown us. We do not quarrel with this arrangement, but we try to keep out of the water.

We are ceaselessly operating under the law of gravitation, by which an unsupported body is drawn toward the center of the earth. If a man walks off the edge of a precipice he goes down to destruction. We accept this as a wise law, and try to keep away from the edge of the precipice.

And so relentless are these laws in their operation that, though a child innocently and ignorantly violates them, he must surely pay the penalty. And we do not complain of even this. We think it better to have a uniform system of law, with all its hardships, than to be without law.

Our mental operations are also regulated by law. We think by law, and feel by law; and if we violate the laws of mind we must pay the penalty. We do not complain that God has so ordered it that if a man

does not cultivate his mental faculties they will deteriorate, we rather try to become acquainted with the laws of our being and live in harmony with them.

God has given us laws in the moral and spiritual realm also; and the Bible says that "Sin is the transgression of the law." These higher laws have their penalty as well as the lower. A man ought not to think that he can live a life of sin and not suffer the inevitable consequences. It is not reasonable. Consequently men ought to become familiar with God's moral and spiritual laws and obey them as they obey the laws of matter and mind.

Sin, Its Bondage

A poor drunkard told me he had resolved over and over again to conquer his appetite; had begged of friends to help him; had put himself under the best of influences; had taxed the arts of physicians, and put under contribution every agency, but had repeatedly fallen, until he had lost all heart, and was crushed under the power of this base appetite—humbled, mortified, in the most cruel and disgusting slavery, with no power to break the galling yoke. What an abject slavery is this! How men abhor themselves when they behold their helplessness!

Another poor slave to intoxicating drink, after repeated efforts and repeated failures, came to my house late one Sunday evening and wanted to take the pledge. I wrote a strong pledge, and, after reading it to him, he signed it, and went his way. In a few

weeks he came back and wanted another pledge. The old one was broken and lost. As I was writing it he said, with pitiful tone and expression: "Put something into it that will *make me* keep it." He had lost all confidence in himself.

He asked what man cannot give, but I tried to show him that God could put something into him that would make it possible for him to keep his pledge.

Sin, Its Action and Reaction

Every sin is a power for evil let loose in human society, and the amount of harm done by it will depend on the influence of the sinner or the circumstances attending his sin. An earthquake in mid-Pacific sent a tidal wave sweeping for hundreds of miles to submerge and destroy thirty thousand people on the coast of Japan. A little pebble dropped into the ocean has likewise power to send a little ripple in widening circles to the farthest extent of the ocean. And God will hold us responsible for what influence we have, and not for what we have not. If we have the intellectual power to send a resistless wave of influence sweeping down the ages God will hold us responsible for the character of that influence; but if we have power to send only a ripple of influence across the surface of human society we shall be held responsible for that ripple.

A Christian woman told me that when she commenced the Christian life she watched the wives of the official members of the Church, determined to live

as they lived. She soon found that she was losing ground in religious things, and was obliged to look to a higher ideal. When we little think it our example for evil is helping some one to travel in the wrong road.

And every sin which gives a wrong impulse to others likewise reacts to make the sinner worse and confirm him in his evil course. In the civil war some Federal batteries were planted behind earthworks at Port Hudson very close to the rebel fortifications. When shells were fired into the enemy's breastworks they frequently exploded in the ground, and the pieces would fly back to kill or wound the very men who had fired the shells. And every man who hurls an evil thought or deed out into human life lets loose a force for evil which not only harms others, but returns with baleful power upon his own head.

Spiritual Cripples

A tree with one limb stretching out in proper proportion and the other limbs stunted or dead is not a beautiful tree. A man with one vigorous, natural arm and the other withered and helpless by his side is not a pleasant sight. If a sculptor should undertake to chisel the human form from a block of marble, and should make one arm too long and the other too short, leaving out one eye altogether, it would not redeem his work from failure that the nose was of proper shape and the shoulders well rounded. And when we see a man with some excellences of character, but with

many weaknesses and defects, we can only regard him as a moral and religious cripple. Men complacently excuse themselves by saying, "O, every one has his faults." That is no doubt true; but it does not cure faults to excuse them. Probably a cripple is better than no man at all, and a spiritual cripple better than no Christian at all.

Spiritual Death

You have seen a dead tree standing in a pasture. What a desolate thing it is! Once it was alive. For years it shot out leaves and branches every spring, put forth its beautiful blossoms, and every autumn was loaded with rich fruit. The cattle lay in its shade protected from the heat of the sun; insects sported in the coolness it afforded; birds sang and built their nests among its branches; children played in its shadow and enjoyed its delicious fruit. But one year its leaves were smaller than usual, the blossoms few in number, and the fruit stunted. The next year there were fewer leaves and blossoms, and the next no blossoms at all—only a few sickly leaves. The next spring, when other trees were putting on their beautiful foliage, it remained naked. It was dead. It still stands in its accustomed place, towering up into the sky; but no sap courses up through its roots and trunk to nourish the distant branches. No green leaves appear to clothe its nakedness; no beautiful blossoms adorn it; when autumn comes there is no fruit; the children play there no more; the cattle find shelter elsewhere;

the birds have forsaken its branches, no nests are built, no songs are heard; the bark is dropping from it, and the branches are falling one by one. The tree is dead, and stands in desolation crumbling back to earth again.

