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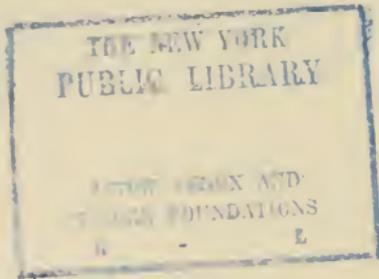
EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

OF THE

HERALD AND PRESBYTER.

1873-1880.

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INTRODUCTION.

FROM nearly four hundred letters published in the *Herald and Presbyter* since April 1, 1873, these are selected in the hope that some readers of the paper will welcome the winnowings of the correspondence in a more permanent form, and that others may be interested in the writer's plain expositions and homely illustrations of Christian truth.

The volume is affectionately dedicated to the Senior Editor of the *Herald and Presbyter*, in commemoration of our pleasant intercourse in newspaper work for more than twenty years.

CLEMENT E. BABB.

SAN JOSE, CAL., *May, 1880.*

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C. E. B.

THE SHEPHERD BOY'S SONG.

I COMMITTED the Twenty-third Psalm to memory nearly fifty years ago. I have read or repeated it thousands of times since; and yet I find in it new beauty and sweetness every time. This, I doubt not, is the experience of multitudes on the earth; of far greater multitudes in heaven, and will be the experience of other multitudes as yet unborn, even to the end of time. Now, why is this song of the shepherd boy so popular and so delightful? It tells, in the simplest possible words and figures, of God's love for us, and of our trust in him. The relation of the human soul to its Creator is the most interesting of all themes. And here that relation is so presented that the youngest child can under-

stand, and yet the profoundest scholar can not exhaust the meaning.

The logic of the first sentence is irresistible. If the Lord is our Shepherd, how can we want anything that we ought to have? The shepherd's pride and joy are in his flock. It is his sole business to take care of it. He never leaves it night or day. He does not shelter himself from storms, while his sheep and lambs are exposed to their fury; but he encounters, cheerfully, discomfort and danger, that he may protect them. Often does a good shepherd, as our Savior tells us, lay down his life for his sheep. Now, if such is the shepherd's devotion, and our Shepherd is the Lord Omnipotent, Omnipresent and All-wise, how is it possible that we should lack any good thing? We may lack what we think would be good for us, but that is because we are silly sheep. The Shepherd will give us not what we long for, and ask for, but what we ought to have. Could all Christians accept fully the logic of this sentence there would be an end of all anxious care. The fact that the Lord is our Shepherd would give such assurance of safety, and of the supply of every real want,

that our hearts would be filled with the peace that passeth human knowledge.

THE PRONOUNS.

We see here, as elsewhere in the Scriptures, the force and beauty of the pronouns. David did not sing, the Lord is a Shepherd; the Lord is the Shepherd of men; the Lord is the Shepherd of all who will hear his voice and follow him. He cried, with sweet, appropriating faith: "The Lord is *my* Shepherd;" "he leadeth *me*." The words "I," "me" and "my" occur no less than fifteen times in the six verses of the Psalm. It is well to study God's relations to the world as Creator and Preserver, to see how "he openeth his hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing." But we can not find the comfort that we need in these general views of Jehovah's goodness and care. We long for the assurance of, and the experience of, a personal interest in ourselves. We are not satisfied with merely belonging to a flock of which God is the Shepherd. We ask, Does he know and care for me as an individual? Does he call his own sheep *by name*? David intimates that he does. Christ, in the

tenth chapter of John, assures us that he does. Hence, each of us can use this shepherd song as our own. God's nature and his love are so great that he is as truly mine, and as truly yours, as if there were but one soul in the universe for him to watch over.

Two thoughts specially interested me as I read this familiar Psalm to-day. First, why does he use two words for the same thing in the fourth verse? Why does he speak of the shepherd's crook as

A ROD AND A STAFF?

This is not careless tautology or rhetorical amplification. It is designed to call attention to the twofold use of the crook, viz.: to guide and to govern; or, in other words, to protect and to chasten. If a sheep is attacked by a wild beast, the shepherd defends it with his staff. If a sheep falls into a pit, the shepherd helps it out with his staff. If a sheep is wayward, and wanders willfully, the shepherd uses his staff as a rod to drive or drag it back into the right way. It was a comfort to David to know that the Lord would govern as well as guide him; would chasten as well as guard him; would not only

lead him to green pastures, but would drive him from the paths of sin and folly. God is not only a good Shepherd, but he is wise. As many as he loves, he rebukes and chastens. We should then, with Paul, rejoice in afflictions; we should, with David, find comfort in the rod of our heavenly Father. He doth not willingly afflict; but he never hesitates when we need to suffer in order that we may cease to sin.

SHALL FOLLOW ME.

Why does he say, "Goodness and mercy shall follow me?" Why do they not go before, or beside us? Manifestly, that we may walk by faith, and not by sight. It is only when we look back upon our lives that we can fully appreciate the loving-kindness of God. And what blessed followers are these! What glorious angels of the Lord! "Goodness supplies all our needs, and mercy blots out all our sins." Thus, as the Christian journeys on, with clouds before and over him, these wondrous angels still follow, making the record of God's dealings luminous with love. And so it is that his path "shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

THE HOUSE OF THE LORD.

The young shepherd closes his song with the assurance that he "will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Some regard this as meaning only that he will go to the tabernacle to worship and sacrifice as long as he lives. But the word house, when applied to God, has a fuller significance. It means household, family. The passage is parallel with that in the Ninety-first Psalm: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." David's idea is, I am not only one of the flock that God guides and feeds, but I am a child of God. He has adopted me. His home is mine. I will dwell with him in sweet, filial confidence and communion here and hereafter. I will dwell with him in the house not made with hands. Thus, at the close, this Psalm carries us up to heaven. It starts with a lamb that a good shepherd loves, and that is happy in the assurance of his care. It rises step by step, until it leaves that lamb a glorified saint in paradise.

And now, as the old preachers used to say, "a word of exhortation." Shepherd and sheep are correlative terms. If we expect the Lord to lead

us, we must be humble, trustful and obedient. He will not take to the green pastures those who have the spirit of wolves or swine. And the paths in which he leads are those of righteousness. True happiness is found only in connection with holiness. The disciples of Christ must be Christ-like. The child of God must be godly. The sheep hear ever a voice which says: “Be ye holy, for I am holy.” If we would claim the promises of God, we must try to do the will of God. If we would have his staff comfort us, we must kiss that staff when the Good Shepherd uses it as a rod.

“HIS TENDER MERCIES.”

DAVID was a shepherd boy and then a warrior. Where did he learn so much about God? He tells us in the Psalms more of the character and works of the Creator than all the poets and philosophers of ancient times. And his descriptions are so different from theirs that we can not see how he could have made them unless God taught him.

Take this verse: “The Lord is good to all, and

his tender mercies are over all his works." (Psalm cxlv. 9.)

We have here, first, the statement that God is good to all—that he is absolutely and impartially benevolent. Did the wisest uninspired man ever get as far as this in studying the character of his Maker? But David goes far beyond this. Goodness to all would require the punishment of sin. A good government must protect the innocent; hence it can not pardon the guilty. God, however, is merciful as well as good—"his tender mercies are over all his works." What a thought to flash into a world of sinners! The Holy One must hate your sins, but he does not hate you. He wants to forgive you, to love you, and to make you happy. Forsake sin and he will have mercy. He is hovering over all his works, not only as a Ruler and a Judge, but also as a Savior.

We elect our Governor to execute the laws. We confer on him the power to pardon, but we expect him to exercise it only on rare occasions. He must not forgive every criminal who repents and reforms, for the majesty of the law must be vindicated. To say of a Governor that he pardoned everybody who asked him to would not

be complimentary. Such a Governor even the criminals would despise. And yet it is among David's highest ascriptions of praise to God that he is merciful—universally and impartially merciful. No writer depicts more grandly God's holiness and justice. None presents him so fully and frequently as a Judge and an Avenger; yet none sings so sweetly of his compassion and his tender mercies. How did he learn of these? Not from nature or from history. They give no intimation that there is a Great Spirit brooding over the world in loving kindness. But when that Spirit became incarnate this was his revelation of divinity to man. He stood upon Olivet, and, looking down upon Jerusalem, said: “How often would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings”—that was an illustration of “his tender mercies.” The New Testament, in its teachings concerning God, is but an expansion of David's statements in the Psalms. We can see it all now—that the Holy One could also be merciful; for he tells us how Jesus died so that God might be just, yet justify the ungodly. But when David wrote there was no gospel revealed

—there had been no incarnation of divine love; no sacrifice of the Lamb of God. Hence that conception of mercy must have come from the Holy Spirit, and it proves that the sweet singer sang no merely human songs.

God is not only merciful, but his mercies are tender, cherishing, motherly. He not only pardons the repenting sinner, but takes him into his arms, into his heart and into his home. He cries: "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him," even while the sinner is crying, "I am not worthy to be called thy son: only let me be thy servant."

Now look again at our human Governor. He extends mercy to a culprit. But how? He signs a printed or written form of pardon, and sends it by a messenger to the jailer, and the jailer lets the man go free. Perhaps he never saw the Governor, and the Governor cares no more for him. Suppose instead of sending a pardon the Governor should go himself to the condemned cell, unbar the door, file off the fetters, take the prisoner by the hand, lead him out, put him in his carriage and take him home, give him the best chamber in the house, a seat at the table

and treat him as a brother. This would be more than mercy. It would be tender mercy like that of God. Did ever a Governor on earth so pardon criminals? all criminals who would consent to be pardoned, even the chief of criminals, if they would repent? If not, then where and how did David get the idea? It was a foreshadowing of the gospel. But what did he know of the gospel? of God as Christ would reveal him? Only what he was taught by the Spirit of God. There is no evading this conclusion. And this is but one illustration of the internal evidence of the inspiration of the Scriptures. They have the witness in themselves that they came from God.

THE COMFORTER.

How interesting to us is this name given to the Holy Spirit! It is not, perhaps, the best possible translation of the Greek word, which, in other places, is rendered in our English Bible by Advocate. But the idea intended to be conveyed is that the Spirit will be such a Helper, Teacher, Guide and Friend to each believer in

all times as Christ was to his disciples while with them on the earth. He is spoken of as "another Comforter." It was a great comfort to those disciples to have Jesus present in a bodily form; to hear his voice, to see him work miracles. Sorrow filled their hearts when he was taken away. Although they knew that he was in heaven as their Intercessor, yet they wanted a divine Leader and Comforter on the earth. To meet this want the Spirit was given. The Spirit's presence is better than that of the incarnate Son, for he can be in all places at the same time. He can comfort me here and my child a thousand miles away, and all my friends, however widely scattered, and all the friends of Christ, even to the ends of the earth.

When we read, "He shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever," we think that Christians ought never to be sad and sorrowful. Why are they so? Is it not because they fail to understand fully the work of the Holy Spirit? Let us see whom he comforts and how he comforts.

The Holy Ghost is not given as a Comforter to everybody, but only to those who love Christ

and keep his commandments. (See John xiv. 15, 16.) If our hearts are cold, if we are not striving to serve and honor our divine Redeemer, we can not enjoy the consolations of the Spirit. Like conscience, he is a witness for God and the truth, and can not cry "Peace, peace!" where there is no peace.

This will appear more fully when we consider how the Spirit comforts. By reprovng (or convincing) the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment! Strange consolations, these! Our Advocate appears as our Accuser. He who was to plead our cause files indictments against us. We see clearly, then, from our Savior's statement, that the Holy Spirit will not comfort any soul in sin. He will not comfort any soul that trusts in its own righteousness. He will not comfort any soul that denies its moral accountability, and declares that there is no judgment to come. He will probe the wound before he heals it. If we want the Spirit to comfort us, we must be willing to know ourselves as sinners, under condemnation, without any hope, save in the righteousness of Christ. The Spirit will not administer anodynes. He will not, like foolish

human friends, tell us that we are better when he knows that we are sick unto death.

Again, the Spirit will not comfort by revealing new truth, but by bringing to remembrance what we know already. (John xiv. 26.) Some people think it would be a great satisfaction to know more about their departed friends, to know more about the spirit-world. But the divine Helper does not gratify any such morbid longing. He reminds us of what is revealed in the word of God. He recalls our attention to the teachings of Christ. Here is all that we need to know. If we fully believed what Christ said and did, and is now doing, we could not be unhappy. The fact of such a salvation from sin, of such a Savior and Advocate for sinners, ought to thrill our hearts with joy. If the sun should fail to shine, and all the stars should fall from their spheres, yet, while we see Christ as our atoning Lamb in the midst of the throne, we have nothing to fear. And that is the vision which the Spirit presents to the eye of faith, and which he aids the eye to see.

If the Spirit convinced of sin only he would not be a Comforter. But, when he shows us

our guilt and danger, he shows also the way of escape, and he helps us to enter and walk in that way. The man who is sleeping in a burning house may have sweet dreams, and it seems cruel to startle him with the cry of fire. But when he is awake, sees his peril, and is saved from it, there is a rapture that no tongue can tell. Such is joy in the Holy Ghost. Without conviction of sin, how could we appreciate and be grateful for salvation from sin?

And conviction of judgment, how does that comfort us? Christ says: "Because the prince of this world is judged." Satan tempts us. He seems to have great power. He goes about as a roaring lion. The Holy Spirit shows us that he is chained. Christ has judged him, condemned him, and only permits him to come to us that our faith may be tested and made strong. Christ uses him for the discipline and culture of our spiritual life. He is but an instrument in the hands of his Master and ours. There is a world of comfort in this fact. We are not between two contending forces—those of light and darkness—with the issue undecided. No, the battle has been fought, and our Savior is the

Conqueror. He not only controls all the forces of nature; he not only makes material things work together for our good; but he makes the wrath of men and devils promote our blessedness and his own glory.

Such comfort as this—comfort that meets all the facts in the case, that not merely soothes us with assurances of sympathy and with vague hopes of relief; but tells us how God has made the fullest provision for our safety and happiness, and how he administers his remedial government as “God over all”—such comfort is comfort, indeed. And this Divine One, who is to abide with us forever, is far better than a Savior in human flesh. Then, with one Advocate in the midst of the throne, and another in our own hearts, each divine, and keeping up by their unity in the Godhead a living union between us and the fountain of all power and love, how can we ever walk in darkness? how can we ever doubt as to our personal salvation, or as to the safety and triumph of the Church of Christ?

“ARRAYED IN WHITE ROBES.”

SUCH is the brief description of the redeemed in glory. What does it mean? It means a great deal. It tells more than a volume could fully unfold in regard to this life and the life to come. White is the symbol of purity, of triumph and of joy. In ancient Rome candidates for office put on a white toga, thus saying: “I am innocent and worthy. I challenge criticism, and I claim the suffrages of my fellow-citizens.” When a Consul returned victorious, and the Senate voted him a triumphal entry into the city, he appeared on his war chariot clothed in white. On festive occasions guests were arrayed in white, and the bride is so arrayed when she stands at the altar to-day.

But these guests of the Son of God, gathered from the earth into his jeweled city, how do they obtain these white robes? They were neither holy nor happy here. They made daily confessions of sin, and they experienced sorrow even to the end. Their spirits passed away amid death-throes of anguish. In the next verse (Revelation vii. 14) the mystery is explained,

and yet made more mysterious: "They came out of great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Here is a wonderful paradox—soiled garments made clean by washing them in blood. No wonder the gospel seems foolishness to the wise of this world. It proposes to save a race of sinners by the death of one sinless Being. It presents the crucifixion of Him who was led as a lamb to the slaughter, as the hope of the penitent, as the fountain of life for millions who are perishing in sin. In the blood that trickles from his mangled form we are to find an element that cleanses, that makes the soul pure and spotless as the souls of the angels that shine around the throne of God!

We have said this symbolical picture teaches many things in regard to this life and the life to come. Two only can we refer to now: First, though all our righteousness is through Christ—though our redemption robes are represented as the putting on of Christ—yet we do not receive them as new to be put on in place of the old ones, or over them. They are the old robes cleansed—cleansed by washing, cleansed by our-

selves amid great tribulation—cleansed in the blood of the Lamb. Here we see that we are not to get away from ourselves, not to be renewed by some miraculous power apart from our own volitions and efforts; but that we are to work out our salvation, while God works in us both to will and to do. He says to the sinner: “Be ye holy, for I am holy.” “But how shall I get rid of these filthy garments?” cries the sad soul. “Go to that fountain filled with blood,” is the reply. “But how can I make my robes white by washing them in blood?” “That is my business. Trust in me. Show your faith by your works.” And the believer takes God at his word. He realizes that notwithstanding all that Christ has done he himself has something to do. He wants to be a co-worker with God. He wants to use all the gracious ability that God gives. He trusts as fully in Christ as if he could do nothing, and yet he strives to resist temptation, and to perfect holiness, as if he must do all. This trusting and striving is beautifully symbolized by the washing of garments in blood; hard work, rubbing and rinsing and wringing, where there seems to the

eye of the rationalist and the skeptic no hope of cleansing. But he finds peace of conscience; finds growth in grace; he finds increased delight in the law of God, as he washes in that fountain; and he knows that it is able to make him pure in heart, so that he can see God. This fact that we are to wash our own robes, that is, purify our characters, might be perverted so as to encourage us to seek and trust in legal righteousness, if we were told to wash in water, if there was any tendency in the washing itself apart from God's miraculous grace to make us holy. But the symbol can not be misunderstood or perverted. The work is *faith work*. We show our faith by our works.

The other teaching of these white robes is that purity and joy in heaven are real, not apparent merely; are deep and permanent, not superficial and transient. The white toga of the candidate at Rome often covered a heart that was corrupt, selfish and unhappy. The white dress of the bride is sometimes a mockery. But the redeemed who stand before God in glory have been renewed in the spirit of their minds—their characters have been transformed. Their clothing is

not the putting on of external robes, but of a new man. (Ephesians iv. 24.) They are not actors in a play dressed up as saints, but they are saints truly; as holy as the angels that never sinned. All moral defilement is left behind, for it could not be admitted to heaven. Not all the grace of God in Christ could secure the entrance of one evil thought or unholy desire through the gate of pearl. No, the white robe means a soul thoroughly changed into the image of God; a soul that, though sin-stricken and sorrow-stricken here, can there rejoice in freedom forever from both sorrow and sin.

Oh, when we see how imperfect the best Christians around us are, nay, when we feel how morally vile we ourselves are, must we not rejoice in that vision of the white-robed who came out of great tribulation; must we not long for the time when we shall stand with them, and join in their triumphal song? The glory of this picture is that it represents the redeemed as not only in heaven, but as worthy to be there; worthy not in their own right, but in their natures sanctified by grace; made pure and holy by the trials of life and the cleansing blood of Christ; saved by

the merits and mediation of the Son of God from their sins and not in them. How this wondrous change is consummated at death; how the earth-worm becomes an angel as soon as it is freed from the body, I will try to explain hereafter. But now my heart is full and warm with this grand idea that I shall walk the streets of the New Jerusalem arrayed in white--not a leper covered with a white robe--not an invalid or a convalescent, an object of compassion like the patient in a hospital. But I shall have an angel's spirit and an angel's purity, as well as an angel's drapery and an angel's home. Thank God for the assurance of a holy heart; for without it there could be no certainty of happiness even in heaven.

ABOUT BURDENS.

JUST now a good many people feel weary and heavy laden. These are days of burden-bearing, such as some of us have not experienced hitherto. This fact has turned my attention to what the Bible says about burdens. It says three things,

which seem inconsistent with each other at the first glance:

1. "Every man shall bear his own burden."
2. "Bear ye one another's burdens."
3. "Cast thy burden on the Lord."

How shall we understand these seemingly conflicting statements? Thus, as it seems to me: God gives to each of us duties and cares, to develop our strength. They are the discipline we need; without them we would be characterless, mere jelly-fish Christians. These burdens we ought to bear bravely and cheerfully. We ought to recognize in them the fact that this life is our spiritual gymnasium; that here, by toil and trial, we are to be prepared for rest and glory. The man who tries to shirk his burdens, or who carries them only because he must, and grumbles all the time, will get little good out of them. He will be a mere drudge. While he who accepts the fact that burdens are blessings, and makes the cheerful bearing of those that are allotted to him a part of his religion, will find the statement verified, that "these light afflictions * * * work out for us a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory."

But he who bears his own burdens most bravely will always sympathize with his brethren. And this sympathy between burden-bearers is a mutual help. Then there is something gained often by an exchange of burdens. The pastor administers spiritual comfort to his parishioner, and the parishioner ministers to the pastor in temporal things. The wise man helps the strong man with his wisdom, and the strong man helps the wise man with his physical strength. And even in those cases where we aid the absolutely poor, and they seem unable to do anything in return, we find our hearts warmed by our benevolent efforts, and we are led to appreciate more highly God's special goodness to us. Nothing brings us nearer to Christ, and insures us more of the joy of his salvation, than going about doing good, as he did while on the earth.

And there is yet another wonderful fact in regard to bearing other's burdens. By so doing we really lighten our own. Much of the weight of what we carry comes from a morbid state of heart. Our excessive selfishness tempts us to feel that we are unjustly dealt with; that God loads us too heavily. But when we go out of

ourselves, and learn what others are called to endure; when we find that they have burdens far greater than ours; the morbid part of ours disappears, and we seem to carry less when a goodly portion of others' loads is added to it, than when we struggled and staggered and fretted under it alone. This may sound like a paradox; but whoever tries it will find it true.

Then the requirement to bear our own burdens is not inconsistent with that to bear the burdens of others. We can not carry all the load that is allotted to any one else. There is a sense in which each must struggle and suffer alone, however much others may seek to aid him, and may really lighten his load; for "every heart knoweth its own bitterness." There are weights that press upon our spirits, that we can not speak of to our most intimate friends. They are known only to God and to ourselves. These are the especial burdens that we are to bear, and accept with cheerfulness, as laid upon us by Him who loves us.

But how about casting our burdens on the Lord? Are we thus to get rid of them as one gives his luggage to a porter? Let us see. Peter

says: "Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you." And Paul says: "Be careful for nothing, but in everything * * * let your requests be made known unto God." These exhortations are based upon the invitation of our Savior: "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; * * * for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Christ our Savior is a burden-bearer, too. He wants us to come into sympathy with him, as well as with our neighbors, in this matter. He wants us to share his burdens, and to let him share ours. He will not relieve us from our load, for that would deprive us of the discipline that we need; but he will teach us how to bear it so that it shall not gall and chafe us, so that we shall not faint under it, as he did under the weight of his cross while going to Calvary. He who can realize that Christ is with him in all his toils and trials; that whatever he is called to do and endure is for Christ's sake; because Christ in it all is seeking to make him stronger, purer, holier, happier; that Christ puts his own neck in one side of every yoke that he asks us to take upon ours; that he

makes the heaviest burden light by his sympathy and help--that man can never be overburdened. He may have loads to carry that seem crushing; but so wondrous is the power of God's grace that he will mount up with wings as eagles; he will run and not be weary; he will walk and not faint.

Here, then, is the gospel law of burden-bearing: Each of us is a free, moral agent, to be trained by work and care and conflict for the skies. But we are linked, in this probationary state, with other moral agents, who are to influence us and be influenced by us. We are to help ourselves while helping them, as stones in a current, rolling together, round and polish each other. And over us all is the great, wise, holy and loving God, who watches us as tenderly as a mother watches her babe; who lets us try our strength, and stumble and fall even, in order that we may learn our own weakness, and be led to trust in him. Then, through him, our very weakness becomes strength, our sorrow becomes joy, our trials become blessings.

Oh, weary burden-bearer! become not selfish, saying: "I have all that I can carry, and can

not help anybody else." Believe in and act upon the paradox, that he who watereth shall be watered; that it is more blessed to give than to receive; that you can lighten your own load by helping others. And, above all, look to the divine Burden-bearer, the divine Helper, who will aid you so wisely and so lovingly, that when you cast your burden on him he will take it and transform it, by the inspiration of his grace, so it will bear you while you bear it. It will become like the wings of the eagle, like the steam in the engine of the boiler, a weight, indeed, to be carried, but a power, also, that carries itself and that which bears it.

"A PLACE FOR YOU."—JOHN XIV. 2.

I HAD an engagement to preach in a strange city. I reached it on Saturday after dark. I hoped that somebody would meet me at the cars. But as I stepped on the platform I was greeted only with the din and clamor of the hotel runners. I knew the name of a good hotel. I went to it, was treated politely, had

an excellent supper and a pleasant room. But anybody else might have had that supper and room by paying for them. They were not specially for me. I felt lonely and sad. I wanted somebody to say: “I am expecting you, and am glad to see you.” I had a large and attentive congregation next day. I heard that the officers of the church, which was vacant, paid their supplies liberally, but did not think of entertaining them. It is so in a good many places on this coast; but I am glad to be able to say that it is not so in all.

A few weeks later I stepped from the cars on a dark and stormy Saturday night in another strange city. On the platform was a man with a lantern, who came to me at once with words of welcome. He took me to a carriage in waiting. We were driven to his house. There we found not only an elegant supper ready, but a company who had been invited to meet me. After a season of social enjoyment and of devotion, I was shown to the prophet’s chamber, where everything was arranged for my special comfort. I slept sweetly, and felt like preaching next day.

I was reminded of these two visits while reading the fourteenth chapter of John—how the Savior's words meet the innermost longings of our souls: "I will go and prepare a place *for you*, and I will come again and receive *you* unto myself." He does not simply assure his disciples that heaven is large enough for them all, and that they will be admitted there on application; but he tells them that each one will be expected, and that special preparation will be made for him. He also tells them that he himself will come and receive them.

A great many questions we are tempted to ask

ABOUT HEAVEN.

Where is it? What kind of a place is it? Our Savior did not think it best to gratify our curiosity as to these things. He says: "In my Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you." Some suppose that by his Father's house he means the material universe. They were walking at night toward Gethsemane. He pointed to the stars above them. "All these," he said, "are lights from the chambers in the great house of creation

which my Father built, and which he fills with his presence. In one of the chambers, or mansions, of his house I will prepare a special home for myself and for you.” Others suppose that by his Father’s house he means that central place in the universe where God manifests himself in some peculiar manner to his intelligent creatures; where a throne is set up as the symbol of his power; where the angels gather to behold his glory, and to commune with him. “In this highest dwelling-place of holy and happy spirits there yet is room. The angels do not fill all of its mansions. There are many waiting for you. Perhaps they are the mansions of the spirits that kept not their first estate. They need, however, to be refitted and furnished as the homes of redeemed men. After purchasing them for you by the agonies of Gethsemane and Calvary, I will go and get them ready for you.” Which of these expositions is the true one, or whether either of them is, we know not, and we do not need to know. The great fact that satisfies the heart is that Christ, our beloved, has a place prepared for each one of us—a child’s place in his Father’s house and ours; a place where we

will be with them, and be glorified with them; a place that we shall not have to go about hunting and knocking to get admission to when we die, but which he himself will take us to.

Miss Phelps' idea, in "Gates Ajar," that those fond of music will find

PIANOS AND GUITARS

In their heavenly mansions, and that good little children will find wonderful dolls and toys to play with, is rather materialistic. But we can not doubt that the homes of the saints will be adapted to their individual tastes and capacities for enjoyment. I believe that there will be delightful surprises in those homes; that the happy spirit will say: "How thoroughly my Savior understands me, and what personal thoughtfulness and affection he has shown in preparing a place for me. He has cared for me as fully and as tenderly as if I was the only object of his love."

Writing of Christ's mansions and his guests, I am reminded of the

GREAT RECEPTION AT BELMONT

Last week. Senator Sharon (who represents Nevada at Washington, but whose home is really

in San Francisco, at the Palace Hotel, which he owns) has a magnificent country seat at Belmont, twenty-five miles from the city. He invited a thousand guests to meet General Grant there last Wednesday evening. As the mansion is near the railroad, special trains of cars were run to accommodate the guests. The house and grounds at Belmont were brilliantly illuminated, and a splendid supper was served. All the wealth and fashion of the Pacific Coast were there. The society people regarded that reception as the great event of the season, and those who received invitations spared no expense or pains in securing toilets worthy of the occasion. Probably never before was there such a display of court dresses, of silks, satins, laces and diamonds on this side of the mountains. But what did it all amount to? There was a rush and a jam for a few hours; a formal introduction to the great General, who did not hear or remember one name in a hundred. The rich and costly viands could not be enjoyed, the crowd and pressure were so great. The host did not know personally a quarter of his guests, and could only give each a formal welcome. The mansion they

could admire and envy its owner, but none of them could stay in it even until morning. Soon after midnight the cars began to whistle, and the thousand guests had to hurry homeward sleepy and weary, some with crushed flounces, some with torn or dragged trains, and some lamenting the loss of jewels which had been dropped in the crowd and trampled under its feet. Next day there were headaches and vague memories of a brilliant but unsatisfactory scene. The rich Senator spent thousands of dollars, gratified the curiosity and vanity of a good many people, offended a good many more, who thought that they should have been invited; but did not make anybody really happy. How different from this will be the reception in the heavenly mansion: Room enough for all, a special place for each, a wedding garment for every guest, a love welcome from the Master of the feast, and a title to the place prepared for us, so that we shall go no more out forever. Thus the grandest of earthly mansions and invitations enhance by contrast the glory of the celestial. And here, too, there is no invidious discrimination, as in the case of the Belmont reception. All, all invited! "Who-

soever will, let him come." From the highways and the hedges, from the attics and the cellars, the poor and the despised of earth will be carried by angels to Abraham's bosom. They will sit down as honored guests at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

ASKING THE WAY.

THAT is a striking picture which Jeremiah paints (chapter l. 4, 5) of the return of the Jews from captivity. The children of Israel and of Judah "together, going and weeping: they shall go, and seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten." They are weary of bondage. They long for their own land, their Judean homes, and the temple in Jerusalem. They realize that they are guilty, and they weep. They are encouraged by the promises of God, and they resolve. They are brethren. They have the same sad experiences and the same rekindled

hopes. Hence they are drawn together in sympathy. They say to each other, "Come." The weeping Jew will not seek the Lord alone, but invites the weeping Israelite to go with him. Their object is to escape from captivity and return to Canaan. But as they can not do this without God's help, as he who gave them the land originally must restore it to them, they "seek the Lord their God." They pray earnestly to him before they set out on their journey. But having wept and prayed, and invited their brethren to join them, they go forward. There are no railroads across the broad desert; there are no bridges across the broad rivers; there are no graded ways over the high mountains; there are no guide-books. None of them has traveled between Jerusalem and Babylon. It is seventy years since the last of their nation were carried away. The oldest of the captives was but an infant then, and can remember nothing of the route. But one thing they know, that Jerusalem lies westward. So they turn their faces toward the setting sun. They act promptly upon such knowledge as they have. They look, and begin to move, in the direction in which they would go.

With faces thitherward, they begin to ask the way to Zion. They are anxious to go there as speedily and safely as possible. Hence, to all they meet they say: "Tell us what you know about this route. Is there a ford or a ferry over yonder river? Is there a pass through yonder mountain? Where can we strike the caravan track across the desert? Where can we find grass and water?" Thus they went on, keeping the right direction, and getting all the information they could. Like theirs was the journey of

THE FORTY-NINERS TO CALIFORNIA.

They determined to go to the land of gold. They knew that it was in the farthest West. They turned their faces toward the setting sun and started. They had only vague and general ideas of the route, so they inquired as they went on. They eagerly questioned everybody they met. They watched for the trails of those who had preceded them. They looked anxiously for passes through the mountains, and for fording-places along the rivers. For months those gold-seekers inquired their way to California with their faces thitherward.

Now, it seems to me that in these two pictures of earnest seeking there is a lesson for those who are awakened, who would like to be Christians, but who say that they don't know what to do. Imitate the captive Jews, nay, even the California gold-hunters, and you can not fail. You know, in a general way, what it is you seek, and where it is to be found. You want Christ, with his pardoning love and his sanctifying grace. Christ is revealed in the Bible. Study it earnestly. This will be setting your face thitherward. Christ is preached in the church. Go there and listen reverently. Christ is worshiped in the prayer-meeting; in it he has promised his special presence. Attend it regularly. Christ has taught us to pray; has said that men ought always to pray, and not to faint. His promise is: "Ask and ye shall receive." Then pray in your closet. On your knees, with weeping, turn toward him who died for sinners.

Perhaps you have done all this, and yet have not found peace. Then "ask the way." There is the minister, who has guided many seeking souls. Go and tell him your doubts and difficulties. There is a friend who has recently

found the Savior. Open your heart to him; his experience may help you. If there is a special inquiry meeting appointed, attend it. Don't be too proud or too sensitive to apply in any and every direction for aid. It is not a mere holiday excursion that you propose to make, but a journey from the land of bondage into the soul's promised land; a journey from the wilderness of sin in which you are lost, and in which millions have perished, unto the city of God, where peace abides within jeweled walls, and love walks white-robed along golden streets.

Years ago two young men, fellow-students, were awakened. They found that they were far from God, and in bondage. They determined to be Christians. They had been well instructed in regard to the plan of salvation, so they turned their faces Zionward. They began to attend meetings, both for preaching and for prayer. They began to study their Bibles and to pray in their closets. Days passed, weeks passed, and they found no peace. At length one said: "I must go and talk with somebody about this matter. I must get help from those who have experience." He visited a minister, who unmasked some of Satan's

batteries for him. He went to the inquiry meeting, announced himself as a sinner seeking Christ, and asked Christians to pray for him. In a few days he was rejoicing in hope, and in a few years he was preaching the gospel.

The other student said: "This is not a matter for me and the minister, or for me and the prayer-meeting; but a matter between me and God. I will settle it with him in my room. No one but God shall know anything of my seeking until I find." This pride, or morbid sensitiveness, or whatever it was, Satan used as a snare to hold him captive. He read and prayed earnestly for some months; then became discouraged, gave up seeking, turned his face away from Christ, permitted the tempter to fill his mind with bitter thoughts, concluded that Christianity was a delusion, entered the gloomy path of skepticism, went on from that to the downward way of vice, and died without hope.

The primal condition of all success is

EARNESTNESS.

I saw a frantic mother once in a crowd, who had lost her child. She did not wait for intro-

ductions, but ran hither and thither, crying to all she met: "Have you seen a stray child? Oh, help me, for I have lost my child!" And I recall a touching story that was in one of the missionary journals, years ago. I wish that I could find it and reprint it. A heathen on some ocean island had heard of Christ, that he died for sinners, and that through him sinners might be saved. He saw a ship at anchor. He went to it in his canoe, and said to the sailors: "Do you know about Christ?" They told him that he was worshiped by many in the land from which they came, but they did not know much about him. He begged them to take him to that land. They consented. He worked his passage to London. He went ashore and began asking the people in the streets, in broken English: "Do you know Christ? Where is Christ who saves sinners?" The men in the hurrying crowds thought he was crazy, and paid no attention to him. At length he met an earnest Christian. The question thrilled his soul. He thought, perhaps God has sent that dark-browed seeker here. He took him home, told him the story of Jesus, and the heathen was converted. So do men seek, and

so sure are they to find, when they are in earnest. But how many, lounging in the porches of God's house, does the story of this heathen rebuke? They want to be Christians; they hope to be some time or other. They look longingly Zionward, now and then, at a communion season or at a funeral. But they keep all their longing and hopes, and such feeble efforts as they make, to themselves. They will not confess that they are seekers of salvation. They will not ask the way to Zion.

I have no doubt that people have been converted who never asked help from anybody but God. Yet these are exceptional cases. The ministry and the church are instituted to aid those who set their faces Zionward, and he is wise who promptly seeks their aid. Oh, if all whose thoughts at this season are turned toward the gospel would inquire the way, how many would be glad to help them with their counsel and their prayers! And thus that feeble, flickering flame of desire might be fanned into a bright and glowing hope—a hope full of glory and eternal life. Be in earnest, and you will not be afraid or ashamed to ask.

THE THREE DOORS.

I LIKE to take one of God's metaphors and study it, by comparing Scripture with Scripture. It is wonderful how he can use the most familiar things to illustrate the sublimest truths. We are opening and shutting doors almost every hour, and yet, whenever we do so, we ought to be reminded of our own immortal natures, of Christ and of the Holy Spirit. Not to go back into the Old Dispensation of types and shadows, we find in the New Testament a threefold use of the door.

First, Christ says, in Revelation iii. 20: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." We all know what this means. God has created us in his own image. He has endowed us with a free, moral nature. Our characters are our castles. No one is to enter rudely or by force. The will is the doorkeeper. He lets in whom he *wills*. Those influences and agencies that we do not choose we bar out, and they knock in vain. To this castle, that the Creator has given us, he himself comes. He comes not to storm it as rebellious, not to demand its submission, but as a visitor, as a friend; nay, even as a suppliant.

He comes, respecting the rights of the owner of the castle, and the prerogative of the porter. He knocks. Why does he knock? Why does he want to enter? With beautiful simplicity of language, but wonderful suggestiveness, he adds: "I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me." That appeal for admission is purely benevolent. The object is to bring into the castle a feast from the banquet-hall of heaven—to begin on earth a friendship and communion that shall be the foretaste and earnest of immortal blessedness. And yet, even the heart of the Christian is often bolted and barred against the Son of God. That scene, so touchingly presented in Canticles v. 2, 3, has been repeated again and again in the experience of believers. We fall into carnal slumber, and hear not the voice of our beloved. And all around the world how many hearts are beating at which Christ knocks in vain. Oh, the wondrous, patient love of him who stands at the door! Whenever we knock for admission at the house of neighbor or friend, and hear the prompt invitation, "Come in!" let us think how we treat this divine Visitor, and how the world treats him! That every

door we look upon may stimulate us to deeper penitence, and to greater Christian fidelity.

But He who knocks at our door represents himself as "the door" (John x. 9). "By me," he says, "if any man enter in, he shall be saved." If we receive Christ into our hearts, he will receive us into his home—the home that he has prepared for those that love him. The use of the figure here is in harmony with its use in the passage in Revelation. A prince goes to a cottage; he seeks the heart and the hand of a peasant girl; he says: "If you love me, if you receive me freely into the castle of your affections, then I will receive you as my queen into the royal palace. As the humble door here opens to me, so opens the great door there. If your heart is shut against me, my home must be shut against you." Thus these two doors—that lowly one within us, which creaks as it moves on rusty hinges, and the gate of pearl, that swings on golden hinges—are united by the electric wire of grace. As one opens, so does the other. When this remains closed, that must also. If the Savior knocks in vain at our hearts, we knock in vain at heaven's portal.

But Paul, as an inspired apostle of Christ, uses this word door to illustrate openings for Christian work—opportunities for usefulness. He writes, in 1 Corinthians xvi. 19, of a great and effectual door that was opened to him, and, in 2 Corinthians ii. 12, he says: “A door was opened unto me of the Lord.” He does not mean the door of a house to live, or the door of a church to preach in, but the door of men’s hearts. He means that God’s Spirit so went before him, or wrought with him, that his hearers were ready to receive his words. This use of the word makes it symbolize the work of the Holy Ghost. He does not force his way into the castles at whose doors Christ stands knocking, nor does he give Christ’s messengers, whom he accompanies, battering-rams to beat down those doors; but he gives such force and sweetness to the proclamation of mercy that the porter is compelled to draw back bolt and bar and let the Savior in. The door which the Spirit opens is opened effectually. The work of the Christian, aided by the Spirit, is connected with heaven, and its pearly portal, as the work of Christ is. When we enter the doors of awakened sinners’ hearts—taking

in with us the love of God in Christ Jesus—we bind those hearts with the cords of grace to the home of glory. Yes, when in our congregations an effectual door is opened, we know that the door in the jasper wall, the door that opens on the golden street, swings on its hinges. The angels come down to gather up the tears of penitence. They hasten back to hold them up before God as priceless jewels, and to sing over them anthems of joy. Nay, more; when the effectual door opens here they put a golden plate, with the name of a redeemed sinner, upon the door of one of the “many mansions,” and they say, “this is his home.” They adorn and beautify it for him until he is ready to leave the tent-life on earth, and become a citizen of heaven. Thus this figure, so familiar, is associated with the whole of Christ’s work in, and for, the souls of men. It is door-opening from the time that he came forth from the guarded tomb of Joseph, the counselor, until all his redeemed shall enter in through the gates into the city.

BULK AND VALUE.

SKEPTICS sneer at what they call our "Blood Theology." They say it is absurd to claim that the sufferings of one being, even if he was God's Son, could atone for the sins of the world. His blood could not be so "precious" as to redeem the souls of millions. But these shallow critics should not talk so flippantly about the relations of bulk or quantity to value in spiritual things until they can explain some facts in the material world. For instance: The Emperor of Russia has a diamond as large as a pigeon's egg, that is worth four millions of dollars. That diamond is nothing but crystallized charcoal, and yet how much charcoal it would buy! If a ton of charcoal is worth ten dollars, that diamond would buy 400,000 tons. Its weight is one ounce. There are 32,000 ounces in a ton. There are 1,280,000,000 in 400,000 tons. Hence the Emperor's diamond would pay for 1,280,000,000 times its weight and bulk in uncrystallized carbon. This almost incredible enhancement in value results from that arrangement of the atoms of carbon which we call crystallization. And can not God, who

makes diamonds out of charcoal, by uniting a human nature with the divine, give to Christ's blood a preciousness that shall make it adequate to the redemption of our race? Now, we would not measure our Savior's intrinsic worth, or that of his sufferings, in diamonds, or in anything material. But while there are such facts in the world around us, skeptics ought to be more modest in their criticisms.

