SOLOMON THE PRINCE
AND
SOLOMON THE PREACHER.

Solomon the Prince, and Solomon the Preacher.

A LECTURE

BY THE

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DELIVERED BEFORE THE

YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION,

IN

EXETER HALL, FEB. 4, 1851.

BOSTON:

PRESS OF T. R. MARVIN,

42 CONGRESS STREET.

1851.

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THERE is no season of the year so exquisite as the first full burst of Summer: when east winds lose their venom, and the firmament its April fickleness; when the trees have unreefed their foliage, and under them the turf is tender; when, before going to sleep, the blackbird wakes the nightingale, and night itself is only a softer day; when the dog-star has not withered a single flower, nor the mower's scythe touched one; but all is youth and freshness, novelty and hope — as if our very earth had become a bud, of which only another Eden could be the blossom — as if, with all her green canvas spread, our island were an argosie, floating over seas of balm to some bright Sabbatic haven on the shores of Immortality.

With the Hebrew commonwealth, it was the month of June. Over all the Holy Land there rested a blissful serenity — the calm which follows when successful war is crowned with conquest — a calm which was only stirred by the proud joy of possession, and then hallowed and intensified again by the sense of Jehovah's favor. And amidst this calm the monarch was en-

shrined, at once its source and its symbol. In the morning he held his levée in his splendid Basilica — a pillared hall as large as this.* As he sate aloft on his lion-guarded throne, he received petitions and heard appeals, and astonished his subjects by astute decisions and weighty apothegms, till every case was disposed of, and the toils of kingcraft ended. Meanwhile, his chariot was waiting in the square; and, with their shoeless hoofs, the light coursers pawed the pavement, impatient for their master; whilst, drawn up on either side, purple squadrons held the ground, and their champing chargers tossed from their flowing manes a dust of gold. And now, a stir in the crowd — the straining of necks and the jingle of horse-gear announce the acme of expectation; and, preceded by the tall panoply of the commander-in-chief, and followed by the *élite* of Jerusalem, there emerges from the palace, and there ascends the chariot, a noble form, arrayed in white and in silver, and crowned with a golden coronet, and the welkin rings, "God save the King!" for this is Solomon in all his glory. And as, through the Bethlehem gate, and adown the level causeway, the bickering chariot speeds, the vines on either side of the valley give a good smell, and it is a noble sight to look back to yon marble fane and princely mansions which rear their snowy cliffs over the capital's new ramparts. It is a noble sight, this rural comfort and that civic opulence — for they evince the abundance of peace and the abundance of righteous-

* See 1 Kings viii.; Josephus' Antiquities, Bk. viii. chaps. 5—7; and Fergusson's "Palaces of Nineveh Restored," (1851,) pp. 225—232.

ness. And when, through orchards and corn-fields, the progress ends, the shouting concourse of the capital is exchanged for the delights of an elysian hermitage. After visiting his far-come favorites — the "apes and the peacocks," — the bright birds and curious quadrupeds which share his retirement; after wandering along the terraces where, under the ripening pomegranates, roses of Sharon blossom, and watching the ponds where fishes bask amid the water-lilies, — we can imagine him retiring from the sunshine into that grotto which fed these reservoirs from its fountain sealed; or in the spacious parlor, whose fluttering lattice cooled, and whose cedar wainscot embalmed, the flowing summer, sitting down to indite a poem in which celestial love should overmaster and replace the earthly passion which supplied its imagery. Dipping his pen by turns in Heaven's rainbow, and in the prismatic depths of his own felicity, with joy's own ink, this Prince of Peace inscribed that Song of Songs which is Solomon's.

It was June in Hebrew history — the top-tide of a nation's happiness. Sitting, like an empress, between the Eastern and Western oceans, the navies of three continents poured their treasures at her feet; and, awed by her commanding name, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah brought spontaneous tributes of spice, and silver, and precious stones. To build her palaces, the shaggy brows of Lebanon had been scalped of their cedars, Ophir had bled its richest gold. At the magical voice of the Sovereign, fountains, native to distant hills, rippled down the slopes of Zion; and miraculous cities, like Palmyra,

started up from the sandy waste. And whilst peace, and commerce, and the law's protection, made gold like brass, and silver shekels like stones of the street, Palestine was a halcyon-nest suspended betwixt the calm wave and the warm sky; Jerusalem was a royal infant, whose silken cradle soft winds rock, high up on a castle tower: all was serene magnificence and opulent security.

Just as the aloe shoots, and in one stately blossom pours forth the life which has been calmly collecting for a century, so it would appear as if nations were destined to pour forth their accumulated qualities in some characteristic man, and then they droop away. Macedonia blossomed, and Alexander was the flower of Greece; fiery and effeminate, voluptuous in his valor, and full of chivalrous relentings amidst his wild revenge. Rome shot up in a spike of glory, and revealed Augustus — so stern and so sumptuous, so vast in his conceptions, so unquailing in his projects, so fearless of the world, and so fond of the seven-hilled city, — the imperial nest-builder. Mediæval, martial Europe blossomed, and the crusader was the flower of chivalry — Richard of the lion-heart, Richard of the hammer-hand. And modern France developed in one Frenchman, the concentration of a people vain and volatile, brilliant in sentiment, and brave in battle; and having flowered the fated once, the Gallic aloe can yield no more Napoleons. So with Palestine at the time we speak of. Half way between the call of Abraham and the final capture of Jerusalem, it was the high summer of Jewish story, and Hebrew mind unfolded in this preëminent Hebrew. Full of sublime devotion, equally full of