Like such dead trees are the Christian characters of some who were once warm and active and zealous in the service of Christ. They were clothed in the beautiful garments of salvation; they were fruit-bearing Christians; the wayfarer found shelter beneath their shadow; they were liberal; they ministered to the sick and succored the tempted; they comforted the weak and revived the faint; their voices were everywhere heard in honor of Christ, and they were foremost in all good works. But a change came over them; a chill passed over the ardor of their love; their zeal waned; their good works grew less and less; the warm flush of spiritual health faded away, and the pale hue of death took its place. They may stand in the same place in the church, as the tree stands in its place in the pasture, its dismal branches stretching up into the heavens, but, like the tree, they are dead; having the form of godliness but not the power of it. A sadder sight than a dead tree is a dead Christian.

Spiritual Geography

The devil's territory and Immanuel's ground lie side by side in this world, and the two lands are much alike on the border. The soils are quite similar, and the surfaces much the same. The adversary has fixed

up his grounds so that they look almost as well on the border as the fields of the pleasant land. He comes in the garb of an angel of light to deceive the very elect, and often succeeds in doing so.

This line between the devil's territory and Immanuel's ground is like the line between day and night on the surface of the earth; the light and darkness shade into each other. But these two countries, which look so alike on the border, change entirely in appearance as we go back into the interior. The one grows brighter and brighter until it reaches the glory of eternal day; while the other grows continually darker and darker until it ends in eternal night.

This border land seems to be densely populated. Many sinners have come up toward the border, and many saints have come down toward the border, and there they stand in crowds parleying across the line as if to effect a compromise, so mixed in appearance and manner that ordinary eyes cannot distinguish between them. If Christians will persist in living on the border, if they will try to be just as near the dividing line as possible without actually crossing it, is it any wonder if they get things mixed and are actually over the line without knowing it?

Dr. Holland speaks of "worldly people with tender consciences and Christian people with tough consciences;" and such a condition furnishes the exact materials necessary for a mingling of the church and the world. What is imperatively needed to-day is a church that is unlike the world—a great host of

Christian men and women who are readily distinguishable from all other men and women by the holiness of their lives. The church of God needs to leave this border land, and move back into the interior.

Spiritual Light

All the spiritual light there is in the world radiates from the lives of Christians. The individual soul is the wick of the candle or lamp, the oil is divine grace, and the wick is ignited by a spark of heavenly fire. It is in the wick that the light is visible. There is no light in systems of theology. Divine truth becomes luminous only in the lives of Christian men and women.

Formerly churches were lighted with candles—a large number of them for a large church. Now a few great electric lights accomplish the purpose. The former method better represents the spiritual light of the church. No one great man does the shining for the whole church. Every member is a little candle, and the aggregate of all the candles constitutes the light of the church. Let a candle represent one member; then if all are lit we have a three-hundred, five-hundred, seven-hundred candle-power church. But if three fourths of the candles are not lit the church cannot shine at its best. But let all be lit, all trimmed, all carefully and often snuffed, all thieves taken away from the wicks, and you have a magnificent spiritual light. The loss of one candle reduces the aggregate of the light.

It is much better to have every member contribute something to the aggregate light of the church than to have a few members do all the shining, for if anything happens to these few the light of the church goes out.

I preached in one church which was lighted by two large electric lights, and the result was as disastrous as to have a church run by two great men. These two great electric lights used to hiss and sputter continually, burning very low and then flaring up at intervals, until one evening, after the usual unpleasant demonstrations, they went out altogether. The more recent and better method is to have a large number of small electric lights. And this much better represents the spiritual light of the church, which is the aggregate of all the lights which the members shed on the community.

Spiritual Magnetism

The saved man receives new elements into his life; he comes under celestial influences; the power of an endless life rests upon him; and he is ceaselessly drawn Godward and heavenward.

The needle in the compass trembles and sways from side to side, yet always settles toward the north. It looks like any other piece of steel, but a mysterious power has come upon it; it is chained to the pole, and gladly obeys the influence that controls it.