The Christian does not rest his faith in the power of Jesus' blood upon analogies. He has two demonstrations, each of which is perfect. First, God says that this blood is given for the life of the world, that we may all have redemption in it, that it cleanseth from all sin. Now, God knows all about sin, all about the penalty of the law which the sinner has broken, all about heaven and the character needed for admission there. He tells us that the blood is sufficient, and he gives us in Revelation a vision of a great multitude around his throne who washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Those divine declarations ought to satisfy us. They do satisfy those who accept the Bible as from God.

But this testimony in regard to the value of the blood is confirmed by the experience of the believer. He has washed in the fountain and proved for himself its cleansing power. He has sought, and by faith secured, the sprinkling of that blood, and knows that it purged his conscience from dead works to serve the living God. (Hebrews ix. 14.)

Do we, in our preaching, make enough of

THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST?

Would there not be more life and power in the Church if her ministers dwelt more upon the great doctrine of his vicarious death? It is only by faith in that doctrine that the Christian can have peace with God, and can believe that God is able to save the world.

While celebrating the Lord's Supper yesterday, and thinking of this precious blood, I was reminded of an incident of my boyhood. When visiting a family in the valley of Wyoming, the lady of the house took from her jewel-box a piece of common granite with a few red spots upon it. Tears filled her eyes as she said: "I would not sell that piece of rock for many times

its weight in gold." Why? During the Indian massacre in that valley her father was captured by the savages. After torturing him awhile, they placed his head upon a rock and cut it off with a tomahawk. After the Indians retired, the body was found near that rock, identified and buried. The rock itself was sprinkled with blood. The family believed that it was the blood of him whom they loved and mourned. They had the portion of the rock on which these spots were cut off. They divided it into as many pieces as there were children of that father, and each kept his piece as a sacred memorial. The granite, of little value in itself, became precious to the members of that family because it was sprinkled with that blood. So, thought I, all those Christians ought to be dear to me, for I trust that the marks of the precious blood—the blood of Him who gave his life for me—is upon them. We should love the brethren, though in many respects some of them are not particularly lovable, for Christ's sake.

And this reminds me of the legend of

THE JEWISH MAIDEN.

It was the night of the first passover. She was

the first-born in her Hebrew home. She lay sick of a fever. But she heard the order that came from God, through Moses, about sprinkling the blood on the door-posts. She knew that the death-angel would pass along at midnight, and that wherever he saw not the blood he would slay the first-born. As the evening advanced, and she heard the family feasting in an adjoining room, she became intensely anxious about that blood. She cried at length: "Father! father! is it nearly twelve o'clock? Are the door-posts sprinkled?" "Yes, daughter," he replied; "I ordered it done an hour ago." "But, father," she cried again, "are you sure? Father, you know that my life depends upon it, and I would like to see it with my own eyes. Father, won't you carry me to the door that I may look upon the blood?" She persisted in this plea, until the father, to gratify her, took her in his arms to the door. They looked, and lo! the blood was not there. He to whom the order had been given had neglected it. Easily may we imagine how they hastened to bring the precious drops and sprinkle the door. Scarcely had they done so when they heard the

rustling of wings and knew that the death-angel had passed by.

Need I moralize upon this legend? Does it not apply to the homes of many of my readers? If the children, there are not anxious themselves about the blood, like this Jewish maiden, their parents ought to be anxious for them. They ought to be sure that every heart in the home circle has been sprinkled; for who can tell when the death-angel may come?

THE PRAYER OF FAITH.

I SEE in the papers another case reported of healing the sick by the prayer of faith. A young lady in Buffalo had been bed-ridden and helpless for months. A number of persons agreed to unite in prayer, at a certain hour, for her restoration. She was also to pray, and then, believing that her and their prayers would be answered, she was to try to get up. At the time appointed, she made the effort and succeeded. Though she had not been able even to turn herself in bed, for a long time, she got up and walked about, and, in a few days, was entirely well.

Such is the statement of intelligent Christian people, who, it is claimed, could not have been deceived, and would not deceive others. There was a similar case reported from some place in New England a few months ago. It is claimed that the statement in James v. 15, "the prayer of faith shall save the sick," is for all time; that if such prayer is offered the Lord will raise him up, and that, when our prayers for the sick fail to be effectual, it is because we have not faith; we do not expect a specific and immediate answer.

Some commentators contend that this promise in regard to the prayer of faith—that it should save the sick—belongs only to the apostolic age—the age of miracles; that to certain persons was given the gift of healing, and that by sending for them, and, thus showing faith in their miraculous power, they were enabled to exercise it. But I can not accept of this explanation, for the direction is to send, not for persons miraculously endowed, but for the elders of the church; and there is no pretense that all elders were workers of miracles. I can not doubt that the promise is for us, and for our children, as well as for

the primitive believers; and that, if we had more faith in the power of prayer, we should oftener receive specific answers to our prayers. Few Christians, nowadays, seem to believe that prayer is of any special value to the sick; for, when disease comes and prostrates them, or some member of their families, they send at once for the doctor, but don't send for the minister and the elders of the church. If the minister chance to hear of the sickness and come, he is invited, or, at least, permitted to pray; but no one, not even the minister himself, seems to expect that the prayer will have any specific influence upon the disease or upon the body of the sufferer. The prayer may comfort him, may help him to bear affliction with patience, but, for being raised up, he depends upon the physician, and not upon prayer.

It is no wonder, then, that the cases where the sick are saved, physically, by prayer, are few and far between; for faith in the healing power of prayer has almost become obsolete in the Church. The few who still believe in it are regarded as fanatics, and, being so regarded, they are tempted to go to extremes, and to claim, as we stated

above, that, in all cases where the prayer of faith is offered for the sick, the Lord will raise them up.

Now, I would gladly see the faith of the Church in the power of prayer increased a hundred-fold; I would not discourage any one from believing implicitly in the power and the love of God. I am glad that there are some in this material and skeptical age who receive, literally, the assurance that whatsoever we ask of God, believing, we shall receive, though they may not always be judicious in the statement or the application of the statement. Yet I can not, of course, believe that prayer is the effectual and only needed remedy for all manner of sickness—that whoever prays in faith, and calls in the elders to pray with and for him, will surely, in every case, be healed.

But what right have I to limit statements so full and explicit as that of James, or as those of the Savior himself, as recorded in Mark ix. 23 and xi. 24, John xv. 16 and xvi. 23? I would not dare to do so, save on the authority of God himself.

The Bible tells us that God sends afflictions;

that they are not only to punish sin, but also to purify the hearts of his people, and to promote their growth in grace. To claim that, in all cases, he will heal the sick as soon as the prayer of faith is offered in their behalf would be putting this dispensation of his justice and his love out of his own control, and into that of those who pray. John, in his first Epistle (chapter v. 14, 15), says: "If we ask anything, according to his will, he heareth us," etc. And our Savior, in Gethsemane, said: "Not my will but thine be done." And Paul was heard, when he asked that the thorn in the flesh be removed. Yet, instead of removing it, God promised that his grace should be sufficient. Again, if sickness in all cases could have been removed by the prayer of faith, why did Paul leave Trophimus sick at Miletum? (See 2 Timothy iv. 20.) Why did he not gather the elders around him and pray, so that Trophimus should be restored at once to health, and accompany him on his journey? It is manifest that there must be, in every prayer, a submission of the human will to the will of God. We can never have a faith that will dictate to him; that will insist upon special answers without any refer-

ence to his wisdom, for faith is the gift of God, and he never can so inspire it that its exercise will dishonor him, or derogate from his sovereignty. Any faith which does this is wicked presumption, and any apparent answers to such faith are a delusion.

But we must not press the fact of God's sovereignty so far as to discourage prayer for specific blessings, or even earnestness and importunity in such prayers. If, when we ask him to heal the sick, we feel that such healing would be right—would be for his glory; if the Holy Spirit seems to indite the petition; if the kindling of desire, as we pray, becomes a glowing flame of devotion, then we may conclude that God is giving us faith; that the specific object we are praying for is in accordance with his will, and we may press our suit, believing that we shall have what we ask for.

The saints, in all ages, have prayed for temporal blessings; have asked God to give or to remove some specific thing. They did not believe that the results of prayer are spiritual merely; that it has no definite relation to the things of this life. If my child is sick, and I ask God to spare its life, does God answer only by giving me grace to bear

the loss of the child, or does he, in many cases, restore the child, in answer to prayer? The feeling and conviction of the most pious men and women, for more than eighteen centuries, that God does bestow temporal blessings, in response to our asking, ought to be decisive; and, though this feeling and conviction may, in some cases, go too far, and become fanatical, yet the greater danger is in the other direction—the direction of skepticism—as to the value of prayer. Well does Dr. Dwight say: “In our zeal to correct the mistake of some ardent but injudicious Christians, let us take care not to commit or countenance a greater mistake. It is better to have something of the heats and irregularities of enthusiasm than the stupor of a cold and heartless philosophy.”

TWO PASTORS.

THEY were installed over two prominent churches about the same time. No matter where the churches were. The men, I trust, are in heaven. They were both able ministers; talented, edu-

cated, earnest, conscientious. But they started with radically different ideas of the pastoral office. Bro. A thought he was so wedded to the church that called him that it was almost a sin for him to take any interest in anything else. If asked to go and assist a neighboring minister in a protracted meeting he would say, "How can I leave my own church? It needs all my time and strength." If invited to speak at a temperance meeting, he would reply, "My people differ in their views on the subject, and I might offend some of them. My great business is to cultivate peace and harmony in my church." If an appeal came from some Missionary Board, or from some feeble, struggling church in the vicinity, he would throw it into his waste-basket—for how could they respond to all those outside calls when the church needed a new organ, or to be frescoed, or something else? Bro. A lived in his church, like a tortoise in its shell. His ambition was to make it the model church of the region. What was the result? He secured an elegant house of worship, a fine, artistic choir, a fashionable, self-appreciative congregation. But he had no revivals. The contributions of his

congregation to benevolent objects were meager. His influence and that of his people was confined to a narrow home circle, and did not amount to much, spiritually, even there. As years rolled on, Bro. A began to realize that his ministry was a failure. He mourned over it. He could not understand why the field in which he toiled so hard should be barren. He never seemed, however, to wake up to the fact that he had ignored the great law of true development, that he had petted and coddled his church when he should have taught it to work for others—to exercise self-denial.

Bro. B's ideas ran to the other extreme. He thought it was well enough to be the pastor of a strong church; but this was only the fulcrum for his lever. He could not be satisfied with moving a parish. He wanted to move the world. Hence, he was hearing Macedonian cries all the while and from every quarter. Whenever anybody wrote, "Come, Bro. B" he thought that he must go. He attended protracted meetings, communion meetings, installations, dedications, anniversaries, etc., all over the land. He was a trustee in a dozen institutions. He was a com-

mittee-man in a score of reformatory movements. Busy, bustling, full of zeal, taking upon him the care of all the churches, feeling that he was a sort of ecclesiastical Atlas with the world on his shoulders, of course he neglected his own church. When the people remonstrated, he replied, "I am not merely your pastor, I am a minister of Christ. He said to me, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel,' and I must do it as far as I can. You must not be selfish and exacting. You ought to sympathize with me in the wide work that I am doing. You ought to esteem it an honor to sustain a pastor who is in such demand, who is one of the pillars and lights of the Church universal."

Bro. B may have been useful in a general way, but he did not build up his church. It suffered for the want of pastoral care. Its members became discouraged; and the result was that the pastoral relation was dissolved, leaving the church much weaker than when it was instituted. Bro. B missionated for awhile, then went into an agency of some kind, and, after a very active but miscellaneous kind of life, went, as I hope, to heaven.

Now, between the two extremes of these good brethren lies the golden mean of true pastoral fidelity and efficiency. The pastor does not belong to the church that calls him as a laborer's time and strength belong to the man who employs and pays him. The minister of Christ is not a hireling. He is the servant of the Lord, and of the Church for the Lord's sake. Hence, while he will give to the people of his pastoral charge his warmest love and his best energies, he will not forget that the field is the world; that the great Shepherd has other sheep in the wilderness. He will look after the feeble churches around him, and try to get his people interested in them. He will quicken their liberality to the cause of missions, even if the church does not get freshly frescoed every year or two.

I have in my mind's eye another pastor, one of the most successful in our Church. He has cultivated the same field for over thirty years. He is eminently useful and popular at home. And yet his influence is felt all over the land. By correspondence, by vacation excursions, by exchanges, and by writing for the newspapers, he reaches a wide circle, and does a great deal

of good without neglecting the interests of his own church. Nay, he promotes its development by this judicious outside work; for he brings it into sympathy with the world-wide cause of Christ.

Such pastors are a great blessing, both to the churches over which they are installed and to the Church universal. Let our younger ministers understand this matter. Let them get the idea that pastoral work has both a center and a circumference. There may be too much concentration and too much diffusion. The wise undershepherd will so guide his particular flock as to keep it in sympathy with the great Shepherd and with all the sheep.

“ABOLISHED DEATH.”

THIS is what Paul says that Christ has done (2 Timothy i. 10), yet Stephen was stoned. James was slain with the sword. Paul himself did not go to heaven like Elijah, in a chariot of fire, but was beheaded at Rome. In all the ages since believers have died, and the unseen Reaper is swinging his scythe to-day throughout our

churches and our homes. Is it true, then, that Christ abolished death? Two answers may be given to this question:

First, Christ, by his own death and resurrection, has made sure the resurrection of all the dead. He has proclaimed a time when they that are in the grave shall come forth, when Death will be compelled to surrender all his victims. Paul speaks of this great event as accomplished, because it is so sure. When the British Government decreed that all the slaves in its colonies should be emancipated on the 1st of August, 1834, it was said, and truly, that England had abolished slavery, although the 1st of August had not yet come. The faith of the nation was pledged. The emancipation was as certain as if it had already been accomplished. So here.

Second, the gospel has thrown such light upon death, and what is beyond it, that it is not since what it was before. Its power to terrify and to sting is gone. Paul says that death is abolished by bringing “life and immortality to light.” (2 Timothy i. 10.) He cries (in 1 Corinthians xv. 55), “O death, where is thy sting?” and he declares (in Hebrews ii. 15) that Christ delivers

those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. Now we may properly speak of anything as abolished when its nature and influence are changed; when it has lost that which has been its distinguishing characteristic. If I extract the poison fang of a serpent and render it harmless, I am as safe as if I had killed the serpent. I have abolished the fear and the danger. So in the case of this King of Terrors.

Satan had the power of death. (Hebrews ii. 15.) He used it to terrify and enslave men. When Christ became a man, Satan thought that he would slay him, and triumph in his death. But he found in his victim a conqueror. He was like the fish that seizes the bait, and gets a barbed hook in its mouth. Satan was vanquished in the death of Christ, and now he has no "power of death" over those who believe in Christ. He can not terrify them with shadowy fears. He can not pierce them with the sting of sin, for they know that Christ has died for their sins.

Then, in regard to the Christian, Death is *now* abolished. Instead of the King of Terrors, he is the messenger of God to summon his guests

to the banquet of immortality. Look at the death of the first Christian martyr. Was it not unlike any previous death? He saw heaven opened and Jesus standing at the right hand of God to welcome him. He cried, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,” and then, says Luke, “he fell asleep.” Was that dying? Was there any fear there? Was there any sting of sin there? Was there any power of Satan there? No. It was as triumphant a passage from earth to heaven as that of Elijah. And like this is the death of every believer.

The Athenians wondered that Socrates was not afraid to die. The jailer said that all his other prisoners raged and swore at him when he told them that they must drink the poison. The calmness of this greatest of heathen philosophers was a mystery even to his pupils. But though he was willing to go out into the spirit world, believing in the immortality of the soul, he had no joyous or triumphant feeling, for he had no knowledge of a divine Savior, or of a home in heaven. If he had had our knowledge of and hope in Christ, how different his view of death would have been. His cheerful submis-

sion to the inevitable was the best that philosophy could do. But the gospel can do far more; it enables multitudes to rejoice in the hour of death.

We ought to cultivate a cheerful view of the spirit's translation from its house of clay to its mansion of glory. There is too much of the old bondage in the hearts of professed followers of Christ. Let us realize fully that he has abolished death, that what we call by that name is the coming of the Savior to take us to himself, and can we not all say with the apostle John, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus?"

OUTSIDE CHRISTIANS.

A DISTINGUISHED minister and lecturer has been telling the people on this Coast that some of the best Christians are outside of the Church—that though a man may deny the divinity of Christ, and the inspiration of the Bible, yet if he is honest, generous, etc., he is a true Christian. "The true Christian is he who has the fruit of the Spirit (see Galatians v. 22-24), whether he is a Hebrew

or a Brahmin, or a heathen or an infidel." The sermon in which these strange statements were made was delivered in the Grand Opera House. The statements themselves were applauded by the audience, and next day, I am told, at the Stock Boards, and even in the saloons, men were saying to each other: "Well, thank God, we are not hypocrites, as the preacher says many of the church-members are. We are clever, whole-souled fellows; pretty good Christians after all, if we don't go to church; guess we will come out all right. Let's go and take a drink."

This fling at the Church by one of its ordained ministers is as illogical as it is ungenerous. As it expresses a somewhat extensive and popular error of the day, it is worthy of some attention. The idea is that Christianity may exist without the Church, and even without the Bible. Now, what is Christianity? Let us divide the word into its component parts. Christianity is Christ-ianity. It is the religion of Christ. It owes its existence on earth solely to Christ. It is the embodiment of his teachings and his Spirit. But what did Christ think about the Church? He organized it. As he entered a human body in order to labor

among men and to suffer for them, so he put the truth and love that he revealed into an organization in which the Holy Spirit was to be incarnated. The Church is Christ's body now, as truly as the human form of the Son of Mary was during his earthly life. The Christian Church to-day is the Church that Christ established. It is the Church which he loved, and for which he died. It is the body of which he is the Head. To talk about Christianity as apart from and independent of the Church, is like talking about a man without a body, a State without any constitution or form of government, about steam operating simply as steam without any cylinders, or valves, or wheels, or levers. Only diffuse the spirit of Christianity, say these modern illuminati, and all will be lovely. That subtle spirit will overspread and renovate the world. Only generate steam and let it go out into the air. Let it fill the atmosphere with its hot, white vapor, and all the cars will run, and all the steamboats, and all the factories, and every farmer will have a steam thresher of his own ready whenever he needs it. How nonsensical!

And, forsooth, the Hebrew who calls Christ a

blasphemer, the infidel who calls him an impostor, may be true Christians notwithstanding — real Christ-men, though they despise and reject Christ! How transparent the absurdity of such assertions, and yet the Christian minister makes them, and the Christ-hating, Christ-scorning multitude applaud them!

Let the Savior's own test be applied to these outside Christians: "By their fruits ye shall know them." What has been done by them for the renovation of the world? What benevolent institutions do they sustain? What missionaries do they send to the heathen? Ever since Christ was on earth, all the streams that have purified and blessed it have come from the Church. He who proposes to dispense with the organized Christian Church, simply proposes to do nothing for the moral renovation of the race.

THE PORTER AND THE ELEVATOR.

SITTING in one of our hotels the other day I saw a porter bring a heavy trunk to the elevator. He sat down on a cushioned seat, and he and his

burden were taken up to the fourth story. I thought how porters used to carry such trunks up the long stairways, and imagined that they must invoke many blessings upon the man who invented the elevator. And then I thought again: Let that elevator represent the freely offered grace of God. Suppose I read printed upon it, "Cast thy burden on the Lord." Suppose instead of the porter with a trunk, there stands before it a Christian with his load of anxieties and cares. He is weary and heavy-laden. He sighs and groans. He looks at the inscription, shakes his head, and begins to climb the stairway. "What is the matter, my brother; don't you see the elevator?"

"Yes, I see it; but I can't believe that it is meant for me. I am not sure that if I went into it with my load, it would take me up to the fourth story. The elevator has all it can do carrying better people than I am—people whose burdens are not so heavy as mine. I am a poor unworthy sinner, and I ought to be grateful that there is a stairway for me to climb up by."

Would any porter or guest in a building where there was an elevator be as foolish as some Chris-

tians are? How ungrateful, as well as senseless, to go about burden-bowed and sad when God comes to us with such invitations and promises.

How precious is the inspired exhortation in 1 Peter v. 7: "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." He is a care-carrier for you. Can we find an illustration of the folly of the care-worn Christian with such a verse in his Bible? No; we shall have to invent one. Yonder is a train of cars; a traveler comes to it with his ticket, dragging a heavy trunk. He sees a car on which "Baggage" is painted in large letters. In the door of that car stands a baggage-man, who cries: "Bring your trunk here and I will give you a check for it." But he shakes his head, and drags it to the platform of the passenger-car. The brakeman says: "Don't bring that trunk here; take it to the baggage-car." Again he shakes his head. The train is about to start. He gets on the platform, draws his trunk up so that it rests partly on the step of the car, but must be held all the time or it will slip off and be lost. And there, as the train rushes on, stands that passenger holding himself by the railing of the platform with one hand and his trunk with the other, sigh-

ing, groaning all the way. His trunk ought to be in the baggage-car, and he ought to be in the passenger-car. There is no necessity for his being on the platform with his baggage. Nay, he has no business there. He is violating the rules of the road. He is annoying and defying the officers in charge of the train. That passenger I never saw, and never expect to. But I have seen Christians just like him—Christians who insist upon being miserable when God has made the most ample provision for their comfort and happiness.

CUNNINGLY DEvised FABLES.

PETER writes in his second Epistle (Chapter 1, v. 16): "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the coming and power of our Lord Jesus Christ." He does not say silly fables, but "cunningly devised fables." It would be easy to show that even if the Gospel story is a fabrication, it is the most ingenious one ever devised by the wit of man. Just think how, for eighteen centuries, it has taken hold of the minds and hearts of millions. It has

charmed the scholar amid his most refined speculations. It has lured the savage from his orgies of blood. No story since time began has been so popular and so potent. Compared with it, how senseless all the mythologies of Greece and Rome, of China, Persia and Hindostan! How they grow old and pass away, while it, though venerable, is ever fresh and vigorous; suits every age, every clime, every state of society, every human condition and want. A fiction whose influence is thus wide as the world and enduring as time, which anticipates the progress of man, and is ready to respond to each new development of the science and civilization of the ages, must have been devised by the most transcendent genius of the race. But who was that genius? What is his history? A young man reared in a carpenter-shop in an obscure village, who was executed as a criminal when but thirty-three years old. Ah! that man, as a man, had not, nor any of his illiterate followers, cunning enough to devise this story; hence we must conclude, with Peter, that the writers of it were "moved by the Holy Ghost"—that the hero of it is "the Lord Jesus Christ."

Some shallow skeptics say that the Gospel story is not only false but foolish; that it is full of inconsistencies and absurdities; that they could themselves get up a better system of religion and not half try. Well, let them do it. Let them devise a fable that shall supplant Christianity. Let them give us a hero superior to Jesus of Nazareth—a model man—wiser, purer, more original than he was. Let them so arrange the plot of the story that the world will be interested in it; that it will stir the hearts of millions; that it will transform their characters and lives. Let them start with all the advantages our Christian civilization gives, and make a book that shall lead us on to a higher and better civilization.

It is much easier to criticize than to excel, to find fault than to get up that which shall be faultless, to destroy than to create. Any idiot can take a watch and crush it, but it requires skill and time to make a watch. The modern opponents of Christianity call themselves "Positivists," but they are really negativists. They propose to take from us a story that has had wonderful vitality and power for more than sixty generations, and to give us nothing in its place. We do not mean to

be cheated and robbed in that way. We do not mean to abandon our ship in mid-ocean unless they will bring us a raft, at least, in its place.

That advertisement of Dr. McCosh's for a new religion was a splendid piece of irony. Let the skeptics of the day come together—materialists, spiritists, rationalists, transcendentalists. Let them agree upon something. Let them get up a cunningly devised fable, an ingenious substitute for Christianity. Let them start it on a rival mission. Let them try to supplant our story with a wiser and more powerful one. This will test the matter fairly. Until they do this they are but dogs barking at the wheels of a chariot as it rolls on its triumphal way. They only call the attention of the world to the progress that they are powerless to arrest.

“GROWING OLD.”

Is this expression correct? Should we speak of old age as a growth? Physically, it is the reverse of this. The body which has developed from infancy to youth, and from youth to the ma-

turity of manhood or womanhood, begins to decay. The senses become dull; the step is tottering; the blood is chilled; the pulse is languid; and often the mind sympathizes with the body. It loses its elasticity; it shrinks from the scenes of excitement in which it once delighted; it covets quiet and repose. There are multitudes to whom age is in no sense a growth, but a slow, sad crumbling of their earthly house. But there are some who can say with Paul: "Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." These are they who bring forth fruit in old age. To them loss of sight and hearing, and all bodily infirmities, are like the pruning of a tree. They stimulate the true growth—the growth of the soul.

Put a child in a tent that is exposed to the storm; the canvass and cordage will rot, the stakes will decay or be loosened, the tent will tremble with the wind. It will admit the rain. People will say it is rotten and must soon fall. But does the child cease to grow because the tent decays? Nay; if healthy, it will grow more vigorously, as the rents in the canvass admit the free air. Like that child in the tent is the Christian

in the body. Paul calls it the earthly house of our tabernacle—that is, of our tent life. It is to be dissolved, and we are to move from it into a house eternal in the heavens. Then, as the process of dissolution goes on, it shows not that the spirit is failing, but that it has become too large and strong for its tabernacle; that the fluttering of its wings, as they unfold for flight, is shaking the frail prison in which it has been confined.

In the trees in our orchard there are two kinds of sap—that which produces wood and leaves, and that which produces fruit. If the former is stimulated, the tree becomes large and looks thrifty, but is barren. If the wood growth is checked by pruning, the fruit growth is stimulated, and the tree that seems less thrifty, nay, that is mutilated or marred, becomes loaded with fruit. We are like trees in this respect. If we have health and bodily vigor, we enjoy the world, we are tempted to seek happiness in sensual gratifications. We almost forget that we have souls. But when sickness comes, or old age dulls the senses, the hidden life begins to bud and blossom; fruit is produced unto righteousness and eternal life.

Let us, then, not speak of growing old as if it were sad and mournful. Even Cicero, with only philosophy to comfort him, was wiser than that. Old age may be the period of our noblest growth. It may be the time in which we shall begin to enjoy the best fruitage of our toils and studies, and, above all, of our faith in God.

It is an especial privilege to grow old. More than three-quarters of our race die in early or middle life. Less than one in five reaches the sixtieth year. And we do not grow old alone. Those who were boys with us, if they survive, are gray-haired like ourselves. Many that we knew at school, at college, or later in life, are daily going onward, from old age into the spirit world; and there is a great company waiting to welcome us on that mysterious shore. If our growth in years is represented by a corresponding growth of grace, and if our latest years are our best ones, as the older a healthy tree is, the larger the new ring of wood formed around its trunk, then we may rejoice in gray hairs, as showing our ripening for heaven, and in the failure of our bodily powers, as the proof that the Great Husbandman is loosening us from earth, and preparing to transplant

us into the paradise above. If growing old is growing heavenward, it is the best of all growths. A true life is not like a day on the earth, with its morning, noon and evening, ever ending in night. It is not like a path that turns on a down grade and ends in darkness. It is the path of the just (the justified), that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

MUSIC.

WHAT is there in music that attracts and delights all classes of people, the old and the young, the educated and the ignorant? Has any philosopher been able to analyze its influence? It is one of the facts, like the love of beauty, which we must accept without trying to understand them. But it is evident that this susceptibility is one of the strongest and most abiding in our nature; and also that it is one that we possess in common with the angels. Job tells us of the first oratorio of the creation, when "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy."

We read in Genesis that the harp and organ were invented before the flood, and perhaps Jubal got up musical concerts to entertain the antediluvians.

God made music an important part of his worship under the Old Dispensation. He showed thereby that he himself shares in that love for it which he has planted in our natures. He shows also that it may be made to promote our moral culture. The greatest of lawgivers, Moses; the greatest of Judah's kings, David and Solomon; the greatest of the prophets, Isaiah—were poets. They wrote that the people might sing. In the Christian Church, from its institution in that upper room where they sang a hymn, to the present time, music has been cultivated as a most appropriate, if not indispensable, means of expressing the heart's adoration and love.

We are not surprised, then, to find in the Apocalypse that there is a great deal of music in heaven. We read in the fifth chapter of a new song which the four beasts, and four and twenty elders, sang to the Lamb, saying: "Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain." This song is caught up by the angels, ten thousand times ten thou-

sand, and thousands of thousands. (Verses 11 and 12.) And then, in the next verse, every creature in heaven and on earth is represented as joining in the grand doxology: "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever." Here was the first Musical Festival of Redemption—the first grand concert of the New Dispensation in heaven.

But there is a second concert described in this wonderful book. In the fourteenth chapter we are told that the Lamb stood on Mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty and four thousand, who sang as it were a new song before the throne. This song no man could learn but those who were redeemed from the earth. The words of this song are not given. The angels do not join in it, though no doubt they listen to it with deep interest. It is new; its melodies are peculiar. It is, we may believe, a composition of Christ himself, who evidently leads the choir, setting forth in fitting words and music the joys and glories of redeeming love. Solomon's Canticles are called the Song of Songs. But this will be the real song of songs—the most perfect anthem since time began

—the crowning anthem of immortal blessedness and joy. Who, then, are the singers that God and angels shall thus listen to? The angel tells the writer (chapter vii. 14), the hundred and forty-four thousand “are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

Here is a fact that excites our wonder: The choir of the Son of God, the choir which makes the newest and best music of heaven, is not composed of the great singers of the earth, or of those which have been learned and eloquent among men, but of those who have suffered here—of those who have been despised and persecuted. Their spirits are tuned by sorrow to express the highest and holiest emotions of the redeemed. Christ, the great Leader, comes to them in their earthly trials, and awakens faith. Then there are “songs in the night,” strange feelings of rapture amid scenes of deepest gloom, music like that of Paul and Silas in the dungeon at Philippi. These are the rehearsals. These are bringing the soul of the Christian harper up to concert pitch, so that he can join in the great song on Mount Zion. That is to be a song of

the heart—a song of Christian experience—a song which only those who have suffered and been redeemed on the earth can learn. Who will not want to hear that new song? Nay; who will not want to join in singing it? Who would not rather have a place in that choir, than be the most popular vocalist on earth? Parepa and Patti, no doubt, often sing with heavy hearts. But there the melody will come from the heart itself. It will be the outgush of its richest experiences and of its highest raptures. And it will not be the song of a day, but the life-song of each singer. Its melody will flow out fuller and sweeter as the ages roll on. It will be the expression in words and music of immortal blessedness.

Then, courage, my careworn brother, my sister, heart-sore and sad. There may be a place and harp for you on Mount Zion. If you truly love the Son of God, and yet are a sufferer, you have the evidence in your own experience that he is training you to join in the music of heaven. Yet a few days and these weary rehearsals will be over, and you will stand in white robes, and sing such music as heaven itself shall love to hear!

THE DITCH AND THE RIVER.

OUR ditch for irrigating is half a mile long. Before it reaches the point where we begin to use it the volume of water is diminished fully one-half. It grows gradually less and less all the way. The soil absorbs it; the sun evaporates it. But the river, which starts in a mountain spring, and is a mere rivulet at first, grows broader and deeper all the way. It pours into the ocean ten-fold, a hundred-fold more water than it started with. Why this difference? The river is fed by fresh springs and by tributary streams. The new supplies they bring it more than make up for its losses. Hence, though it is watering the earth continually, though it quenches the thirst of flocks and herds, yet it gains while it gives. Man made the ditch, and it is a specimen of the best that he can do. God made the river, and it illustrates the riches of his grace. What we call natural sources of enjoyment—those of the senses, of the intellect, and of the human affections—are limited. They fill our capacities and desires for a time; but, as the years roll on, they become less and less satisfying. The current of our peace

becomes feebler and feebler. A worldly man, who has nothing to enjoy but the good things of this life, experiences the truth of that sadly eloquent description in Ecclesiastes (chapter xii.). Eyes dim, ears dull, the grasshopper a burden, desires failing; the memory weak, the body feeble, the world more and more lonely and dark and cold. But they that wait on the Lord "renew their strength." "He giveth more grace." "As the outward man perisheth, the inward man is renewed day by day." Well, then, does the prophet compare the peace that God imparts to a river. (Isaiah xlvi. 18.) It is not only unfailing, but it is ever increasing. It is fed by fresh supplies of the water of life all the way. The older the true believer, the happier he is; for he has a richer experience of God's love, a growing likeness to God himself, and a clearer title to his heavenly home. He sits in the land of Beulah, fanned by breezes from the celestial shore, and seeing in the visions of faith its gates of pearl swinging open to let him in. I know of nothing on earth more beautiful than a cheerful, hopeful, happy old age. And such an old age is the heritage only of those who trust in Christ. As the

head-spring of the river that flows so grandly into the sea is far up among the hills, so the life of faith, which ends in a triumphant death, must begin in youth, and must grow with our growth. Conversion in old age will, doubtless, secure salvation, as did conversion on the cross; but the piety that blesses the world, and to which an entrance is administered abundantly, must have been tested and strengthened by the experience of years.

THE YOUNG ORIOLES.

WE found a curious nest on one of our oak-trees. In it were five orioles, not yet fledged. We moved the nest to a lower limb of the tree, so that we could watch the development of the birdlings. This frightened the parent birds, and they deserted them. The little hungry creatures opened their mouths wide and cried for food; so we prepared bread and milk and fed them. In the evening we brought the nest into the house and covered it with cotton to keep the fledgelings warm. For a week or more they grew rapidly. Their appetites were insatiable.

Look at the nest when we would, we saw five open mouths. The amount of bread and milk they consumed was enormous. Out of that bread and milk they made bones and flesh, and feathers of different colors, until they became strong and beautiful. How wonderful the process! When first found they were featherless, bony, scrawny—five as ugly-looking things as could be imagined. They were half mouth, and the mouth nearly always open; but by filling those open mouths with simple food they were changed to pretty and active birds, clothed in plumage of bright and varied hues. How could all that strength and quickened life and beauty come from bread and milk? What naturalist can explain the mystery? Where can he find, in either the bread or milk, the material out of which to make a scarlet feather?

Well, for more than a week our birdlings throve on their bread and milk, and under their cotton covering. We thought they were thoroughly acclimated to their indoor life; but a night came a little colder than usual. The birds were strong enough to push off their covering. In the morning they were chilled, their throats

sore, and their voices hoarse. From that time they drooped, and one by one they died. Poor little orioles! Our orphan asylum for them was not a success.

As I watched those birds I thought they could teach us some things in regard to our human nestlings. All children, like the young orioles, are open-mouthed; they are wonderfully receptive; they believe everything that you tell them, and they want you to be telling them something all the time. Out of what you tell the children they make that which is more valuable than parti-colored feathers. They make character. What the man or woman is to be, in spirit, in temper, in destiny, is often determined in the nursery. How important, then, that all the influences surrounding our children be pure. How sad to have their young ears and minds filled with that which is silly or vile. When those young orioles opened their mouths so confidently, how cruel it would have been to put poison in them. But there are persons who treat children so. There are servants hired to take care of them who frighten them with ghost stories, or who teach them to deceive. Whatever else

the mother neglects, let her not neglect her little children; let her be their earliest teacher; let her not permit any one else to make upon their plastic natures those first impressions which are indelible.

Another lesson, akin to this, those birdies taught me. If, that chilly night, the mother oriole had hovered over them, they would not have suffered and sickened as they did under the artificial covering. That covering seemed to meet their wants well enough for a time; but when a change of temperature came it failed, and they perished. So with all outside arrangements for the care and culture of our children; so with all substitutes for true home cherishing. The day-school and the Sunday-school are useful, but they can not take the place which God ordained that the parent should fill. There is no love on earth like mother love; there is no place so warm and safe for the child as its mother's breast. If cherished there with Christian faith, as well as instinctive parental affection, the world will not easily chill it; but it will grow in moral strength and beauty. Napoleon once said: "What France needs is mothers."

I sometimes think we might almost say the same of this country. The mother of the olden time, who lived for her children, and whom they clung to and confided in as their best friend, is becoming obsolete. Children are turned over to hired nurses and teachers. Many of their noblest affections are chilled, and they do not grow up either as good or as happy as when the home was as a nest where all the birdlings were warmly cherished until strong enough to go out into the world.

FENCING IN CALIFORNIA.

WE are building a new fence to-day. Have I described our California fences? An Eastern farmer would laugh at them. We take pickets of red wood, split pickets about five feet long and about three inches thick each way. We sharpen one end and drive it into the ground ten or twelve inches. We set the pickets about a foot apart, then we nail on them, near the top, a strip of fir six inches wide. This is our fence, and it is both strong and durable. We have such fences

on our farm that are twenty years old. It would not be a good fence in Ohio or Indiana, but it is an excellent one here, for two reasons: First, the red wood does not rot in the ground; and, second, there is no frost to disturb the foot of the picket. It is as firm as a post set two feet deep is in a land whose winters are severe. The reason why the fence is so strong, though the pickets are small, and driven into the ground only a little way, is that all are fastened together. The strip of fir nailed to each makes each a part of the whole. One of those pickets standing alone, a child could pull up or push over. But when the most unruly animal tries to move or break the fence, it finds that it must raise a hundred pickets before it can get any one of them out of the ground. Until a picket is loosened from the strip of fir the fence is secure. Its strength is in its unity.

As we were building this fence, to-day, I thought it is just what a church ought to be. No Christian alone has much strength or influence. Even though really and consciously in Christ, he is like one of our pickets driven but a few inches into the soil—he is easily moved. But

if a company of Christians band together and strengthen each other—if they pray together and talk often with each other, they become like our completed fence. They form a barrier that resists the world and the wicked one. I have seen a vicious animal, horned and cloven-footed, dash against one of our red-wood fences, hoping to break it. Foiled in this, I have seen him rush along it looking for a loose picket, or a defect of some kind, keen-eyed to detect any weakness and prompt to take advantage of it. And so does the great adversary go about the churches. He watches for divisions, alienations, jealousy and strife. Whenever and wherever the unity of the Spirit is broken he rushes in. He knows that he can not succeed as long as Christians love each other and help each other. He heard that wonderful prayer of Jesus—"that they all may be one." He knows that just so far as that prayer is answered his efforts are hopeless. And hence he tries to break the brotherhood of believers; he tries to loosen the attachment of the Christian to the church; to alienate him from his minister, or from some of the members; tries to persuade him that he is able to stand alone; does not need the

influence of the prayer-meeting, or the aid and sympathy of his brethren. The church is to the Christian what the strip of fir is to the pickets. It gives them unity and strength; it makes each help all, and all help each. If there is any one lesson that we especially need to learn just now, and that we are sadly slow to learn, it is the lesson of brotherly love, of that Church unity which results from a sense of our individual weakness and of the wisdom and love of Christ in uniting us, not only to himself, but to each other.



“GOD BLESSED FOREVER.”

WE think of God as omnipotent, all-wise, holy, just and good. But do we realize that he is the happiest, as well as the greatest and the best, of beings? On the earth, power and wisdom do not bring peace and joy to human hearts. The trail of the serpent is not over the low places only, but over the mountain-tops. Even those who love and serve God are never perfectly blessed. As long as they are in the body they must share, to some degree, in the sad heritage of the race.

But he who is God over all is blessed forevermore. So the inspired writers tell us, and so it must be, or he is imperfect, and therefore not divine. It may be profitable for us to meditate upon this statement in regard to our heavenly Father.

(1.) He must be happy, absolutely and always, because, though ever busy, he is never weary. He creates worlds and systems as easily as we converse with our friends. He speaks, and it is done; he commands, and it stands fast. And the government of his vast empire does not oppress him. He is not anxious and worried about the revolutions of the planets, or the actions of his intelligent creatures. With a touch of his hand, nay, with a volition, he controls them all. We enter upon our work in the morning with enthusiasm, but how soon do we find the early freshness and vigor failing! How often do we drag through the daily task wearily and in pain! But with God it is always morning. Though he is the ancient of days, the dew of youth is ever upon him. "Hast thou not heard that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the

earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?” (Isaiah xl. 28.)

(2.) Another element of God’s blessedness is certainty. He knows the end from the beginning. He saw from eternity just how everything would come out. Hence for him there are no anxieties and no disappointments. We wake in the morning with plans for the day; we hope to accomplish something; we toil and struggle, hour after hour; we encounter obstacles of which we had not dreamed; we lie down at night not only weary, but discouraged. How can we work with interest and with hope when all is so uncertain? when failure often follows our best laid plans, and our most persevering efforts?

(3.) A third element of God’s blessedness is purity. He is conscious that his plans and purposes are not only right, but benevolent. He knows that he is doing that which is best. He can not act from any base motive, from envy, jealousy, or narrow selfishness. His nature is love, and love is the well-spring of joy.