So perfect is this submission to a higher power that the hunter takes it into the dense forest, and in the darkest day, or blackest night, it will point to the

north and guide his footsteps aright. The mariner takes it out onto the trackless ocean, and it remains true to the pole. When the sun is shining in the heavens, or the stars sparkling above him, he hardly needs his compass, but the needle points, nevertheless, to the north. When storms arise, however; when thick clouds shut out the friendly stars, and midnight darkness settles over the howling waste of waters, he has no other guide—he stands over his compass as his only friend. And it guides him aright. He can sail into the very teeth of the storm, through the thickest pall of darkness, toward a port that is thousands of miles away.

And the Christian is a magnetized man. A mysterious heavenly influence has come upon him, and he is chained Godward and heavenward in his course. He looks like other men, but he is very different from any other man who has not this divine power resting upon him. Outside attractions may cause the needle to sway backward and forward somewhat, but in all its oscillations it yet points in the direction of its eternal destiny. If a man is a Christian the whole drift of his life is toward God and heaven.

“Rivers to the ocean run,
Nor stay in all their course;
Fire ascending seeks the sun;
Both speed them to their source:
So a soul that’s born of God,
Pants to view his glorious face;
Upward tends to his abode,
To rest in his embrace.”

Storms of Life

It is said that wind and storm never make any difference with the thermometer. It is no colder when a fierce wind is blowing than when it is still; in fact, the coldest days are generally still days. But storms and winds make a great difference with these poor sickly bodies of ours.

In like manner the winds and storms and troubles of life have a very depressing effect on our poor sensitive spirits, but they do not affect the temperature of God's love. He loves us just as much when fierce winds are buffeting us and tempests of trouble are breaking upon our heads. But men find it very difficult to divest themselves of the old heathen notion that prosperity is the sunshine of God's favor and affliction a sign of his wrath. When trouble and sorrow fall upon them they begin to look about and ask, "What have I done to merit all this?"

Sympathy

Sympathy is a noble word. It is the life current of the church. Some scientists claim that there is a magnetic current passing around the earth from north to south, and that if we lie down to sleep at night with the head to the north this current will flow along the nerves of the body and soothe us to rest, but if we lie across the current it will fret us and disturb our slumbers.

We need not concern ourselves about the correct-

ness of this theory; but there surely is a current of sympathy flowing through the church of God. To be in this current is to find rest in the church; to be out of this current, or across it, is to find the church a very uncomfortable place.

Temperance

We have on the surface of the earth what is called the temperate zone, the broad belt lying between the tropic and polar circles—lying between extreme heat and extreme cold. Its climate is temperate, moderate, mild—neither too hot nor too cold. It is free from the burning sun, the poisonous reptiles, the deadly miasms of the tropics; and also from the enfeebling cold and perpetual ice fields of the polar regions. The temperate zone has ever been the most desirable part of earth. Here civilization has spread, here Christianity has flourished, and here the great and heroic deeds of history were performed. Strike out the temperate zone, with its great achievements, and earth with its history would largely disappear. And it is the moderation of its climate which has made it what it is, while the extremes of the tropic and polar regions account for their unfavorable conditions.

In like manner temperance in its broadest sense is the temperate zone of human life. Within this happy mean have flourished health, joy, peace, friendship, and piety; while intemperance has led to a large part of the ills that afflict human life.

Temperance Seesaw

Schoolboys in the country play a game of teetering. A long board or plank is balanced over a rail in the fence, one person sits on one end of the plank and the other on the other end, while they teeter up and down. As one goes up the other goes down; as the other goes up the one goes down; neither gets any advantage, and not much comes of it.

This has seemed to me a fair illustration of the contest that has been long going on between the liquor men and the radical temperance men. It is up and down, up and down, sometimes the one having the advantage and sometimes the other. Neither has gained a victory, and the question is still unsettled.

In this game of teetering a third person sometimes took his seat on the plank just over the center of gravity, where the motion of the plank affected him very little, and where he had little or no influence over the motion of the plank. This third person was called the candlestick—probably because he shed the light of his countenance equally on both contestants. Sometimes half a dozen boys sat on the fence just over the middle of the plank and watched the game, while exerting no influence upon it. If these boys on the fence, however, moved over to one side or the other, the opposite boy was hoisted high into the air and held there, and there was nothing left him but to climb down the plank to the side of the majority.

There is a great middle class in the temperance

issue who are merely spectators of the temperance contest. They are over the center of gravity, and are exerting very little influence on one side or the other. And while they occupy this position the teetering goes on between the liquor men and the radical temperance men without much result.

If this great middle class would throw their weight on the right side in this contest there can be no doubt that the advocates of liquor would be worsted. And why should they not? No man can quite afford to stand over the center of gravity in a great moral issue.

Temptations

Temptations afford vigorous exercise to harden the spiritual muscles. Temptations are the heavy hammer of the smith, the ringing ax of the woodman, the dumb-bells of the gymnast, which tighten the tendons, solidify the muscles, and invigorate the entire frame. Temptations are the fiery sun of summer, the biting frost of winter, which give color, hardiness, and endurance to the physical system. Temptations are the storms that sweep the ocean of life to give courage, skill, and patience to the sailors who tread the deck. Storms make sailors, and temptations make Christians.

If the storms would surely crush and bury the vessel in the boiling ocean our courage, vigor, and hardiness would be purchased at too great a cost. If these experiences are too strong for human nature they cannot develop a spiritual life; and poor struggling souls

often declare that the divine discipline is too heroic to do us any good. But God declares that he has an eye on the training of his children, and will not suffer them to be tempted beyond what they are able to bear; and we can well believe that God knows how much discipline we need, and how great trials we can bear, much better than we ourselves can know.

“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation.” Better a storm that blows us toward heaven than a calm that delays our journey, or a gentle breeze that blows us the other way; better a storm, so long as Christ walks on the water to control the winds and waves. Human experience seems to confirm the teaching of God’s word that the storms all blow heavenward. We must sail away from the better country by beating against the storms. Christians make rapid speed toward heaven when storms fill the sails. Six months of trouble will often do more to culture a Christian than six years of prosperity. The disciples when crossing the Sea of Galilee thought the storm a calamity, but it accomplished two purposes which they did not anticipate—it brought Christ to them, and it carried them just where they wanted to go.

“If, on a quiet sea,
Toward heaven we calmly sail,
With grateful hearts, O God, to thee,
We’ll own the favoring gale.
But should the surges rise,
And rest delay to come,
Blest be the tempest, kind the storm,
Which drives us nearer home.”

Testing Truth

These are times of unusual intellectual restlessness and questioning. Truth will be subjected to many unreasonable tests, but we have no cause to fear the ultimate result. Winnowing never injures wheat. It is often necessary to run it through the fanning mill two or three times to get it reasonably pure. And if a person in mere wantonness should insist on running it through a dozen fanning mills of as many different kinds, it will be found that, in the face of the strongest blast, the heavy, full-sized wheat will come down unharmed; while nothing but chaff, or dead insects, or imperfect kernels will be blown away.

And God's undying truth will outlive all the tests to which it may be subjected. Any amount of winnowing can only eject the chaff and half-filled kernels, while the genuine truth will come back again to its old place in the hearts and consciences of men.

Thirsting for God

We were going with our little girl a short distance on the cars one hot summer day, when she was just beginning to talk. We forgot before entering the cars to give her a drink of water. The train had no sooner started than she became thirsty, and began to ask for water. I looked through the car and found there was no water on it. That little cry became importunate, and I searched the whole length of the train, and inquired of brakeman and conductor; I

stopped at every station and looked for water, but found none.

Then we tried to amuse her and divert her thoughts from the burning thirst within; just as the world tries to lead the human soul to forget its spiritual thirst. We talked to her about her playthings and picture books, but nothing could still that plaintive cry for water. We told her about her relatives and little playmates, but she answered us with the one word "Water," repeated over and over. We told her stories about animals she had learned to know by name, and resorted to every expedient to divert her attention, but all to no purpose. She did not cry in anger, but above our voices, and above the rattling of the train, that little pitiful voice was ceaselessly heard crying, "Water, water, water," until the train reached its destination.

This wonderful exhibition of persistent thirst led me to think that if we thirsted after God in this fashion; if we cried out for the living God as ceaselessly and longingly, our spiritual thirst would somehow be satiated, for God can do what earthly parents cannot. And if we answered all the allurements and pleasures and enticements of the world with the one persistent cry, "My God, my God, my God, give me more of thyself," we might have less of the world, perhaps, but we should have the fullness of God's presence in our souls.

Searching through that train, and resorting to every expedient to get water for that child, brought to mind

the beautiful words of our Saviour, "If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." We may say with the psalmist, "My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God;" and God will satisfy the longings of our souls.

Touching Christ

It is entirely legitimate to win people to ourselves, that through ourselves we may cause them to touch Christ. If persons join hands in a circle it is necessary for only two of them to take hold of the handles of a battery and all alike feel the shock. I am smitten with the electric current, not because I took hold of my neighbor's hand, but because I somehow—anyhow—came under the power of the battery. And a man is vivified by the power of the Gospel, not because he has touched Paul, or Wesley, or some favorite preacher, or fellow-Christian, but because through any of these means he has come under the power of Christ. If we occupy such a relation that the sap from the main vine finds its way through other branches to us, we are in the spiritual current, and will live, blossom, and bear fruit.

Types of Christian Character

We must recognize the fact that, on account of the infirmities of human nature, there are a great many types of Christian character—some more and some

less excellent and beautiful. With God the same, Christ the same, the Spirit the same, and the truth the same, it yet comes to pass that there is almost an endless variety of Christian character.