(4.) But we may add, rather as a consequence of these elements than as an additional one, that God can never experience regret or remorse. He

can recall no errors in the past to mourn over. His memory brings up only a succession of triumphs; of great plans fully accomplished; of good intentions that have ripened into a rich fruitage of benevolence.

(5.) But there are those to whom God's ways seem dark. They are his intelligent creatures; he has made them; he loves them; he wants them to appreciate and confide in him. Do not their doubts and fears trouble him? No! For he sees that in a little while they will understand it all, and then what are baffling mysteries will be luminous illustrations of his love. He sees that the temporary struggle of faith will enhance the joy of its final triumph; that the light afflictions which are for a moment will work out a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory. Hence, when the crushed and bleeding hearts of his redeemed cry, "O, Lord, how long?" he answers, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

(6.) But there are men and devils who hate God. Does not this dim his blessedness? No; for he tells us that he will make their wrath to praise him. How he will do this we can not now

know, and it is useless for us to conjecture. We take the statement on the word of Him who can not lie. We believe that since, notwithstanding his power and love, he has permitted sin to enter the world, he will so control it that it shall not only fail to thwart any of his plans, but shall promote his glory.

Then we may accept, in all its fullness, the inspired statement that “God is blessed forever.” We may rejoice in the fact that there is one Being, the worthiest and the best of all, who is perfectly happy.

But are we glad that God is blessed forever, only for his sake, and because we love him? Have we no personal interest in this truth? We want to be happy; we hope to be; and our hope is in God. Yet he can not give what he has not. He can not, by shining on our hearts, make them brighter than his own. If there are clouds over his Spirit, he can not enable the spirits that trust him to walk in the light; he can not lead them in a path that shall shine more and more unto the perfect day. Then all our expectation of a blessed immortality rests upon this great fact in regard to God. We shall be like him when we see him as

he is. We shall be changed into the same image from glory unto glory.

When clouds darken around us; when sadness and sorrow fill our hearts, let us remember that we are heirs of God—of God the blessed forever—that he has for us an inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled, and that can never fade away; that at his right hand there are pleasures forevermore. If we are his we are allied with the source and center of all felicity. We may suffer here for a few days, but he can and will comfort us; and when we are made perfect, through suffering, he will take into his fullness of joy.

Thus, in meditating upon the blessedness of our heavenly Father, we brighten our hopes; we learn to prize more highly our union with him through Christ. It insures not merely our deliverance from sin, but that fruition of peace and joy which the Bible calls everlasting life—the holy, happy life of God.

KINDLING AND QUENCHING.

ANOTHER lesson from familiar things: I was trying to make a fire on the hearth; the flame was feeble. One who wished to help me brought me a quantity of damp shavings, and put them upon the fire. There was a dense smoke for a time, and then the fire went out. Now, I had to begin again. I kindled some dry splinters with a match, and added to them little by little. Slowly the fire grew in brightness and in strength. After awhile I put on the damp shavings, but not all at once, and soon they were dried and consumed. And then I thought of that exhortation in 2 Thessalonians: "Quench not the Spirit." Fire is the symbol of the Holy Ghost. He came down in tongues of fire on the day of Pentecost. If his influences may be quenched, they may be kindled, too; and the latter process is the reverse of the former. How, then, may we secure that special glow of Christian feeling which we call a revival of religion? I answer: Let each begin in his own heart; begin with some one truth or duty; get freshly interested in some promise, in some relation of Christ

or the Holy Spirit to our spiritual wants; meditate upon this, thank God for it, study the truths related to it and suggested by it. In this way the affections and hopes of the heart will be kindled and begin to burn within us. Now, with this quickened spiritual life, begin to work for Christ. Don't try to do some great thing; but take up some little cross; discharge some near but neglected duty; endeavor to interest your family, or your neighbors, in spiritual things; begin to talk with your brethren in the church; speak in the prayer-meeting, briefly and warmly; encourage your minister; if you know of any stumbling-block in the way, go and remove it, if possible. So, little by little, you may add fuel to the holy flame, and see it extend to other hearts, while it grows stronger in your own. Merely wishing and praying for a revival, or seeking it by multiplying meetings and means, when the people's hearts are cold and damp with worldliness, will end only in smoke. We need, in this matter, to study the laws of mind, and the illustrations of those laws in nature. Better hasten slowly—do a little, and do it well, and then a little more—than to try to do a great

deal at once, as he did who threw the shavings on my fire.

On the day of Pentecost the Spirit came suddenly. But the disciples had been, with one accord, in one place for ten days. All that time they had been talking about Christ, and praying to him, and preparing their hearts for the kindling from on high. Our Savior did not send the Spirit down as soon as he ascended, for the disciples needed a special preparation. And so it is, even now, in all our churches, and in all our hearts. If we wait patiently for the Lord, and work wisely while we wait, he will come suddenly to his temple.

But when the holy fire has been kindled, why does it not burn on? If a score of sinners have been converted, why not a hundred? if a hundred, why not a thousand? Is God's power limited? Does his love fail? No; we quench the Spirit. How? In various ways. Let me specify two or three of them. First, a fire may be smothered. Cover it with rubbish; it will smolder awhile, and then expire. Many revivals are smothered. People try to use them for selfish purposes—to burn up their rubbish with

them. They become unwilling to make sacrifices for God; to give him the fuel of consecrated hearts for his work. They ask and expect him to bless them, while they cherish a worldly spirit, a spirit of self-righteousness, of sectarian gratulation and pride, and then they wonder that the bright and beautiful blaze departs, and there is nothing left but smoke.

Another way, nearly allied to this, is want of ventilation. A fire can not burn without air; and a revival can not continue without the breath of the Spirit. He is the wind as well as the fire. He must sustain, by his abiding agency, the flame that he has kindled. But when the fire is burning brightly we are tempted to forget our dependence on the Spirit. We begin to look upon it as our fire. We enjoy it. We want to keep it up. We shut all the dampers. We heap ashes upon it. We exclude the draft which comes from heaven and draws heavenward. And soon we find, alas! that the Spirit has been grieved away; our fire is out, and our hearts are cold.

A third way that fire is quenched I may illustrate by a deserted

CAMP-FIRE.

Last night they heaped up logs, kindled them, and had a cheerful blaze. But the ends of the logs that were brought together, and that by their contact kept each other burning, burned off after awhile, and then the logs fell apart. The very fire that was kept aglow by their contact tended to separate them. When the campers left, there was no one to push these logs together from time to time, so they became more widely separated as they burned, until there was a circle of half-charred brands, with a heap of cold ashes in the center. Fuel enough, but the fire had gone out. So we have all seen churches that, having enjoyed special influences of the Holy Spirit, seem colder, by the contrast, than if they had not been revived. There are half-awakened sinners around them, like those charred brands, but the fire smolders in ashes. Why? They who brought together the fuel for the fire neglected to keep it together. But Satan did not neglect his work. He takes a great interest in revivals. He has temptations prepared for them. If he can only persuade Christians that special efforts to preserve the unity

of the Spirit are not necessary now; if he can only make them jealous of each other, and get them to criticising each other, he quenches the Spirit as effectually as if he poured a flood of water upon it. Never do Christians need to be more watchful, humble and prayerful than in the midst of a revival. The sacred fire should never go out. It need not. Use the same means to keep it burning that you used in kindling it, and it may abide with you, in its beauty and its blessedness, for years.

FREEZING.

YESTERDAY morning I found the thermometer down to 25°. I went to the horse-trough in the corral, and lo! there was ice upon it nearly an inch thick. I said to the water: "Why did you freeze?" It seemed to reply: "You shut me up here, so that I could not move and keep warm; and how could I help it?" I went to my pond, and asked the same question. The water there replied: "You stopped me with that dam, and while it kept me from flowing the cold caught

me." I went to the little mountain stream, and there was no ice—not even along its shores. It was running and singing, just as in the brightest summer day. And I said to it: "Why didn't you freeze last night, as the water in the trough and the pond did?" And it seemed to say, as it hurried by: "I was too busy; I was too busy."

And then I said to myself: "Little stream, thou hast taught me a lesson. If I would be happy, I must be active and useful." And as I recalled the past, with its many days of sadness, I saw that the heart was never chilled, merely because of afflictions or disappointments, but because its best affections were checked in their flowing; and I understood how such earnest and faithful Christians as Paul could rejoice even in distresses and persecutions—could sing even in the most adverse worldly circumstances. They were too busy to freeze. My little rivulet flows in a narrow and rugged channel; it tumbles over many rocks, and frets upon their jagged edges; but, because its channel is so strait and rough, it flows the faster, it sings the merrier, and it refuses the more persistently to freeze, as the stagnant waters do.

I give my winter morning's lesson to my readers, thinking that some of them may need it, and hoping that they will so learn it, that they will never, henceforth, complain of spiritual coldness when there is so much to be done for Christ, and when, if we try to do it, he will not fail to bless us.

FIGHTING FIRE.

LAST week one of my neighbors kindled a fire to burn the stubble in his fields. It soon got beyond his control and came sweeping into an adjacent field of ours. In that field were a stack of hay and a quantity of straw that we intended to stack. In the next field were our house, barn and granary. The wind was fresh, and toward our home. If that fire was not arrested it would gather such strength as it advanced that it would be irresistible. We summoned all our forces to the attack. Our neighbors came to help us. We fought the fire for several hours, along a line of half a mile. When subdued in one place it would break out in another. When we thought it en-

tirely out, a single spark that escaped would suddenly blaze up, and, caught by the wind, the flames would spread with fearful rapidity. We had to watch as well as work. But we succeeded in saving our property. Late in the afternoon we quenched the last spark, and felt safe. But it was Saturday. I had an appointment to preach seventy-five miles away. I could not start while my home was in peril. So the cars went without me, and a congregation was disappointed. Little did the man who started that fire think it would affect the Sabbath services in a church so far away. But we are so connected together in this life that we can not tell how wide may be the influence of our most careless act or word.

My personal experience with this fire has given me a keener sympathy with those who suffer in the great conflagrations of the Northwest. It must be sad, indeed, to see the flames devouring fences, crops and homes! Is it not strange that fire and water, the two most useful elements in nature, are the most destructive? We could not live without these elements; yet, when they get beyond our control, they seem like demons, so madly do they devour our property and our lives.

And I could not help thinking of that passage in James (chapter iii. 5): "Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" He says the tongue is the fire. Idle words, reckless words, may kindle strife that will rage for years. Unkind words, though spoken thoughtlessly and in jest, may burn into a sensitive human heart and blight its happiness. Speech, like fire, is a great blessing; but it may become as great a curse. Our words, like the fires we kindle, are very likely to run over, or through the fences that divide us from our neighbors. In nothing do we all need so much wisdom and so much grace as in ruling our tongues. A thought in the heart is comparatively safe. We can ponder it well before we utter it. But a thought once spoken we can not tell where it may go—what harm it may do. Wise was the Roman who said *obsta principiis*—resist the first beginnings. Stop the fire as soon as it starts. Stop the water as soon as it begins to trickle through the embankment. Break off the evil habit as soon as it is formed—as soon as its first link is forged. "Leave off contention, before it be meddled with." (Proverbs xvii. 14.)

THE WATCHMEN.

THE flood last week undermined a section of the railroad track. It was repaired as promptly as possible. But when I passed over it the water was still high, and it was not considered entirely safe. So men were stationed all along, a few rods apart, to watch the track and to warn the trains, if necessary. There they stood, hour after hour, in mud ankle deep, the storm beating on them, each holding a little flag in one hand to signal the train, and a shovel in the other to keep open the water-courses, or to repair the embankment. They stood there because they were paid for it. And yet they felt that their position was responsible. If any one of them had seen that the embankment was washed away, yet failed to warn the train, his own conscience and the world would have condemned him. The engineer went on, slowly it is true, yet steadily, gazing at the watchmen, and feeling safe as long as no red flag was waved. The passengers looked out of the windows, a little nervous perhaps, but reassured by seeing how numerous, and apparently vigilant, the watchmen were.

God calls ministers of the gospel his watchmen. And the fact impressed on me by this railroad incident was, that people look to ministers for direction and warning. If a minister says, "Go on, you are safe," they are comforted in sin. They reply to the suggestions of conscience: "Don't worry, the minister says we are all right." Hence, great and solemn is the responsibility of him who prophesies smooth things; who proclaims that God is too good to punish sin; that somehow, somewhere in the universe, and sometime in the great future, all will be made happy, no matter how they live and die. Such watchmen will have a fearful reckoning, not only with God, whose message they perverted, but with men whom they lulled into carnal security.

And this applies not only to those who teach error, but to those who proclaim the truth so tamely that their hearers don't think they really believe it. Said a worldly man: "If Mr. A—— should tell me that my house is on fire as coldly and formally as he tells me about 'the vengeance of eternal fire,' I should think he didn't mean what he said." I don't believe that many ministers, who call themselves evangelical, are as cold

and formal as Mr. A——. But the thing wanting in many of our pulpits is EARNESTNESS. Our sermons are logical and scholarly. They are delivered gracefully, and even forcibly; yet they do not make men tremble. Let us feel ourselves, more deeply, what we preach, and we will make others feel. Oh! think, herald of salvation, some of your hearers may be in eternity before next Sabbath. Are you ready to meet them there, ready to answer both for the matter and manner of your message to them? May not some of them say, "If you had been more earnest when you preached to me I might have been saved?"

CALIFORNIA IN 1846.

REV. S. H. WILLEY, D. D., one of the pioneer missionaries of the American Home Missionary Society to this coast, has just published a volume entitled "Thirty Years in California." It brings up some facts which show on what small hinges, apparently, the destinies of States and nations may turn. In 1846 there were already many immigrants and adventurers from the United States

and Europe here. They knew nothing of the existence of gold, but regarded the country as valuable on account of its fine climate and its possible commercial relations with Asia and the island world of the Pacific. They felt that in order to develop its resources, it ought to be no longer a Mexican province, but an independent State, under the protection of some great commercial nation. The majority of the settlers favored a British protectorate. The British Government was advised of their views, and had a fleet in the Pacific watching the course of events, and ready to take possession as soon as there was any action of the people that would afford a pretext. The United States Government had advices from its friends here, who, though few in number, were very decided and energetic. It had also a fleet on this side of the continent, with instructions to act in certain emergencies. A convention met at Santa Barbara in March, 1846. The Americans, finding the British in a majority, succeeded in procuring an adjournment. Before that convention met again war broke out between the United States and Mexico. There were no telegraphs in those days. The news crept slowly across the

continent and reached the American commander at Mazatlan and the British commander at San Blas at about the same time. Both knew that the decisive hour for California had come. Both at once weighed anchor and set sail for Monterey. Commodore Sloat arrived first, hoisted the stars and stripes, and took possession of the country in the name of the United States. Eight days later Admiral Seymour, in the British ship *Collingwood*, entered the harbor. He was too late. What he would have done, had he come first, is known only to him and his Government. But the impression is that he had such authority to act from the city of Mexico, as well as from London, that we should have had to face the possibility of a struggle with England or abandon California. Little did either party know of the real value of the prize, and how much depended upon the relative speed of those war-ships up the coast.

Again, in February, 1846, the packet ship *Brooklyn* sailed from New York with 260 Mormons on board. They were the advance guard of the westward movement planned by Brigham Young. It is now evident that his objective point was not Salt Lake, but the Pacific Ocean. He

had learned about California from the explorations of Fremont and thought he could buy it, or enough of it for his purposes, from the Mexican Government. Hence, he sent this ship, with a colony on board well supplied with agricultural implements and arms, and then started overland with the rest of his people. The Brooklyn reached San Francisco on the thirty-first of July, after an unusually long voyage. It found the stars and stripes floating over the harbor. Bitter was the disappointment of the colonists. Messengers were sent overland to meet Brigham Young, and the result was that he stopped at Salt Lake. If that column of 15,000 Mormons had reached San Francisco when it was a village, with only a few hundred inhabitants, it might be to-day the headquarters of the Latter-Day Saints. Had the Brooklyn arrived a month earlier, the colonists upon her could have taken possession of the harbor at least, and their prior occupancy would have complicated matters in the settlement of the embryo city. These two narrow escapes in July, 1846, from a British protectorate and a Mormon occupancy, the atheist may say were lucky for Cal-

ifornia. But we see in them the will and purpose of Him who holds the winds in his hands.

OTHER PROVIDENCES.

It was important that the title to this country should be definitely settled, and a strong Government established before the gold-hunters rushed here from all the world. Look at the coincidence of time in this regard. The treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, by which Mexico ceded California to the United States, was signed February 2, 1848. On that same day Marshall rode in from Sutter's Mill with the grains of gold that he had found in digging the race. The land was ours by the treaty, and now the golden news went forth to summon thousands to occupy it. If gold had been found before that treaty was signed, Mexico might not have been so willing to cede the country to us. She thought she was surrendering what was of little value.

How narrowly California escaped being a slave State few people now understand. Congress would not give it a Territorial Government, for it was in the midst of the Kansas-Nebraska agitation. So the people met and adopted a State

Constitution; and, being then mostly miners, they put in an article prohibiting slavery. Soon after the Constitution was adopted there was a large migration from the Southern States. Many planters came with their slaves. They saw that the fertile plains of this coast were admirably adapted for large estates, and for the prosperity of the patriarchal institution. If California had been a Territory then, slavery would, no doubt, have been established here, and when the great Rebellion came the State might have joined the Southern Confederacy and been desolated by civil war. It was a manifest providence that that question was settled so early, for in 1860 the people were nearly equally divided, and there was a sectional contest here almost equal to that in the Border States on the other side of the mountains.

THE GOLDEN KEY.

“PRAYER is the golden key that unlocks the treasure-house of grace.” So writes one who had often used that key. The figure is suggestive. If we would open a door that is locked, we must have

the key that fits the lock. We might have a hundred different keys, and try them all in vain. Such locks as men secure their treasure-houses with are complicated. They have many wards, and the key must be adapted to them all. It must be made, or at least a pattern of it, by him who made the lock. So here God only knows the conditions on which he can and will bestow blessings upon us. Hence he only can teach us how to pray. And he has taught us. In the Bible he has revealed all the wards of the lock, and told us just how to unlock it. He says: "Ask, and ye shall receive." But, evidently, he does not mean that any kind of asking will do. If we ask carelessly, selfishly, irreverently, we can not expect that God will hear us. James was inspired to announce that some who ask receive not, because they ask amiss. It is important, then, to know just how to ask—to get God's idea of prayer, in order that we may offer to him that which will be acceptable and effectual. We want to have the exact pattern that he has given us of the golden key.

There is nothing arbitrary or unreasonable in this matter. The conditions of prevailing prayer

all grow out of the character of God and our relations to him.

The first ward of the lock is the greatness of God. He is Lord over all. He is "holy in all his ways, and perfect in all his works." Hence his creatures must adore him. They must come before him with reverence and godly fear. The angels that surround the throne bow on their faces, crying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord Almighty." And yet we have heard men pray as if God was their equal or even their servant. Such men are trying to pick the lock, or to open it with a wooden key.

The second ward is the goodness of God. He has bestowed upon us many mercies. These we must recognize when we ask for more. We must go to him with thanksgiving and praise, if we expect to be heard. An ungrateful suppliant shows that he will not appreciate the good he seeks; for he despises that which he has already received. To hear his prayers would be casting pearls before swine.

A third ward is the wisdom of God. The prayer that suits this, is: "Not my will, but thine, be done." God will answer every true

prayer. But he will not give just what the suppliant asks for, unless that is what he really needs and ought to have. He will give according to his knowledge, and not according to our ignorance. He who thinks he is wiser than God, who insists upon a literal answer to his prayer, who is not willing to take what his heavenly Father sees to be best, is wanting in filial confidence. He practically denies one of God's noblest attributes; and while he cherishes this dictatorial spirit he must ask amiss.

These elements—adoration, gratitude and humility—would be essential to true prayer if we had not sinned. But the fall made it necessary to add new wards to the lock. We are told what they are, and how to adapt the key to them. We have violated the Law of God in deed and word and thought. This we must confess. Only the prayer of the penitent can reach the ear of the Holy One. And seeking forgiveness, we must forgive. We must cultivate the spirit towards others which we ask God to show towards us. We must try to forsake the sins that we confess and seek pardon for. We are not to continue in sin that grace may abound.

If we regard iniquity in our hearts, the Lord will not hear us.

And, finally, we must fix our faith upon the plan of justification, which God has revealed. We must go to him in the name of Christ. We must plead Christ's obedience and sacrifice in our behalf. We must look up as we pray to our divine Advocate in the midst of the throne. We must realize that he can take our most imperfect prayer, if only it is sincere, and so reoffer it that it will be as sweet incense before God.

And praying thus, with adoration, gratitude and humility; with the spirit of penitence, forgiveness, obedience, and faith in Christ, we are yet to remember that we are ignorant, although God has taken such pains to instruct us; that, after all, we know not what to pray for as we ought. But there is given to us a divine Helper. The Holy Spirit will indite our petitions for us, and thus we may pray in the spirit, and may be certain that our supplications will be according to the will of God.

There is a great deal of what men call prayer that is neither "fervent" nor "effectual." It lacks some essential element of true prayer. It

fails to meet one or more of the necessary conditions of prevailing prayer. The suppliant thrusts a key into the lock; but not being the right key, it does not open the door, and he goes away unblest. How important to study what God has told us about prayer, and to cultivate the spirit which will enable us to come acceptably before him. And how happy is the man who has the golden key, and the Holy Spirit to teach him how to use it.

GROWTH MEANS GOD.

I HAVE just been feeding my stock—horses and colts, cows and calves, hogs and pigs. I fed them all with hay. They all ate it greedily, for it was good hay; and they all seemed to be doing well. While they were eating I was thinking. And as it is too wet to plow this morning, I will write my thoughts. These colts are growing: growing means more bone, more muscle, more fat, more teeth enameled, more hoof, more hide, more hair, more mane, more tail, larger eyes, more nerves, more tendons, lengthened arteries and veins, a

proportional enlargement of the heart, the lungs, the digestive organs, the viscera, etc., etc. It takes a thousand things to make a colt, and there must be something added to each of these thousand things every day, as the colt increases in size and becomes a horse. Now where does the colt get a little more all the time to add to these thousand things? All out of the hay. The dried grass that I feed him furnishes bone and flesh and skin and hair; and it goes just where it is needed. It goes to the different parts of the animal in just the right proportions. It does not make too much of any one thing, or fail to make enough of any.

Now take that dried grass to the most skillful chemist. Tell him to analyze it, and see if he can get flesh and bone and hair out of it as the colt does, and he will tell you that he can not do any such thing. The wonder to me is that my colts, and everybody else's colts the world over, can do what these men of science can't do.

But here is something stranger yet. The calves eat the same hay, and they make out of it differently shaped bones and hoofs, different flesh and fat, from that which the colts make. They

make horns, too, and the colts don't. And the cows, feeding beside the horses, make milk out of the hay, and milk is a very curious liquid. It contains caseine and albumen, and ever so many other ingredients, all of which come from the hay. And out of that same hay the pig makes pork and bristles. And the hens go into the hay-mow, and eat the heads of the hay; and they make from these heads feathers, eggs, beaks, talons and gizzards, none of which the cattle have. Isn't there something strange about this? It seems to me that if I had in my barn at feeding-time one of the wise men who think that they can explain everything; that we don't need any God; that their theory of evolution and their laws of nature are sufficient for making the world and for keeping it a-going—it seems to me that I could puzzle him by just pointing to my horses, cattle and hogs.

Now, suppose that I had three machines; that when I put hay into one of them and turned a crank awhile, out would come carpets of perfect texture and of beautiful colors. Then, if I put the same kind of hay into another machine, and turned the crank awhile, out would come sets of

porcelain, plates, cups, saucers, etc.—all perfectly shaped, enameled and painted. And, finally, if I should put the hay into a third machine, the result would be books, well printed, elegantly bound and profusely illustrated. What would the scientists who know all about making worlds say to my machines? Wouldn't they think there was something about them that was never dreamed of in their philosophy?

But I have in my barnyard a score or more of machines fully as wonderful. They are working up the hay into hundreds of different things, and into just the right proportion of each, while I write. Did a law of nature make these machines; and do the laws of nature keep them a-going? Or, is there not a wise and powerful Being who created each one of them, and who superintends all their operations?

It is said that Robespierre, when he saw the efforts of atheism in France, exclaimed: "If there is no God, we must make one; for we can not get along without him." So must every man feel who has not permitted that "dangerous thing," a "little learning," to magnify his self-conceit and minify his common sense.

The tendency of positivism, and of all the infidel philosophy of our day, is to sheer atheism. Men want to get rid of the idea of a personal God—a great, wise and good Being who made, upholds and governs all things. But grand, solemn and mysterious as that idea is, it is the simplest explanation of the wonders that we see around us. The grass is growing now all over our hills and plains. Why? The soil was full of seeds, we are told, and the rain has made them germinate. But water can't make grass out of seeds. Here is a chair factory all complete, and lumber piled up in it. And now a fire is kindled under the boiler, and the wheels revolve; but no chairs are turned out. Why? The chair-maker has not come to put the lumber into the lathes. Nature during winter or a drouth is like that factory, full of lumber but without steam. Nature, when the sun shines and the rain falls, is like that factory when the steam is up and the wheels are in motion. Nature is God's workshop. It is the grand factory in which he is making all the while the many, the numberless things that we speak of as growing. With all our science we don't know what growing really is, and the most

sensible notion we can get of it is this—the presence of the Omnipresent One superintending the operation of the laws and forces that he has ordained. All growth requires something higher and mightier than what we call law. It is not mechanical merely, it is vital. And as the cause of a thing must be greater than the thing itself, the cause of all this living growth must be a living agent. An invisible Spirit must brood over field and fold. That Spirit's work far transcends the power and skill of man. Hence, it is a super-human Spirit. It is the Spirit of God. Here we rest. We can not rest in any other idea of nature.

When Mungo Park sat down in the African desert, alone, lost, hungry, sick, footsore, heart-sore, and just ready to give up in utter despair, he saw a little flower. It was like the vision of an angel. He said: "God is here. Only his hand could have fashioned that flower. And he who fashioned it can take care of me." So we should feel as we look on a blade of grass. Whoever teaches the world to see God in everything helps to elevate and purify and bless his fellow-men. He who tries to dim our ideas of "a God

at hand"—a God whose wondrous working is in all that we see and feel; a God who reads the thoughts of our hearts—that man is guilty not only of gross impiety, but of high treason against humanity. He is the worst enemy of his race. He would take away from us the basis of all virtue, of all happiness and hope. Well may we cry with Robespierre: "We must have a God; we can not get along without him;" nay, with David, the Psalmist: "The fool hath said in his heart, No God."

ELASTICITY.

I HAVE in my yard iron pipes that bring water near the house from a distant fountain. At the end of the piping there is a hose of gutta percha, which I can turn in any direction, taking the stream to the kitchen, to the stable, or to the shrubbery, at will. While handling that hose, to-day, I thought what a blessing is this elasticity with which God has endowed certain substances, and what a blessing that everything is not elastic! We need the solid and stable iron. We need the

pliant caoutchouc. Each has its place and its use. And the workman who would make a perfect machine must know what parts to construct of hard metal, and where to put the elastic rubbers and cushions. He must have pinions that will bear a heavy strain and constant friction. And he must have washers that will relieve the friction. In the most powerful engines made of highly tempered steel, elastic packing is needed. But he would be a sorry machinist who would try to make an engine all of indian rubber or without any.

Our characters are like machinery, in one respect; they need a combination of elastic and of inelastic elements. A true man should not be like a fossil, all rock, or like a jelly-fish, all softness and pliancy. Paul was a man of great firmness and decision. He said in regard to "bonds and afflictions," "None of these things move me." Nay, he counted not his life dear unto him that he might finish his course and the ministry he had received. And yet how yielding in some directions was this adamantine apostle. He could adapt himself to all circumstances. He had learned in whatsoever state he was, therewith

to be content. He was made all things to all men that he might by all means save some. (1 Corinthians ix. 22.) He pleased all men in all things. (1 Corinthians x. 33.) Never for a moment compromising principle, or swerving from duty, yet he was always patient, courteous, conciliatory. And observe, the pliancy of his spirit was intimately connected with its firmness and fidelity. Just when he was most fearless and decided was he most gentle—as the axle on which comes the hardest friction is cushioned with the most elastic rubber.

The lesson of Paul's life, then, is not that men of iron purpose may sometimes relax and be amiable in spirit. But that amiability and gentleness belong to energy and decision; that those strong and seemingly hard elements need the softer ones, and are not perfect without them. It is not friction with its grating harshness that manifests power, but smooth and noiseless motion. The machine that is kept well oiled accomplishes far more than that whose force is expended largely in tearing itself to pieces. There is no more important study for us all just now than that of mental and moral elasticity. The tendencies of

the age are to an excessive use of indian rubber. We do not like friction, and to avoid it we are tempted to sacrifice strength and power. But we need not yield to this temptation. We are to put the anti-friction washer upon the steel journal, and not in place of it. When we have a track of steel rails and wheels with chilled tires and an engine of brass and iron, we may add elastic spring and air brakes at discretion. But safety is first, then comfort. And this is as true in regard to character and to creeds, in regard to ourselves and to the Church, as in regard to railroads. Let us insist upon fidelity to truth always and in all things. To this we may add charity at discretion.

START A BLAZE.

I WAS sitting by an open fire this morning. There was a bed of live coals between the andirons and some sticks of half-seasoned wood upon them. But the coals did not kindle the wood. They only heated it enough to make it smoke. "This will never do," I said; "I must get up a

blaze." So I took a piece of paper from my waste-basket and threw it upon the coals. In an instant it flamed up and was gone, but it started the fire. The flames which it brought out of the coals kindled upon the wood, and soon the whole pile was aglow. And then I thought how many churches need just what was needed in my fireplace a few moments ago. There are hearts in them that love God, and that long for his salvation. There are souls around them that are interested in the truth, but not yet kindled by it. The problem is: How to bring the piety of the church so in contact with the men and women in the congregation, or the community, that they shall be awakened and converted. The church is exerting some influence upon the people within its sphere, just as the coals on my hearth were gradually seasoning the wood. But this does not satisfy the true minister or the earnest Christian. He wants to see the impenitent, not merely respecting religion and attending its Sabbath services, but rejoicing in the hope that is full of glory. Can not the minister or the Christian do just what I did just now? Can't he start a blaze? Can't he do something that shall kindle to a glow

his own faith, and that of his brethren? Can't he, by one earnest effort, make the latent piety of the church active—set its burning coals aflame? It did not require much to change my smoking brands to a cheerful fire—only a bit of paper. And any other light combustible would have done as well. And it may be that a little thing, which you hardly think worth trying, will be blessed of God in the revival of his work. It is not necessary to appoint a series of meetings, or to send for an evangelist. You have the live coals and the partially seasoned wood, and they are in contact with each other. It ought to be easy to kindle that wood. The Holy Spirit is ready to fan the flame as soon as it is kindled. He waits for us to do something in faith that he can energize for good. We are going over and over a round of duties, and asking God to bless us. He does, and he will. But if our work is formal, our prayers will be; and though the coals will be kept alive, and the wood will be slowly seasoned, we will not be as happy or as useful as if we had that living faith which sets the heart aflame.

But some one may ask, Just how shall we start the blaze? I can not tell you. God will if you

ask him. There is not a single way of kindling, but many. So there are diversities of spiritual operation. Do the duty which Providence brings nearest to you. It may be personal effort to interest some one in the great salvation. It may be special prayer. It may be trying to reconcile alienated brethren. It may be an agreement with others to seek, in concert, an outpouring of the Spirit. It may be some special work of Christian benevolence. It may be seeking with new earnestness the conversion of your Sabbath-school class, or of some member of your own family. Whatever is pressed upon your conscience and your heart as important to be done for Christ and to be done now, go and do. "Quench not the Spirit." That one thing may start influences for good, whose full results shall be known only in eternity. I don't believe in getting up revivals; but I do believe in kindling the faith and love of Christians to such a glow that they shall shine as lights in the world. And to do this is not so mysterious, or so difficult, as some good people seem to think it is.

A young minister once went to consult an aged one about the best way to labor for a revival in

his church. After hearing patiently all about this, that and the other, the old man said: "Any one of the three best ways is good enough, but do something, and do it right off." I want to echo that advice.

THE TWO FAILURES.

I WAS traveling with a friend through one of the beautiful valleys of this State. He pointed to an elegant mansion surrounded by fruit and ornamental trees, and said: "The owner of that place has just failed!" "How could he fail," I asked, "with such a farm? Surely it should have supported him." "It did; but he was not satisfied with a support. He wanted to be a millionaire, so he dabbled in stocks until he lost all. He inherited that splendid farm. He might have kept it, and been rich enough, but now he has lost it, and in his old age, with his expensive habits and large family, it is a sad failure." Turning in another direction, as the cars rushed on, my friend said: "Do you see those broad fields of grain? They are part of a farm of

three thousand acres, and it belongs to a man who, twenty years ago, worked by the month for the rich man over yonder who has just failed. This day-laborer was a thrifty Scotchman; every dollar he earned he invested in land. He has kept on adding field to field until he has all the land he can manage, and now he loans his surplus money on mortgages. He has never speculated in stocks. He was too shrewd and cautious for that. He is worth several millions. What a contrast between his success, and the failure of his former employer." "Are you sure," I asked, "that he has really been successful? What kind of a man is he? liberal, public-spirited, warm-hearted, happy?" "Why, as to that, I must confess," was the reply, "that he is the stingiest, meanest, most illiberal, most unpopular, and, I think, the most unhappy man in the neighborhood. He has no friends, no children, no home comforts or joys; never goes into society, never goes to church, never gives to any object of benevolence; is a dry, hard, cross old miser; that's the fact about him. Nobody loves him, or even respects him. He has nothing but his money, and that don't seem to do him any good."

“Well,” I asked, “do you call such a life successful? I think his failure is quite as sad, if not sadder, than that of the other man. The one did not get what he sought, and is poor because he is landless and moneyless. The other got what he sought and is poorer still; for he is soulless, heartless, friendless and joyless. The worst failures in this world are those of the men who acquire wealth and don't know how to use it.”

HOW IT GROWS.

THERE is a tree by my study window which interests me deeply, not because it is different from other trees, but because it is in many respects like all the trees on the earth—because it illustrates the law of growth. Two years ago that tree was only a few feet high. Now its head is up to the roof of the house, and its branches cover an area of many yards. Yet, though I have watched it daily, and it has grown luxuriantly, I have never been able to see it grow. It looks to-day just as it did yesterday, and it will look to-morrow just as it does to-day.

But a month hence, I will be able to see that it is larger every way. So with all true growth. It is gradual; little by little, imperceptible at the time, to be known only by measurements taken at long intervals. If a man wakes up some Sunday morning, and says to himself: "Now I am going to grow in grace ten or twenty degrees by the study and devotions of this Sabbath," he will probably retire at night very much disappointed and discouraged. But if he says: "I will try to-day, with God's blessing, to grow in knowledge and in love. I will be grateful for the consciousness of any progress in the divine life. I will not stop to measure that whereunto I have attained, but will do what I can trusting in God," he will find as years roll on that his faith is stronger, that his hope is brighter, that Christ is dearer, and that heaven seems nearer.

Christian fidelity and Christian progress, with the most of us, are to be in little things; and the more fully and cheerfully we recognize this fact, the better. That tree by my study window rebukes my impatience and my unbelief. It says to me: "Why should you claim exemption from the general law of growth? Here I

stand, day after day, pumping up a little moisture from the earth, receiving a little sunshine to vivify that moisture through each of my leaves, and making thus a million tiny wood cells under the bark, and tiny bud cells on the branches. Watch me. I do nothing by fits and starts; nothing great enough to attract attention at the time; and yet I am doing something all the time. When you look at me next year you will see that these littles amount to a good deal."

The lesson that the tree is teaching me I would like to send out to all my readers. This hourly fidelity in little things don't seem to be of much consequence, but the habits which it cultivates are of inestimable value, and the growth that will result from it—the growth that will fit us for the paradise above, who can foretell its beauty and its blessedness?

THAT COLT SALLY.

WE thought a great deal of Sally. We halter-broke her almost as soon as she was born. We petted her, and she was so gentle and kind we

didn't expect to have any trouble with her. When plowing-time came we put her into a five-horse team beside one of our steadiest wheelers. But she would not work. She reared and plunged. She jumped over the tongue of the gang-plow. She pawed at the double-trees of the leaders. She balked, and then tried to run. She worried the whole team, exhausted the strength and patience of the driver, and made faults in the plowing in spite of all we could do. At night John said: "It's of no use--Sally won't work. I've fought with her all day, until I haven't a dry thread on me, and my other horses are as wet as rats." Well, I thought we were too sanguine about Sally, but that she will do better next day. Next day, however, it was as bad, or worse. The third day she fought and fretted just the same. We didn't know what to do. It looked as if the colt would conquer us, instead of our conquering her.

The third day, in the afternoon, just after Sally had made one of her furious assaults on the double-tree, John said: "I'll stop that, anyway." So he took out his near leader, and put him at the tongue, and put Sally in his place.

He did not put her between the other leaders, as I should have done, but on the outside. He said that he did it so that she could worry but one of the other horses, and would have room for her tantrums. Well, having made the change, he started his team, when, lo! Sally became as steady as any of the older horses. She seemed proud and happy. She arched her neck, bent forward her delicate ears, kept step with the other leaders, or rather tried to keep a little in advance of them. No more trouble for John. His plowing now was like play. Was it a sudden freak of the colt's that she would get over? No: next morning she was put in the same place—on the lead, and worked there as well as any horse could work all day. John says that Sally is the finest leader he ever drew rein upon. But she won't work at the wheel.

Mr. S. in our church is just like Sally; put him on the lead, and he will do wonders. But if the minister or any or all the rest get up some plan without consulting him, and don't make him chairman of the committee, he won't work worth a cent. And worse than that, he will find fault with the plan, and do all that he can to hinder it.

He thinks that, like Napoleon, he is a born leader, and lead he must, or he will balk.

Nearly every church has men in it like Mr. S., and they give their ministers and their brethren a great deal of trouble. A church team can't all be leaders. It can't have three leaders to two wheelers, like our gang-plow team. We need a few wise men to plan, and to go ahead. But most of us have to be patient workers. And the Christian who is willing to work anywhere, and do anything, is a treasure. He is like the thoroughly trained farm-horse—such as our old Kitty. She is good on the lead or at the wheel, good on the farm or on the road, good in the carriage or under the saddle.

I find among our young people not a few like our Sally. They want to begin life as she wanted to begin plowing—on the lead. Old folks are old fogies—fit only to be wheel-horses; while the young folks are too precociously smart to follow anybody. They expect the world to follow them. A story is told of one of these conceited juveniles. Being asked what he intended to be when he grew up, he replied that he hadn't yet made up his mind whether he would be a millionaire or

President of the United States. If a President could have three terms, he rather thought he would prefer the Presidency. But if he could only have eight years in the White House, he believed he would go in for a pile of money. The money, however, he did not mean to make by plodding industry and close economy, as old Stephen Girard and John Jacob Astor made theirs, but by some grand speculation.

It is these foolishly ambitious young men that become defaulters and embezzlers. They are not willing to work and wait. They are in haste to be rich or to be in prominent places. They are tempted to seek success by dishonest means. And though ninety-nine in a hundred fail, go crazy, commit suicide, or live in poverty and disgrace, the crowd presses on, and the same sad story is repeated.

A LIVING STONE.

THIS is one of the titles of Christ. (1 Peter ii. 4.) It seems at the first glance absurd to speak of a living stone. But a little study will show us

that there is great propriety and beauty in the figure. We want something to trust in that is firm. We want, as the foundation of our hope, a Rock that can not be moved. But we want more than this—we want sympathy, we want love, we want growth in grace. The apostle tells us by this bold metaphor that these wants are all met in Christ. In that Corner-stone there is a living heart. It beats for us. The Rock to which we flee for refuge is not cold and barren. It has flowers blooming upon it. It has fruit for the nourishment of the soul. It has tendrils to entwine around the soul. It is not a fortress merely, it is a home.

Imagine a shipwrecked sailor, struggling with the waves, exhausted and just ready to sink beneath them. He is far from the shore, and night is settling down upon the deep. Before him rises what seems to be a barren rock. He climbs upon it, thinking only of escape from death. He has little expectation of finding even water to quench his thirst. But as he drags himself out of the reach of the hungry waves, he sees a living spring. He drinks and is refreshed; going farther, he finds trees loaded with fruit; still farther

he finds a palace. From it a king comes to welcome him. He is placed in a royal chamber. As he rests on a bed of down, will it not seem to him wonderful that there should be such a rock in mid-ocean? Will he not say: "Surely this that seemed so cold and barren, that I fled to merely to escape from death, is a living rock?" Such a rock is Christ; a Savior full of grace and truth.