The difference is in the persons—just as different kinds of glass transmit the same sunlight with varying colors and effects. Every flaw in a window pane modifies the sunlight which passes through it.

The white sunlight is not a simple light, but is made up of rays of different colors, which blend to form the white. There are red rays, yellow rays, blue rays, and the different colors of objects result from their power to reflect this or that kind of ray most perfectly. An object which appears red reflects the red rays and absorbs the rest; a yellow object reflects the yellow rays and absorbs the others; while a black object reflects no rays whatever but absorbs them all, and a white object reflects all and absorbs none. Thus it is that the same sunlight gives us objects of different colors and beauty. Different colored glasses can separate these rays, hindering or entirely suppressing some, while permitting others to pass. And it is reserved for the prism to separate these rays entirely and throw all the colors on a screen in a beautiful halo of light.

In like manner different types of persons, in receiving heaven's blessed light upon them, transmit it with vastly differing effects and beauty.

Some can transmit only one attribute of God—his love—while all the rest are stopped and absorbed in

passing through them. They are charming persons, but no just reflection of the many-sided God we worship.

Others can reflect only his justice, while the love is absorbed. They are upright, just, stern, severe, unlovable Christians.

The various denominations of Christians each seem to single out one attribute of God to make a hobby of, and put special emphasis upon, while the others are given less consideration. One has magnified God's omnipotence until they make him an almighty machine that relentlessly does everything he is able to do without reference to the wisdom of what he does. The divine foreknowledge has been broadened by many until it trenches upon the prerogatives of omnipotence. Another great body of Christians has emphasized divine holiness beyond anything else; while another puts almost the sole emphasis on God's love, making him a being too weak and tender-hearted to do what really ought to be done.

Christians should be prisms—reflecting all the light of God that falls upon them, in just proportion and beauty, not hindering or modifying the divine light in any way.

Unity of God

There is need of the divine unity in the government of the universe. There must be one head, and only one. The religion of the Parsees—perhaps the noblest of the ethnic religions—enthroned two principles, good and evil, with equal power and authority—the one to

undo the work of the other. Two gods, ruling alternately or ruling as rivals, would thoroughly upset each other's plans. There must be a single authority.

The House of Representatives passes a law, and the Senate rejects it; or, both houses pass it, and the President vetoes it; or, it passes both houses, with the President's signature, and the Supreme Court pronounces it unconstitutional. The co-ordinate kings of Sparta were in continued rivalry. Homer represents the gods as taking different sides in the Trojan war—a part fighting on the side of the Greeks, and a part for the beleaguered city.

“For mortal men celestial powers engage,
And gods on gods exert eternal rage.”

No plan of salvation could stand on such a basis. The terms might be changed at any time and the whole plan vitiated.

Value of Love

There are no words so pleasant to human ears as the words, “I love you.” These three short words bring the highest earthly joy to the timid maiden's heart. These three words fire the soul of the young man, and make him ready to do and dare for the one who utters them. These simple words cheer the burdened wife in the midst of her household cares and inspire the husband and father in his labors for the family. Children grow up in gentleness, virtue, and piety under the influence of loving words; and parents

are comforted in their cares and anxieties by loving words from their children.

I knew a little boy who used to go to his mother twenty times a day, and, twining his arms about her neck, say, "Mamma, I love you." He was naughty sometimes, and disobedient, and made some trouble, but this atoned for it all. There is hope for the boy who continues to love his mother.

How it warms our hearts toward a person to be told that he loves us. We may have been indifferent to him; we may have had a poor opinion of him; he may have grave weaknesses and faults; but it raises him wonderfully in our estimation to know that he loves us. His faults hide away, and his virtues come to the front at once, and we think he is quite a man after all.

And it is one of the most precious thoughts in all the wide range of Christianity that God so values human love as to ask for it, bid for it, plead for it, and miss it if it is not given.

Waiting for Favorable Opportunities

Three haymakers had a large field of clover to cut—so large that it would require two days to do it successfully, as the grass was heavy and would not dry in one day. Clover must be cut at the right time or it suffers a rapid deterioration. They delayed as long as possible for weather so favorable that they could be reasonably assured of two good days in succession. A week was thus spent in waiting, and the grass was

more than ripe, when it was resolved to cut it on the following Monday.

But Monday morning was dark and lowery, and they thought it would rain before noon, so the work was postponed till Tuesday. The weather cleared, however, after a few hours, but it was too late for that day. Tuesday morning was darker than ever, and bringing all their wisdom to bear on the weather, they decided that it must rain within two hours, so the work was postponed till Wednesday. But before noon on Tuesday the sun was shining bright and hot and it proved an excellent hay day. Thus it continued day after day, the morning dark and threatening, and the latter part of the day fair. A whole week was thus spent in irresolution, and in the meantime the grass had become so ripe as to be almost worthless.