But Peter tells us that this living stone is a corner-stone. We are to build upon it. And its life will pervade the edifice; will make every stone in it lively; that is warm, sympathetic, active, fruitful as well as firm. The result will be a spiritual house; a Church that is immovable as a mountain, yet beautiful and fragrant as a garden. What a grand ideal is this! If it could be fully realized, the world would be attracted to this spiritual house. It would find in it that rest which it has sought elsewhere in vain.

THE GRAND CO-OPERATION.

“ALL things work together for good to them that love God.” (Rom. viii. 28.) What a statement! There is universal activity. Everything is working. This activity is harmonious; “all things work together.” And the object of this grand co-operation is the good of those who love God. Let us visit some great factory. In the engine-room immense power is generated. But that power is under the control of the engineer. He directs it all to certain shafts or wheels. To them are geared other shafts and wheels; the whole building is full of machinery, all driven by the engine, all working together. And what is the result? A roll of cloth or carpeting, nay, a nail, or even a pin. The power and machinery are directed to that one end. Everything in the building is so arranged as to contribute to that one result. It seems a small thing for such a vast establishment to turn out. But the world needs nails and pins. They are useful, though small. And the value of the factory is seen not only in the usefulness of the articles that it turns out, but in their number. It makes millions every day.

Such a factory is the universe. It is energized by the power of God. He keeps all its great forces at work. He employs them all in the interests of his Church. It seems a small matter for suns and systems, for angels and archangels, to minister to the heirs of salvation. It seems a result unworthy of such mighty agencies to polish a human spirit for the skies. But when the work is accomplished, when the sanctified soul shines like the sun in the firmament, when, as ages roll on and all the material lights of creation have burned out, that soul shall continue to shine—then it will be seen that wisely did God so construct and govern all things that they should work together for good to them that love him.

TESTING THE SCAFFOLD.

HELPING to put on the cornice of our new farmhouse, I stepped upon a scaffold that had been strong enough to sustain two men the day before; but in an instant it fell beneath my weight, and down I went some fourteen feet upon

the hard ground. The immediate sensations were not pleasant, and the soreness and stiffness that still linger are far from agreeable. I do not mention this fall as anything peculiar to California, for ever since the days of Adam men have been falling in this world; but it suggested some reflections which I note down as I sit propped and pillowed waiting to get well again.

I had no business to go on that scaffold because it looked safe and had been so the day before. I ought to have tested it. If I had brought my weight to bear upon it before letting go my hold upon the building, I would have learned its weakness. It would have fallen, but I would not. There are men and women here and everywhere who act in regard to things spiritual and eternal as foolishly as I did last Saturday in regard to that scaffold. They know that ere long they must go outside the building—they must swing away from the body, from the world, from all that is now visible and tangible, swing away into the atmosphere of the spirit world. Will they find something to support them there? or will they go down, down, down as soon as they leave the body? Will death be to them the

edge of a precipice, or the first plank of a bridge that reaches clear over the bottomless abyss? Everybody dreams that he has a safe and sure scaffolding for the soul on the outside of its present abode. One has pushed forward into the chilly darkness a theory of universal salvation. Another has built a scaffold of virtues and charities. He adds new braces to it daily, and hopes that it is strong enough to support him over the dread abyss. The Christian believes that Jesus of Nazareth has come to his lowly home and placed there, within his mortal body, one end of a celestial arch, or of such a ladder as Jacob saw in his dream at Luz, the top reaching to heaven and angels passing up and down.

Now, how shall we know beforehand whether any of these outside scaffolds will support us when heart and flesh fail? We must test them. But can we do so? Can we bring our weight to bear upon them before we let go our hold upon life? I think that we can. Let me illustrate. A man was dying with consumption. He knew that he could not live but a few days. He did not believe in Jesus. His hope was not derived from the gospel, hence he said to his physician

and friends: "When the end is near, give me morphine. I don't want to be conscious while I am dying." He reached over to his scaffold and found that it would not bear his weight. Under the pressure of the fear of death, it sank beneath him. He should have known that it would not support him when he died. He did not dare to go over the precipice with his eyes wide open. The fact that he wanted to shut them proved that he had no faith in his theory of salvation. He tested his scaffold and it failed. Did he think that a dose of morphine would make it strong?

An able lawyer whom I knew years ago professed to be an atheist. He believed that the soul went out like an extinguished lamp at death. He had an only son, the idol of his heart. This son sickened and died. The father was insane with grief. He would go into his chamber, and, falling prostrate on the floor, cry out: "O God, what does this mean? Why do you treat me so? Why have you taken my boy away? What have you done with him?" For weeks he suffered from paroxysms of grief, during which he was overheard howling heavenward such bitter

and blasphemous cries. After awhile these paroxysms ceased, and he was as cold and sneering an atheist as before. That man tested his scaffold with the weight of his boy, and it utterly failed; yet he went on, expecting to commit his own soul to it when he died.

Every reader will be able to recall cases in which Christians have tested their scaffold in the severest trials of life and in the immediate prospect of death. I shall never forget the case of a young soldier on the battle-field of Shiloh. He was shot through the breast, and as I helped the surgeon to probe and dress the wound, he said: "Chaplain, I know what Dr. F. means by that look. There is no hope for me. But I am not afraid to die. I went into the fight thinking I might be killed, and repeating, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' He heard my prayer. I am waiting for him." That boy while yet in the body brought the weight of his spirit to bear upon the scaffold outside. It did not yield, and hence he knew it would not fail him when he died.

I have seen Christians in sorrow as bitter as death itself, and I have heard them say: "The

Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Testing thus the sustaining power of the gospel when they were pushed out for the time beyond all human support, when the whole weight of the spirit in its utter desolation was thrown upon the promise of God, they know that those promises will be firm and steadfast in the dying hour. They hear the Savior saying: "Lo, I am with you always;" "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee;" "My grace is sufficient for you;" and they reply triumphantly: "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

But I have seen Christians whom the trials of life completely overwhelmed; who refused to accept even the consolations of the gospel when they were bereaved; who cried out bitterly, "It is cruel—I can not bear it;" who shrank from the rod when their religion required them to kiss it; who looked up to the Smiter with bitterness of soul when they should have said, "It is the Lord. He doeth all things well." They are testing the hopes of their souls at such times as

these, and, if the anchor drags with only the strain of bereavement upon it, can they expect it to hold when death tries it to the utmost?

In such trials the nominal Christian is not testing the gospel, but his own faith in it. The gospel is an adamantine arch reaching from the lowliest believer's heart to the throne of God. But if the heart and the arch are not cemented together by true and living faith, there is no salvation. A man may be near to Christ, may hear his voice, may touch the hem of his garment and imagine that he is a true disciple, yet be deceived. If we would have full assurance, the hope that is an anchor to the soul, we must *cling* to Christ. We must take him, living or dying, to be our all and in all. Whoever does this will find his earthly trials tests of Christ's sustaining power, which will prepare him to die in peace.

“AS SEEING HIM WHO IS INVISIBLE.”

THIS is one of the definitions of faith in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. Moses lived and

acted just as if he saw God. That was what made him a moral hero. We need in our day this same faith, and it is all that we need. If we could look up and see our Creator on his throne controlling all forces and events, holding in his hands cords that are fastened upon all human hearts so that he can turn them as he wills—if we could see Christ, our Savior, in the midst of the throne as a lamb that had been slain, pleading for us, would not this vision of power and love scatter all our doubts and fears? Would it not give us assurance of our own salvation, and of the safety and triumph of the Church? Could we ever be troubled, even for a moment, amid the fiercest rage of men or devils while we beheld that throne in the heavens, and looked upon the face of that pleading, yet mighty Savior? But we know that the throne is there, though we can not see it. We know that he who sits upon it is our reconciled Father in Christ. We know that he has promised to make all things work together for good to them that love him. We know that Christ is there as our glorified Redeemer, and that he is able to save unto the uttermost all them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever

liveth to make intercession for them. Knowing these things, having God's word for them, should we not feel and act as if we saw them? That would be walking by faith. That is both our privilege and our duty.

Does not this divine definition make the whole matter very clear and simple? People say, "Oh, if I had more faith." Why don't you have it? Is there, can there be, any doubt as to the facts in the case? Are they not as real as if you saw them with your eyes? And if as real, should they not be as operative? The old adage, "seeing is believing," implies that mere corporeal vision is the only basis of confidence. But it is not so. Our eyes often deceive us; and there are many things that we believe in fully and firmly, though we have never seen them.

How shall we cultivate this faith? How shall we accustom ourselves to act as seeing the invisible? There is but one way: Study the facts as God states them. Meditate upon them. Realize them. Get the mind and the heart full of them. Our souls have eyes that *can* see God. Our souls have ears that can hear God. Faith is the soul's vision of God. When I find my faith

wavering, I go to the Bible. I take some one of the great facts it reveals, and fix my thoughts upon it. I invoke the imagination to make me a picture of it. I gaze upon that picture persistently and prayerfully. I say to myself: Yes, it is so! Yes, Christ is there. I see him. I hear him. Now he lifts up for me those hands that were nailed on the cross. Look, my soul, at the marks of the nails. Look at the thorn-scars on his brow. Look, keep looking. Listen, keep listening. Ask God to open more fully the soul's eyes, to make more acute the soul's sense of hearing. Thus by earnest and prayerful study of these wondrous facts they become to us as objects of sight, and we learn to feel and to act as if we were ever in the visible presence of our Creator and Redeemer.

THRESHING.

PAUL says that "tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope." (Rom. v. 3.) Now, tribulation is literally thresh-

ing. The *tribulum* was the sledge that the Romans used to drive over the sheaves to beat and tear the grain from the straw and chaff. It was a rough process, but a necessary and effective one. Like it is the discipline by which God delivers his children from the evil that is in the world and in their own hearts, and prepares them to glorify and to enjoy him. Hence we are told "whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth."

There are two stacks in a field. The thresher passes by one of them. It is hay. No heads of wheat there. If he should run it through his machine he would only change the hay to straw. He goes to the other stack, sets his machine, applies his power, tears the stack up with his derrick forks, and pitches it into the cylinder; the iron teeth rend it; the fragments are carried on where a fan drives the wind fiercely over them, tossing them out into the air. But there is something in that stack which the teeth can not rend, nor the wind blow away. As the operation that seems so cruel and destructive goes on, hard, plump, golden grains of wheat come dropping into the sacks. They are garnered for home consumption, or may be shipped to feed the hungry in foreign

lands. The haystack is valuable for certain purposes, but it is not worth threshing. It has nothing in it fitted for the markets of the world. But the wheat is so firm and hard, such a crystallization of vegetable matter, that it can be kept thousands of years. Grains taken from the wrappings of an Egyptian mummy have been planted, and they grew.

When, then, we behold a man who seems to have no trials, we are tempted to think that there is nothing in him worth threshing—that all his excellence is of the earth—is like the grass and flowers. If there were in that man germs which might develop into spiritual life and bear fruit unto immortality, the Great Thresher would put him under the discipline of his providence. He would apply to him the rough *tribulum*, that he might beat out of him all his folly, blow away all his imperfections, thus preparing him for present usefulness and for eternal life.

Tribulation, like the threshing of grain, will not bring anything out of a man if there is nothing in him. Some people are not made wiser and better by the trials of life. They are only threshed into chaff which the wind driveth away. But God's

discipline is unlike ordinary threshing in this—it not only brings out what there is of good in the true believer, but it strengthens and increases the good. It not only proves that through divine grace we are patient, but it “worketh patience.” In connection with the trial of our faith “he giveth more grace.”

Then welcome be the *tribulum* of our heavenly Father. By it we are not only proved and purified, but aided in the development of our spiritual life. “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life.”

THE TWO BRIDGES.

THE Bible says that “by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight.” And again, “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness for every one that believeth.” These two passages bring before me two scenes that may illustrate their meaning:

I was returning home once in the early spring. As I approached the river on whose opposite

bank that home stood, I saw that it was a swollen torrent full of floating ice. No boat could cross it. But I was not troubled; for I did not have to depend on a boat. I knew that there was a staunch bridge on stone abutments and piers. I saw, as I rode down the mountain-side, that the bridge was standing firm above the fury of the freshet. I said to myself: "All right, I will be home in an hour." But as I drew nearer, I saw that the stream had cut away the embankment between me and the bridge. There rushed and roared a current of mad water, tossing huge ice-cakes into the air, and upon each other, in wild confusion. The current that swept around the abutment of the bridge was as impassable as the river itself. How useless that bridge when I could not reach it! How it mocked my hopes and longings, as I stood on the brink of the broken embankment and gazed upon it! The bridge was all right; the trouble was that I could not get to it.

Like that bridge is the law of God. If we could obey it, we would be saved by it. The Holy One could not condemn any one who kept his holy law. But we can not keep it; we can not

even begin to. Between us and the abutment of that bridge there rolls the torrent of depravity. Sin has broken through the embankment of innocence that connected us with the bridge of obedience. Our souls are deluged with evil thoughts, unholy imaginations, impure desires, rebellious passions. We are powerless to arrest this torrent, or to cross over, and begin with angelic purity to be holy as God is holy. The law is perfect. It is just and good. It can save the sinless, but it can not atone for sin. By loving obedience the unfallen can secure the favor of God. But the fallen can not begin to obey it. He can not of himself think the first pure thought, feel the first pure desire, send heavenward the first pure aspiration. When I hear men talk about doing right, and thus making sure of heaven, I think of that day when I stood by the torrent that roared between me and the bridge and fear that they are mocked as I was.

Again, some years later, I was traveling in a land of swamps. I took a new road that ran in the direction that I wished to go, and congratulated myself that I would soon reach my destination. Just as the sun was setting I came to an

immense swamp. I could see the tufts of rank grass, and the dark oozy waters. But there was a bridge over the swamp. I drove upon it for nearly a mile, when suddenly it ended. Before me was a pile of lumber, and beside it were the tools of the workmen. The bridge was not finished. The solid ground was many rods away. The swamp was as impassable as if it had been a deep river. I had to turn about, no easy matter on that narrow bridge, and go back in the gathering darkness and try to find a better way.

Such is the experience of many a man who has trusted in himself that he was righteous. He has gone on for years, hoping that his was indeed *the* way. But the sun is going down, and the shadows of life's evening time begin to gather over him. Conscience wakes up, and shows him how far he comes short—how imperfect is his best obedience, how self-incrusted and sin-stained is his morality, and that without Christ's righteousness to complete and crown his own he must perish. Happy is he who learns where his own way ends soon enough to turn and seek the new and living way.

WHAT AND HOW.

OUR Savior uttered two commands in regard to hearing: "Take heed what ye hear" (Mark iv. 24), and "Take heed how ye hear" (Luke viii. 18). Both are emphatic and imperative. We have no right to listen to a blasphemer, or to a sophistical teacher of error. Though we may not accept anything that he says, yet his words will fasten themselves in our memories, like burrs that cling to our clothing, and give a great deal of annoyance. Satan will have, in the recollection of those blasphemies, or cavils, an artillery of evil within us which he will not fail to turn against the truth. Let me illustrate the insidious peril of hearing what is false or vile: I found, in traveling, years ago, a family living in a cabin on the edge of a swamp. They were feeble and fallow. They all had the chills. I said to them, "Do you drink this water?" "Oh no," they replied, "we know better than that. We go away yonder to the hillside, where there is a spring, and get our water, both for drinking and cooking." "Yes," I replied, "and you ought to move your cabin to the hill and live there. You won't drink this

water, but you live in the air that it poisons. You breathe the miasma, awake and asleep. It enters your system as effectually and fatally as if you drank it." Like those dwellers by the swamp are they who are careless as to *what* they hear; who think it does them no harm as long as they don't believe it. Ere they are aware their souls are poisoned. Our only safety is in dwelling in an atmosphere of purity.

But the *how* is as important as the *what*. Truth may be heard so that it shall be as profitless as seed sown on a rock. The command, "Take heed how ye hear," is given in connection with the parable of the sower—a parable that ought to be carefully studied in all our congregations. A besetting sin of the day is careless hearing. Even Christians, when they return from the house of God, can not repeat the text, much less the leading thoughts of the sermon. It is sad to think how much good seed is sown that never germinates; how little preaching accomplishes because there is so little prayerful and devout hearing. But are not the preachers responsible, in part, for this state of things? If their sermons were more textual and expository they

would fasten themselves in the memory by the law of association. I remember such sermons now that I heard in boyhood. I wish we had more of them nowadays.

WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?

I PLANT on an acre of ground less than a hundred pounds of seed. I cut from it a crop of grass which, when thoroughly dried, weighs two tons. Here are 3,900 pounds more of solid matter than I deposited in the soil. Where did it come from? A little silex and lime and phosphorus have been taken from the ground. But the part of my crop which makes food for man or for beast was not in the earth. It has come from the atmosphere. It is the carbon and nitrogen that are poisonous when inhaled, but are nutritious when eaten in the form of grain or fruit. During the long process of vegetable growth, every plant is a laboratory. In it slowly, steadily, surely, wonderfully, the hurtful elements are extracted from the atmosphere and converted into food. The rain and the sunshine, moisture, heat and

light, are the agents employed in this process. But the great Chemist, who superintends the work, is God himself.

I never watch a field of wheat but I think of the miracle of the manna in the wilderness, and of that of the five loaves that fed five thousand when Christ blessed and brake. Here is an operation of divine wisdom and power in my behalf as great and as marvelous. Here is equal proof of creative energy. To say that the germ, the end of a dry kernel which I plant, makes the blade, the ear, and the full corn in the ear, is absurd. How can it make anything? It has no life. It is only a point that God has chosen to begin to work at. It is only used to mark the spot when he sets up his laboratory. He says to the farmer: Wherever you put a seed I will build a workshop, and construct for you a plant or a tree. I only want you to bury the seed, for I am "the invisible God." I work unseen. I work in silence and darkness. But by my quiet, underground operations I clothe the earth with beauty, and feed the millions who dwell upon it.

These thoughts about God have been throb-

bing in my brain as I have gone over fields ripe for the harvest. Every full head of wheat and barley was bending as if in worship, and, nodding in the breeze, it seemed to say, Behold what a miracle of power and goodness I am! You could not have made me. All the boasted science of the world could not have made me. God alone could have gathered my constituent elements out of the air and shaped them into symmetrical grains, each inclosed in a shell to protect it until the reaper and thresher are ready for it.

I think that Christians ought to talk less about nature and laws, and more about God. They ought to see the Creator in his works, not merely as the great original maker of all things out of nothing, but as making beautiful and wonderful things all around us all the while. We ought to teach our children, not how plants grow, for they don't do any such thing, but how God makes them. They are developed from seeds, or bulbs, or offshoots, by his own hand. He is as really present in the process as he was when the sun was lighted, or when the foundations of the earth were laid. I want to protest, from my rural home, against the prevalent atheism of the day;

not the atheism of Huxley or Darwin, but of Christian men and women. They seem to think it unscientific to talk about God, except in church, or on the Sabbath. They do not honor him and enjoy him as they might, if they accustomed themselves to see him in all things.

THE GRUMBLER.

ISN'T there somebody in your church that is always talking about the coldness of the brethren, the divisions that abound, the low state of piety, the conformity to the world, etc.; in other words, who is continually confessing other people's sins instead of his own? My word for it, that man is the cause of much of the evil that he complains of, and magnifies it by his complaining. (Those who choose can put *she* and *her* in this last sentence instead of "he" and "his.") Tell such grumblers the fable of the "Bell Clapper." The bell in which it was hung was cracked, and the clapper was always complaining of its sad fate in being hung in such a bell. A good many unsophisticated people pitied the clapper, and con-

doled with its sad lot. At length the spirit of Diogenes, the old cynic, who could not endure shams of any kind, came along. He heard of the clapper's complaint, and said: "Before you make any more fuss about the bell, remember two things. First, you cracked it, and, second, nobody would know that it was cracked if you didn't tell them." The moral is obvious, but those who need to ponder it will be the last to see it.

WAITING ALL NIGHT.

It was announced on Friday of last week that the Government would redeem \$50,000 of greenbacks in silver, commencing at ten o'clock Saturday. Here was an opportunity to make a clear profit of \$2,500. For, while greenbacks were worth only ninety cents in gold, silver half-dollars were worth ninety-five cents on the dollar. Every money-changer in the city wanted as much as he could get of this \$2,500. So, long before dark, on Friday, a crowd gathered before the doors of the custom-house, expecting to wait there until the doors opened at ten A. M. next day. The

policemen in attendance made this crowd fall into line, so that the first comers should be first served. And there they stood all the evening—all night—all the early morning—fourteen or fifteen weary hours. There they stood, joking, pushing, grumbling; sleepy, but with no place to sleep; weary, but with no chance to rest. There they stood with their greenbacks in their pockets, waiting to exchange them for silver, and make five cents on the dollar. When the doors were opened Saturday morning the rush was fearful. Many had their clothes torn from their backs. Some were pushed down and trampled on. Not a few, who had waited in line all night, were crowded out by their stronger competitors when the column began to move, and failed to get to the payer's counter in time. At five minutes after eleven the whole amount of silver was paid out, and scores went away disappointed.

How those men, who waited in the street all night to make a few hundred dollars, would ridicule an all-night prayer-meeting.

"THE AGE OF REASON."

THIS is the title of the book by which Thomas Paine was going to convict the Bible of falsehood and folly, and to drive it out of print. I had not seen a copy of it for years. But the other day, to my surprise, I found one in the Bible House in San Francisco. Some customer who was preparing a lecture on infidelity wanted to examine it, and that copy was ordered from Boston for him. There it lay, a lonely thing, in the midst of thousands of Bibles; Bibles large and small, Bibles plainly bound and richly bound, Bibles in many different languages. Yes, the book that Paine proposed to destroy was never so widely circulated, so generally read, and so influential as it is to-day; while the book which he wrote is almost out of print. I thought if the spirit of Paine could have been in that copy of his "Age of Reason," as it lay in the Bible House, he would be mortified and ashamed. He would see that he had been bombarding a rock with a wisp of straw. Paine's criticisms are, many of them, ingenious, and a few of them are not easily explained. But, doubtless, this is our fault rather than the Bible's.

There are spots, as we call them, on the sun. But they are not of necessity imperfections.

I have no sympathy with the commentators who try to explain everything in the Bible. I believe that there are mysteries in it on purpose to try our faith. If an inspired apostle found some things in it “hard to be understood” (2 Peter iii. 16), is it any wonder that we do? A conceited skeptic lately called it

“THE BOOK OF BLUNDERS.”

He tried to show that it was full of errors historical, errors philosophical, errors rhetorical, errors of all sorts and sizes and colors. “Well,” thought I, as I read the various counts of his indictment, “it is a great wonder that such a blundering book has not been scorned and scouted out of the world long ago.” Such men overdo their work, and their efforts react in favor of the Bible. Sensible, practical men say, “There are, as everybody knows, a great many excellent things in this book, and it has done a great deal of good; why, then, try to pick petty flaws in it?” If I can’t understand all its miracles and mysteries, yet I can understand enough to make me wise

unto salvation, and the more I do His will, the more I shall "know of the doctrine."

THE FRESCO AND THE MIRROR.

IN a palace in the city of Rome is a splendid fresco, by Guido, called the "Aurora." It is in the ceiling of a lofty dome. To study it is very trying to the eyes, and dizzying to the brain. For the relief of visitors a large mirror has been placed near the floor directly under the fresco. Before this mirror the visitor can sit, and study the fresco at his ease, and can get a better view of it than by gazing at the ceiling itself. Reading of this fresco and mirror made me think of the statement in 2 Corinthians iii. 18: "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord," etc. The knowledge of God is the most interesting and valuable that we can attain to. How much grander and better to understand the Creator than to understand the noblest of his works! Men study the sun and the stars with great patience and enthusiasm. If they could turn their

telescopes upon the throne in heaven, and upon him who sits upon it, "like unto a jasper and a sardine stone;" if they could pierce the emerald rainbow and study the features of the King of kings, would not every created orb be neglected in order to gaze upon the uncreated glory? But such gazing, were it possible, would be wearisome. Hence God has placed a mirror in our hands. He has given us an image of himself in the narrative of our Savior's life on earth. With the New Testament, we may sit down in our homes and study God. Gazing upon it with patient and prayerful interest we may know as much of Jehovah as we need to know, as much as it is possible for us now to comprehend. We may behold in our glass what angels and arch-angels behold in heaven. Our divine book is as full and faithful an "image of the invisible" as mortal eyes can see. How great is the goodness of God in giving us this mirror of himself!

But there is another statement in the latter part of the verse (2 Corinthians iii. 18) about the mirror. They who gaze into it are changed by it. The glory which they see glorifies them; studying what Christ revealed of God, they become Christ-

like; and, of course, God-like. The condition stated is, that we must behold "with open face." We must not go to the Bible with preconceived theories, or to find in it a reflection of ourselves. But we must go to find in it, and to receive from it, the pure truth—just what God has revealed. In this process the heart of the student is like the plate or card of the photographer. It must be clean. Its surface must be receptive. And then it must be uncovered and exposed freely to the light coming from the image, and to that light alone. He who studies God's word in this way—who opens his heart to it—will find that it prints itself not only upon his memory, but upon his affections; upon his character, until he becomes a living epistle; an illustrated edition of the gospel, until his face shines as did that of Moses when he came down from the mount, and men take knowledge of him that he has been with Jesus.

DON'T SWITCH OFF.

As I passed a train of cars on the Central Pacific, the other day, I saw written on several of

them these words: "Perishable; don't switch off." These cars were loaded with fruit for Chicago. If they went through promptly the fruit would get into market in good order, and sell for good prices. But if too long on the way it would rot, and be worthless. The fear of the shipper was that in making up trains these cars would be switched upon some siding and left there until his fruit was ruined. I went into a Sabbath-school the next day. I saw a large infant class, and a very small Bible class. I asked, Where are the boys and girls that were in the infant class ten years ago? Are they teachers? A few of them are, and a few attend the adult Bible class which the pastor teaches. But the majority of them, when fifteen or sixteen, concluded that they were too old to go to Sabbath-school. They switched off. Do these graduates of the school, as they consider themselves, come regularly to church? No, only occasionally. I am sorry to say that they have not only outgrown the Sabbath-school, but all Christian influences. They are trying to have what they call a good time. They go to places of amusement on the Sabbath. They are falling into bad habits. Many of them, I fear,

will go to destruction. And I thought of the request written on those fruit-cars: "Perishable; don't switch off." I wished that those words could be written on the heart of every Sabbath-scholar, and on the hearts of parents and teachers too. The age when boys begin to think that they are men is the most critical of their lives. If they get switched off then they are exposed to temptations which few are able to resist. One of the great Sabbath-school problems of the day is: How can we keep the older scholars? It is easy to get little children to come, and to interest them. But it is not so easy to get the young men and maidens who are beginning to think that they are wiser than their parents. I know of but two ways that will be likely to prove successful. First and best: Try to have all the boys and girls converted. If they become Christians before they are twelve years old, they will, of course, want to stay in the Sabbath-school either as scholars or teachers as long as they can. The second way is to have all the adult Christians, and all other adults that can be interested in the study of the Bible, attend the school. Where there are a number of classes composed of grown-up peo-

ple, the young folks feel that the Sabbath-school is not a place for children merely—that they are not expected to outgrow it. If fathers and mothers complain that their children are getting tired of Sabbath-school, and think that they have gone long enough, let them go with their children, study their lessons with them, and try in this way to keep them interested.

THE WIND AND THE FIRE.

WE were trying to burn the stubble on an eighty-acre field the other day. We kindled fires all along the northern side, but it was hard to keep them burning. The flames crept southward so slowly that we were tempted to give up in despair. But just then the sea-breeze came. It caught those languid flames upon its wings, and bore them rapidly across the field. The fire ran furiously now, and our only anxiety was in regard to stopping it when we should want to. All the combustibles were in the field before the wind came; the fire was kindled and making some prog-

ress. But what would have required hours without the wind, was accomplished in a few minutes with the wind. It at once intensified the conflagration a hundred-fold. So will it be when the Spirit is poured out upon our churches. Oh, it was wonderful to see those feeble flames, that crept slowly over the ground, mount up into the air, and rush like fiery chariots before the wind! And far more wonderful will it be to behold the new life in our churches—the living energy in what now seem to be mere formal instrumentalities, when the Savior breathes upon them, saying, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost.”

The flames that were fanned by the wind in our field to-day increased its force by rarifying the air. Thus, as the fire became hotter, the breeze became stronger. Each acted and reacted upon the other. And so it is with our hearts and “the heavenly wind.” The more they glow with love the more fervent and believing are our prayers, and these prayers bring down upon us still greater effusions of the Spirit. So, if there is a Pentecostal kindling, why should it not burn on, gaining fresh force as it advances, like a prairie fire, until all the churches are ablaze?

If we had kindled our fire at only one point on the north side of our stubble-field the wind would have carried across a narrow line of flame and but a small part of the field would have been burned. But, expecting the wind, we kindled fires a few yards apart all along that side, and when the wind came it soon united those fires in one broad sheet of flame which swept over the ground like an army in battle array. This is what we want in the Church just now—preparation for the coming of the Holy Spirit all along the line—every minister, every congregation, every Christian, prepared and expectant, waiting and praying. Then when the power from on high is given, it will not glow and burn in only one place, or in a few places, but all over the land. The revival will be general. It will move onward with a broad and steady flame.

THE NAIL IN THE FOOT.

IT was a valuable horse. Some one had left a nail in a board. He stepped on it. It penetrated his foot and broke off. He was a little lame, but

no disease was developed in the region of the wound. Yet that nail in the foot resulted in death. On the third day after the accident, lock-jaw appeared. In the part of the body farthest from the place of injury, there was a violent and fatal derangement. Why? In each living creature there is woven a net-work of nerves. They connect each part with all the rest. By them an injury in any member is at once telegraphed to the rest. And such is the peculiarity of the nervous system that often there seem to be closer sympathy through it between parts that are remote than those between parts that are contiguous. Here the nail in one of the hind feet manifested itself in the jaw of the horse. With such a net-work in the body it is not safe to injure any part expecting that it will alone suffer. The injury may be felt most where it would seem probable that it would be felt least, or not at all.

Paul represents the Church as a body of which the individual believers are members. And in this spiritual body also there are nerves. Hence, if one member suffer, all suffer. An injury to the humblest believer, or a sin committed by him, may be felt in the most distant part of the body.

How important, then, that each believer try to be pure, not only for his own sake, but for that of others.

“EMBRYO CHRISTIANS.”

A DOCTOR of Divinity, on this coast, has discovered a new species of Christians. I quote above the name by which he calls them. He first ventilated the discovery in a funeral discourse. The deceased was an honest, energetic, public-spirited, benevolent, and, above all, *rich* man. He never made a profession of religion. He seldom went to church. He did nothing in all his life to honor Christ, or to manifest faith in him. But notwithstanding this utter indifference to Christianity, he must be complimented with some kind of Christian character. He is, therefore, declared to have been an undeveloped Christian. The germ was there. It slumbered while he lived, but death waked it up. Death made it germinate and grow. Death was the hour of spiritual birth. Such was the idea presented. How comforting to careless, worldly men!

Only be good citizens. Only make money. Don't do anything grossly immoral. Be a kind neighbor and a pleasant friend. Then some man of God will stand before your coffin, and say that you were as truly a Christian as any of those good people who make such a parade of their piety; who go regularly to church, to prayer-meetings and to communion. The only difference between them and you is in the degree of development. You did not find a congenial soil and climate for the growth of your piety in this world. You preferred to make money. But now, since you can not do that in the spirit-world, the dormant buds of your spirit-life will burst into leaf and blossom, and you will become a full-blown Christian. The idea of embryo Christians is not patented or copyrighted. So if other preachers wish to use it on funeral occasions they are at liberty to do so—if their conscience will let them.

BEAUTY IN COMMON THINGS.

I HAVE just been out in the corn-field. How splendidly every stalk is shaped and polished and

colored. How graceful the form and curve of every leaf. How grandly the tassels wave in the breeze like the plumes of a vast army in battle array. How delicate the silk as it comes out from the forming ear. How finely modeled and proportioned the ear itself. How delicately hued the husk and the kernels. There is an all-day study for a painter in a single stalk of corn. No human skill could imitate it. And yet how many millions God makes every season. Does he make them merely to feed us or our swine, and to furnish our distilleries with corn? I can not believe it. I read in that graceful growth God's love of beauty. I see in it a revelation of his desire to cultivate and refine our spirits while he feeds us. A wise and loving mother tries to make home attractive to her children. She not only puts food on the table for them, but she puts it on the best dishes she can get. She covers the table with snow-white linen, and adorns it with flowers. She wants to teach her boys and girls that they are not mere animals to be fed and sheltered, but that they have a higher nature. She would cultivate in them pure tastes and holy affections. And she learned this from

our heavenly Father. He seeks to win our hearts to himself, and to purify them by making the common things around us so graceful and so beautiful. Study the vines, the trees, the grain, the vegetables even. Watch the young animals at play. See how much there is in form and coloring and motion to interest you. How the thought of utility is lost, as you gaze, in the emotion of beauty, and you will feel, you can not help it, that your Creator is not only the wisest of all beings, but that he is the most loving and most worthy to be loved. He is ever touching the familiar things about us until they glow with beauty, and thus is saying: "Let me give you a heart-growth as graceful as that of the corn or the vines. I delight in the graces of the spirit more than in these external graces. I work around you to show how I can and will work within you."

SHADOWS.

"OH, dear, I wish the light would shine into this closet," said a little fellow who was looking

for a toy that had rolled away; "why don't the sun shine around corners? Why is there always a shadow behind anything that is lighted up?" The boy's questions suggest other and deeper ones. Why do shadows fall upon our hearts? Why can none of us walk in the light all the way of our earthly pilgrimage? Shadows are often welcome. When we journey on a summer day, how glad we are to find shade trees along the road, to have clouds come between us and the burning sun! If light went around corners, if nothing could intercept its beams, in what a terrible glare we would have to live and toil! We would hate the sun if we found it impossible to hide from him. Our Father knows that we need shade as well as sunshine, and he has so arranged the laws of nature that they shall go together; that whatever is shined on shall cast a shadow; that where there is a bright there shall also be a dark side. Thus not only is our comfort promoted, but beauty results from the play of light and shade. The world owes much that is grandest and loveliest in its scenery to the fact that sunbeams go only in straight lines.

But our Father sees that our spirits need shad-

ows as well as our bodies; that the dark side is as valuable in our soul culture as the bright side. He shines upon us from his word and by his Spirit. But always a shade goes with the shining. He who finds nothing in the sunniest hours of life to stir his deepest sensibilities, to start the tears in his eyes, has but a shallow nature, or takes only superficial views of that wondrously solemn thing, a life of probation for a life that shall never end. Christian, when shadows creep coldly over your spirit, feel not that God has ceased to shine; that he no longer reigns and no longer loves you; but remember that as the earth needs night as well as day, as vegetation needs clouds as well as sunshine, you need hours of darkness and sadness; you need the mellowing influences of sorrow in the ripening of your character for its work on earth and for its home in heaven.

“WITH QUIETNESS.”

CROSSING San Francisco Bay, this morning, I watched the noiseless movement of the powerful

engine with great interest. There is a strange fascination in the quiet working of such forces. The immense pistons, perfectly polished and oiled, seemed to go up and down in the cylinders with great ease, and yet to them were attached the cranks and levers that turned the wheels and propelled the boat. I asked, as I stood there, Why is this power so quiet in its operations? And I found these answers: First, the force generated in the boilers is sufficient for the work that is to be done by it. If the engine was placed in a boat too heavy for it, it would have to carry too much steam, and there would be a constant strain upon it. Second, the force is regulated in its application to the work. Only a certain amount of steam is admitted into the cylinders at a time, and at uniform intervals. Indeed, in this respect the engine is made so that it is self-regulating. Third, every part of the engine where there could be any friction is kept constantly oiled.

Now, Paul exhorts Christians to work with quietness. Not to be quiet, but to be busy without bustling; to be active and earnest without making any fuss about it. It seems very difficult for some good people to obey this exhortation,

or even to understand it. In their minds work and worry are inseparable. Such persons may learn a lesson from the engine. Let them not try to do too much; let them be systematic in their efforts, and, above all, let them keep the machinery well oiled; let them cultivate that charity which suffereth long and is kind. The real workers for Christ are not always those that the world hears most about. There are thousands who, in humble spheres, are toiling quietly to do good. What they accomplish others will never know. Nay, they themselves will never know until the day when it shall be said to them: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

IN EARTHEN VESSELS.

MEN put their treasures in iron safes, but God puts his in "earthen vessels." (2 Corinthians iv. 7.) He knows that he can take care of it even in such frail depositories, and he wants to fix the attention of men upon the treasure itself. He

would not have their thoughts diverted from the jewel by the casket. Yet how little appreciation there is in the churches, to-day, of this divine plan in regard to the gospel. How severely the earthen vessels are criticised. How anxious men are to get their gospel in a vessel of a finer mold and higher polish than that of their neighbors. Indeed, there are congregations, not a few, who seem to care very little about the treasure itself, if they can only get a vessel of graceful form, and highly ornamented. Eloquent preachers are in great demand. Pious preachers, whose gifts are those of the Holy Spirit only, are not wanted. Some one must be secured who can draw a crowd, who can tickle itching ears, who can get people to rent pews just as they rent opera-boxes. The tendency of this is to secularize the Church—to “run” it as a human institution—ignoring the fact that its real power is of God; that its true success and usefulness can come only from the indwelling of the Holy Ghost.

Now, because the vessels are earthen it does not follow that they must be rude in shape, unpolished, or, perhaps, even cracked. An earthen vessel may be graceful, it may please the eye, it

may have a "ring" that is musical, and yet it may contain a treasure so rich in value that you can not look at or think of anything else. Such ministers of the gospel there are, men of ripest culture and rarest eloquence, yet so full of Christ that the hearer forgets everything but him. Even the beauty of the vessel seems only to make the treasure more attractive, to draw all eyes to it instead of diverting any from it. A minister can not be too thoroughly educated if he consecrates all his culture to Christ. He can not seek too earnestly the graces of oratory if by them he would the better persuade men to come to Christ. But when he polishes the vessel only because a vicious taste demands it; when he cultivates rhetorical elegance because the churches bid high for it, forgetting that "the excellency of the power is of God," he is faithless to his high calling.

"In earthen vessels!" Is it any wonder that ministers of the gospel are not perfect? Is it any wonder that a critical world often despises them? Is it any wonder that cold-hearted Christians fail to "esteem them very highly in love for their works' sake?" But if the earthen vessel has the treasure in it, God will honor it though men

do not. Be patient then, nay, be joyful, ye humble ministers of Jesus. He who hath chosen you will make the treasure enrich your own souls, even if others refuse to receive it from you. And, hereafter, though you have gone forth weeping, you shall surely come again rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you.

FINDING A SPRING.

I REMEMBER reading this story years ago. A farmer who had dug a well in his stock-yard, and was obliged to spend an hour a day pumping water for his stock, thought, one morning: "I have been plodding here for months. I am weary of this monotonous toil. I will take a holiday. I will climb these hills beyond my farm. I will look over the landscape, and let my spirit rise for a few hours above its narrow sphere of thought and care." So he left his plow in the furrow, and went out to ramble over the wooded slopes and rocky summits that skirted his arable land. Those slopes and summits were in the sur-

vey and deed, but he had considered them of little value, and never visited them.

After expending hours in exploring this rugged region for mere pastime and rest, he turned homeward. On the last hillside, as he paused to look down upon his farm, he saw that the leaves were wet in a little ravine. He carelessly pushed them away with his foot, and lo! a tiny spring appeared. He saw at once that it was small because it was choked up. He opened it as well as he could with his hands, opened it with the boyish instinct to see how much faster it would flow. While thus engaged, he suddenly thought: "Why this spring is just above my cattle-yard! I have spent days in digging a well there and I spend an hour every day in pumping water, while God has placed a spring here from which I can easily take a stream down to my yard. What a fool I have been to toil so in the valley for what was waiting to come to me from the hills! This day, when I thought merely to rest, when I climbed up here merely to get a breath of fresher air, has been worth more than weeks of hard work. It will save me a month of pumping every year."

And the story went on to say that this man had

been a moralist. He had been trying to satisfy his conscience by industry and honesty. Yet he had felt spiritually weary and dissatisfied. It was hard to do right even according to his own low standard. As he sat that day by the fountain on the hillside he recalled what he had learned in childhood of "the Fountain filled with blood." He said: "Why should I work so hard to get up a poor righteousness of my own, when Christ offers me his so freely?" He found there, as he thought and knelt in the ravine on the hillside, not only living water for his cattle, but for his own soul.

Now, I need not dwell on the lesson of this old story. We are all tempted to bend over our daily tasks, to try to satisfy our consciences and our hearts by anxious ploddings. We forget, even those of us who knew it, that there is above us, in the hills where Christ has gone, a river of the water of life; that it will flow freely into every heart that is open to receive it; that its mission is to refresh the weary, and to wash away sin. Whoever will clear away the dead leaves and rubbish with which he has tried to cover and drive back this living water; whoever will penitently

and lovingly welcome it, will find it will do for him what all his own efforts can not do. It will not only give him peace of conscience, but joy in the Holy Ghost.

The well-spring of God's grace is not beneath, but above us. Its blessings are not to be toiled for, but received. When they asked Christ what they must do "to work the works of God," he replied: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Faith is not working, but drinking; kneeling at the Fountain, and quenching the sin-thirst. When we give up our hard and toilsome way of trying to be happy; when we take God's easy way; when we are willing to receive what he so freely gives—then the great problem of life is solved. Then we need not thirst any more, or go to the well to draw, for there is within us "a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

THE PLOWED FIELD.

As I stood upon a hill to-day and saw the plowmen, in all directions, turning the young grain

under, and making the green fields black, I was reminded of a story that I read years ago. An emigrant family, when Illinois was the far West, went out upon the prairies, many miles beyond the line of civilization. The husband built his cabin amid the flowers. He did not plow near it, for his wife said nature had given them a more beautiful lawn than any they could secure by cultivation. But a few rods distant he broke up the sod of the prairie, and prepared a field for planting. His wife laughingly said that he was spoiling a splendid flower-garden. But he knew that they could not live on flowers. His ground being ready, the farmer went to the nearest settlement for seed. Late in the afternoon of the day when he was expected back, his wife and children went out into their flowery lawn, hoping to see him. But, instead of the well-known wagon, they beheld along the eastern horizon a strange light. It ran along the ground, and shot up into the air, and the wife knew at once what it meant—the prairie was on fire! The grass was dry enough to burn, and whatever was still green was dried by the intense heat long before the flames reached it. So on rushed the all-devouring fire.

She knew that in a few moments it would blacken their lawn, and turn their cabin to ashes. There was no safety there for her and the babes. What could she do? She thought of the plowed field. It was black and rough, but there was nothing on it for the fire to feed upon. She ran there, and lay down upon the furrows with her little ones, while the fire passed all around them, leaving the flowery prairie a scene of utter desolation. On the plowed field, hungry and cold, but safe, the emigrant found them next day. His wife, with tears of mingled sorrow and joy, said: "I see now how foolish I was. If you had plowed around our cabin it would have been saved. But here, where I said you had spoiled a part of my splendid garden, your plowshare made a place of refuge for us. I feel like kissing this rough, black ground, for to it we owe our lives."

Many of my readers are like that wife. They love those things that are bright and gay, like prairie flowers. They do not love serious thought, repentance for sin and a suffering Savior. They don't want to be disturbed in the enjoyment of what they call pleasure. They dread a revival of religion in the community, for it will interrupt the

gayeties of the season; it will trouble their consciences; it will stir up their Christian friends to talk with them about their souls. But do not my hearers know that things which are beautiful are not always safe, and that, in sacrificing them, we often secure a higher good? What though the solemn interests that the minister presses upon your attention seem to you like plowing under all that charms you in life, and leaving your earthly lot as black to the eye, and as rough to the feet, as that field, yet, if the fire is abroad, and it feeds upon the grass and flowers you love—if nothing can escape it but the plowed field of repentance, and of faith in him “who gave his back to the smiters,” is it not better for us to flee to Christ than to perish in our sins? The plowed field, that looks so uninviting now, will soon be covered with a better verdure than that which is turned under by the plow. And so the joys of the Christian will be found far more satisfying than those of the impenitent. Yet, were the new life to be always like walking on the rough ridges, and in the deep furrows, without anything to gladden the eye, better far to go footsore and weary in the way that is safe, than to be over-

taken by the resistless and quenchless fire while playing among flowers.

THE FLAW IN THE BOLT.

A WORKMAN in a machine shop in Ohio was making a patent mower. He had just forged a bolt to fasten one end of a rod, when he discovered a slight flaw in the iron. "No matter," he said, "it will not be discovered. It may last for a good while, and when it breaks the owner of the machine will only have to buy a new one." That mower was shipped to California. The purchaser had a field of wild oats just ready to cut. If not mowed immediately the grain would all shell out, and the hay would be only straw. These wild oats are one of our most valuable hay crops, but must be cut just at the right time. The mower was started in the field, and worked beautifully for an hour. Then suddenly that bolt gave way. Before the machine could be stopped the rod it fastened was broken. "Too bad," said the farmer. "A flaw in the bolt. Well, there's half a day lost, for I must go to San Jose and get

another." He drives to the hardware store; but no rod can be found to replace the broken one—none nearer than San Francisco. He telegraphs to San Francisco to have one sent by express. It comes at noon next day. Price of rod and bolt, express charges and telegram make quite a bill. Besides, nearly two days are lost, and the field of oats is damaged so that it is hardly worth cutting. All this annoyance and loss because a careless workman used a piece of iron with a flaw in it. He might have replaced it with a perfect bolt in ten minutes. He did not mean to subject a stranger to so much worry and cost, and would be very sorry, no doubt, if he knew the history of that bolt. But his carelessness was just as injurious and criminal as if he had deliberately planned all the possible results. When men know that certain consequences may follow from their not doing what they ought to do, or from their doing what they ought not to do, they are responsible for those consequences. We all see this readily in regard to material things. But do we remember, as we should, that our characters, our tempers, our lives are influencing others? That a flaw in them may not only grieve, but

ruin an immortal soul? Suppose some one is watching you or me to determine whether Christianity is a reality or a sham. Suppose we get angry at some trifle; suppose we are dishonest in some little thing. He says to himself: "If religion don't make people any better than that, I don't want it." We go into eternity. We stand before the great white throne. The books are opened. The history of all human lives is revealed. We see just where each has affected others. We see where bolt and bar have come together in the great complicated machinery of society. We see how a thoughtless act, an idle word, has blighted a human soul. It may be the soul of a stranger whom we met but once. It may be the soul of our child or of our dearest friend. How important then that we be faithful always—"faithful in the least." Human lives are so woven together in a network of mutual influence that our most careless look or tone may be the turning point of some soul's eternal destiny

PETER AND PAUL.

I HAVE been interested to-day in reading about the intercourse between these two apostles, and their estimate of each other. Naturally, they were not dissimilar. Both were earnest and impulsive. But how different their culture and manner of life had been! How different their calling to the apostleship and their training for its duties! They were just the men to differ widely, and to be tempted to be jealous of each other. Yet, we find the scholarly Paul when he first goes to Jerusalem after his conversion seeks at once the house of the illiterate Peter, of Peter the fisherman, and stays with him fifteen days. (Gal. i. 18.) Nay, he tells us that he went to Jerusalem on purpose to see Peter. In the same epistle he tells us that Peter wrought effectually in the gospel of the circumcision, and yet goes on to say that he withstood him to the face because he was to be blamed.

And Peter on his part writes of "our beloved brother Paul" (2 Peter iii. 15), and of the wisdom given unto him; and then goes on to say of his epistles, that in them are things hard to be under-

stood. It is evident that these men, though so dissimilar in many respects, yet highly appreciated each other. And we learn from them that good men may withstand each other to the face, and yet love each other; that honest differences of opinion are no bar to mutual esteem and affection. We learn also that we can think highly of those whom we can not fully understand. I have no doubt that Peter was sorely puzzled by many things in Paul's letters. The doctrines presented by the great logician of the apostolic church were mysterious to the uncultured Galilean. But he did not reject them because he could not comprehend them. He knew that Paul wrote "according to the wisdom given him," and he would not limit inspiration to his own intellectual capacity. The friendship between these apostles should teach us to honor and love all true laborers for Christ, however dissimilar our tastes, training, culture and spheres of usefulness.

A SLOPING CUT.

A TYRO in farm work attempted to mow a patch of mustard. He swung his scythe with all his might, keeping its blade at right angles to the tall, strong plants. He worked hard and accomplished little. An experienced farmer said to him: "Let me show you how." He took the scythe, held it loosely in his hands, and swung it with an upward movement, so that it cut the plants, not at right angles, but with a long slope. The work was easy and rapid. The largest stalks, that it was hard to cut at all in the way that tyro tried, fell fast, and as it seemed almost with a touch, before the scythe when the old farmer swung it. "You see," he said, "the sloping cut is the easiest, and the straighter you whack at them the harder it is to bring them." As I listened to that lesson in mowing I thought there are other things in this world besides mustard plants for which the sloping cut is best. Many a young minister goes to work like that tyro. He swings his scythe with all his might at the sins and sinners around him. He thinks that his "cuts direct" must bring him down. But he

finds, to his surprise and chagrin, that his sturdy blows produce but little effect. He learns after awhile that the sloping cut is best. Our Savior met the caviler and the skeptic in this way. What a sloping cut was that when he asked the Pharisees about John the Baptist! and that when he said to those who brought a guilty woman to him: "Let him that is without sin first cast a stone at her." In dealing with this wicked world we need a great deal of sanctified common-sense, of zeal according to knowledge. It is foolish to hammer on cold iron when we have the means of heating it. It is bad generalship to attack an enemy in front when you can outflank him.

THE FERRY-BOAT.

I WAS crossing a rapid stream, in a ferry-boat, some years ago. I noticed that as soon as we left the shore the ferry-man headed his boat, not for the opposite landing, but for a point nearly a mile above it; and that he kept it headed so all the way across. I said to him, "Why don't you steer for the place that you want to go to?" "If

I did," he replied, "we should land far below it. The current is working against us all the time, and, unless we work up the stream as well as over it, we shall not get straight over. In other words, we have to steer diagonally in order to go straight."

And is it not so with all of us in our efforts to be just with our fellow-men—to give to each his due? We make these efforts while we are afloat on a swift and strong current. Depravity, with its abnormal development of selfishness, is pressing against us all the while. The moment that we look at another, and try to feel and act rightly toward him, this current seizes our spirits, perverts our judgment, excites our prejudices and passions, and almost unconsciously drifts us into injustice when we are trying to be just. How shall we resist this tendency of our fallen nature? We are to aim at more than justice. We are to "love our enemies; to do good to them that hate us." This is the gospel plan for overcoming the downward drift of depravity, and for enabling us, in spite of that drift, to "do justly."

JOB AND PAUL.

THEY were representative men: Job of the Patriarchal and Paul of the Christian Dispensation. Both were sensible and pious, and both were great sufferers; yet how different their views of suffering! Job said, replying to the bitter taunt of his wife: "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" He believed in God's justice, and his impartiality. He saw that there was a great deal of evil in the world, and thought that he ought to be willing to take his share of it. The very fact that he had been so prosperous and highly favored was a reason why he ought to expect reverses; what right had he, or any man, to claim as his all the good things of this life, while so many had only evil things? Job's question presents a thoughtful, common-sense idea of life and of the government of God. Many who have health and wealth see the sick and poor around them, and seem to imagine that they, the fortunate, and those unfortunates, compose two permanent classes. That while they are born to prosperity, the others are born to adversity, and hence they complain bitterly if they

are afflicted. What right has he who has loaded them with good gifts to take any of those gifts away? But that is a narrow and foolish view of the matter. Looking at this world only, as men of the world do, they ought to expect to share in all the common experiences of humanity. They ought to see that the lives of men would probably not be greatly unlike, on the whole; that the poor and the rich would probably change places now and then, and hence just because they themselves had been comparatively free from trouble hitherto, they should prepare for their portion of it, which is sure to come sooner or later.

But Paul had clearer light on this subject than Job, and hence he said, "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in distresses, and in persecution, for Christ's sake." If he had been in Job's place he would not have submitted merely to the losses and the boils, saying, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." But sitting in the ashes, he would have sung hymns, praising God as he did in the dungeon at Philippi. What made the difference between these wise and good men?

Paul had learned of Jesus the worth and glory of suffering. He had been taught by the Holy Spirit that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." He believed that "all things work together for good to them that love God." How sweet and blessed it is to get this gospel idea of evil; to realize that in the case of the true believer it is evil but in name—that the trial or affliction, however dark it seems, is sent in love. It comes from the hand of him who is always seeking to make us wiser and better; who sits beside us as a refiner and purifier of silver, and who, when he heaps the burning coals upon us until we cry out in anguish, is only separating the dross from that which is precious in his sight, and which he would polish for the skies. To submit to disappointments and losses without murmuring is philosophical. To take pleasure in them is Christian. If they are providential, and Providence means our heavenly Father, then we know that they are blessings in disguise.

ABILITY AND OPPORTUNITY.

THESE are the conditions of success. Give a man power and a field in which to use it and he must accomplish something. He may not do and become all that he desires and dreams of, but his life can not be a failure. I never hear men complaining of the want of ability. The most unsuccessful think that they could do great things if they only had a chance. Somehow or other, something or somebody has always been in their way. Providence has hedged them in so that they could not carry out their plans. They knew just how to get rich, but they lacked opportunity.

Sit down by one who thus complains and ask him to tell you the story of his life. Before he gets half through he will give you occasion to ask him, "Why didn't you do so at that time? Why didn't you stick to that piece of land and improve it, or to that business and develop it? Is not the present owner of that property rich? Is not the man who took up the business you abandoned successful?" He will probably reply: "Yes, that was an opportunity; but I did not think so then. I saw it when it was too late." In telling his

story he will probably say, of his own accord, half a dozen times, "If I had known how things were going to turn I might have done as well as Mr. A. That farm of his was offered to me. I knew that it was a good one and cheap, but I knew that it would require a great deal of hard work to get it cleared and fenced, to plant trees, vines, etc., and to secure water for irrigation. I did not like to undertake it. I am sorry now that I didn't. It was one of my opportunities."

The truth is, God gives to all of us ability and opportunities enough to enable us to be moderately successful. If we fail, in ninety-five cases out of a hundred it is our own fault. We neglected to improve the talents with which our Creator endowed us, or we failed to enter the door that he opened for us. A man can not expect that his whole life shall be made up of opportunities; that they will meet him at regular intervals as he goes on like milestones by the roadside. Usually he has one or two, and if he neglects them he is like a man who takes the wrong road where several meet. The further he goes the worse he fares.

A man's opportunity usually has some relation

to his ability. It is an opening for a man of his talents and means. It is an opening for him to use what he has faithfully and to the utmost. It requires toil, self-denial and faith. If he says, "I want a better opportunity than that. I am worthy of a higher position than it offers;" or if he says, "I won't work as hard and economize as closely as that opportunity demands," he may, in after years, see the folly of his pride or indolence.

There are young men all over the land who want to get rich, and yet they scorn such opportunities as A. T. Stewart and Commodore Vanderbilt improved. They want to begin, not as those men did, at the bottom of the ladder, but half way up. They want somebody to give them a lift, or carry them in a balloon, so that they can avoid the early and arduous struggles of the majority of those who have been successful. No wonder that such men fail, and then complain of Providence. Grumbling is usually a miserable expedient that people resort to to drown the reproaches of conscience. They know that they have been foolish, but they try to persuade themselves that they have been unfortunate.

ROOTED IN LOVE.

THE most important thing about a plant is its root. If that is healthy, in a good soil and well watered, the plant will live and grow. Cut off all the top, and the root will send up sprouts to make a new one. But if the root is gnawed by gophers, or planted in a hard, dry soil, so that it withers and dies, the whole plant dies. Life starts at the root and works upward. In winter the sap from the trunk and branches descends into the root, and is there protected from frost until the warmth of spring lures it up again. The great art, then, of successful culture is in rooting well what we cultivate. A great deal of the thought and time and toil of the good husbandman is given to the preparation and improvement of his soil. The best of all husbandmen understood this, and hence when he set his plants of righteousness in the earth he prepared for them a special—a celestial soil. He rooted them in love. Love, how rich and deep; how warm and mellow it is! How full of the moisture of sympathy! A soul rooted in it must grow in grace. It must speedily comprehend “the breadth and length and depth and height.” (Ephesians iii. 18.) But though God

has provided this wondrous soil for our souls to grow in, he will not keep them in it by force and against our will. We must choose and strive to be rooted in love. Thus only can we obey the command to grow in grace. Growth can be secured only by stimulating the underground life of a tree—by developing the inner hidden life of the believer. When we find ourselves spiritually barren, despondent, easily overcome by temptation, we should at once examine the root. We shall probably find that we have left our first love—that we are out of the divine soil. And the cure is simple, *radical*. It is the prescription which Christ sent to the church of Ephesus: “Repent, and do the first works.” (Revelation ii. 5.) When by faith we root our spirits in the love of God, we will find them budding and blossoming and bringing forth fruit.

DOUBLE PAY.

DID you ever think, dear reader, how God pays his servants? Our Savior said (John iv. 36):

“He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal.” That “and” is noteworthy. It means that the laborer for Christ not only gets paid day by day for his work, but that he has an interest in the fruit he gathers. God rewards him just as if he worked for God only, and not for himself; and yet when he reaches heaven, he will find the harvest he helped to reap laid up for him. He will receive “fruit unto life eternal,” in addition to the peace and joy that were the present reward of his fidelity. The man who helps to build an earthly house is satisfied if he gets his pay, regularly, for his work. He does not expect to live in the house, even to be a guest in it. But God says, build for me, and I will pay you wages, and then, when the house is finished, it shall be yours forever. Will it not be an element of special interest and joy to find that our works on earth followed us to heaven; that the cup of cold water which we gave, and found pleasure in giving here, secures us a reward also over there? Great, then, is the encouragement to work for Christ. His servants have promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

MIXED WITH FAITH.

PAUL says (Hebrews iv. 2) of certain persons, that "the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." This mixture of faith with the truth is very important. Without faith the word is powerless. It has no tonic virtue. But add faith to it, make the solution strong, and it becomes the grandest of all medicines.

As I was looking over a congregation last Sabbath, and trying to interest them in Christ as the Divine Savior, I thought, How many of these people really believe what I say? To how many of them are these divine statements as idle tales? Oh if we could mix with this truth a real faith, how glorious the results would be! Christians would rejoice in the Lord, and sinners would repent and believe.

How shall we secure a strong mixture of faith with truth? We must make the truth so plain that people will be compelled to understand it. We must repeat the same truth in all possible forms and with varied illustrations, so that it will seem to surround the hearer—to hem him in on

every side until he can not possibly get away from it. But in addition to this, we must pray earnestly for the Spirit of God to open the hearts of our hearers. It is sad to see how much preaching seems to be wasted. It is not weak intellectually, but fails in spiritual power—in what the old divines called *unction*. Why? Because the truth is not mixed with faith in the soul of the preacher. He believes it, but he does not feel its full power. It does not thrill every nerve as it would if he realized it. When Jonathan Edwards preached upon the text: “Their foot shall slide in due time,” and the people were so impressed by the truth that they caught hold of the pew railings to keep from sliding, he felt deeply. He seemed to realize somewhat as God does the peril of the sinner. So with all truly great preachers in all ages. They study the word earnestly and prayerfully until it burns like a fire in their bones, and then, when they proclaim it, it startles their hearers like the cry of fire.

THE STYLE OF THE BIBLE.

IF a youth whom you had known as illiterate should write you a letter in the purest French, you would conclude that he had been to Paris, or at least studied the language used there under a competent teacher. So when we open our Bibles and read such descriptions of heavenly and spiritual things as can be read nowhere else; find the words wonderfully well chosen and full of meaning; find the writers telling about the grandest facts that imagination can conceive of, with simplicity and clearness, without morbid sentimentality or extravagance, we are convinced that they were inspired by One to whom such facts were familiar. Take, as an illustration, Paul's description of the resurrection of the body. (1 Corinthians xv. 40-58.) Read that passage with reference to the style merely, and must you not pronounce it superhuman? Turn to 2 Corinthians iv. 17. Ponder the description of the Christian's future blessedness: "A far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." As a combination of familiar words, so as to give us a sublime idea of heaven, is it not wonderful? Read the first chapter of

Peter's First General Epistle. Remember that he was an illiterate fisherman, and where did he learn to pile up words upon words, and sentences upon sentences, so grandly? I can not forbear quoting a few verses: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time," etc., etc. I have never found in any of the classics, ancient or modern, any such writing. The style of the Bible is not human, but divine. Let me advise my readers to stop and ask themselves, when perusing the Scriptures, how could mere men, unaided, write so about things spiritual and divine? I doubt not they all *believe* that the Bible is the word of God, but it is well to realize vividly what we believe—to feel what we know—to see on the inspired page not merely the autograph of Paul, or of Peter, but of the Holy Spirit.

THE TWO MANSIONS.

I SAT in a railway car near the family of a millionaire. He is building a mansion about thirty miles from San Francisco, which is to exceed in magnificence anything on this coast. The estimated cost is, I think, a million dollars. The wife and daughter of the millionaire were talking with each other and with friends who sat beside them about this new home. They seemed to enjoy it by anticipation already. And yet they were troubled about it too. Some things in the plan of the architect did not just suit them. They feared delay on the part of the builders. The weather was unfavorable for some of the work that needed to be done right away, etc.

As I listened to those people, whose means for gratifying every taste and whim were superabundant, I thought of my own home, of the improvements I would make in it if I had the means. I was tempted to envy them at first. Then I thought, my house here is not my true home. It is only the tent in which a traveler lodges for a while. I have a better house that is planned and being built for me; yes, a better one than that of

the millionaire. And so while they talked, I opened my pocket Testament and read: "In my Father's house are many mansions . . . I go to prepare a place for you." Yes, thought I, the Son of God, who built the world, who kindled the sun and all the stars, is the Architect and the Builder of my home. It will be ready as soon as I need it. It will be perfect in all its proportions and arrangements, and I will live in it forever. That millionaire, if he lives to be an old man, can not enjoy his mansion many years. In a little while, perhaps before it is finished, the physician will be summoned there in haste. He will come and go with anxious face for a few days, and then the undertaker will be summoned; the mansion will be draped in mourning, and its owner will be carried out to a narrow house—a house of clay. How much better the prospects of the humblest Christian than those of the rich man who has no hope in Christ. Little matters it whether our home here be a hovel or a palace, if we are sure of a mansion which Christ has prepared for us and to which he himself will take us when we die.

SHOD.

READING the description in Ephesians of the equipment of the Christian warrior, I paused at the statement, "shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." What does it mean? We have to march as well as fight. The First Napoleon owed much of his military success to the celerity of his movements. But how shall we go over the hot deserts and amid the briers and thorns of this fallen world? Not barefoot, like Washington's soldiers at Valley Forge. No, our Captain has provided sandals for his followers, sandals soft as an Indian moccasin, yet strong as the iron-bound shoe of the Swiss mountaineer. These sandals are "the preparation of the gospel of peace." In them we walk by faith. Our Savior had, while on earth, no royal chariot, or caparisoned steed. He rode only once, when he made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. On other occasions he walked, and often was weary. But love sustained him during his pilgrimage of toil and tears. That same love, and that alone, can sustain us. We must be shod with the gospel, or we will shrink from the hot sand and from the briers

and thorns. Can the missionary go to Africa and live and labor amid the abominations of heathenism without the love of Christ in his heart? No more can we in our less self-denying sphere. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." In every way of Christian faithfulness, in every conflict with sin and Satan, our preparation is the gospel of peace. When we know the glad tidings that "being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," we are ready for any toil or trial of life. Shod with that assurance we can walk upon burning coals unharmed. The true Christian does not love war. He does not go out in full armor because he wants to fight. He goes shod with the gospel of peace; with messages of love, on errands of mercy. But if he is opposed in his efforts to do good, if evil assails him, he will resist even unto blood. He will try to conquer his foes that he may win them to Christ. "Peace on earth, good will toward men," is his watchword even in the deadliest conflict.

TWO WAYS OF LOOKING AT THINGS

TAKE two men into your young orchard, and probably one of them will admire the vigorous growth of the trees, while the other will call attention to the few that look stunted, or worm-eaten, or sun-blighted. Take them into your house: the one will notice its conveniences; the other will see at once how it could be improved in many particulars—will tell you that you ought to have made the ceilings higher, the windows larger, etc. Let these men travel together: the former will enjoy the scenery; the latter will complain of the weather, of the cars, or of something else all the way. He persists in seeing and commenting upon whatever is disagreeable, and has no eyes for the things that are pleasant. These different ways of looking at things are partly constitutional, and partly the result of habit. Some people are born with cheerful temperaments. They always look on the bright side. They are sanguine, hopeful, enthusiastic by nature. Others inherit atrabilious and melancholy temperaments. But we can control even constitutional tendencies. We ought to cultivate a cheerful spirit. We

ought to get out of life as much good and as little evil as possible. We ought to try to add all that we can to the happiness of those around us. The critical, fault-finding, cynical man can not enjoy himself as well as a man of an opposite spirit; for it is impossible that one should take pleasure in noticing defects, and in depreciating what others admire. And such a man mars the enjoyment of others. Wherever he goes he clouds the sunshine of the rest of the world. He is continually saying to his fellow-men, "You have no right to be happy. Your trying to be so shows your ignorance. The world is all wrong. It is a world worthy only to be criticised and despised."

God does not approve of this censorious spirit. He tells us to be content with such things as we have. And the principle of the command would lead us to try to make others contented also—to extend as far as we can the spirit of cheerfulness and hopefulness.

I advise all my young readers to avoid the habit of fault-finding. Admire all that you can, enjoy all that you can. There is something beautiful in almost every person and thing around you. Try to see that rather than defects, and

you will make your own life sunnier, besides reflecting a good deal of sunshine upon the lives of others.

THE PERSONALITY OF THE SPIRIT.

I FEAR that the dearth of revivals is connected, to some extent, with a prevalent skepticism in regard to the personality of the Holy Spirit. How emphatically Christ uses the personal pronoun when speaking of him. (Read John xiv. 16, 17, 26; John xv. 26; John xvi. 7-14.)

A good man said to me one day, "I believe in the Spirit of God, that he sends it upon us as a good influence, just as my spirit influences those with whom I associate. Is not this enough? Must I believe in the Spirit as a person?" I replied: "You must believe just what the Bible teaches. By cherishing an idea of the Spirit different from what it reveals, you become a skeptic. Nay, you dishonor not only the Spirit who is sent, but the Father and the Son who sent him. Suppose you come to me, saying, 'My child has fallen into a pit; won't you lend me a

rope to draw him out?' I seize the rope at once, and run to the pit. I put one end in your hand, tie the other around me, and go down into the pit, and bring up your child. I don't merely lend you that which may help you, but I go in person and save your child. Now, if you should go all about telling merely that I lent you a rope to draw your child out of a pit, would you be an honest man? Would you do me justice?" Such is a rough illustration of the guilt of him who denies the personality of the Holy Spirit.

THE TWO PARACLETES.

CHRIST says to his disciples (John xiv. 16): "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever." He does not say *a* Comforter merely, but another Comforter—one who was to take his place and be to them what he had been. Hence, by studying the relation of Christ to his disciples while he was with them, we learn what the relation of the Holy Spirit was to be to them after the day of Pentecost. But was Christ to be no

longer their comforter? Did he propose to turn his disciples over to the care and guidance of the Spirit? Would he cease to be the Good Shepherd after he had laid down his life for the sheep? The Greek word translated comforter here is *parakletos*, or, in an Anglicized form, paraclete. John uses the same word in his First Epistle (ii. 1): "We have an advocate [original *parakletos*] with the Father." He who was our Comforter, or Paraclete, on the earth is so still, though in heaven, and though he has procured for us, as an additional Comforter, the Holy Spirit. Hence we have now two divine Paracletes, one with us on the earth, and one with the Father in heaven; in fullest sympathy with each other, both deeply interested in us, and ceaselessly active in our behalf.

This is a most wonderful fact. Let us try to understand it. And first: What is the full meaning of that Greek word, *parakletos*, which John applies both to Christ and the Spirit, and which, in our version, is translated "Comforter" in the Gospel, and "Advocate" in the Epistle? It means literally "one called to be beside another." In ancient times those who were poor

and friendless attached themselves to some man of power and influence. They were called his clients, and he was called their patron. If the client got into trouble of any kind the patron was bound to help him—to appear for him in court—to make the client's cause his own. The patron would say to his client or dependent: Don't be troubled, trust in me; I will throw my influence over you as a shield. This relation of patron and client suggested to our Savior the application of the term paraclete to himself and the Holy Spirit; hence he said in the beginning of this discourse, "Let not your heart be troubled. * * Believe in me." I am your friend, your protector, your counselor, your comforter. I have come to stand beside you in all emergencies, and when I go away I will see that you have another, equally wise and loving, to take my place here, and I will stand up for you and represent you, and look after your interests in the court of heaven.

What a comforter Christ was to his disciples. He uttered many hard sayings; he rebuked them for their unbelief; but he was so wise, so patient, so sympathetic, so unselfish, so prompt in his re-

sponse to their prayers, so mighty to deliver them, that they learned to confide in him, to believe that they could not fail in anything if he was with them. Such a teacher, such a helper, such a monitor, such a guide, such a friend and comforter is the Holy Spirit to each one of us. We study the life of Jesus not only to learn what he was to his disciples, but what he is also to each of us. Now, if we believe in him, and what the Holy Spirit is to us, we are clients who have two powerful patrons, and who ought therefore to fear no evil.

I have been thinking how to illustrate this relation of two paracletes. I know that if we could realize it fully, we should have far greater strength and joy in the Lord than belongs to the average Christian of to-day.

Let me suppose a man in California, who has a claim to a large estate, but has lost possession and clouded the title by his ignorance and folly. Besides, he is accused of crime, and cast into prison. There he lies helpless, friendless and in despair. But one comes to his cell, and says: "Don't you want me to be your advocate? I have great skill in such cases, and know that if

you confide in me I can not only get you out of jail, but secure you the title to and the possession of your estates." The prisoner replies: "Oh, sir, I have no money to pay you." "No matter; I will serve you without money and without price. Nay, I will advance all the money necessary to prosecute your suit. You need have no trouble about it. You have only to confide in me."

The prisoner accepts that sympathizing offer, though it seems too good to be true. The advocate bails him out, goes into court and gets the indictment quashed, brings an ejectment suit and puts him in possession of his property, introduces him into the best society on the coast, gives him advice and help in managing his affairs, and comes to him every day and says, "What can I do for you?" If he finds that there is any difficulty or trouble, he will not rest until he has removed it.

But one day he comes to his client and says: "I must go to Washington City. There are matters there affecting your title that I must look after. Your enemies are trying to get decisions against you in the Land Office and in the Supreme Court."

The man, who has learned to live in the light of his patron's countenance, cries sadly: "Oh, what shall I do? My enemies here will assail me as soon as you are gone. I am neither wise nor strong enough to contend with them alone."

"I know that," the patron replies, "and hence I have sent for my brother to come and take my place. He is an able lawyer. He will stay with you, advise you, help you, give you the influence of his name and position, as well as of his knowledge and skill. He and I will be in constant correspondence with each other, and together we will protect your interests fully. It is for your good that I go, and with me in Washington and my brother here, you may rest assured that all things will work together for your good."

If such a case as this were possible; if two men of legal skill, wealth and high position should devote themselves to the interests of one whose only claim upon them was his need of them, who could do nothing to compensate them for such fidelity, the world would wonder and admire. Yet how feebly it illustrates the great fact revealed in the gospel of the sinner's two Paracletes: of Christ, who appears for him in heaven; and of

the Holy Spirit, who abides with him on the earth. Can the imagination conceive of any provision more perfect than this for the protection, guidance and comfort of believers? Well, then, may he say to his followers in all time, "Let not your heart be troubled."

Now, I presume that every one of my readers believes in the intercession of Christ, and in the gift of the Holy Ghost. But how do we believe? Do we take these great facts into our hearts? Do we ponder them until our hearts burn within us? Do we feel such grateful love as we would if human friends did for us a tithe of what these divine friends have done and are doing? I do not know of any better preparation for a revival of religion than an earnest and prayerful study of the work of the two Paracletes in our behalf.

SPIRITUAL FRIENDS AND FOES.

Is there not in the Church, to-day, a good deal of skepticism in regard to our unseen allies and our unseen enemies? We need spiritual friends, for we have mighty and malignant spiritual

foes. We should cultivate faith in the Holy Ghost and in the ministry of holy angels, for we are surrounded by the Devil and his angels, and we can not resist them alone. I am not surprised that one of the first assaults of error is upon the idea of a personal Devil. He himself suggests it. It is one of his wiles. A cunning warrior always hides himself if he can. The attack of an ambushed foe is more to be feared than in the open field. But he must be a most careless reader of the Bible, or an arrant skeptic in regard to its inspiration, who doubts the existence of an evil spirit, the prince of the powers of darkness, who has under him a host of fallen angels that help him to tempt and destroy the human race.

I have just been looking up the passages in the Bible on this subject for my own satisfaction. I find that "*the* Devil" is spoken of no less than twenty-eight times as a person, with the attributes of personality ascribed to him, such as speaking, tempting, going about, setting snares and wiles, contending with God's angels, etc. Satan is spoken of in the same way no less than thirty-seven times; and in the book of Revelation we are twice told (Revelation xii. 9; xx. 2) that the

Devil and Satan are the same. Then the inspired writers tell us of a spirit who is the prince of the power of the air, who is the prince of this world, who is the prince of the devils, etc. They also tell us of principalities and powers that oppose the truth; of rulers of the darkness of this world who are not made of flesh and blood (Ephesians vi. 12); of spiritual wickedness (marg., wicked spirits) in high places. It is impossible to explain away these repeated and emphatic statements. It is no vague inborn tendency, or misty principle of evil, that we have to contend with, but a living and powerful tempter, who is at the head of a large and disciplined army. He is a general with the experience of thousands of years. His soldiers are all veterans in the warfare against the truth. They are full of subtlety. They have power almost angelic. They have access to our hearts at all hours, yet we see them not. No merely human defenses will protect us. We must ask God to send his holy angels to camp round about us. (Psalms xxxiv. 7.) The more fully we realize what the Bible teaches in regard to evil spirits, the less will we be inclined to trust in our own strength, the more will we be led to seek for

help from above. It is this sense of weakness, and of dependence on God, that the Church now needs; and a study of the pictures Inspiration gives of the invisible forces arrayed against us may discourage us from trying either to be good or to do good without the Holy Spirit.

A DESIRE TO DEPART.

PAUL had it. There are times when all Christians feel as if they would like to go away from this world of sin and sorrow. They are weary and long for rest. But is it right to cherish such feelings? As long as God wants us here should we not stay cheerfully? Is not the willingness to die before our appointed time, evidence rather of a morbid spirit than of a spirit ripe for heaven? The heavenly mind is the mind in harmony with the will of God. If he should send an angel to live in Ethiopia for a hundred years, that angel would be happy there. He would have heaven in his heart there. He would not want to return to his place in the celestial choir one moment earlier than Jehovah's appointed time.

There are many reasons why the Christian should resist this longing to depart; why, in his periods of highest spirituality and consecration, he should rather desire to remain in this tabernacle, though in it he groans and is burdened. There is a great work to be done for Christ in this world, and how few there are to do it. Even the youngest and feeblest has duties and responsibilities. The removal of every true believer weakens some local church. There is a vacant seat in the sanctuary and in the prayer-meeting. There is one less to plead for and encourage the minister. One less to visit the sick and to teach in the Sabbath-school.

A soldier, marching with his comrades through a hostile land, loves his home and longs for it. But would it be right for him to seek for a discharge while he is able to march and fight? Does not loyalty to his country and to his fellow-soldiers prompt him to resist the homesickness of the heart, and to press on until the victory is won? The discharge of a single soldier tends, in many ways, to weaken and discourage an army in the field. Because the burden is heavy and the bearers are few, should we shirk from carrying

our part? Nay, let us rather ask to be spared as long as possible to the Church militant. Let us, "for our brethren and companions' sake," desire to stay and toil and suffer with them.

Again, a desire to depart may, very properly, be checked by the fear that we are not meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. God keeps us here to sanctify us. We are not to be made holy by death, but during our lives. Our trials are for this purpose. Our work for Christ, that often seems so wearisome and hard, is to develop our Christian characters, and to polish our spirits for the skies. Are we sure that this process of preparation is complete? If not, then let us not be impatient. Let us rather ask to stay and toil and suffer, if thereby we can be more fully prepared for our eternal home. The thought of going into a land so pure, where all are white-robed, where God shines, and there is not a shadow behind which to hide a weakness or a sin, this ought to make us pause. Better stay here to extreme old age, even if the years be full of pain and disappointment, than to hasten away before the purifying work of the Refiner is complete.

If the block of marble in the artist's studio was

as full of nerves as these bodies of ours, it would shrink from the hammering and filing by which it is to become a statue that ages will admire. But the shaping and polishing of that block require time. It can not be hastened, and however the nerves might shrink and quiver, they must endure until the work is finished. The sculptor, who was asked why he worked so slowly, replied: "I work for immortality." The divine Sculptor is fashioning our spirits for eternal life. Well may we wait when the time here, at the longest, is so short, and the hereafter is so long.

A DESIRE TO DEPART, AGAIN.

WHAT I wrote on this subject several months ago has brought me a number of letters. I will notice but one of them this week: The writer says, "I believe that I am a Christian. I love the Bible. I love the Church. I love and trust in the Savior of sinners. I believe that he has prepared a home for me in heaven. I believe that when I die he will take me to himself. Yet this life is very sweet to me. I don't want

to die. I am persuaded that God can and will make me willing when the time comes. But I have no desire, no longing, to depart. On the contrary, I shrink from death. To send the spirit out from the body seems to me like sending one out of his house in midwinter to shiver unsheltered in the open air. Is it wrong to feel so? Does this shrinking show that I am not a Christian?"

It seems to me that the shrinking shows two things: First, that you have a good deal of vitality. The instinctive love of life, of this mortal life, which God has implanted in us all for wise ends, is strong in you. Your hold upon the world has not been weakened, by sickness, disappointments and bereavements. Second, you have not studied earnestly what God has revealed in regard to the future life. You have not cultivated that familiarity with it which we should expect from one whose "conversation [citizenship] is in heaven." Now, instead of yielding to the shrinking from death, saying that you can not help it; or mourning over it as a cloud upon your hope of heaven, suppose that you begin to inquire what kind of a place heaven is—what at-

traction it has even for one whose love of life is as strong as yours—I think you will soon reach some conclusions that will not only clear your head, but also warm your heart.

1. Going into the spirit-world is not like going out of doors. It is rather like turning from tent-life when the canvas has become rotten and the nights are cold, to enter a home that is firmly built, and that is filled with light and warmth. This, you know, is Paul's inspired account of the matter. He says, "We that are in this tabernacle [tent] do groan . . . not that we would be unclothed but clothed upon." And how clothed, *i. e.*, sheltered? With "a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." The spirit will not shiver when it goes forth from the body. It will find itself in a spiritual climate—in a spiritual home—in the society of pure and loving spirits.

2. Going into the spirit-world is not going into a state of lethargy and semi-consciousness. Death is often preceded by diseases that paralyze both body and mind. Hence it is hard for us to realize that it is a waking up and not a falling asleep. But one inspired statement of the apostle

settles that matter. He says: "Mortality is swallowed up of life." Our true life begins when we die. Again he speaks of the dead as "present with the Lord," as soon as they are "absent from the body." Christ is not a dreamer. He is the Ruler of the universe. He is the Head of the Church. Where he is, must be the center of intelligence and of activity. In such a presence there can be no want of interest and excitement. The more you study this matter, the more strongly will your heart be drawn heavenward by the very intenseness of its vitality. As you love knowledge, as you love action, as you rejoice in seeing and sharing in great enterprises, you will long for the hour when you can be with Christ; when you can watch, and perhaps help, in the administration of his glorious government over matter and mind.

3. Going into the spirit-world is not going to be a stranger in a strange land. That world is full of people that you know, that you will be glad to see, and that will be glad to see you. Not only will you be delighted to meet Christian friends with whom you sang and prayed on the earth, and to meet Christ and thank him in per-

son for his love; but you will feel as if Adam and Noah, and Abraham and Moses, and Paul and John, and Luther and Knox, and Henry Martyn and George Whitefield, with hosts of others, that you have read of, are not strangers. You will want to see them, and they will all want to see you; for every new arrival will be welcomed by all in heaven, as a babe is welcomed in a human home.

4. Going into the spirit-world will not cut us off from all sympathy with the Church on earth and with the Christians that we love and labor with here. I believe that the saints, as well as the angels, are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation. I believe that they see us, though we can not see them; that they come to our hearts and homes with messages of love. They do not come rapping on tables, or "materialized" in closets. They come, as the Holy Spirit comes, into our hearts. Their influence upon us is so gentle and so subtile that we can hardly distinguish it from the action of our own spirits. And yet it is as truly from above, as the visit of the angels to Abraham. Now, is there not something attractive in the thought, that with sanctified na-

tures, and the wisdom acquired in heaven, we will hover over our friends and kindred on the earth, help them to resist the tempter, strengthen and encourage them, be co-workers with the Holy Spirit in promoting their growth in grace?

5. May I not add that going into the spirit-world will not only enlarge our knowledge of God and our sphere of usefulness on the earth, but will perhaps open up to us another sphere in which we can work, and see glorious results? Paul says: "That unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." Will not then every redeemed and glorified spirit be a witness and teacher of that new manifestation which the Deity gives of himself in the gospel? And what mission could be grander than this—to unfold from our own experience fresh and fascinating views of their Creator to the highest intelligences in the universe?

I have not time or space to write of other things which this subject suggests: as freedom from sin, understanding the mysteries that have puzzled us here, rapid growth in the knowledge of God and in the likeness to him; but have I

not written enough to convince my correspondent and all my readers that heaven would draw our hearts, with a wondrous magnetism, if we would study what God reveals of its employments and its joys?