The second Monday morning looked darker than ever, if possible, and two of the men were in favor of waiting still longer for fair weather, but the third said, "No; it is time we attended to our clover and stopped gazing at the clouds." The clover was cut, and by Tuesday night was safely in the barn; and so it might have been just one week before. "He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap." The best rule for the farmer is to sow when seedtime comes, and reap when the grain is ripe, with little attention to weather signs.

The same rule has been found to apply to spiritual

sowing and reaping. Whoever watches and waits for entirely favorable opportunities will never accomplish much. The man who does most is the one who keeps in mind the rule, "In season, out of season."

Waiting for God

The man who cannot wait cannot accomplish great things. The history of the world furnishes many illustrations of this truth.

The Cologne cathedral was six hundred years and over in building. I climbed up to the top of one of the seven mountains of the Rhine and saw the quarry from which the stone was dug, and they were still at work there. I looked upon the unfinished building; saw men cutting stone in the rear under sheds; looked upon the immense scaffolding by which they raised stones to the towers yet incomplete, while the stones on the old part were crumbling away with age. A long time to wait for a cathedral! But at last the scaffolds were taken down for the first time in six hundred years. But we could afford to wait, for we have in the end one of the grandest structures in the world.

Lincoln and Douglas had a joint political debate in Illinois to determine which should be United States senator. I remember reading it when a boy. Lincoln uttered sentiments the country was not quite ready for, but which were bound to triumph by and by. Douglas became a senator, but that debate made Lincoln President in the great crisis of our civil war. We

can afford to take our stand on the right, and wait until the world comes around to it.

The man who gets in a hurry in studying God's operations in nature and providence is in great danger of becoming a skeptic.

God's ancient people grew very restless in Babylonian captivity, when they read in their prophets that this cruel city was to be wiped out of existence. Time seemed to drag at a snail's pace; but the papers announce that the site of buried Babylon is now owned by two Jews.

For many years the cry of the enslaved went up to heaven from our own land, and many cried out, "How long, O Lord, how long?" Some were even led to question the justice and judgment of God; and they shut their Bibles and threw them aside because God was so slow. But God's time came at last, and he did what the nation had refused to do.

And if we see wrongs unrighted to-day let us not doubt or be discouraged, but wait, wait, wait for God. His eye is on things, and his purpose never falters.

Waste Material

In the great locomotive works at Schenectady the best iron that is used in the construction of an engine is made from refuse iron bought from the railroads for a trifle. This scrap iron is cut up into small pieces, and a certain weight of these pieces is wired to a board, which is put into a furnace. By the time the board is burned up the pieces of iron are fused to-

gether, and the mass is then hammered into a bolt. The bolts thus made are nearly of the same size, and as they are needed for different parts of the engine they are heated again and again and hammered into shape. Thus the best iron is made, for the most important parts of a wonderful machine which must be as perfect as possible, from material that is usually thrown away.

So can God make something very useful and very perfect out of what is considered the very poorest human material. Though called scraps, these waste pieces of iron are nevertheless just as good as any iron. They only need a little more working over. So the waste scraps of humanity, which are too often neglected and despised, sometimes contain the very best material, and may be made fit for the highest uses.

Watching

Whoever has stood by the side of a pilot on a Mississippi River steamboat must know something about watching. The Mississippi is a very crooked river, winding about in every direction, full of snags and rocks, islands and sandbars, and shallow places. There are short corners to be turned, and constant danger of running over something that will endanger the vessel, its cargo, and the lives of the passengers. While making a trip during the civil war from Port Hudson to Cairo our vessel struck another vessel in a fog, and ran over a snag which damaged one of the wheels.

It is no sleepy man's task to carry a vessel successfully along such a river; and the pilot is not a sleepy man. You speak to him, and he will answer your questions; but his hands are never taken from the wheel, which moves backward and forward to keep the vessel in its proper course. He will chat with his friends, and join the social laugh, and one not seeing him might think him engaged in nothing else but social intercourse; but all this time his eye is never taken from the channel of the river, and he has not for a moment forgotten that he is a pilot. He will discuss with you politics and religion, and talk over the news of the day; but he is at the same time constantly looking out for snags and sand bars, turning his vessel here and there that he may avoid danger and find deep water.

If night comes on, or a fog settles, his eye grows sharper, he peers more intently into the distance, and grasps the wheel more firmly. He may fail to hear what you say, or to answer your questions; he may ask you not to talk to him any more, so fully is his mind occupied with watching, that he may keep the vessel in her course. The fact that his own life, a valuable cargo, and the lives of many passengers all depend on his vigilance is a heavy responsibility. He dare not forget that he is a pilot.