And now what is the conclusion of this whole matter? Not that we should so long for our summons to heaven, be so homesick while God keeps us here, that we have no heart for the duties of life. On the contrary, we should be cheered and comforted amid our present toils and cares by the glorious hope that is set before us, and should strive so to finish the work the Master assigns to us here, that he shall administer unto us an abundant entrance into his everlasting kingdom. We should love this life, not for its own sake, but for the opportunity it gives us for laying up treasures in heaven.

THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST.

WE rest our belief of this doctrine largely on proof-texts, such as John i. 1. But to me the most conclusive demonstration is in the miracles

of our Savior—and even here it is not so much the thing done as the way in which it was done. The prophets wrought miracles. So did the apostles. But there was a radical difference between theirs and those of Jesus. Let us take one of the earlier miracles in the gospel story as an illustration:

The carpenter's son is sitting in a house in Capernaum, probably in his own house. He is preaching to those whom curiosity has gathered in. A paralytic is brought by four men; and as they can not get in by the door they climb up to the flat roof, and let the sick man down by ropes into the area or court where Jesus sits. He pauses in his discourse, reads at a glance the hearts of those five men, the paralytic and his friends; sees also with his omniscient eyes the cause of the disease, viz.: sin; knows that he himself is obeying the law, and will endure its penalty for sinners; knows that this man has faith in him as the promised Messiah. Hence he says: Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. No prayer to God in behalf of the paralytic. No appeal to anybody else as when Peter said: "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and

walk." (Acts iii. 6.) But in his own right, by his own inherent sovereignty, he pronounced absolution. Yes, that young man—not in the temple but in a private house; not after the offering up of sacrifice and the sprinkling of blood, but as an episode in his discourse—promptly, quietly, as if he was doing that which for him was an easy, every-day act, forgives sin.

Now the pardoning power is the highest in all governments. Only the chief magistrate in any nation can forgive and set free a criminal under condemnation. And in the divine government God alone can forgive. So the Old Testament constantly declares. So all men in all ages have believed. When conscious of guilt the cry for pardon goes up to God. Hence the scribes, who heard these words spoken by one whom they regarded as a mere man, were right in thinking Jesus guilty of blasphemy. Had he been a prophet merely, or an angel, had he been anybody but God, he would have been a blasphemer. Knowing this, our Savior proceeds at once to prove his right to forgive sin, and the fact that he had forgiven it, by healing the body that sin had paralyzed. He did this, as he distinctly declares, to

prove to them that he was not guilty of blasphemy. He heals as promptly and with as much quiet self-consciousness as he forgives. No prayer, no incantation, no appeal, but a simple command, "Arise, and take up thy bed."

This incident, given so briefly, and yet so graphically, in the inspired record, is no doubt authentic. Indeed, the evidence of its genuineness is on its very face. No man who made up such a story could tell it so plainly and calmly. He would be tempted to embellish it. Nor would a writer of fiction have made Jesus forgive the man's sins before he healed his palsy. He would have had prominent in his thought the object for which the man was brought, and the visible miracle that was wrought. He would not have felt, as the holy Savior did, that sin is the great malady; that to be delivered from sin is the great need; that pardoning sin is the greatest of all miracles.

Now observe, Jesus of Nazareth, sitting in his house in Capernaum, assumed the authority and prerogative of God. He claimed to exercise in his own name and right power that all men feel belongs to God alone; power that he has never

delegated to any creature—that he can not delegate, for only one who reads the heart—who sees that its faith is real—can declare its sins forgiven. If, in this assumption, Jesus was guilty of blasphemy, how could he heal the man? Would God, who sent him as a prophet to teach merely, have indorsed such teaching? Did Satan help him to cast out Satan? No; the whole incident shows as clear as sunlight that the carpenter's son, in his house at Capernaum, was as truly God, as when he sat upon his throne in heaven; as truly God, as when he said, "Arise, and walk," as when he said, "Let there be light."

I have called attention to this miracle to strengthen the faith of my readers in this fundamental doctrine of the gospel. If Jesus of Nazareth is not very God, then we have no sure foundation, no "Rock of Ages," beneath our feet. And if he was "the true God and eternal life," then we have here, and in scores of similar instances, just what we would expect, words and deeds that seem to be, as it were, incidental, and yet are wholly inconsistent with any other idea. So the divinity of the Son of man runs all through the narrative. It is the very woof of the texture.

It is woven into the entire gospel story from the miraculous conception to the miraculous ascension. I can understand how a man can reject the Bible; for he probably does so without examining it. But how any one can read the Bible and yet be a Unitarian, I can not understand. Take from the four Gospels the full and absolute divinity of Christ, and they present to us one of the most inconsistent and incredible stories imaginable. Accustom yourself to ask, as you read, if Jesus was a mere man, would he have said this? could he have done this? and you will be surprised to find that nearly every verse is a direct or incidental proof-text of his divinity.

CITIES.

I HAVE fallen into the habit when I want light on any subject of going first to the Bible. What does it say about cities? There is only one mentioned before the flood. Cain went and built that just after he had murdered Abel. The first city was founded by the first murderer. There may not be anything particularly significant in

that, but such is the fact as Inspiration has recorded it. After the flood, men began to build a city on the plain of Shinar. There is some difference of opinion as to their special object, but that it was godless and heaven-defying, is evident from the fact that God came down and confounded their speech and scattered them. The third account of cities in the Bible is that four of them, in a fruitful plain, a very garden of the Lord in natural fertility and beauty, were so polluted by the vices of their inhabitants that God rained down fire and brimstone and destroyed them.

So much for the early history of what men call centers of civilization. In the Prophecies the record in regard to cities is not much better. Fearful are the denunciations of Babylon, Nineveh, Tyre, etc. Going on into the New Testament we find Christ accusing even Jerusalem of great guilt, and consigning it to destruction. And in the last book of the Bible we have a most graphic picture of a city that made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. (Rev. xiv. 8.) This city, we are told, became the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit,

and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.
(Rev. xviii. 2.)

After reading this dark record of the cities of the earth, we would expect that the home prepared for the redeemed would be a garden, like the primeval Eden. But no; it is a city with walls and gates and streets; a holy city into which nothing that defileth can enter. Hence we infer that, after all, cities are not to be considered as utterly and hopelessly bad. The truth doubtless is that men, when crowded together with evil hearts, corrupt each other, and thus these masses of fallen humanity, in all ages, have tended to moral putrefaction. But, a city of holy spirits, who would stimulate each other by a pure sympathy, and a sanctified sociability, would be one of the most delightful of dwelling-places. As the gospel becomes more influential upon men's hearts and lives, our cities improve. They are now, with all their vices, centers of great moral power and Christian enterprise. In them are located the agencies that are evangelizing the world. In them are the men whose princely benevolence sustains these agencies.

Yet the city needs the country. The city

population must be recruited from the country. A large proportion of the most active and useful men in all our cities were born and raised in the country. They bring into those centers of civilization fresh blood from time to time. Without the farmers' sons in its stores and offices what would New York, Chicago, or Cincinnati be today? The rural element sends into the cities not only vigorous physical life to meet the wear and tear of their intense and abnormal activity, but it sends new moral strength to resist the temptations of the city—the tendency of that massing of humanity to corruption.

And does it not follow from these facts that the young people in our cities should be encouraged to seek homes in the country; that especially those whom God blesses with large families should try, if possible, to bring them up on farms, in the purer atmosphere, both physical and moral, of the valleys and the hills? If we could thus alternate between town and country; let one generation grow up outside and the next inside of the cities, we should have stronger and better men and women than we now have. The cities would refine and elevate our country life;

the country would revigorate the physical and moral life of the cities.

What we need just now is to turn the currents of population away from the cities. There is too much blood in the heart, and not enough in the extremities. We, as a people, are too fond of excitement, too anxious to get rich in a hurry. We don't like patient toil, slow accumulations, the quiet of rural life. Our spirits are feverish, and we call the fever enterprise. We think it an evidence of intense and noble vitality, when it is really abnormal, a disease.

As I meet in the streets of San Francisco careworn men and women, I often wish I had a million acres of land, with ten thousand cottages on it, so that I could say to ten thousand families: Come out of this hot and unhealthy atmosphere, and earn your bread by tilling the soil. I don't believe that just now, in this land, a rich man could do so much good in any other way as by colonizing the surplus and unemployed population of the cities on our tracts of unoccupied land. It might be done so as to be even profitable financially. But it could not fail to be profitable benevolently. And a few such movements

would help to solve the great problem that presses upon us—what shall be done with the workmen for whom there is no work? It is folly to attribute all the present depression, even on this coast, to the presence of the Chinamen. The great cause is the aversion of the people to rural life—their morbid love for the excitements of the city, and their inability, even when willing, to go out and become tillers of the soil.

GRAIN AND CHAFF.

WE had ten stacks of grain, making five “set-tings.” They had cost us a great deal of labor and of money. We bought seed last November. We plowed our fields, sowed the grain, and harrowed it in. We watched it while it grew; when it was ripe we reaped it, and stacked it. We knew just how much those stacks had cost us, but their value was a matter of conjecture merely. Indeed, they had no market value as they stood. They must be threshed. The golden grain must be separated from the comparatively worthless chaff and straw. So we engaged a man to come

with a separator, a steam-engine, eight horses and twenty-two men to thresh for us. We had to furnish fuel for the engine and food for the horses and men. For a week our house was turned into a hotel. We employed a Chinaman to cook. He had to get breakfast ready for the threshers at five o'clock in the morning, for they wanted to be out in the field at work as soon as they could see. The amount of provisions that those threshers stowed away during that week was astonishing. Twenty pounds of beef, a wash-boiler full of hot coffee, and other things in proportion, three times a day. The engine did not work well. They would have to stop every hour or two for repairs. On the third day the cylinder burst, and it had to be sent to San Jose and another brought out in its place. The result was that the threshing required twice as long and cost nearly twice as much as it should; for the farmer has to board the threshers whether they work or not, and he has to pay the wages of sixteen out of the twenty-two. Well, at the end of the week we knew just what our stacks were worth. We had the grain in sacks ready for market. We were disappointed. We expected

two thousand sacks, and we obtained only fourteen hundred. But all our neighbors are disappointed in the same way. The winter was too wet. The growth was too rank. There was a superabundance of straw, and a light yield of grain. This threshing week will be a memorable one in our lives. It is a new experience for us, and one that we have resolved shall never be repeated. We will manage hereafter to raise something else instead of grain, or to devise some more civilized way of threshing it.

But enough of our personal experience. Let me add some reflections:

1. A great many people are like our grain. Nobody can tell what is in them until they are threshed. The trials of life test our characters. They show just what we are worth. A man may carry his head high, like a head of shrunken wheat (and the lighter the head the higher it is carried), until temptation or affliction comes. Then he is blown away like chaff.

2. Threshing is the hardest work of the year. It is the time most dreaded by the farmer and his family. It is an operation that they regard as necessary, and yet shrink from, and rejoice when

it is over. So with the discipline which we all need; which shows us what we are. We know that it is for our good, and yet we do not love it! It is hard for us to kiss the rod.

3. As most farmers are dependent on others for their threshing, so we secure from others, largely, the discipline which tests us. Some one has written both wittily and wisely upon "the uses of an enemy." Another cried, "Save me from my friends." In our intercourse with the world there is constant friction and collision. Those we trust are ever disappointing us. And this "tribulation worketh experience." This threshing teaches us to know ourselves.

4. Most farmers are disappointed when their grain is threshed. It seldom turns out as well as they expected. From the stack that they thought contained five hundred bushels the thresher gets but three. So men, when tried, find themselves weaker than they thought they were. They have not the moral stamina they supposed they had. They are disappointed in themselves—humbled and ready to look to God for strength. Nothing does a man so much good as taking the conceit out of him. This is one of

the earliest and best results of our disappointments in life. This is the preparation for seeking the grace which is made perfect in our weakness.

5. The result of threshing, even in the most favorable circumstances, is a great deal more straw and chaff than grain. And so the Christian finds when afflictions come that the dross in him far exceeds the gold—that there is an immense amount of “wood, hay and stubble.”

Finally, as we rejoiced when our threshing was over, so there will be joy when the saints come out of great tribulation, with robes washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. There is a great deal of trouble in this world. We often feel as if God dealt harshly with us. But when we see how necessary and how merciful the discipline was, we shall thank him most for what now seems most unkind.

But I am so weary with the threshing itself that I can not write about it as I would. I feel to-day as if I had been threshed as well as my grain.

A VILLAGE PASTOR.

I AM writing to-day in the study of a church with which I spent the Sabbath. Its history has a moral. Let all restless young ministers read and ponder.

Eight years ago there was a town here of a thousand inhabitants and no church. It was a railroad town, with a score of grog-shops, all in full blast on the Sabbath. A young minister came, and found here half a dozen professors of religion; some were Presbyterians, some Congregationalists, some Methodists and some Baptists. He proposed to preach for them for what they could afford to give, the Missionary Society of his Church paying the balance of a very moderate salary. His offer was accepted. He began with a handful of hearers, in a school-house. He worked on patiently, and lo! the result; he has a church of over a hundred members; a church edifice, with audience-room, lecture-room, infant class-room and study, that must have cost nearly \$10,000, free from debt. The lot is large, centrally located and full of choice shrubbery. Everything in and around the church is in excel-

lent taste. Opposite the church the pastor has built for himself a neat home, as if he meant to stay. And everybody means that he shall. They say: "He is not a great preacher, but he is a good man, and a faithful pastor. He loves us and our children. Everybody has confidence in him. The worldly and wicked respect him. He has an influence which a stranger, no matter how talented, could not easily secure." The result is that this village pastor has planted himself deeply and firmly in the community for a life of usefulness. His success, thus far, is the pledge and earnest of the future. The church to which he ministers is a great power for good. It is the acknowledged center of Christian influence in the place. Its pastor is looked up to as a leader in all moral and spiritual movements.

Now, is not such a position all that a minister ought to desire? Does it not offer one who loves souls a field large enough for his most assiduous cultivation? Were I young in the ministry, I would try to do just what this brother has done. Instead of hunting for what the world calls an inviting field and a church that can pay a good salary, I would go where a church was needed and try to

gather one. I would, by self-denying labor, so entwine it about me, that it would feel that we belonged to each other, and ought to live and toil together as long as God spared my life.

We need more such pastorates, and I do believe that if our young ministers were wise, if they sought fields of permanent usefulness, if they tried to locate themselves as early as possible for a life-work, our churches would be built up faster and stronger than on the present system. Too many have the feeling that certain fields will do for them to make a beginning of their ministry in. As soon as they get some experience and reputation as preachers, they look around for a more inviting place. They hope ultimately to reach a pulpit in one of the great cities. This ideal of ministerial life has an unhappy influence in many ways. It tempts churches to feel that they are estimated according to their size and wealth, or according to the size of the place they are in; that ministers regard the smaller and poorer churches only as stepping-stones to those that are larger. And the minister who gets the spirit and the reputation of a place-hunter, will probably find his ministry barren of spiritual fruits. Would

that the majority of our brethren were willing to settle with village and country churches for life, as the ministers did in New England two generations ago. We know there are difficulties in the way in our newer settlements. But these places where the population is so constantly shifting need, above all others, a permanent ministry.

WHY DO WE READ IT?

A GOOD many people read the Bible more or less. Probably every professor of religion reads a chapter or part of one daily. But why? Could we put this question to each of our readers we should probably get a variety of answers. Some would say that they read because it is a Christian duty. They take regular doses of Bible just as they take medicine, or exercise, because they hope that in some way it will do them good. Others have formed the habit of reading about so much every morning or evening, and keep it up because they pride themselves upon being systematic. Others like the stories in the Bible, or are interested in its poetry. Others are always

seeking in it for novelties, and the gratification of a morbid curiosity, like the man who searched the Scriptures to find out how old Mary was when Jesus was born.

But it was in none of these ways that David read his Bible. It was not near as large as ours. It probably contained, at most, the Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, Ruth and Job, yet he wrote a Psalm of 176 verses to declare his delight in the law of the Lord. He studied it because he loved it. It was sweeter to him than honey and the honey-comb.

To the saints of all ages the Bible has been not only the best, but the most interesting of books. They have read it not as a task-book, but as a love letter. They have feasted upon its promises, and rejoiced in the prospects that it set before them. They have studied it as a legatee studies the will by which he is entitled to great riches.

There is no truer test of our spiritual state than the feelings with which we read the Bible. If we are indeed the children of God the words of our Father will be very sweet to us. If we are the brethren of Christ the life of our noble Elder Brother will be intensely interesting to us. If we

are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ we will want to know all that is in the will—to gather and to treasure every statement in regard to the inheritance incorruptible and undefiled.

Does the average professor of religion to-day really love to read the Bible? Does he not prefer the newspaper? Does he not go over his daily chapter from a sense of duty rather than with delight? Does he keep the Bible near him so that he can turn to it whenever he has leisure? Does he meditate upon what he reads? Does he feast upon it? Is he ever searching as for hidden treasures, and finding new truths that enrich and gladden his soul? We fear that this test applied would convict many of spiritual declension, would show that they are cold and formal, that they have left their first love.

But can we cultivate a more excellent way of reading the Bible? Can we learn to love it? Yes, for it is, when fully appreciated, the most delightful of all books. The trouble is that most readers are too superficial. They do not study the word of God. They do not get beyond the outer rind or husk into the inward sweetness. Now, let any one who would acquire a taste for

this divine book try this experiment—let him take a single verse in the morning, commit it to memory, and think about it whenever he can during the day; let him turn that verse over and over in his mind until he realizes something of its meaning; thus doing, he will find food for his spirit. And his appetite for this kind of food will be quickened. He will go to the Bible to get fresh supplies of manna. One truth vitalized by meditation and prayer will suggest other truths related to it, will awaken the desire to know more of things spiritual and divine, and the soul will become all aglow with interest. The Bible will be first in his thoughts in the morning, and last in his thoughts at night. The enthusiast in science is not the tyro, but the thorough scholar. The more the student knows in any department of investigation, the more he longs to know. Our comparative indifference to the Bible results from our ignorance of it. If we will resolve to study it henceforth instead of running over its chapters and verses, as a matter of form, we shall soon become fascinated with its unfoldings of truth and love.

IDEALS OF LIFE.

As I watch the crowds surging through the streets of this great city, I ask myself, What is their idea of life? They are evidently in earnest about something, and in a great hurry to secure it. What is that something? In most cases it is money. But money is only a cold, hard metal. It is not sought as an end, but as a means. One wants money that he may live luxuriously, that he may gratify his tastes and appetites, or his lusts and passions. His ideal is basely sensual. He cares not for the future, but only for the present. With all his business enterprise and skill he is a mere animal. He is of the earth, earthy. I fear that a large proportion of the men and women, even in Christian lands, are practically materialists. They have a vague belief in the soul and in immortality, but that belief has very little influence upon their daily lives. They live as if there was nothing above mortality or beyond the grave.

But there are some in these hurrying crowds who seek money because it will give them reputation and power. Nay, it will enable them to build for themselves monuments that shall carry

their names down to distant generations. The instinct of immortality is strong in these men, but they seek to gratify it on the earth and in earthly things. They think proudly of what men will say about them after they are dead. They dream of the crowds who shall visit the institutions they endow, and praise them as benefactors of the race. But all their enjoyment is in anticipation. There is no evidence or reason for believing that their spirits will be permitted to return and listen to the eulogies that are pronounced upon them.

This ideal of life is nobler than that of the sensualist, but it fails, because it provides only for the mortal and the earthly part. It lays up no treasure for the soul.

There is a third class who believe in immortality; who realize the duty of securing the salvation of the soul; but who, when they obtain a hope through Christ of eternal life, seem to think that the spiritual part of their work is done. Now they need not care specially for the future. Its interests are secured. They have a policy of insurance. They are safe; what more do they need? It seems almost incredible that a Christian should feel and reason thus; but I am afraid that

many do. With them, escape from eternal death, securing an entrance into heaven, is the Alpha and Omega of religion.

Now and then I meet a man who has a higher ideal. He sees that this life, though in itself but a vapor, is inestimably important and solemn in its relation to the life to come. Here and now, we are not only to secure the soul's safety in that life, but its social position, its wealth, its relative honor and happiness. Here and now, we are not only to obtain a title to heaven, but to lay up treasures in heaven. Here and now, we are to gather jewels for our crown of rejoicing. The wise husbandman sows bountifully that he may reap bountifully. This is our spiritual seedtime, and the harvest is after death. The Christian will, therefore, be always striving to do good, that he may enjoy the fruit of his labors over there. He will invest all that he can of time and energy and means in work for Christ, knowing that for such work he will be rewarded in the great day. Let it not be objected that this is a selfish view of life. We are created to love ourselves, to seek for happiness. It is our duty to make the most of ourselves and of our opportunities. We can do this

only by taking into account our whole life—the present and the future—the time of probation and the time of fruition.

When the sculptor had a shapeless block of marble brought into his studio and began to chisel upon it, he had an ideal of what it might be. He said that he saw an angel in it. And he worked day after day, with patient energy, until he brought out the angel. Such is the ideal we should each have of ourselves. A character may be wrought out here fit to shine in heaven. Every day and hour we should be toiling to develop and perfect that character, to bring out the angel whose wings we may almost feel fluttering within us. The Holy Spirit has given to each believer the germ of a new life. That germ is to be cultivated that it may grow, that in due time may come from it the blade, the ear, and the full corn in the ear. Our years on earth are given us that we may grow in grace, that, beginning as babes in Christ, we may attain to the stature of men. This is our great business; this is numbering our days, so as to apply our hearts unto wisdom.

Thus, whether we look at the preparation we need for heaven, or at the importance of laying

up treasures there, we see that this life is intimately connected with the life to come. We see that the true ideal of this life must be shaped and colored by what God has revealed of the celestial life. Wisely has he made its blessedness depend upon our fidelity here; for the more faithful we are to the future, the more useful we shall be in the present. We do not get ready for heavenly joys by sitting down and dreaming about them, but by doing good. Active benevolence does two things for us: It polishes our souls, and it makes investments for us in heaven. In giving a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, we make ourselves more Christ-like, and we secure a reward in the day of Christ. Happy thus the man who lives not for the pleasures of sense, not for the applause of men, but for glory, honor and immortality at God's right hand. He will be the best citizen, because his citizenship is also in heaven. His earthly home will be filled with light and love, because he will bring into it the atmosphere of the heavenly home for which he is trying to be prepared. He will be diligent in business, for whatever he does he does heartily as unto the Lord. He will be honest, for he real-

izes that God's eye is ever upon him, and that he must soon be judged according to his deeds. He will be benevolent and charitable, for he reads in his Bible: "He that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God; for God is love."

ENDURANCE, ACQUIESCENCE, THANK-
FULNESS.

THREE children were playing beside a little brook. Their shouts and laughter showed that they were having a merry time. Their mother came and called them. They stopped their play and listened. One said, with a sad face, "Well, I suppose that we must go. It is mother that calls and we ought to obey her." Another said, more cheerfully, "Of course, we must go, for mother loves us and she wouldn't call us if it were not best." But the third said, "Let us go quickly. I am glad she called us, for mother is so good I know that she has something nice for us. She has not called us to break up our play, but to make us happier at home than we were or could be here by the brook."

These children represent three classes of persons who call themselves Christians. Every trial or disappointment is like the interruption of their play by the brook. It is God calling us to go somewhere else, or to do something else. To the man of business he says, "Leave your store, or your office, and lie down in your chamber and suffer." To the rich he says, "Leave your wealth and all the luxuries it enabled you to enjoy, and work for your daily bread." To the proud, fond mother he says, "Give me your child, and sit desolate in the home which his prattle filled so full of music."

In these and many similar cases, if we do not murmur, if we endure affliction patiently, if we say, "It is the Lord; he gave and he has a right to take away," we think that we manifest a Christian spirit. But this is only a kind of baptized stoicism. It is submitting to what can't be helped, just because it is inevitable. It is refraining from murmuring, because murmuring would do no good. The Christian spirit is not that of a slave who submits silently and makes the best of his hard lot. No, it is the spirit of the child who loves his heavenly Father, who has confidence in

that Father's love for him, and who receives whatever he sends as a love-gift.

Many who get beyond the spirit of mere endurance, who accept God's dispensations cheerfully, who really feel that whatever he does is right and wise, yet do not realize that afflictions are blessings, that trials are mercies, that bereavements are bestowments, that whatever God sends is good and kind as well as right. Few of us are able with Paul to "glory in infirmities," to rejoice in sufferings, to say "when I am weak, then am I strong." Job cried with noble patience and good sense, "Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil also?" But to the Christian nothing received from God's hand is evil. "All things work together for good to them that love God." As a child, as an heir of glory, he should welcome with gratitude every dispensation. He should bless God for the sunshine and for the cloud, for the day and for the night, for health and for sickness, for friends and children given, for friends and children taken away, for life and for death. This is the true spirit of adoption which enables us always to cry, Abba, Father—

to cry thus lovingly and thankfully, not merely with submission or even acquiescence. It is well to believe in God as just and wise and good, but we ought to go beyond this as Christians. We ought to believe in him as our best friend, and in all his providential dealings as proofs of his covenant love.

PATIENCE, COMFORT, HOPE.

READING to-day the fourth verse of the fifteenth chapter of Romans, I was specially interested in what is there stated as to the object and influence of the Scriptures. They teach and inspire patience, comfort and hope. Are not these the essential elements of success and happiness? Patience involves the idea of cheerful waiting. Much of our unhappiness comes from expecting immediate results. We sow to-day, and we fret and worry because we can not reap to-morrow. We watch the trees that we plant, and ask impatiently, why is the fruit so long in coming? We forget that God has said, "In due season . . . if we faint not." We want to hasten the seasons.

This spirit is the very antipode of faith. With it comes the temptation to fear that what is so slow in appearing will never come at all; and this fear, though it be but vague and shadowy, though we do not fully yield to it, yet clouds our sky. How shall we resist this demon of impatience? We may say to him, as Christ did: "It is written." The only effectual antidote to the restless spirit, with which the very air seems laden in our day, is the Scriptures. What wonderful teachers of patience they are! Think of Abraham, how he believed and waited! Think of the Hebrews in Egypt! Think of Moses, forty years a shepherd in the wilderness! Think what multitudes, under the Old Dispensation, endured as seeing him who is invisible! If we study these examples, we shall be ashamed of our childish fretfulness, and learn to *wait* on the Lord.

But the Scriptures give us comfort. They are inspired by "the Comforter." The Greek word translated comfort is *parakleseos*—the help of the *paraklete*, the influence of the Holy Ghost sanctifying through the truth (John xvii. 17). Our English word comfort comes from the Latin *confortare*. It means, literally, to strengthen. It is

a sense of weakness that saddens and discourages us. When we are strong we are cheerful and hopeful. Work that is too hard for us, that we grapple with only to fail, drives us to despair. But in the Bible we read the words of the Omnipotent, "Lo, I am with you always;" "My grace is sufficient for you: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Reading this, and believing it, we can glory even in infirmities. Our very weakness is a source of joy. Our lowliness is like that of the ocean shore, it enables the tide to come in and cover our imperfections, and make our feeble spirits mirrors reflecting the glory of God.

Herein is comfort. Our heavenly Father not only sympathizes with us, and assures us that all will be well at last if we patiently work and wait, but he comes and works with us. He tells us what to do, and helps us to do it. Every life of faith is all through like the single act of faith, by which the sick were healed when Christ was on the earth. That man with a withered hand felt weak and sad, no doubt, as we often do. But when the divine Savior said, "Stretch forth thy hand," he knew just what to do, knew that he

would be enabled to do it, and that doing it he would be healed. Then what a thrill of hope must have entered his soul as he heard that command! And so may our souls ever be thrilled as we study the word of God. It is full of commandments that imply promises. When it tells us to do anything, it means that we shall have grace to do it, and the joy of seeing it done.

For the result of Bible-taught patience and comfort is "hope." This is called the soul's anchor. No matter how the storm drives, and the currents drift, and the rocks threaten, if the anchor holds. "We are saved by hope"—not to be saved, but "are saved." Too many people push the expectation of spiritual good away into the future. They believe that God is able and willing to make them happy in heaven, but not in this world. Here they must be weary and sad, and stumble and sigh. There is no help for it. The trouble with us all is that we don't study the Scriptures enough to get out the comfort that is in them. That comfort is not luxurious ease, sensual gratifications and worldly prosperity. It is not health and human friendship. It is oftenest given in connection with poverty and sickness,

and toil and reproach. It is the "peace of God that passeth human understanding."

The traveler on a wintry day, wrapped in his fur robes and whirled along by his fleet horses, pities the poor man whom he sees climbing a rugged mountain path with a burden on his back. But the climber may be warmer and happier than the traveler. Exercise quickens the circulation. His home is near. He has something in his pack that will make his wife and children happy. He sings responsive to the storm; while the rich man shivers, frets at his horses, and broods anxiously over the business which he hastens to attend to.

The Bible says, "He giveth his beloved sleep." While the godless and unbelieving toss upon their beds, thinking what may happen, or what they must do on the morrow, the Christian pillows his head on some sweet promise, casts all his care on Him who careth for him, and rests like a babe in its mother's arms.

But the comfort that is in the Scriptures will not come to us in a miraculous way. We must study them. We must not only read, but memorize and meditate upon the promises. We must make them our own by an appropriating

faith. In the Middle Ages, if a man who could not read could get a Bible and put it under his pillow, he thought that he was safe from witches. The Bible, even in an unknown tongue, was a magic talisman. But though we smile at this obsolete superstition, we are almost as foolish. We have a copy of God's word, richly bound and illustrated, on our center-table. But David tells us that he hid it in his heart. Do we? Grain in his granary will not enrich the farmer. He must sow and cultivate it. And Bible truth is the good seed of the kingdom, and by prayerful study it will bring us wisdom and joy, thirty, sixty, a hundred fold.

SPIRIT AND LIFE.

IN that remarkable discourse of our Savior recorded in the sixth chapter of John, he says: The words that I speak are spirit and life. Those words excited the anger or the scorn of the Pharisees. They staggered the faith of the disciples. They seemed at the time to have no power but to puzzle or disgust those who heard them. But

when they were written under the inspiration of the Spirit, and he quickened those who read them, how wonderful they were! Those words have gone into all lands and adown the ages as mighty spirits, transforming the hearts and lives of men. It is not because Christ was a teacher of truth merely, but because he spake with authority; because, being divine, he must impress something of his own attributes upon his utterances; because, being the great Creator and Life-giver, he could breathe into his words, as into the molded dust of Adam, the breath of life.

We accept the whole Bible as inspired. We confide implicitly in all its declarations as true—in all its promises as trustworthy. But what Christ said with his human lips seems to bring us nearer to the mind and heart of God than what the Spirit said through David or through Paul. And hence no words have had such power to convince, to persuade, to comfort, and to sanctify as those of Jesus himself. As we read them we seem to hear the voice of God. They are plain and simple, but they embody a force and meaning that are superhuman.

Do we realize what a blessing it is to have

these words of Jesus? Think of a prisoner in his cell condemned to die. A skillful advocate brings him a written argument to prove that he ought to be pardoned. He is shown a petition numerously signed, asking the Governor to pardon him. A friend comes and says: I have talked with the Governor, and he tells me that he means to pardon you. All this is comforting, but fails to satisfy the prisoner. There is hope in it, but there is no life in it. One word from the Governor himself would be worth more than all of it. If he comes to the dungeon door and says: "Jailer, I pardon this man; let him go free"—these are words of life. And like these are the words of Jesus. They are not arguments to prove something. They are not reports of what somebody has seen or heard. They are royal words, divine words, words instinct with creative energy. They are the words of him who said, "Let there be light, and there was light."

And as Jesus himself is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever, so are his words. They are as full of spirit and life to-day as they were on the day of Pentecost. When I take up my New Testament and read the Savior's invitations and

promises, those wonderful pictures of truth and love, the parables, there is an electric contact between my spirit and the spirit world; those are not mere words, signs of ideas that enter my mind through the eye. They have life. They enter into my life with a mysterious, magnetic, transforming power. They impart to me not new thoughts merely; they kindle not new hopes merely; they renew my character and life. Prayerfully studying those divine words, I am "changed into the same image from glory to glory."

I wonder at myself that I do not prize more highly these words of the Son of God. I ought to memorize them; to be so familiar with them that they would hover around me like ministering spirits. Jesus said something that is adapted to every phase and emergency of our earthly lives. He uttered just the truth we need now, just the truth we shall need an hour hence, just the truth we shall need every hour until we die. All those truths are waiting for us in the Gospels. They are all ready to come and abide with us, and help us. But how shall they come unless we study them, meditate upon them, and welcome

them into our memories and our hearts? Christ said, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." What did he mean by his words abiding in us? That we should keep printed copies of them in our homes, and glance over them in the morning before we are half awake, and late in the evening when we are already half asleep?

PLANTING THEM.

I think one object of Christ in saying that his words are life is to tell us that if we plant them in our hearts they will grow. A diamond secured is worth as much to-day as it will ever be; but a seed may produce a hundred-fold. A scion may become a tree loaded with fruit. The diamond is brilliant, but lifeless. The seed and the tree are alive. And it is wonderful what a fruitage of grace we may secure by planting and cultivating a single word of Jesus. Take this sentence (John x. 11), "I am the Good Shepherd;" study it, apply it to all the varying wants and trials of life. It will grow upon you in beauty, in sweetness, and in power, until you will almost feel as if you could be happy with that one divine utterance.

He who is loved and cared for by a Shepherd omnipresent, omnipotent, infinitely wise and good, what more can he wish for or need? Oh, what a fountain of living waters that verse has been to millions of thirsty souls! Oh, what a tree of life it has been, shading and feeding the weary ones who have trusted in it! Let us take such precious words as these, coming as they do fresh and warm from the heart of God, into our hearts, and we shall learn the secret of growing in grace; we shall find these words striking their roots deep into the soil and filling the soul with ever-widening harvests of spiritual good.

THE BIBLE SAFE.

Spirits don't die; and words that are spirit and life must survive all the assaults of demons and of wicked men. Books of science may become obsolete; human constitutions and laws may be supplanted by others if not better ones; the popular literature of an age or nation may pass away; but these divine utterances are not of the earth, earthy. They are instinct with the life of him who uttered them. They can never fail while God reigns. He sent them forth as his messen-

gers to the children of men. They have a mission to accomplish until the end of time. They will not only to abide, but will grow in influence until they fill the earth. He who accepts Christ's own statement about his words need have no fear that any weapon formed against them shall prosper. He who is himself "the Word" that was with God and that was God, will see to it that all his words, uttered to men and for men, live on until their work for him is accomplished, and then live on forever in the grateful recollection and in the praises of those who were saved by them.

SCARCELY—ABUNDANTLY.

I AM requested to reconcile two apparently conflicting passages in the Epistles of Peter. He says (1 Peter iv. 18), "If the righteous scarcely be saved." He says (2 Peter i. 11), "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly," etc.

The word "scarcely" in the first passage is *molis*. It might have been translated "hardly,"

“with difficulty.” It is parallel with the exhortation of Paul: “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians ii. 12), and with that of Peter himself: “Give diligence to make your calling and election sure.” Nay, both are based upon the declaration of the Master himself: “Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life.” Though the Bible proclaims “a great salvation,” and declares that whosoever believeth shall be saved, it tells us of easily besetting sins, and of enemies that lie in wait for our souls. We are to fight the good fight of faith. We wrestle “against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”

But if we put on the whole armor of God and resist evil; if, despite of all obstacles, we press toward the mark for the prize of our high calling; if we struggle, weary, travel-stained and battle-scarred, to the gate of heaven, we shall not find it narrow like the gate on earth at which we entered. And as we draw near, that gate will open, and thousands of shining ones will come to meet us, with shouts and songs of welcome. We will enter as victors. White robes and golden crowns

will be given to us, and our Savior will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." Thus the scarcely saved, the toiling, struggling saint, who went up by the strait and narrow way, shall find no more straitness or narrowness, but fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore.

A few years after the close of our first war with England, a Government vessel was sent to France to bring Lafayette to our shores. The whole nation was waiting to welcome him. The moment the vessel appeared in New York harbor, cannons were to be fired, bells rung, bonfires lighted, flags unfurled, and the entire population was ready to rush to the Battery with expressions of gratulation and joy. The captain of the vessel knew of this abundant entrance, as he battled with the waves of the Atlantic. He knew of it as he entered the Narrows. Did he say, "As we shall be so triumphantly received in New York, we need not be vigilant on the ocean and in the 'Narrows?'" On the contrary, he would regard the promised welcome as an additional inducement to try to make the voyage safe and successful. He would watch his chart and compass. He

would take soundings. He would secure a pilot familiar with the rocks and currents of the channel. He would say: "The nation is expecting us. The nation is waiting to welcome its guest; I must give all diligence to reach the harbor safely for the sake of the nation, as well as for that of my distinguished passenger and my crew." So in the case of every tempted, struggling believer. Let him press on, though the way is hard; for heaven is waiting to welcome him. God and angels are expecting him. The joy-bells are ready to be rung, and myriads of the glorified to shout aloud as soon as he appears at the gate of pearl. And the difficulties of the way will enhance the rapture of that abundant entrance.

LOOKING UNTO JESUS.

THIS is the condition of salvation. "Look unto me and be ye saved." (Isaiah xlv. 22.) It is also the condition of growth in grace. "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our

faith." (Hebrews xii. 2.) What, then, is looking unto Jesus?

Did you ever see a mother looking at her babe? She has seen it almost every hour for months. Yet she gazes upon it as if she would devour it with her eyes. How intense is that love-look! Not the grandest painting, or most gorgeous panorama, could fix her gaze, as does the face of that child, which is the idol of her heart. So we are to look unto Jesus. Look unto him as the chiefest among ten thousand, the one altogether lovely.

Did you ever see an artist looking at a picture of one of the old masters? How steadily and patiently he gazes upon it. How he studies every feature, every hue and shading. After spending hours before it he feels that he has just begun to see its real beauty. He wants to go, day after day, and commune, through that picture, with the man whose genius created it. As he looks at the old painting, so should we look unto Jesus, studying, with an interest that never flags, his character and his life; seeing new beauty in it every time we gaze upon it, and ever seeking to be like him. Looking not merely to

admire, but to imitate, that we may be changed into the same image.

Have you ever seen a pilot looking at the harbor light, when the night is dark and the wind is high? He knows that the safety of the vessel depends on his steering it constantly by that light. If he lets his bow drift even a few points away he may strike upon a rock. Hence, he never turns his eyes for a moment from that beacon blaze. And while he looks his hands are upon the wheel. He keeps the vessel headed toward the light, into which he looks so steadily. And so the Christian looks unto Jesus. He is "the light of life." Toward him we not only turn always, but struggle and strive. We long to be like him, to get near him, to keep our minds and hearts in the knowledge and the love of him.

Have you ever seen the patient looking to his physician? How anxious that look. He would read his life or death in the doctor's face. He feels he can do nothing for himself; that all depends upon the doctor's skill. So looks the sin-sick soul to the great Physician. But it looks knowing that it will read hope and life in the face of Christ. It looks, however, with the interest

and intensity of one who feels that the soul's destiny for all the ages of its being depends on the power and love of Jesus only.

You have read of shipwrecked sailors, to whom a life-boat was sent from the shore. You can easily imagine how they would look to it, as it struggled to reach them over the billows. They would not be gazing all about, but every man would fix his eye on that one object. He would see nothing but the life-boat. He would think of nothing else, care for nothing else. If that boat reaches and rescues him, he is safe. If it fails, he must perish. And Jesus is the life-boat for souls that are shipwrecked. He is their only hope. They look to him, then, and to him alone. They care for him, and him only. If he saves them, they are safe forevermore. If his power or his love should fail, they must perish forevermore. Yes, the man who realizes his lost condition, and the salvation that is in Christ, must so look unto him that he shall seem to see nothing in all the universe but him.

Now combine these pictures and we begin to get an idea of what is meant by looking unto Jesus. It is not a single glance, a turning the

thoughts to him, now and then, that saves and sanctifies; but such a looking as expresses all the love and anxiety and hope and trust of a soul feeling its need of salvation, and realizing that he alone can save.

PRECIOUS PROMISES.

THIS is an age of promises. The United States Government has issued hundreds of millions. The banks issue them. The railroad companies issue them. The mining companies issue them. Corporations of all kinds issue them. They are called notes, bonds and certificates of stock. But they are simply promises. Their value does not depend on their size, color, quality of paper or phraseology, but upon what they promise, and the character of the promiser. The bonds of a bankrupt railroad or fraudulent mine appear as well, and often better, than those of the corporations that pay twenty per cent. per annum. The Government registered bond for a million of dollars does not differ

greatly in form and looks from the bond for fifty dollars.

A glance at the quotations in our commercial papers will show a wonderful diversity in the estimated value of these promises. Bonds that pledge to the holder ten per cent. per annum are sold for three cents on the dollar; while United States bonds, that promise only four per cent., are sold at 104 to 105. Why this difference in the preciousness of the promises? The former are issued by an irresponsible company, the latter, by what we consider the strongest and richest Government in the world.