In some such way must the Christian watch. He has life's duties to perform. He must engage in business, politics, science, art, literature; he must talk with friends, and meet the claims of social life; but none

of these things must so engross his attention that he will for a moment forget that he is trying to steer successfully through a world of snares and dangers to the port of eternal life. He must not be interested in anything so fully as to forget that he is first of all a Christian. He must live in the world and yet be on his guard against it. And when dangers thicken, when the way grows dark and mists gather around, he must neglect earthly things, if necessary, and keep his eye on the main purpose of life.

Watching Harder Work than Fighting

A soldier in the Northern army during the civil war went for the first time on picket post in the enemy's country. It was midnight. He was entirely alone, and half a mile from any other sentinel. The country swarmed with those who would gladly have taken his life, and he felt it necessary to be constantly on the alert. For this purpose he took his station under the thick branches of a tree and began his watch. For the first hour he did nothing but peer out into the darkness watching every shadow which his own fancy had conjured up, and straining forward to catch every sound that broke the stillness. Only those who have tried it can know how fearfully wearying such a process is. Soon his head began to ache; soon it began to reel; his nerves grew restless, and he started at every sound. The strain became terrible; and by the end of the hour he thought he could endure it no longer. Setting his gun down, he muttered, "If there are any

rebels here they are welcome to the first shot, for I can stand this no longer;" and leaning back against the fence he was soon asleep. If the rebels did not kill him it was only because there were none in the neighborhood at that time. He put himself entirely in the power of any who might wish to injure him.

Christians in like manner often grow tired of watching, and put themselves in the power of the enemy. This soldier made two mistakes. He watched with unreasonable intentness the first hour, and so paved the way for a nervous reaction which resulted in absolute carelessness. The Christian should use common sense in the practice of religion. The exercises of the Christian life are not meant to be slavery. Assured of divine help, he should exercise his own powers in a rational way. It is possible to establish a standard of watching which can be maintained unbroken year after year without reaction.

"What We Shall Be"

It is not what we shall have or enjoy, but what we shall be. When we are considering merely enjoyment—happiness, toys, possessions—we are on a very low plane of thought; and when we attempt to measure heaven by what we shall have and enjoy there, we have altogether missed the mark.

As the kingdom of God is within us here, so will it be there. The term "kingdom of God" is a broad one, covering the Christian's experience both here and here-

after; so that, as far as the Christian has come to be right here, he has heaven already set up in his soul. The future glory is only the perfection of our present state and experience.

We have the bud here. We see little touches of brilliant color, and catch a faint whiff of delicious odor; but it is impossible to read in the bud the full fragrance and glory of the rose.

But, while this is the case, we must remember that the bud is of the same nature as the rose.

Wheat and Chaff

If you look at a head of wheat you can count the chaff bulbs along the stalk, inside each of which is supposed to be a kernel of wheat; but if you rub it in your hand and extract the kernels there will not be as many as there are bulbs of chaff—some of them were empty.

The chaff is the profession; the kernel is the real Christian life within. An inspection of the records of any earthly church will reveal more names than actual Christian characters. Some of the professions are empty. Winnowing does not hurt wheat, but it is bad for chaff. All forms, all professions, all externals that are only empty chaff must be burned up; nothing will stand the test but the solid kernel of real piety. And this will stand the test. There is no process in all the government of God by which the wheat can be burned up.

Witness of the Spirit

Surely it is not an unreasonable doctrine that God can speak to men, and so speak that they shall know it is God who is speaking. Men can understand each other; even foreigners can make each other understand many things. Animals have means of communicating with each other; men can understand animals and animals can understand men. Would it not be strange if God could not so speak as to make himself understood by those spirits which he has created?

It may be necessary to listen for God's voice; it is a "still small voice." It may be necessary to hush our spirits in the midst of the whirl and bustle of life, in order to distinguish God's voice from all others.

An ancient philosopher taught the doctrine of the music of the spheres. He said that the heavenly bodies in their ceaseless revolutions give forth a delightful melody which only the practiced ear has ever heard. The bustle of earth is so loud and distracting as to drown this heavenly music, but the old philosopher, in the stillness of meditation, had somehow caught its delicious strains. And at the midnight hour of a summer's night, when earth is at its stillest; when the voices of men are hushed in slumber, and the bustle of business has ceased; when the animal kingdom is stilled in repose; when we hush our spirits and turn the ear toward the blue heavens and listen, we fancy we feel the throbbings of nature's pulse, and catch some faint murmur of this heavenly music. In such

moments we can almost believe that this dream of the old philosopher is a reality.

However this may be, we know that a music far sweeter and more definite finds its way from heaven to the soul of man—the voice of God, which speaks to his children in assurance and love. While we are in the midst of earth's noise and confusion it may be necessary to turn aside for a time, enter our closets, shut out the world, hush our hearts, and listen for the voice of God which assures us of pardon and divine favor.