Now, every reader of the Bible knows that God has been issuing promises for thousands of years. Peter says that they are "exceedingly great and precious." If so, they are a good investment. Let us see if the apostle's statement is true, or is like the glowing advertisement of a bogus joint stock company. We may profitably study this financial problem under four heads: Who promises; what he promises; the conditions of the promises, and the experience of those who have trusted in them.

WHO PROMISES.

A man has a thousand dollars to invest. He is offered a mortgage on land at ten per cent., and a United States bond at four per cent. He chooses the latter. Why? The Government does not pledge to him its property. It does not even give him a right to bring suit against it in the courts. His only guaranty for the safety of his money is its ability and character. The Government is a permanent institution. It represents, and in a degree controls, the wealth of the nation. It represents also the integrity and good faith of the nation. He would rather trust it at four per cent., than any individual, or any tract of land, at ten per cent. But what is the ability or integrity of our Government compared with that of Him whose registered bonds fill the Bible! His wealth is incalculable. If we could go as light travels for a thousand years, we should not reach the limits of his domain. And all these myriad worlds roll and shine because God is just and true as well as wise and mighty. If he should cease to be perfect, confusion and chaos would desolate the universe. When such

a being issues his bond it ought to command the highest premium in the markets of the world.

WHAT IS PROMISED.

A bond usually promises the purchaser two things: Interest annually at a certain rate, and a sum, called the principal, at the end of a specified time. Thus, a thousand-dollar 4-20 promises four per cent. a year on a thousand dollars, and the thousand dollars twenty years from date. In all God's promises there is something for both the present and the future. Our Savior said, "A hundred-fold now; and in the world to come eternal life." (Mark x. 30.) This is the Gospel Bond, issued by the Eternal Son in the Father's name. Who ever heard of such promises elsewhere, or ever dreamed of them? Now and then somebody advertises in the papers \$50 for \$1. But who believes it? Yet here the only true God says (for this is what it amounts to): "Buy one of my \$1,000 bonds, and I will pay you on it \$100,000 a year as long as you live, and when you die you shall have a crown and kingdom in the skies. You shall sit with me on my throne, and reign with me forever and ever." Is that a

genuine bond? Of course it is; for Christ's words will abide after the heavens and the earth have passed away. Are many of them in circulation? Yes, millions! Are they not held at an enormous premium? Could a poor man, by any means, raise money enough to get one? And if so, where must he go to get it? The poorest can buy, and the Lord, who issues the bonds, is so anxious to sell them that he sends agents around with them. I want to make this as plain as possible, and shall have to use what some fastidious readers may consider a very homely illustration.

THE CONDITIONS, OR PRICE.

A peddler came to our house the other day. He had brooms to sell. We did not need any, and told him that we could not buy as we had no money. "Oh," he said, "I don't want money; I will take old iron, rags, soap-grease, anything that you have—that you don't care for—that you throw away." It was hard to refuse to buy under such circumstances, even if the brooms were not very good. But now suppose, instead of a broom, he had offered me a bond, such a bond as Christ offers—a hundred thousand dollars a year,

and ten or twenty years hence the throne and crown of the British Empire—would I not either have laughed at him as a lunatic, or gratefully given him all the old and worthless things about the place and taken the bond? Now, this is not stating the case too strongly. The condition of the divine promises is that we give up our filthy rags, our old, sin-rusted hearts. We have not a farthing of the currency of the skies. Spiritually considered, we are utterly poor, absolutely penniless, and we must remain so, unless God shall, of his own free will, in the abundance of his grace, enrich us. This he offers to do. He sends the offer to our homes in every copy of the Bible that we have. It is filled with bonds, that we can appropriate to ourselves, and that will insure^e us the hundred-fold now, and the eternal life hereafter.

THE TESTIMONY OF INVESTORS.

But if these bonds are so cheap, and yet so precious, surely they ought to be popular. Have many people taken them? and what do they say about them? These bonds have been on the market for nearly six thousand years. They have been held by many millions of people. They are

held to-day in nearly every country on the globe, and by some of the wisest and best in those countries. I have never heard of a holder who did not prize his bond very highly; nay, of one who would part with it at any price. Thousands have suffered death rather than give up these bonds. And as to the eternal life promised in them, one of the bondholders was permitted by the Lord to investigate that matter. He saw a door opened in heaven; he entered; he beheld there a great multitude, that no man could number, clothed in white robes, with palms in their hands. These are they who trusted in Christ while on the earth, and who are now kings and priests in glory.

Who will doubt the word of God? Who will distrust the testimony of the best men and women that have lived upon the earth? Who will refuse to believe in the vision which John saw on Patmos? Who will not gladly exchange his filthy rags for a hundred-fold in this time, and in the world to come life everlasting?

POLISHING THE PLOW.

ONE of our plowmen was going out to plow in a field that is "dobe"—that is, the soil is composed largely of a stiff and sticky clay, such as the Spaniards used to make their adobe houses from. He sat down with a piece of sandpaper, and polished his plowshare until it was as bright as a steel mirror. "Why do you do that?" I asked. "Why polish it so when you are going to put it into the dirt?" "Because," he replied, "I don't want the dirt to stick to it. I want it to go through that dobe, turn it over, and come out clean; not to be gathering loads of it on every rust spot and thus be clogged all the way. A plow whose share is polished and kept so will run easier and do a great deal more work than one whose share is rusty." I took my spade to dig holes for some trees I wanted to plant. I found that the clay stuck to it so that it was harder to get the dirt off after it was dug than to dig it up. Remembering what the plowman did, I polished my spade and then had no further trouble. It pays to polish the tools we work with, and to keep them bright.

But I learned a deeper lesson than this from the plow and the spade. We are in the world as workers. We have to dig, to turn our furrow, to cultivate our plot of ground. The world sticks to the worker in it as our dobe soil sticks to the plow. If there is a spot of rust upon us, if we are selfish or sensual, the clay will fasten there and clog our movements. Our only hope of getting through the world easily, and of doing our work well, is in keeping our spirits polished. If we daily study divine truth and seek, by prayer, divine help, we shall be kept bright and pure; we shall have a spirit so unworldly that the world will not be able to fasten itself upon us and clog and encumber us. How weary and sad is the life of a thoroughly selfish man, toiling through the heavy, sticky mire, his soul loaded with ambition, avarice, envy; every evil passion clinging to the rust spots, making him more careworn and wretched the further he goes. A spirit polished for the skies works best on earth no matter how lowly and hard its sphere.

I remember in some book of Emblems, perhaps it was Quarles', a picture of a ship with this motto, "In the water, yet above it." So a

Christian should go through the world—in it, yet above it. He can not avoid some worldly toil and care. He must be immersed to a certain extent in things material and temporal, as the ship's keel must be in the water. He can not avoid the pressure of these things as the ship must feel the pressure of ocean currents. But as the larger and better part of the ship is above the water, and, by its sails spread to the winds of heaven, it resists the currents of the deep, going to its haven even against the Gulf Stream, so the Christian is only in and of the world as far as his body requires. His higher life is kept above the world. He does not permit it to come in through leaks and water-log him. He remembers his celestial home. He spreads the wings of his spirit to catch the air that floats from it and would waft him to it. Thus he resists temptations; he overcomes the world, and secures an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom. An excellent motto for the Christian is, "In the world and yet above the world."

"WE KNOW."

WHAT is so trying as uncertainty? Let me know the worst, cries the wife who sees sad tidings in her husband's troubled face. But if definite knowledge of loss or peril is better than suspense, with all its shadowy fears, how sweet, how blessed, is the certainty of good! We hope, we dream, but to-morrow the bright vision may melt like frost-work. To have that hope changed to full assurance, that dream made a reality, is what we longed for. And how grandly does God, in his word, meet this longing. He inspires his apostles to say, "we know," and he sends by his Spirit those talismanic words echoing through the hearts of all Christians. We are, or may be, as certain in regard to the great interests of our souls as those apostles were. They did not write I know, but "we know." They wrote as representative believers, as declaring the certainty which belongs of right to every child of God. We are not to say we hope; but are authorized to say with Paul and John *we know*.

But what do we know? All that we need to in regard to our present position, to our future

in this life, and to our destiny beyond the grave. Let us quote three passages, and see if they do not cover the whole ground. First: John says: “We know that we have passed from death unto life.” We do not hope that we have been born again; that we have become heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. We are sure of it. The Spirit witnesseth with our spirit. It kindles such love and joy within us that we can not doubt that we are justified by faith. Now this assurance is of inestimable value. If we knew nothing but this we ought to be happy. For what can we fear, if God has become our reconciled Father? Who can harm us if the Great Jehovah has taken us into his arms of love?

But Paul adds: “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.” Do we love him? Does gratitude glow in our hearts when we think of what he has done and suffered for us? Then we are certain not only of safety but of all the good that we need. Then we know that the God we love will compel all things to minister to us, as his dear children. Then we know that plenty and want, that sickness and health, that joy and sorrow, that light and dark-

ness, that rain and sunshine, that society and solitude, that friends and foes, that angels and demons, that all things, no matter how opposite or hostile to each other, shall be obliged to unite in promoting our welfare, that they shall be bound into a grand co-operative agency for making us wiser and holier. The influence of all things in this world, which our Father created and controls, is direct, positive, and constant in preparing the child of God for his home on high. What more can we need to give us peace and happiness in this life?

But our knowledge goes beyond this life: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Oh, this is the grandest assurance of all! Our life here is but for a day. It matters but little, comparatively, whether we spend it in health or sickness, in joy or sorrow. A thousand ages hence, its threescore years will be but a speck in the distant horizon. It will seem as a dream does when one awaketh. But the soul is to live forever. Where shall it live? Has it a home to go to when it leaves this house of clay?

Yes, it has—a God-built and an eternal home. No doubt, no dread, as to the future. That is all provided for; and we *know* that it is. Christ said, before he left the earth: “I go to prepare a place for you . . . and I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also.” We can believe Christ. We are sure that he will keep that promise. We know from what John saw on Patmos that he did keep it, in regard to the saints who had died up to that time. Hence we rest, amid all the trials of this life, upon the certainty of a home in heaven.

Christianity is not a superstition or a system of philosophy—it is a revelation of facts. It is not made up of conjectures and probabilities, but of certainties. This is its excellence and its glory. Every Christian ought to know these things which the apostles knew; and knowing them he ought to have a peace that nothing can disturb. The reason that our spiritual strength is so feeble and our spiritual joy is so dim is that we do not learn thoroughly the elementary principles of our faith. We do not *know* the truth as it is in Jesus—the truth which he reveals to make us free indeed.

I was talking with a Universalist to-day. He kept saying, "I think," "I believe," "It seems reasonable to me," etc. I replied, "Do you know? Have you any certainty? May you not be mistaken after all? And, if you are, will it not be a fatal mistake? Now, instead of thinking and believing as you profess to, I have absolute knowledge. I am sure that Christ is my Savior, and that heaven is my home. I have the witness of his Spirit. It is not a matter of probability, but of conscious assurance." That assurance I would not barter for all the wealth and wisdom of the world.

THE EIGHTY-FOURTH PSALM.

I WAS sick, yesterday, and unable to go to church. I turned, therefore, to this Psalm, beginning, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!" Many read this Psalm with interest, and with a general understanding of its spirit, who fail to appreciate it fully, because of some infelicities of translation. As I have been studying it, to-day, let me note down a few points

for such readers as are not supplied with Commentaries. The word translated "amiable" is one of peculiar force and beauty. It might be rendered, how "lovely and worthy of love." God's house is to the Christian not only the most attractive of all places on earth, but justly so; for it is there that God is specially honored, and that he makes special revelations of his grace.

"The sparrow hath found a house," etc. Some suppose that this figure of the birds in the tabernacle refers to its neglected and ruined condition. But there is nothing in the context to justify such a supposition. Birds were not driven from the Jewish temple, but allowed to build their nests in it. The Psalmist thinks of them as safe and happy in God's sanctuary; as permitted by God to dwell there with their nestlings about them. So would he dwell and rear his children. He, too, would nestle, like the birds, near the altar. He would have the home of his heart where the swallow and sparrow twitter for joy, for are not he and his offspring of more value in God's sight than many sparrows?

"In whose heart are the ways of them." What does this mean? Omit the italics, which

the translators added, and we read, "In whose heart the ways." The "ways" might be translated channels; and then we get this idea: "In whose heart are the channels of thy grace." The believer's "strength" is in God. He opens his heart to receive all of that strength that God will give. Hence, he has such fullness of grace that when he passes through the valley of Baca, bitterness, desolation, he makes it a well. The love and joy within so overflow that the dreariest spot becomes a garden of the Lord.

And we learn from the seventh verse that the progressive strength and happiness of the Christian depend upon his appearing "in Zion before God." The fountain is above, but it comes down through the sanctuary to the heart. As our water-pipes, in a great city, must be connected with the main, and through it with the reservoir, so our spirits must be connected with the great current of spiritual life that flows through the Church. Public worship is a duty and a privilege under the new dispensation, as under the old. Our churches have in them no altars for incense or sacrifice, no ark or shekinah, no robed priests, no high-priest with a jeweled breastplate; yet

they are truly temples of God, and whoever waits upon him there in humility and faith will "go from strength to strength."

The marginal rendering of the tenth verse is literal, and very expressive: "I would choose rather to sit at the threshold of the house of God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." Yes, happier he who can only reach the doorstep of the sanctuary, and thence look in and hear God's praises and join in his worship, than he whose home is in the tents of the wicked.

"For the Lord God is a sun and shield." He both lights and guards us. Or perhaps the reference is to the old pillar of cloud by day and fire by night in the wilderness. God's mercies are adapted to our varied wants. When we need light, he shines; when we need shade, he overshadows. He gives glory. But, lest it dazzle and pain us with excessive brightness, he gives grace also. He tempers the beams of his majesty and his holiness with the soft and mellow radiance of his love. We do not know of a sweeter verse in the Bible than this—sun and shield, grace and glory. Truly and beautifully does it close with

the words, "No good thing will be withheld from them that walk uprightly."

"Uprightly." "Ah, yes," cries some one; "if we were upright, *i. e.*, perfect, of course God would bless us. But we are not perfect. How, then, can we take these promises as ours?" The writer thought of this objection, and added a verse to explain what he meant by upright. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in thee." It is the uprightness, not of innocency, not of perfect obedience, but of faith. It is the "looking unto Jesus" of which Paul writes. It is fixing the eyes, the thoughts, the affections on God, and thus pressing toward the mark. All the richest promises of God's word are based upon our trusting him as little children, and not upon our serving him as strong workers, or fighting for him as brave soldiers. If we truly love him, we will, of course, both work and fight for him. But our salvation depends upon believing in him, and on this alone.

“MY PEACE.”

MANY readers of the Bible, I fear, do not apprehend the full force of the pronoun “my,” in John xiv. 27. It defines the peace that Jesus gives. It tells us not only that it is from him—his gift—but wherein it differs from what the world calls peace, and promises to give us. “My peace,” means that which the Savior himself enjoyed while on the earth; that which enabled him to sleep on a storm-tossed sea. The life of Jesus must have seemed to men a troubled and sad one. He was poor. He was homeless. He was rejected by his neighbors. Even his brothers and sisters did not believe on him. The rulers of his nation sought to slay him. His miracles were attributed to satanic power. He was called a glutton and a wine-bibber. He was betrayed, deserted, mocked, buffeted, scourged and crucified. Yet “the Man of Sorrows” was “the Prince of Peace.” He had sources of comfort that the world knew not of. His great soul was like the ocean; the storms on its surface could not affect its depths. In them there was ever the holy calm of a perfect faith in God.

Now, Jesus does not propose to give us a better peace than he himself enjoyed. Nay, he can not, for that was the best possible. It was unaffected by circumstances. It sustained him in the sorest trials. It enabled him to triumph over death itself. Is it not enough for the disciple to be as his Lord? Do we want any other peace than that of Jesus, any better legacy than that he has left us in this promise, and which was all he had to leave? If not, then let us study the life of Jesus, and ask God to give us more of his Spirit. Let us not desire or pray for exemption from toil and trial, but for grace that will enable us to rejoice, as Paul did, in distresses and persecutions, for Jesus' sake.

THE UMBRELLA SELLER.

YESTERDAY we had one of the heaviest rains of the season. The water poured in torrents from the sky. I was obliged to go to the printing-office. As I turned from Market into Sansome Street I heard a man crying, "Umbrellas; nice, new umbrellas, only six bits apiece!" There he

stood in the drenching rain, on the sidewalk that was covered with water, selling umbrellas. When I returned, an hour later, he was still there, shouting, as before, "Umbrellas, umbrellas!" I could not help admiring the grit of the man. He did not stand in a doorway, or under an awning, and cry, "Come here and buy umbrellas." But he went out in the rain, under one of his umbrellas. He accosted every passer-by who was umbrellaless. He rushed from corner to corner, across the muddy streets. He ran along beside the men, who were hurrying on in the rain, urging them to buy. As I watched that man I thought, Well, he knows how to sell umbrellas, and he is bound to do it. He brings his umbrellas just where they are most needed. He exposes himself freely, in order to succeed in his business. May I not learn from him a lesson? May not that umbrella seller teach ministers and Christians how to work? It is easy, comparatively, to stand in our churches and exhort men to repent and believe in Jesus. But a great many of those who need the exhortation are not there to hear it. And to those who are there we do not seem to be more than half in earnest. If we

went out after sinners, if we took the gospel to their homes, and even to their haunts of vice, we should reach scores where we now reach one. How many umbrellas would that man have sold if he had remained in his store? People will not always go after even the material good things that they need. He who would be sure to sell to them must go after them when they are most conscious of their wants. And this truth is still more true in regard to spiritual necessities. Unless we press upon men's attention in season and out of season, the salvation without which they must perish, few will be saved.

• Shall a vender of umbrellas, at six bits apiece, rebuke, by his earnestness and self-denial, those who have eternal life to offer to souls that are dead in sin?

TRY WATERING.

THERE is a class of persons in all communities that we are tempted to regard as hopeless. They are so selfish, so worldly, or so vicious, it seems as if gospel influences could not reach them. We

say sadly there is nothing in their hearts to appeal to; every germ of sensibility seems to be dead. But we must not judge by appearances. We do not know what possibilities may slumber in the hardest heart, and what agencies of love may wake them into life. We dug an irrigating ditch, last month, along a hillside where there was no soil—nothing but gravel. We thought that nothing had ever grown there or ever could. But, to-day, while our best fields are verdureless as Sahara itself, that ditch is bordered with a luxuriant growth. The water found seeds in the gravel bank, and quickened them. As I look at that long line of living green, I am rebuked for my unbelief. I am taught to regard no human spirit as hopeless. I am encouraged to believe that patient kindness will find germs in the most degraded, which may be quickened into newness of life. The great apostasy of our day is want of faith in the power of the gospel. We believe in learning and eloquence; but not in the omnipotence of love. We do not realize that we dwell in those latter days when God will pour out his Spirit upon all flesh. We do not expect moral miracles—even life from spiritual death—

when we go with the love of God in our hearts, to try to water the hearts around us that seem utterly carnal and depraved. Faithful and loving efforts to do good can not be in vain. If we will by such efforts open a channel to the hearts of the most helpless, the Holy Spirit will fill that channel with the water of life, until deserts rejoice, and blossom as the rose. This he has done—this he is able now to do—this he waits to do. He waits for us to give him, as it were, access to those who are perishing, in order that he may save them.

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

OUR Savior did not exaggerate. His figures were not hyperboles. When he called himself "The Light of the World," he meant that he was, to all who would receive him, a spiritual luminary; that he would light and warm and vivify the souls of men, as the sun lights and warms and vivifies the earth. If this assertion of the Divine One is true, why are there any cold, sad hearts? There can be but one reason—the want of faith.

“He that believeth in me shall not abide in darkness.” Light and faith, unbelief and darkness, are inseparable. No more surely does sunshine change night to day upon our globe, than trusting in Christ changes sorrow and fear to hope and joy in the human soul.

Reader, did you ever sit down and think why this is and must be so? What makes moral darkness? Is it not sin? Every cloud in our sky comes from the evil in our own hearts, or in the hearts of others. We all assent to this statement; but do we realize it? Don't we sometimes half believe that our troubles and trials are arbitrary; that God sends them, or permits them to come, without any just cause? We know better; but we are tempted to forget, and it is well for us to try to trace these trials and troubles up to their fountain-heads. We can not do this in all cases; but we can in enough to satisfy us that sin is the one bitter and deadly thing—the source of all our sorrows. Then, that which delivers from sin is the panacea of the soul. And, so far as the panacea is applied, the curse is removed.

Now look at Christ, the sinless sin-bearer, the mighty God, dying for men; the risen and glori-

fied Redeemer interceding for men. Remember that faith unites us with him, as a branch is united with the vine; that faith clothes us with his righteousness, and transforms us into his image. What do such statements and figures mean? Is it not that sin has no more dominion over us? that we are not to walk under its damp shadows while we walk with the Son of God? that we are to walk in the light as he is in the light, because his blood cleanses us from all sin?

But you say: We are not cleansed from all sin; how, then, can we walk in the light? Look at yonder sky. It is not clear, and yet how beautiful! The sun gilds and burnishes the clouds. They reflect and refract his light, until the glory of heaven seems to come down to earth, and we can almost see, with our mortal eyes, the golden streets, the jasper walls, and the gates of pearl. Oh, light can transmute our mists and vapors into pavilions that angels might dwell in! And so does Christ brighten the sorrows of life; so does he make even the darkness that lingers within us luminous with his love! There can be no night on the earth while the sun is shining, though there may be many clouds in the sky. And

there can be no night in the soul while Christ abides in it, though that soul may be conscious of many imperfections, and may mourn daily over its shortcomings. The Divine Light will reveal its own holy beauty even amid the tears of penitence, as the sun kindles rainbows on the storm-clouds, making the vapors that would hide its beams multiply their glory seven-fold.

This is the idea of Christ which we need to realize and to cherish. He is not a light to be enjoyed in the future—toward which we struggle through dark and rugged ways, as a traveler struggles toward that which shines from the window of his far-off home. He is not a light to be enjoyed now and then—on the Sabbath—in seasons of quiet meditation or devotion; but a light that we may walk in always—just as if we could follow the sun around the earth, and thus have perpetual day. But the natural eyes can not see this light. To enjoy it, we must walk by faith. We must believe that Christ is a great, omnipresent, omniscient, loving Savior, and that he is OURS. Believing this, fully, we can no more doubt or fear, we can no more be troubled or anxious, than a man can stumble at noonday.

Then, simple faith is the condition of peace, of joy, and of hope. With faith in the heart, we have Christ there; we have the Sun of Righteousness there; and spiritual gloom is as impossible in that trusting heart as in heaven itself. Heaven depends, for its blessedness, upon him who offers to abide in us: "The Lamb is the light of it." And if he brings into our hearts the celestial light, does he not bring as much of heaven as the heart can hold?

A great practical error is that we have here, and now, only the toils and trials of the Christian life; that all its joys are in the future. But though this life is a pilgrimage, and the way is through a wilderness, we need not go stumbling and sighing, and with heads bowed like the bulrush. The wilderness is lighted by the love of God. His grace and glory stream down upon it from the Celestial City. They reveal to us the home to which we go, and the way by which we go; they drive the wild beasts that would harm us to their dens; they warm us with their vivifying beams; they cause flowers to bloom around us, and birds to sing above us. Should we be

sad, with the Celestial City in full view, and its light shining about us?

This light our Savior calls, "the light of life." And John says: "In him was life; and the life was the light of men." The sun warms the soil, and causes the seed to germinate; but plants wither in the sunshine, and its brightest rays fall on coffins and on graves. And a time is coming when "the sun shall be turned into darkness." But the Son of Righteousness abides forever. He kindles now in the heart a hope that is full of glory and eternal life; and he will expand that hope into a fruition of blessedness that will grow more and more blessed forever and ever. Then, lift up your heads, all ye sorrowing ones! Look unto Jesus, for he is the true light—the light not of heaven only, but of this world; the pilgrim's light as well as the angel's; the light in which we all may walk and rejoice.

WHERE IS HE?

A FATHER was in business in a distant city. He wanted his little son with him. He wrote to

his wife to send him by the express agent. She obeyed, but with many tears and misgivings. The child might be lost or injured during the journey. His father might not meet him at the depot. She passed a sleepless night. Next morning a dispatch came from her husband. It said: "Johnnie is with me." That was enough. She was satisfied. She did not know where Johnnie's new home was in the great city, or any particulars about it, or about the school he was to attend. But she knew he was with his father—the father who loved him dearly, the father who was wise as well as loving. She believed that the child *with him* would be safe and happy.

When our friends die we feel like saying, with Job, "Man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?" To that anxious question the world with all its boasted science and philosophy can give no satisfactory answer. But in the Bible we have divine statements that ought to comfort us. They are brief, like that father's telegram. They tell us only one thing about our absent friends. But that is enough. If they were Christians here they are *with Christ* as soon as they die.

Our Savior said to the penitent thief, "To-day

thou shalt be with me in paradise." Where is paradise? What kind of a place is it? On these points we have no specific information, and we do not need any. If the believer is with his Lord, if the redeemed sinner is with his Redeemer, all is well.

The message to the dying thief is Christ's message to every dying saint. We know this from our Savior's prayer (John xvii. 24): "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." We know this also from his promise (John xiv. 3): "I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also." We know it from the martyrdom of Stephen. He saw heaven open, and Christ standing at the right hand of God; and he cried: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Did not our Savior reveal himself to the dying believer on purpose to assure him that he was about to fulfill his promise? Would he mock him with such a vision, and tempt him to offer such a prayer, if he were not going to take him to himself—if he were going to send him away to purgatory, or to some intermediate place.

Mark, in his account of the ascension, confirms the vision of Stephen. He says: "He [Christ] was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God." And John, at Patmos, saw Christ as a lamb that had been slain, in the midst of the Throne. Thus it is evident that our Savior is in heaven, and that he receives there, and has a place there for his people when they die.

Paul believed that Christians go at once where Christ is. He writes to the Corinthians about being absent from the body and present with the Lord. (2 Corinthians iii. 8.) He writes to the Philippians that he had a desire to depart and be with Christ, and that for him to die would be gain. He would not have written so if he expected to be sent when he died into some place of unconsciousness and repose. In that case, death would not have been gain. No; he expected to go at once into that central place of light and love where Christ reveals himself, and where he has prepared mansions for them that love him.

Then we know that our departed friends are welcomed by Christ to a home in heaven. Nay, that he comes and takes them to himself. He

sends back to the ear of faith the message, "They are with me." More than this we need not know; more than this we could not understand.

THE RAINBOW.

GOD is a great teacher. He has created some of the grandest and loveliest objects in nature to instruct us in spiritual things. We were gazing to-day upon a magnificent rainbow, one of the most perfect that we ever saw. We thought first of Noah, as he came out of the ark, and saw that seven-hued glory in the sky. It was to him a sign, God's signature to a promise. "No flood hereafter. Build and plant, for the earth shall never be drowned again. Fear not when the rain descends; it shall only water the earth and not destroy it." The fact that the Great Creator thus pledged himself to his creatures showed such kind and thoughtful tenderness that it led them to feel: "God is not a mere Rain King, or a mere Judge and Avenger. No; he is a Father. He loves us. He wants us to confide in him."

Thus the rainbow was a revealer of God's grace to men; and a teacher of the one lesson that they needed most of all to learn—the lesson of faith.

But we could not help thinking of another rainbow—one seen, as yet, by no mortal eyes but those of John, the beloved—the rainbow of the first Christian century, the rainbow of to-day, the rainbow of all time, the rainbow of eternity, the rainbow “round about the throne.” (Revelation iv. 3.) This rainbow is not an arc or semicircle, like that of Noah; but a complete circle, surrounding the throne like a halo or a coronet. In its form it symbolizes the divine perfections. God in full-orbed power and glory manifests himself in the work of redemption. God the Triune, Father, Son and Spirit, is interested and active in saving lost men. God's holiness, justice, truth and love blend in the gospel. How instructive and cheering the fact that the rainbow is “round about the throne;” that the symbol of God's power is completely enveloped by the symbol of his covenant love!

But why is the rainbow chosen to represent the gospel? In it God pledges rest to the soul. The ark rested on Mt. Ararat; the deluge was over,

and light shining on the retreating storm made a bow in the clouds. So when the sinner flees to Christ, redeeming love, shining on his tears of penitence, kindles the hope that is full of glory. The promise of Jesus is fulfilled: "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." No more tempest-tossed; no more anxious and afraid: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God;" peace, because his word is pledged: "He that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out;" "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

But why is the rainbow round about the throne "in sight like unto an emerald?" Noah's rainbow was of seven colors—this is green, the color of the grass upon the plains, of the foliage upon the trees—the color most grateful to the eye. Is there not a sweet lesson for us in this emerald-hued bow? The gospel is adapted to our weakness. It does not dazzle us with a glare of light, or distract us with all the colors of the material rainbow. No; it arches over us softly. It soothes us with its familiar and pleasant green shading, amid the glare of jasper and sardonyx stone.

And as the rainbow, the emerald rainbow, enables us to look upon the throne, lo! in the midst

of it "a Lamb as it had been slain." Yes, God's love for sinners not only surrounds his throne, but reigns upon it. The rainbow symbolizes the rest and safety which are pledged to the repenting sinner by all his attributes. But the Lamb slain shows that the sinner's Savior is God himself. The Pleader in the garden and the Sufferer on the cross wears the crown of universal dominion and wields the scepter of omnipotence. Oh, as we look within the rainbow, and behold the Lamb, we know that our salvation is as sure as infinite power and love can make it.

Is it not well for us to study more these symbols? The Church in our day, though active and benevolent, is deficient in the consciousness of its personal relation to Christ. It is a great organization, but it does not realize that its Head is in heaven, that its members are the body of Christ, that its life all comes from him. If we thought more of what Christ is doing for us now—that he is not a Savior in the past merely, but in the present also—that he is identified with his Church in all time as its Intercessor, as its High Priest, who has passed into the heavens—as the Lamb slain for it in the midst of the throne, we should have

more faith in him and more love for him; we should have more enthusiasm and joy in working for him.

DAYS OF DARKNESS.

THE Preacher says (Ecclesiastes xi. 8), "If a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many." If a man knew that his eyesight would last only a few months longer, that on a certain day in the future he would become blind, would not he try to see all that he could in the meantime, so that he might have pictures in the memory to gaze upon when the outer vision was closed? Would he not try to put his affairs in as good order as possible, so that they should not trouble and annoy him in the days of darkness? Very foolish would he be who failed to improve the brief opportunity for seeing and to provide for the time when he should be able to see no longer. But like this supposed case is that of every reader. No matter how successful and happy, there are days of darkness before him.

He can not expect uninterrupted prosperity. Disappointment is not only the common, it is the universal lot. Every one should make a wide margin for it in all his plans and operations.

Banks and insurance companies provide a reserve fund. Out of this they pay those losses which are sure to come from time to time. When the hoisting works of the Consolidated Virginia mine were burned, the company went right on paying dividends of a million dollars a month. It had accumulated a surplus during the period of its prosperity. A great cause of suffering is that people when prosperous live too fast and spend too freely. They imagine that they are always going to do as well as they are now doing, if not better. They make no provision for reverses. They lay in no coal for the winter, no oil for its long nights. Hence, when the time of sunshine and warmth is gone, they are cold and desolate. Then they complain of their ill-luck, when the blame belongs to their ill-management. God gives to all his children enough of the good things of this life for their real and reasonable wants. But many do not take care of what he gives them. They do not lay up in the years of

plenty for the years of famine. They are like a farmer who should let his crops lie out of doors instead of garnering them, and then complain of poverty when the storms of winter had spoiled the plenty that his fields produced.

In spiritual as in temporal affairs dark days will come. We need them and we ought to prepare for them. The best preparation is studying God's word, memorizing and meditating upon his promises. That was a dark time in our Savior's earthly life when he was led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. But he was ready for it. And his quotations of Scripture lighted up the darkness and drove away the tempter, as sunlight drives moles and bats to their hiding-places. That was a dark time when the Scottish Confessor's Bible was taken from him and burned. But he had light still that his persecutors could not quench. "You can not burn," he cried, "the chapters that I have committed to memory."

THREE RULES.

EVERY man's experience ought to be worth something. His failures ought to help others to succeed. They at least may buoy out one shallow channel so that later navigators can avoid it. I am tempted, to-day, to give a little advice to my younger readers—advice that would have helped me years ago, if I had received and heeded it. I will condense the advice into three rules.

1. Never attempt to do more than one thing at a time. Have a single, definite object, and bend all your energies upon it. Some men succeed in more than one pursuit. There are universal geniuses and jacks of all trades. But even they might do far better in one thing than they have done in the many. Our minds are too finite and our lives too short for us to master every science and become skillful in every art. Each should, therefore, early select his special sphere. If you are called to preach the gospel, make preaching your business, study preaching all day, dream of preaching all night, practice preaching whenever you have an opportunity. Don't dabble in other things. If you have a fondness for literature or

for science indulge in it only so far as you can gather material to be used in preaching. It is enough for a man to be a great and useful preacher of the gospel. He ought to be satisfied with this, and not try, at the same time, to get a reputation as a lecturer, or author, or musician. I never read of one of our great preachers on a lecturing tour that I don't feel as if he were degrading his high calling. He is an angel of the Church, an ambassador of Christ, and what business has he to go about tickling people's ears at a dollar a head? If you are not called to preach, but to make shoes or to raise potatoes and corn, honor your calling by a thorough study of and devotion to it. Say, in regard to shoemaking or farming, "This one thing I do." Our land is full of men who know a little about everything, and not very much about anything. They glory in the fact that they can turn their hands to a great variety of trades if necessary. But such men seldom succeed. Their versatility of talent tempts them to frequent changes, and hence of them it is generally written: "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel."

The few men on this coast who have achieved

reputation, or accumulated wealth, are those who started out to do one thing and stuck to it. The multitudes that have failed, and are drifting to and fro like sea-weed, are those who are too smart (in their own estimation) to confine themselves to a single business or life work. They wanted to be miners and merchants and bankers and politicians and manufacturers and operators in real estate, etc., all at the same time, and the result is that they are bankrupts and vagabonds.

2. The second rule is really implied in the first. It is: Do thoroughly whatever you attempt to do. Choose a business in which you can get up some enthusiasm; which you consider worthy of your best powers and efforts, and then determine to be the most skillful and successful man of your generation in that business. If your ambition rises no higher than to be a bootblack determine to give your customers such a shine as they can get nowhere else. There is a sad want of thoroughness among our artisans and professional men. They consider their trade or profession as merely the means by which they are to make a living. They only give enough attention to it to insure this result. They have no pride in it, no ambi-

tion to excel in it. And hence they are mere plodders all their days. They accomplish nothing that specially benefits the world or that the world will care to remember. They leave behind them no "footsteps on the sands of time."

3. The third rule, and not the least important, is: Don't fret and worry about what you can't do. We can not all be great scholars or orators or millionaires. It is not best that we should be. The smaller stones are as useful in a building as the larger ones. God wants in this world a great many average men and women, and if we fill our own sphere, we are more faithful servants than if we tried to fill, or at least get into, somebody else's. Not a few lives that might be both useful and happy are worse than wasted, because the people want to be what God never meant them to be. Ambition is right and noble within certain limits. But to tell any boy in the land that he may be President of the United States if he will, is only fitting him to be discontented in the position that he will be likely to secure.

"HAVING A GOOD TIME."

A GOOD many think that the object of living is to have a good time. But I do not find this ideal in the lives recorded in the Bible. Not one of the holy men or women we read of there had what men of the world would call a good time. Let us glance at some of the biographies of those whose example is given for our imitation.

Abraham, the father of the faithful, was a homeless wanderer all his days. He was childless until he was a hundred years old. Moses spent forty years of his life as a shepherd in the desert of Sinai. Even the sheep he tended belonged to his father-in-law. Could those have been happy years for one brought up in a palace and learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians? And after Moses became the leader of his people from bondage, how constantly and bitterly was he troubled with their follies and their murmurings. David, the man after God's own heart, taken from the sheepfold to be king over Israel, was one of the most talented and successful men of his own or any age; yet for years he was hunted by Saul, as a partridge in the wilderness. And

after he was firmly seated on the throne, he had great and sore trouble; so that he cried out in the midst of his palace, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest." Elijah was the most eminent of the prophets. He brought fire and rain from heaven, yet he sat down under a juniper-tree and wished that he might die.

Our Savior did not have a good time while he lived on the earth, but was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. We read that he sighed, that he wept, that he was in an agony of grief, but never that he smiled. His disciples were scourged, stoned, imprisoned. They had to flee from city to city. Many of them suffered martyrdom. None of them had much of what the world calls prosperity, or enjoyed much of what it calls pleasure. And so, too, with the most eminent saints in later ages. Luther's life was full of care, anxiety and peril. He found that trying to reform the world waked up all its hostility and scorn. It was stirring a nest of vipers to hiss and sting. Read the biographies of John Calvin, of John Knox, of Henry Martyn, of Adoniram Judson. They all teach the same

truth—that God's faithful ones do not receive their portion in this life.

Look around you at the men and women that seem to you most pious, and hence most dear to God. Does he give them a good time? Are not many of them poor, sick, bereaved of their children, disappointed in worldly matters, overshadowed by godless neighbors who flourish like the green bay-tree? Oh, reader, our heavenly Father does not promise us what the sensualist calls a good time, in this world. But he does promise to be with us in trouble. He does promise that we shall never be tempted above what we are able to bear. And, better than all, he promises that these light afflictions shall work out for us a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory.

There is something for us, in this life, far more important than having a good time. It is finishing the work God has for us to do. This work may require self-denial. It may involve the sacrifice of the right hand, or of the right eye; but as toil-worn laborers, or even as martyrs for the true, and the right, we shall be happier than he who seeks ease and worldly pleasure. We shall

enjoy what he can never have—peace of conscience, and a hope full of glory and eternal life. The most blighting error that a Christian can cherish is that of having a good time, in the worldly sense. It will lead him into many temptations. It will dim his joy in the Lord. It will keep him like a fish in a shallow pool, with just religion enough to make him wretched. Let us work for God and humanity instead of seeking present ease and pleasure. And if we have not a good time, we shall have, what will be far better, a glorious and blessed immortality.

“CONSIDER THE LILIES.”

THE callas are magnificent on this coast. As I looked at them to-day I thought of the Savior's exhortation. They are not to be admired merely, but considered. They are to instruct as well as to please.

Their first lesson is a rebuke of that covert atheism which prates about the laws of nature. Christ said: “If God so clothe the grass of the

field." He ascribes all vegetable growth to the direct power and control of the great Creator. The universe is not wound up like a watch, to run its appointed time. It is rather a factory where God works, where he is omnipresent in all the infinitude of his energy and skill. Whenever you see a new picture you know that somebody has been at work; that it represents not only an ideal, but an operation. The artist may have made that picture with a pencil, or he may have made it in a printing-house with engraved plates and a press. Yet in the latter case the plates and the press did not make the picture, but the man who used them. If he constructed the press and engraved the plates to facilitate his work—to multiply pictures faster than he could with the pencil—yet every picture is as really his. So every flower that blooms shows the handiwork of God. It is just like the flowers that bloomed on that tree or grew from that kind of seed last year. It is a fresh type of the archetype. But the archetype did not make it—the laws of nature did not make it any more than the machinery in a printing-office makes books and papers. As that machinery would stop or go wrong or tear

itself to pieces if left to itself—as it requires, in order to work harmoniously and successfully, the constant supervision of intelligent minds in every department—so nature requires the ceaseless omnipresence of God. And the harmony and efficiency with which the laws of nature work shows that the living Spirit is in all the wheels.

But why does God make flowers? They do not feed the hungry or clothe the naked. Some one has said, almost paradoxically, that their chief value and charm is their inutility. They address our higher nature; they cultivate and gratify our love of beauty. And thus they show how wisely God loves us—how anxious he is to make us truly happy. A God who was merely just would sustain the beings that he had created. He would give them food. But only a good Being would surround them with so many objects to quicken the intellect and to gladden the heart. Flowers do not nourish the body, but the soul. They enrich it with thoughts of purity and with feelings of gratitude and praise. They confirm its faith in him whom the Bible declares to be love.

But how does God make flowers? Not as he makes gold and gems—perfect at once and once

for all. He causes them to grow from seeds or from bulbs. And where does he teach us to plant the bulb of the pure white calla? Not in the snow—not in the drifted sand—but in the miry earth. In darkness and dampness the roots must abide in order that the pearly petals may be formed. And does not our heavenly Father treat his saints as he treats the lilies? They who are to shine in white robes do not grow in the palaces or high places of the earth, but in obscurity and poverty, and sometimes in suffering and contempt. As God's sunshine, penetrating the black and oozy soil, develops the green stem and the glorious flower, so his grace, entering the humble and contrite heart, brings out of it angelic purity and beauty. It is not certain that the lilies on which our Savior looked, when he said "consider," were white. But this calla is, and this fact leads me to say white is not the emblem in the Bible of innocency, but of perfection; for white is not a simple color, but the harmonious blending of them all. The solar spectrum shows this. Hence he who would walk in white must not try to be a harmless nonentity—to cultivate an insipid goodishness. He must develop, with

God's help, all his powers, all his passions even, but in such harmony and proportion that his character shall be a circle of which love to God is the center and love to man the circumference. The only true purity is that which comes from the full working of all our faculties under the unifying power of the gospel of Christ.