Work for Christ

Work for Christ seems to have a wonderfully stimulating influence on the life and character. Those who begin it early in life generally go on to an active and useful career; those who decline it, too often stagnate and die. I call to mind a bright young man, occupying a good position in business circles, who scarcely ever spoke in a prayer meeting without expressing an earnest desire to do something for Christ. This was a marked feature of his remarks. A leader was needed for a young people's class, and I asked him to take the place. His reply was, "O, I can't do that; I'm not fitted for it; some one else can do it much better." I said to him, "Then we mustn't hear any more in prayer meeting about how much you want to do for the Lord, when you refuse to do the first duty that presents itself." I then asked him to lay the matter before God in prayer, and see if he dared shirk such a duty. After a few days he told me that he would

undertake it. He made one of the best class leaders I ever knew, and showed such marked ability and quickening of religious life, that he was soon elected superintendent of the Sunday school, occupying the position for many years with great success. From a position of very little influence he rose in a year's time to be the most influential man in the church.

Another young man, about twenty-one years of age, had graduated from the Sunday school, as too many do at about that age. He had not attended for some time. One Monday morning I met him on the street, and, laying my hand on his shoulder, said, "Young man, we need you in the Sunday school," and went on to other duties. He said to himself, "They need me in the Sunday school, do they? I must go around and see about that." The next Sunday he was in Sunday school, and he remained an active worker for thirty years or more, doing the most efficient service for Christ.

I wish I could say that all whom I have invited to work for the Master have responded to the invitation. Many others said "No," and persisted in the refusal, dragging along in a serviceless religious life to the very end.

Working with God

In the work of human salvation, and in Christian work, God does something and man does something. Men are slow to comprehend this fact and work fully and cordially with God. Some think God will do it all, and they content themselves with asking him to do

so. Others think man **can** do it all, and so they leave God out of the account.

In mechanics the most difficult thing is to make a splice. The joint is the weak part of every structure. And this line of connection between God's work and man's work seems to be the weakest part of a Christian experience. Men are slow to learn just how to take hold of God, and work with him for themselves and others. Faith is the bond of connection, but to many persons faith is a very shadowy thing. There is probably a profounder meaning in the emphasis that Christ put upon faith than the church has yet discovered.

Youth

If a person wishes to get an education, or learn a trade, or enter on a profession, or master the details of a business, or subdue a farm, he must do it early in life or it will generally not be done at all. It is sad to see an old man trying to clear land and establish a home in a new country. I knew an old man who was compelled by adverse circumstances to go West and break up a new farm. After a few years he revisited his old home in the East, wandering about the neighborhood in the most desolate and heartbroken fashion. He had undertaken something when it was too late to make a success of it. It is equally sad to see an old man trying to break up the fallow ground of his sinful heart after energy and enthusiasm and persistence are worn out in wrongdoing. The time to begin the Christian life is in youth.

Youth, Manhood, Age

The little round of earthly life may be compared to the changing shadows of a summer's day. In the morning the shadows all point toward evening; at noon there is little or no shadow; at evening the shadows point back again toward morning.

In youth the shadow points to manhood and age. The hopes, desires, impulses, aspirations, are all for the future. "Distance lends enchantment to the view." The future is full of brightness and glory. This is so of necessity, for youth cannot look back! It has no past; it has very little present; it has only a future.

In manhood, when the sun of life has reached its meridian, the man and shadow are identical; the shadow is under his feet. He is wholly devoted to the interests of the present; he neither looks backward nor forward; desires neither departed youth nor prospective age; the present engrosses and satisfies all his desires; he wishes things would forever remain as they are. He is satisfied with himself, not as he was, not as he will be, but just as he is.

In old age the shadow on the dial of existence points back again to the brightness of its rising. The old pilgrim turns his eyes wistfully back to manhood and youth. His heart stretches in yearning over the intervening years to the enchantment of life's distant morning. The old man would fain be young again. Youth as a far-away, half-faded vision seems far brighter than youth as a present experience. When

the future grows dark he turns to the past for light. The old man turns his back to the future and faces the past.

Such is the picture of a merely earthly life. The only remedy for this desolate experience is a broader vision, which takes in eternity as well as time; which measures this life as it is related to a higher, better, eternal life. The Christian youth does not confine his outlook to manhood and age; but away beyond them he sees a vision of eternal glory and achievement. The Christian man is not absorbed in the present; he only uses it as a means to a glorious end which is not realized in this world. He lays up his treasures in heaven, not on earth. He stores his mind with what will be needed there as well as here.

And the Christian old man does not turn back to the past. He resolutely faces the future. There is something still before him far brighter than the enchantment of youth, or the achievements of manhood. There is no old age in the Christian life; something higher and better is always beckoning us onward.

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