The lilies rebuke our impatience. They grow. There is first a green shoot. Slowly it increases. Gradually leaf-buds appear and expand. Last of all come flower-buds, and they are a long time maturing. So is it with God's grace in our hearts. Its earliest influences are sweet and full of promise. But its work will not be finished until we die. The full blessedness of the new life will not be experienced or its true beauty seen on this side of the grave. To us, until the last hour of earth, will come the exhortation, "Grow in grace." Patiently, then, as we cultivate the flowers in our gardens, let us cultivate the love of God in our hearts. That love will bloom hereafter into a crown of life.

Many stories are told of what flowers have done to teach and to save men. Mungo Park, when he became exhausted and discouraged in

the desert, saw a little flower that grew in the sand, and he thought, God is here. That thought gave him fresh courage and saved his life. Picciola, despairing in his dungeon, saw a flower come up through a niche in the floor. It taught him to hope in God. Napoleon Buona- parte put an atheist named Charney into prison. A little flower growing in the prison-yard attracted his attention. He watched it. He cultivated it. It set him thinking: "How did it come here?" Considering that flower led him to faith in God. The Empress Josephine heard of the prisoner and his flower. With a woman's intuition she saw that one who loved a little flower so well could not be a bad man, and she persuaded the Emperor to pardon him. He came out of prison wiser and happier than when he entered it. His teacher and deliverer was a simple flower.

Our Savior refers to the lilies to show us that God, who cares for things so frail, will not fail to take care of us. We need not be anxious and worried about what we shall eat or wear. We are the children of Providence, and if we do the duty of to-day we may trust in infinite wisdom

and love for to-morrow. How obvious this lesson, and yet how hard it is for us to learn it!

PARASITES.

THIS word is Greek. It means literally one who eats with another—the guest at a feast. But it was early applied to that class of guests who manage, by flattery and fawning, to live at other people's expense. The Romans adopted it, and hence Plautus says: "Parasites are like mice—they eat the food that belongs to somebody else."

Modern science has applied the word to vegetables and animals that attach themselves to other plants or to other animals, and live upon them as the human parasite lives upon his host. These parasites are almost innumerable. The microscope is daily revealing new ones. There are three classes of them: (1) Vegetable parasites, that fasten upon plants or trees; (2) animal parasites, that feed upon vegetables, shrubbery and trees, and (3) animal parasites, that attach themselves to other animals. Of the first class, the

mistletoe and the oak are a familiar illustration; to the second belong all the varieties of tree-borers and plant-lice, and to the third the ichneumon fly, that takes possession of the caterpillar, and all the blood-sucking insects that prey upon man and beast.

A few parasites may be useful. The vine which produces the vanilla bean is said to be a parasite. But the almost universal rule is that parasites are both useless and destructive. They attack plants or animals more valuable than themselves; they feed upon the sap or the blood; they exhaust the vitality of that upon which they fasten in order to sustain their own; and then they do no good in the world; they bear no fruit; they furnish no food; they are a pest in the garden, the orchard, the house—everywhere.

There is a mystery about the existence of these parasites. Why should the wise and good Creator make insects to destroy our trees and vines, and to annoy us as gnats and mosquitos do? I do not believe that there were parasites in Eden. I accept of them as one of the results of the fall; as one of the punishments of sin; as one of the elements of trial and discipline in our probation-

ary state. What can be more annoying than myriads of microscopic foes? What can task more severely our vigilance? What can test more insidiously our faith?

But I think we can learn an important lesson in regard to our growth in grace from these parasites. If we would be wise and strong, spiritually, we must not root ourselves into anybody else's life, but in the truth and in God. The tendency of human nature is to parasitism. In some of the most amiable people this tendency is especially strong. They love and admire their minister, or some popular Christian writer. They fasten themselves upon the man or upon the book for spiritual food. They take the truth at second hand. They believe it and enjoy it, not because God reveals it in the Bible, but because their favorite minister preaches it, or their favorite author teaches it.

Parasitism appeared early in the Christian Church. Paul rebuked it sharply in his First Epistle to the Corinthians: "Every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ." This he declares is carnal; and he tells them not to glory in men,

for they are Christ's. They are to live in him as a tree in the soil, and not upon some other tree.

Able and eloquent preachers attach their hearers to themselves. They need a great deal of wisdom and of grace to keep their congregations from parasitism. But wherever the life of a church comes to depend upon the life and labors of any man, no matter how good, there is danger—danger both to the minister and the church. Whoever comes between a human soul and its Savior, whoever becomes such an agent of instruction and comfort to that soul that it does not want to receive divine truth from any other lips, he has blighted the true life of the soul; he has turned its affections and hopes from the Creator to the creature. And if he has done this consciously—if he has sought popularity, or even affection, for his own sake, fearful is his responsibility.

A young pastor succeeded one who had been very popular. He sought out the members who did not come to church. Finding one of these in a home in the suburbs, he said to her: "Are you not a member of the Presbyterian Church?" "Well," she replied, "I joined Mr. A. last win-

ter, but now he's gone, and I don't know who I belong to." Mr. A. was, no doubt, sincere and earnest. He meant to bring that woman to Christ. He thought that he had done so, instrumentally. But he had only drawn her to himself. She admired his preaching, and so she joined his church. When he went away she was like the mistletoe torn from the oak. Christ was not her life, but the eloquent minister whom she loved to hear.

This spirit of parasitism is as insidious as it is destructive. We must study it, as the microscopist studies the scale-bug; and if we find that we are cherishing it ourselves, or tempting others to cherish it, we must pray earnestly for help.

THAT CLOUD.

THE evening was beautiful. The full moon shone in a cloudless sky. We said: To-morrow will be a fine day, and we planned how we should enjoy it. But in the morning a black cloud covered the blue arch, and hid the sun. A misty

rain filled the air. The outlook from our windows was so gloomy we knew that our plans must be abandoned. We were disappointed. We were tempted to murmur at that cloud. Why did God send it on that morning of all the mornings in the year? But that cloud was full of moisture for the thirsty earth. It poured out wealth upon it greater than any miner ever dug out of its bosom. Soon, where its rain-drops fell, the ground was covered with emeralds and with living green. And on the fresh herbage fed innumerable flocks and herds. Then those rain-drops refreshed the drooping grain, and caused it to bring forth golden kernels for the nourishment of man. They stole to the rootlets of the trees, and through them went up into the trunks and branches, rounding out the ruddy apple, the roseate peach, the golden nectarine. Some of the blessed influences of that cloud appeared early; some were not revealed for months. The treasures it embosomed went into the earth, and fed the springs that sent streams through the valleys and across the plains. Men and beasts all summer long drank water from that cloud, out of the wells and the rivers. We, who murmured that

dark morning, were both foolish and ungrateful. God, in disappointing us, was both wise and good.

But other clouds have come over some of our hearts and homes; clouds that have darkened our worldly prospects, that have disappointed us in our life-plans; clouds of financial embarrassment, of sickness, of bereavement. Have we murmured at those clouds? Or have we had faith in them as God's messengers of love? If our lives were all sunshine, our spiritual graces would wither and shrivel. Moisture is necessary for their growth; but moisture comes from clouds. Rainy days are always dark days. We must have experiences of disappointment and sorrow in this world, and their full fruition we shall receive only in the world to come. Then, as we look back upon the way in which the Lord has led us, we shall bless and praise him more for the clouds than for the sunshine. We shall see that when he made the clouds his chariot he brought us the most royal of his gifts.

THE MASSES OR THE FAMILY.

A GREAT deal is said and written in these days about reaching the masses, attracting the masses, preaching to the masses, etc. Yet the masses don't seem to be reached and attracted to any great extent. Is it not possible that in this effort we are worldly-wise instead of seeking the wisdom that comes from above? I am familiar with two earnest experiments by able men in building up churches. One of them thought the great desideratum was to get the floating population to hear the gospel. He secured the erection of a large and commodious free church in a central locality. He had good music and preached eloquent sermons. Crowds came. They listened. They admired. They were glad to have such a pleasant place to go to without any assessment or pew rent. They put money on collection plates when convenient. And the aggregate of voluntary contributions was nearly enough to pay expenses. A few wealthy Christians made up what was deficient from time to time. This experiment seemed to be a great success. But somehow or other it began to drag after a year or two.

The novelty wore off. The church was not thoroughly organized, unified and trained. The effort of the minister and others interested was to sustain the congregation, to bring the masses to hear the gospel, rather than to bring them individually to Christ. At least the temptation was very strong in this direction. That church has been closed for months. We hope that it will be opened again, and that another effort will be made to gather a congregation there and to compact it into a living Church of Christ. One of the leading spirits in the enterprise said to me our error was in trying to get the masses instead of trying to get families.

In the other case referred to, the minister and elders labored faithfully from house to house. They tried to get the children into the Sabbath-school, and both parents and children to attend church on the Sabbath and prayer-meetings during the week. They did not labor to attract a great congregation, for they had only a small and plain house of worship, but they tried to bring all they could reach to Christ, and to attach them as households to the church. What is the result: Starting with less than twenty mem-

bers, they have, in about two years, a membership of nearly two hundred, of whom two-thirds have been added on profession of their faith. The house is full every Sabbath, the prayer-meetings are well attended, and at every communion parents and children are coming out on the Lord's side. These brethren labor not for the masses in a vague and general way, but for the families of the masses, for the households that are outside of Christian influences. They go among the poor, the careless, the skeptical; and by patient, persistent, loving, prayerful effort bring them to Christ. Is not this God's way for reaching the masses? It involves much personal labor. It is not as easy as to get up music and sermons that will attract a crowd. But it is more practical and more permanent in its results.

A LAND OF HOMES.

WHEN God gave his people possession of their promised land, he divided it by lot among their families. Every family had its inheritance, its home. And these houses could not be alienated

for more than forty-nine years. Every fiftieth year was a year of jubilee. Then every man returned to his possession. The father might squander his patrimony and die poor. But his son or grandson would receive it back again when the trumpet was blown, "proclaiming liberty throughout all the land to all the inhabitants thereof." (Leviticus xxv. 10.) In this arrangement God has revealed to us his ideal of social life; a community of families each of which has its home. Not a community of landlords and tenants, of masters and servants, of barons and serfs, but of freeholders. This arrangement produces a true equality of condition. It gives permanency to population. It interests all in local improvements. It cultivates a spirit of mutual sympathy and co-operation. The happiest and most prosperous people have been those that have lived by cultivating the earth, each family owning its little farm. It was once so in New England, and then she raised her best crop of men. For nowhere do the boys grow up so well as in a home that they are to inherit. Nowhere are such habits of industry and thrift cultivated as where the father tills his own acres with

his own hands. His children are taught that manual labor is honorable. They are interested in the home work because the home is to remain in the family, and every improvement in it will increase the comfort of those they love.

Then, the Communists are right in their theory, that the land should be more equally divided. They are right in opposing the concentration of great estates in a few hands, compelling the majority of the people to be landless, and dependent on others for the privilege of earning their daily bread. But they are wrong, radically wrong, in the means by which they would realize their ideal. They say: Divide by law or by force; give every man his share of the soil; and if the more thrifty and industrious should, ten or twenty years hence, get the shares of the lazy and improvident, why, then, divide again. Who would try to accumulate property under such circumstances? Who would care to improve his patrimony? Who would care to earn more than enough for his present wants? Who would not say: Let us eat, and drink, for to-morrow we *divide?*

But though these poor, half-starved, half-crazed

men say many wild and wicked things, we ought not to ignore the growing evil to which they call our attention. We ought to inquire: Is there not a wise, a practical and a Christian way of securing for every family a home? God, when he established the Christian Church, did not require a distribution of property by lot, as in the case of the Hebrews. But he breathed into the hearts of his people the spirit of a noble Communism—the Communism of love. This led them to give to every man according to his need. This spirit pervading society now would accomplish all that the Communists contend for, and yet not paralyze the energies of the most enterprising and ambitious. For no motive is so stimulating as benevolence. No men work so hard, or are so happy in their work, as those who mean to use their earnings in doing good. And, on the other hand, what a poor man earns, improving the opportunity that his rich neighbor gives him, is worth to him tenfold more than a donation of the same market value.

This, then, is the Christian idea of Communism. It recognizes fully every vested right. If a man owns ten thousand acres legally, to interfere

with his possession is trespass; to try to deprive him of a single acre is robbery. Yet Christianity says to that wealthy land-owner: These homeless men around you are brethren. They ought not to be mere hirelings and dependents. They would be worth a great deal more to society if they could be freeholders. They would cultivate the soil better if they owned it. Divide your estate, or at least a part of it, into small farms. Say to your tenants: Take these farms and pay me so much a year for so many years, and you shall have a title in fee, and thus secure a permanent home for yourself and children. What a stimulus such an offer would be to every man who was fit to have a home!

And while urging the rich to help the poor in the best way—to help them help themselves, Christianity says to the landless man: God has given you health and strength; be industrious and economical; earn all that you can and take care of what you earn; be willing to make present sacrifices for the future good of yourself and your family; and, with God's blessing, you will be able to secure you a home. Not a few of the men who complain because they have no land of

their own have squandered enough to buy a small farm. He who drinks his three glasses of beer a day and smokes several dollars' worth of cigars every week has no right to grumble if he finds himself poor when times grow hard. He has acted on the principle that he has nothing to do with the future, that he is a sort of animal, made to enjoy life as it passes. With such men when they grumble we have no sympathy. They deserve to suffer a little for their improvidence. But there are thousands of hard-working, thrifty men who have not succeeded, after years of toil, in planting themselves and their families on a spot of earth that they can call their own. For such men we have a great deal of sympathy. When they say that society is so organized that they have not a fair chance; that the land is full of monopolies; that capital often oppresses labor instead of helping it, we think that they are more than half right, and that those who regard themselves as belonging to the higher classes ought to look at this matter—ought to ask themselves: Am not I my brother's keeper? And should I not help him to win a portion of the inheritance which the common Father has given to all his

children? He wants all men to have homes on earth as well as homes in heaven. His ideal for a free land is that it be a land of homes. But he will not do again what he did in the case of the Hebrews. He will bring about social changes by moral means; by leading men to see how blighting is this great inequality of conditions, and by inspiring them with the spirit of brotherhood. We can not deal with this Communistic movement as they do in Germany. We must meet it with the weapons of reason and of love. We must try to satisfy its just demands, and persuade it to abandon those that are unjust. Let pulpit and press apply Christ's golden rule to both rich and poor, teaching them that their rights and interests are mutual and not antagonistic, and a public sentiment will grow up, stronger than law, that will gradually remedy the evil of this social inequality.

THE AVERAGE MINISTER.

HE is not very popular nowadays. The larger churches bid high for men whose gifts and culture

are above the average. The smaller churches, just because they are small, want eloquent preachers to build them up. And the average churches in size and financial ability are ambitious. Each occupies a field that is prospectively important. Each wants and hopes to become a first-class church; and how can it unless it secures a first-class minister? Thus there seems to be no place for men of ordinary ability. The demand on all sides is for the extraordinary. Good, fair preachers are endured because there are not enough of the more popular sort to go around. But those who endure them are often restless, and looking in all directions for some stray meteor or comet.

Now, a few moments' thought will show the folly of this state of things. Why are John Hall and T. D. Talmage and Howard Crosby and a score or two of such men so popular as preachers? Is it not because God has endowed them more amply for their work than he has the rest of us? If all of us were as eloquent as those few and eminent preachers they would be only average preachers. And if the standard of pulpit ability should be lowered so that we who are now rated

as but common preachers should be above it, we would be the eloquent and popular men. It is evident, therefore, that the average preacher is simply the style of man that God has chosen for his Church in these times. He may not be just like the average preacher of the past or of the future, but he is the divinely endowed and commissioned ambassador of to-day. As such he is God's gift to his Church, for which she should be thankful.

At least ninety-five per cent. of our churches must be supplied by average preachers if at all. There are a few positions of special responsibility for which God has raised up a small percentage of eloquent men. We rejoice in this. We want those men to be where they can be most useful. But now if some average church insists upon having one of those men and succeeds in securing him, what is the result? It can not keep him long, for there are larger and more important churches that will want him. And when he goes away the people will not be satisfied with common preaching, the congregations will run down and there will be a sad reaction. Better for the average church to call the average minister and to

esteem him very highly in love for his work's sake, than to try to get one above the average and not to be able to keep him.

The highly gifted and cultured men in the Church are doing a noble work for Christ. We bless God for them. But the most of the work must be done by average men. They must care for all but a few of the most prominent churches. They must carry the gospel into the newer States and Territories. They must be the foreign missionaries. Of the 26,000 added on examination last year probably 24,000 were converted under the ministry of average men. What right have we to depreciate those whose labors God approves, and by whom he has chosen to build up his Church?

The average preacher is tempted sometimes to envy his more popular brethren. But why should he? If he is using faithfully the talents that God has given him and filling well the sphere in which God has placed him, is it not enough? Suppose that Venus and Mars should refuse to shine because they were not as large as Jupiter! The greater our endowments the greater our responsibilities. And our reward

will not depend on the popularity of our work among men, but upon its fidelity in the sight of God. I believe that thousands who are rated as but average ministers here, will outshine in heaven some of the brilliant preachers whom everybody admires. One of the most insidious and fatal snares which Satan sets for the feet of a young minister is the suggestion to build up a reputation—to get to be known in the Church as specially promising, so as to be sought for by large and rich churches. The young man thinks that his ambition is holy. He wants to secure and fill as wide a sphere of usefulness as possible. But the trouble is that he measures his usefulness by his popularity, and that is a deceptive standard. Paul was not a popular preacher, yet he was eminently successful in establishing and edifying churches. And this great apostle, in his letter to Timothy, tells him to commit the work of the ministry to “faithful men”—not learned and eloquent, but faithful.

There is no class of men for whom I have so much respect and affection as for average ministers of the gospel. They are not sustained in their labors by popular applause and newspaper

puffs, but by love for Christ and the souls of men. They are patient, persevering, self-denying. They endure as seeing him who is invisible. They lay foundations for others to build upon. They do not estimate themselves at so many thousands a year, but are willing to work even though poorly paid and lightly esteemed of men, knowing that their reward is in heaven. It is these average ministers who have extended the Church over this broad continent, and established missionary stations around the world. Let us honor them as God does. Let us not provoke him to anger by treating them with indifference or contempt. And if we ourselves are but average ministers in the estimation of the world, let us rejoice that God has counted us worthy. For to be his ambassador in some frontier settlement is nobler than to wear the crown of an Emperor.

WHY NOW?

As death itself is the great mystery, everything connected with it is mysterious. It comes often when least expected. It comes not to the aged

who are longing for it—not to the sick who are weary of life, but to the young in the day-dawn of their hopes, to the strong in the midst of their activities and plans: to the useful whom we feel that we can not spare. It comes to the husband and father when wife and children are far away. It comes to the young mother when the babe that God has given her seems most to need her care. It comes to the daughter who is nursing an aged parent, and leaves that parent to linger in weariness and pain, ministered to by strangers. It passes by the pauper in the poor-house, and strikes the rich man in his luxurious home.

We read a touching letter from a venerable minister, in one of our Eastern exchanges last week. He had been bed-ridden for months, and was listening day and night for his summons to the land of rest. He had apparently finished his work on earth, and longed to depart and be with Christ. The death angel came. He entered the house of that aged and suffering one, but passing by his chamber he went into that of a grandchild, brimful of buoyant life. The child was taken and he was left. Did the angel make a mistake? Did he go to the right house, but to

the wrong chamber? No; he went just where he was told to go. It was God's will that the grandchild should die, and the grandsire remain to suffer and to ripen a little longer.

When we stand by the coffin of a friend and ask, Why *now*? is there any answer to our question? Yes, there is—nay, two answers come to the heart's troubled questioning—two answers from the page of inspiration. The first is: "He doeth all things well." The second is: "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." God is wise, God is good, and God will tell us all about it at the right time. Is not this enough? Can we not trust and wait?

A general had placed a division of his army in a certain place, with directions to fortify and hold it. They worked in the trenches all day. At midnight, when the deep sleep of weariness had fallen upon them, an aid-de-camp came, saying: "Up, abandon your tents and your baggage, and make a forced march under my directions!" He brought unwritten orders from the Commander-in-chief. The officer in charge of the fort was astonished. "What can it mean? I was told to fortify and hold this place yesterday—to-night I

am told to abandon it, and go I know not where. But the General never makes any mistakes. He takes the responsibility, and when the campaign is over he will tell me all about it."

So, promptly and cheerfully, at midnight, that tired army leaves its camp-fires, and goes out into the darkness after its guide. It goes wondering and yet trusting. It has confidence in the General who has so often led it to victory. And shall not the Christian soldier confide in the Captain of his salvation? That Captain has placed a minister over one of his churches. He is faithful, acceptable and useful. But suddenly he is stricken down, in early manhood or in middle life. He thought he heard his leader's voice, saying: "Hold this fort for me," and he was trying to obey. But now the voice says: "Leave the work you love, and come up hither." Is there a mistake? It seems so to us. But he who knoweth all things, and doeth all things well, sent that summons, and it must be right. His campaign against the powers of darkness extends over the ages, and perhaps over many worlds besides this. He may need a soldier in another sphere more than he is needed in this. He may

take him into the spirit world to fill a more important place, and may take him in the midst of his years, because he is already *all* fitted for that higher service, and there is immediate need of him in it. Or he may take him away from evil to come, or he may take him away because his death will reach and bless those whom he could not influence by his life. The biographies of Henry Martyn and Harriet Newell may have done more for Foreign Missions than they could have accomplished if they had lived to fourscore years.

Does any reader, looking at a recent grave and a vacant place in church or home, ask, Why now? We reply, "It is God's chosen time—hence, it is the right time and the best time, and we shall see it so when we reach the land where no tears shall ever dim our eyes."

COSTLY CARE.

I ENCOUNTERED to-day one of Wayland Hoyt's pithy sentences: "It costs something to take care of a soul." Yes, it does. Consider the soul a

jewel—the most precious thing in our possession. What do they who have diamonds do with them? Let them lie about on their tables or their bureaux? No, they keep them under lock and key—in fire and burglar proof safes. I read in a paper, recently, of a lady in Paris who was going to London next morning. She had to take her diamonds out of the bank where they were deposited before three o'clock in the afternoon, and she sat up all night to guard them. Such was the cost to her of having those precious stones. And should not he who realizes the worth of the soul be ever watchful, knowing that subtle and mighty foes are ever around him? But the soul—the spiritual life in man—is like an exotic in this world of selfishness and sin. The air is bleak for it. Drouth and frost imperil its existence. It must be carefully guarded or it will perish. And yet, again, this new life is like a babe. It is feeble. It must be nourished. We must seek for it “the sincere milk of the word.” We must cradle it in the arms of a lowly and loving faith. In every view that we take of the soul we see that it requires care and toil—that it is not a possession we can neglect; that if we

would keep it safely, and have it grow strong, we must give to it much time and thought, and earnest, prayerful culture. And is not a soul made in God's image, and that may live and shine in God's presence forever and ever, worth caring for? I saw a picture to-day of many a human soul. It was a tree that used to bear fruit in abundance, and of the choicest kind. But the owner had become interested in other things. He thought that the tree could take care of itself. He did not prune it. He did not mellow and enrich the ground about it. Hence, the tree has become barren and sickly; even its leaves are blighted. It droops and seems about to die. Poor, neglected tree, that so nobly repaid the culture of the past; that so mournfully testifies to the neglect of the present, how many souls are like thee! Their owners are too busy to care for them. Nothing will pay so well in present happiness, to say nothing of the future's grand harvest, as fidelity in the care and culture of our spiritual life.

WITH ALL THY HEART.

THE Psalmist says: "Thy commandment is exceedingly broad." (Psalms cxix. 96.) And many who read Christ's summary of the first table of the law, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," are tempted to regard it as too broad for any finite being to obey. But let us look into the matter. What is required? Perfect obedience? faultless perfection in character and life? No; only love. He said not, "Thou shalt serve the Lord," but "Thou shalt love him." Now, nothing is easier than to love those who are lovely and loving. The child loves instinctively. Its affections flow out to those who are kind to it as water from a full fountain. But God is infinitely lovely himself, and he has been wondrously good to us. We ought then to love him spontaneously; without effort. To refuse to love him is unnatural, and to do so warmly, heartily, should be as easy for us as to breathe.

But we can not, with these fallen natures, love as we should. We can not love as angels do. Very well. This is not required of us. Christ did not say, "Love with a perfect heart, with an

angel's heart," but "with thy heart." Yes, that heart of thine, just as it is, God seeks to enter, and to abide in it. He does not expect you to prepare a marble palace for him, or a chamber of ivory inlaid with gold. He only asks you to open the door of that poor hovel, your fallen heart, and let him take possession of it. Wonderful that the Holy One should want such hearts as ours. But so it is, and to each reader comes this petition from our heavenly Father, "My son, give me thine heart!"

But admitting that it is very easy to love, and that it should not be hard to give the heart as it is to God, yet many pause at the word "all." How can I love God with *all* my heart? I have human friends. Must I expel them from my affections that I may fix them wholly upon God? No; for in this very summary of the law our Savior recognized two other objects to be loved besides God, viz.: ourselves and our neighbors. Hence, though he is to fill the heart, he will fill it as sunshine fills the house—not excluding other things, but illuminating them. He will fill it as water fills the sea, not destroying other things, but surrounding, sustaining and nourishing them.

We are to love ourselves as created in God's image, as his children. We are to love others as his creatures, love them for his sake.

In our human homes, love for father and mother, however great it be, does not prevent or diminish our love for brothers and sisters. Nay, filial affection stimulates fraternal affection. So true love for God, though it fill the whole heart, will only make us love others better.

Then, though the commandment is broad it is not unreasonable. We can obey it. God only requires us to love him with such hearts as we have, and to love him supremely; that we love him in and through all other proper objects of affection, yet above them all. The commandment is, that we give him his true place as our God and Father; that we enthrone him in our spirits, as he is enthroned in the universe; that we let him pervade and fill and brighten our souls, as he does all his other works. Can we not all do this? Should we not all do it, and do it without delay.

ADOPTION.

NEARLY twenty years ago an emigrant family reached Sacramento, sick and destitute. A merchant in that city took them into his family, the man and woman working for him as they were able. They had an only child, a boy, three or four years old. The mother died. The father married again. The boy did not like his step-mother, and as the merchant and his wife had no children, they adopted him. The merchant became one of California's railroad kings. He grew rich rapidly. He died a few days ago leaving an estate worth sixteen millions of dollars, and no will. At first the lawyers said that his adopted son would inherit half of the estate. But it seems that though he had always been considered and treated as a son, he had not been so formally adopted as to make him an heir, and the latest statement of those cognizant of the law and the fact is, that he gets nothing. Of the sixteen millions the widow receives three-quarters, and the remainder goes to the brothers of the deceased.

When I first read of this young man's inheriting eight millions as an adopted son, I thought

of the Christian's adoption. We, like him, do nothing to earn or merit the great inheritance. We owe it all to the electing love of God. When we were poor and destitute, nay, when we were guilty and vile, he chose us; he called us sons; he made us heirs, joint-heirs with Christ, his eternal Son. He treats us as children, bestowing upon us many blessings, chastening us when we need it, trying to prepare us for the kingdom that we are to inherit; for he who adopts us is a great King, and all his heirs shall reign with him forever and ever.

But when I read of the failure of this young man's brilliant prospects, I rejoiced in the fact that there could be no such failure in the case of the Christian. God will not neglect anything that is necessary to perfect our title, or to put us into full possession of our inheritance. There will be no counter-claim; no litigation; no delay. Christ himself will stand before the assembled universe, and say to each believer: "Come, thou blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world." How grand, how blessed this adoption!

A FINISHED LIFE.

PAUL said just before his martyrdom, "I have finished my course." The same apostle declared of John the Baptist that he "fulfilled his course." Our Savior in his prayer to the Father said: "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Yet none of those were finished lives, if measured by human standards. Paul's work seems widely scattered and fragmentary. He founded churches here and there; he wrote letters to those churches; and then, while in the vigor of his powers, he was put to death. John the Baptist started a great religious movement, but, after blazing like a meteor for a year or two, he was arrested and beheaded. Even Jesus of Nazareth did not seem to have accomplished anything worthy of his powers and his claims. His disciples thought that he would at least restore the kingdom to Israel. But, after organizing a church of eleven members in a guest chamber, he was crucified.

Now, if a man begins some great work and is arrested when it is half done, he feels that he is prematurely cut off, and that he has not fulfilled

his course. When an architect lays a foundation he wants to live until he can put on the top-stone with shouting. If he has to leave the finishing of his plan to another, he regards his life as unfinished. Yet this may be a mistake. The life may be complete though the building is not. Some men are raised up to lay foundations, and others to build on those foundations. The former are called wise master-builders. They are not failures, though their work is left unfinished. If the part of it specially entrusted to them is faithfully performed, they will receive the plaudit, "Well done," though another should "build thereon."

It is important for us to understand the distinction between a finished life plan and a finished life. We believe in life plans. Every man ought to set before himself a definite aim. He ought to have a mark toward which he will press. Considering carefully his powers and his opportunities, let him say, "I will, if spared long enough, build up a church here; establish a newspaper; endow a seminary; prepare a book or a series of books; make a model farm," etc. This plan, if it respects the Providential indica-

tions, may be both reasonable and right. It gives unity of purpose and consecration of energy. But suppose the man dies early, before any of the seeds he planted have had time to mature; or suppose obstacles arise to baffle him in his efforts, and he finds himself growing old, while yet far from his mark. In this case shall he say, with the missionary Egede when he left Greenland, "I have labored in vain. I have spent my strength for naught and in vain?" No! no! For he may have done all that he could, and all that God expected him to do, and the value of the work in itself may be less important than its influence on the worker.

Paul was eminently useful in his days, and his example and writings have perpetuated that usefulness through the ages. But the crowning work of his life was not the churches he founded or the letters he wrote. It was himself. What he became by the grace of God was even more important than what he did. And it is so with all of us. We are perfecting the workman while we are doing the work; and when the workman is prepared for a higher sphere, he need not grieve if he is taken away from an unfinished

work. It was his only in a subordinate sense. The Great Master-builder used him to dress and lay a few stones in the wall of the temple. But there are many other laborers, and the plan of the edifice will require ages for its completion. God did not use Paul because he needed him especially. He could have raised up others to organize those missionary churches, and to write those wonderful letters. But Paul needed the work, and in doing it he finished his course; *i. e.*, his training for the spirit world.

It ought to be a source of comfort to the Christian that he does not have to finish anything here but his own course, the course which God has prepared for him. He is responsible for faithful work, and not for final results. And the disappointment of his plans, or the early death that seems to us to mar the completeness of the life, may be the means by which God rounds and polishes it. Moses thought that he should have died in the Promised Land. But who does not see how much better it was that his life should end on Pisgah, and as a life of faith, and with a miraculous vision of Canaan? And we may die just when we seem near the goal which we have

struggled toward for years! Is it sad? Is it mysterious? No; we have secured the discipline of the struggle, and the unseen reward is far better than that on which our bodily eyes were fixed. No matter about the church, the family and the world. God still lives. God will take care of them. Enough for us that we have been enabled to finish on earth a life that will fit us for glory.

TOO MUCH SUNSHINE.

WRITING about gardens and about making garden, in December, leads me to notice a remarkable fact in our present experience on this coast. We are having weather as nearly perfect as can be imagined. For two months past our skies have been almost cloudless; the air has been just warm enough and just cool enough. There have been light breezes, but no high winds. We have had very little frost and scarcely any fog. Occasionally a mist has covered the valley for a few hours in the morning, but it has not been strong enough to climb our hills. It is

pleasant to sit outdoors in the sunshine, and it is not too cool even in the shade. We have no fire during the day except for cooking, and make a little in the evening more for the cheerfulness of the blaze than because we need the warmth. On irrigated ground flowers are in full bloom. Take one of your brightest, balmiest days of May, or in September, and you have a specimen of all our days since the middle of October. You would think that dwellers in a climate so nearly celestial must be as happy as angels. But we are not happy. We are anxious and troubled. We long for high winds, and for storm clouds. If this pleasant weather continues much longer we shall have another dry season, and that would mean famine, indeed. Hence we weary of the monotonous calm and sunshine. We look to the hills and to the sea, hoping for a vision of clouds that shall herald the coming of rain.

There are such seasons in the experience of the Church and of individual Christians—seasons of calm and sunshine—seasons of harmony and brotherly love. We enjoy them and bless God for them, yet they are not the most profitable seasons for us, or for the cause of Christ. They are

not the seasons of growth. In this world of sin and sorrow the good seed germinates best and the trees of righteousness flourish best when the clouds darken and the winds blow. We need sunshine, indeed. Nothing will mature or ripen without it. But too much sunshine is worse than too much rain. In the natural world, God gives usually a due proportion of clear and cloudy, of still and stormy days. And he will administer as wisely the affairs of his spiritual kingdom. We need that faith in him which welcomes the season of trial and conflict, as cheerfully as the season of peace and love. The former is the seed-sowing season, the season of growth. The latter is the season when the fruits ripen and are gathered.

We can not control the weather, though we can influence it, or rather him who sends it, by prayer. But we can, to some extent, control the climate of the Church. When we feel that all is well with it, and begin to rejoice in it, as our terrestrial paradise, may it not be that we are too comfortable, too happy, for pilgrims and strangers; for soldiers in a hostile land; for disciples of the Man of sorrows? Some one has truly said that all great souls were sorrowful souls. The men

who have done the most for the world have not enjoyed it the most. They have not sought ease and comfort, even in spiritual things. They have sought only to work for God and man, and to fight against all their foes. If the Church of to-day were more aggressive in its spirit; if it went forth in battle array against all popular errors and evils, it would soon have stormy times. It would gather about it clouds of obliquy and scorn. It would wake up opposition that would mutter as the thunder, and flash like the lightning. But out of the storm would come such heavenly rain, and such growth in grace, as can not be enjoyed in these days of amiable conformity to the world. The Church can make its weather, I repeat. Oh, may she seek that which shall be profitable rather than that which is pleasant.

THE MARRIAGE SUPPER.

THE event of the week in our country home is a wedding. We did not have a hasty collation just before train time, and then hurry the wedded pair away, thus making the occasion one of mere

“fuss and feathers.” We had an evening wedding, an old-fashioned marriage supper after it, and plenty of time to discuss the viands and other things. We all liked it, and declared that the next time we were married it should be in this good old way. A great objection I have to the modern fashionable wedding is that it mars one of the most delightful figures in the Bible—that of the marriage supper of the Lamb. There is nothing in this style of crowding around a table and snatching a few delicacies from it, at the risk of having your best clothes spoiled, to remind us, unless it be by contrast, of that quiet, holy, loving feast where we shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, those patriarchs whose lives were so calm and restful compared with ours.

I feel like protesting, in the name of the Bible, against the prevalent style of marrying and giving in marriage. There is too much hurry and worry, and not enough solemnity; too much glitter and display; too much selfishness and pride; too much vanity and folly. No wonder there are so many legal divorces and illegal separations, when the most sacred and important of all earthly contracts is entered into on such vi-

cious principles. But I began to write about one marriage supper as suggestive of, and yet inferior to, the great supper of the future.

1. This feast celebrates the end of a long courtship, with its many fluctuations of feeling, its months of uncertainty, anxiety, hope and fear. The ships that have been tossed by winds and waves, now near and now apart; now exchanging signals and now coming within speaking distance, are anchored together at last. They feel to-night that their storms are over—that the clouds are swept from their sky; that they have peace; that their spirits rest in each other's pledged fidelity and love. So will the believer feel when he takes his place at the marriage supper of the Lamb. "Farewell, conflicting hopes and fears." No more doubts; no more temptations; no more struggles and flutterings of faith amid darkness and storm; no more dread of shipwreck. Safe at last, safe forever. Heaven is not an anticipation, but a fruition. Christ is not seen through a glass darkly, but face to face. We are not pilgrims any longer, climbing up the steep and narrow way, but are welcomed into the palace of our Lord and seated in his banquet hall, where the

banner over us is love. Oh, this feeling of certainty, the certainty of salvation and eternal life, will be the first element of rapture in the hearts of those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

2. But our feast celebrates a beginning as well as an end—the beginning of a home life and home joys that seem wondrous bright in the eyes of the bridegroom and bride. What plans, what hopes, what expectations engross their thoughts! How they love to talk about the future which they are to spend together! How attractively it opens to them, like some shaded avenue bordered with flowers through which they are to walk hand in hand, while rills murmur beside them and birds sing above them. And that coming marriage supper will be a beginning, also—the first glad hour of an endless day, of a day that shall grow brighter and brighter forever. It will be glorious to sit down with Christ as our bridegroom in heaven's banquet hall, with myriads of sinless angels and the saints of all ages. But the law of life there is "from glory unto glory." As we see more of Christ we will love him more, and seeing and loving, we will be changed more and

more into his image ; become lovelier in his sight and consciously worthier of his love.

3. We may add that every marriage feast celebrates not only one union, but many. The bridegroom has a wife, and the bride a husband. But her parents have another son, and his another daughter. Their brothers and sisters have each a new brother or sister added to the circle of loved ones. And so in the wider range of kindred and friendship, the marriage brings many together who were strangers, or indifferent to each other before. And the great marriage supper will not only celebrate each believer's complete union with Christ, but with all the holy and happy spirits of the redeemed in heaven.

Alas! how few find on earth the happiness they dream of. It is ever before them like a dancing will-o'-the-wisp, but never grasped. And even if this marriage proves to be what the world calls a happy one, it is for a few years only. Soon old age will come, and death close the scene.

But there will be no shadows over the marriage supper of the Lamb. The bridegroom can never die or change. The bride will see more of his loveliness and enjoy more of his love as ages roll

on; and amid every new scene of glory and sense of blessedness will come the thrilling hope of a brighter glory and a more perfect blessedness. No longing for it, no sense of emptiness or want; a perfect fullness of joy, with the knowledge that we shall grow ever in our capacities, yet never outgrow God's ability and will to make us perfectly happy. Such will be the superiority of this future marriage supper to the best that we enjoy on earth. Let those who are called to it give all diligence to make their calling and election sure.

HOW MUCH GOLD?

I PASSED one of the Assay Offices in San Francisco the other day. A man brought in specimens of ore. They looked to my unpracticed eye very much like pieces of ordinary rock. But the owner believed that they were valuable, and he wanted to have them tested. The assayer took them. He did not stop to admire their beauty as specimens. He weighed them; then broke them up and pulverized them; then put

the fragments—the dust and sand to which he had reduced them—into a crucible, and applied an intense heat. It was a severe operation, and resulted in destroying every component part of those specimens but the gold. That was left in a pure and shining lump—“a button,” I think they called it. The assayer took that “button” from the crucible; compared the weight with that of the ore; figured a moment, and said: “Your specimens show \$100 worth of gold to the ton.” That was what the man wanted to know. He did not complain that his beautiful specimens were spoiled. He rejoiced greatly in that little “button” of gold.

Another thing that I noticed: the result as announced and rejoiced in did not depend upon the size of the specimen of ore, or of the “button” of gold, but on the relation of the one to the other—the proportion of the gold to the ore. The owner said: “That half ounce, from ten pounds of quartz, shows my mine to be worth so many millions of dollars. Its intrinsic value will not pay the assayer’s fees; but its value, as a test or proof of the richness of the mine, is almost incalculable.”

God says "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." In times of prosperity we may think that we have this celestial gold, called faith. We love God, or imagine that we do. We confide in Christ as our Savior, or hope that we do. We cherish the influences of the Holy Spirit, or, at least, we try to. Yet we are often in doubt. We can not feel sure that we are "rich toward God." We pray for assurance of faith. And how does he give it? By a message from heaven? By kindling to a glow the love in our hearts? No; but by beating us in the mortar and throwing us into the fire. When our spirits are bruised and broken and scorched; when riches take wings; when friends grow cold or die; when our cherished hopes are blasted; when we are tempted, in our sadness and sorrow of heart, to cry, "all these things are against me"—then we turn to God as our only hope. Then we trust him only; trust him fully, and find that his grace is sufficient for us. This test of our faith reveals its purity and preciousness. It is hard; the flesh

shrinks; the sensibilities are deeply stirred; the soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; yet as the Great Arm of Infinite Love encircles and sustains us—

A joy springs up amid distress,

A fountain in the wilderness!

“Found unto praise and honor and glory.” How glorious the reward of a true and tested faith! How grateful, then, we should be for the trial of it; for the afflictions which bring it out from the dross, and reveal it to us as more precious than gold.

Here, as in the case of the metal in the crucible, it is not the amount, but the quality, that is regarded. Is it pure gold? Is it true faith? If that faith be but as a grain of mustard-seed, it is able to remove mountains. When God, then, develops within us, by the trials of life, even a little living faith, we know that he is ours and that we are his. We are as sure of spiritual wealth, of being millionaires in heaven, as if we already walked its golden streets.

THE END.