practical sagacity; the extemporizer of the noblest prayer in existence; withal, the author of the homely Proverbs; able to mount up on Rapture's ethereal pinion to the region of the seraphim, but keenly alive to all the details of business, and shrewd in his human intercourse; sumptuous in his tastes, and splendid in costume, and, except in so far as intellectual vastitude necessitated, a certain catholicity — the patriot intense, the Israelite indeed: like a Colossus on a mountain-top, his sunward side was the glory toward which one Millennium of his nation had all along been climbing, — his darker side, with its overlapping beams, is still the mightiest object in that nation's memory.

You have seen a blight in summer. The sky is overcast, and yet there are no clouds; nothing but a dry and stifling obscuration — as if the mouth of some pestilent volcano had opened, or as if sulphur mingled with the sunbeams. "The beasts groan; the cattle are oppressed." From the trees the newset fruit and the remaining blossoms fall in an unnoticed shower, and the foliage curls and crumples. And whilst creation looks disconsolate, in the hedgerows the heavy moths begin to flutter, and ominous owlets cry from the ruin. Such a blight came over the Hebrew summer. By every calculation it should still have been noon; but the sun no longer smiled on Israel's dial. There was a dark discomfort in the air. The people murmured. The monarch wheeled along with greater pomp than ever; but the popular prince had soured into the despot, and the crown sat defiant on his moody brow; and stiff were the obeisances, heartless the hosannas, which hailed him as

he passed. The ways of Zion mourned; and whilst grass was sprouting in the temple-courts, mysterious groves and impious shrines were rising every where: and whilst lust defiled the palace, Chemosh and Ashtaroth, and other Gentile abominations, defiled the Holy Land. And in the disastrous eclipse, beasts of the forest crept abroad. From his lurking-place in Egypt Hadad ventured out, and became a life-long torment to the God-forsaken monarch. And Rezin pounced on Damascus, and made Syria his own. And from the pagan palaces of Thebes and Memphis, harsh cries were heard ever and anon, Pharaoh and Jeroboam taking counsel together, screeching forth their threatenings, and hooting insults, at which Solomon could laugh no longer. For amidst all the gloom and misery a message comes from God: the kingdom is rent; and whilst Solomon's successor will only have a fag-end and a fragment, by right divine ten tribes are handed over to a rebel and a runaway.

What led to Solomon's apostasy? And what, again, was the ulterior effect of that apostasy on himself? As to the origin of his apostasy the Word of God is explicit. He did not obey his own maxim. He ceased to rejoice with the wife of his youth; and loving many strangers, they drew his heart away from God. Luxury and sinful attachments made him an idolater, and idolatry made him yet more licentious: until, in the lazy enervation and languid day-dreaming of the Sybarite, he lost the perspicacity of the sage, and the prowess of the sovereign; and when he woke up from the tipsy swoon, and out of the swine-trough picked his tarnished diadem, he woke to find his

faculties, once so clear and limpid, all perturbed, his strenuous reason paralyzed, and his healthful fancy poisoned. He woke to find the world grown hollow, and himself grown old. He woke to see the sun bedarkened in Israel's sky, and a special gloom encompassing himself. He woke to recognize all round a sadder sight than winter — a blasted summer. Like a deluded Samson starting from his slumber, he felt for that noted wisdom which signalized his Nazarite days, but its locks were shorn; and, cross and self-disgusted, wretched and guilty, he woke up to the discovery which awaits the sated sensualist: he found that when the beast gets the better of the man, the man is cast off by God. And like one who falls asleep amidst the lights and music of an orchestra, and who awakes amidst empty benches and the scattered fragments of programmes now preterite — like a man who falls asleep in a flower-garden, and who opens his eyes on a bald and locust-blackened wilderness, — the life, the loveliness, was vanished, and all the remaining spirit of the mighty Solomon yawned forth that edict of the tired voluptuary: — "Vanity of vanities! vanity of vanities! all is vanity!"

There are some books of the Bible which can only be read with thorough profit, when once you have found the key. Luther somewhere tells us, that he used to be greatly damped by an expression in the outset of the Epistle to the Romans. The apostle says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel; for therein is the righteousness of God revealed." By "righteousness" Luther understood the justice of

God — his attributes of moral rectitude; and so understanding it, he could scarcely see the superiority of the gospel over the law, and at all events his troubled conscience could find no comfort in it. But when at last it was revealed to him that the term here alludes not to God's inherent, but his out-wrought righteousness — that it means not justice, but God's justifying righteousness — the whole epistle was lit up with a flood of joyful illumination; and the context, and many other passages which used to look so dark and hostile, at once leaped up and fondled him with friendly recognition; and to Luther ever after the gospel was glorious as the revelation and the vehicle to the sinner of a righteousness divine. And, to take another instance: many read the Book of Job as if every verse were equally the utterance of Jehovah; and sayings of Bildad and Zophar are often quoted as if they were the mind of the Most High; entirely forgetting the avowed structure of the book — forgetting that through five and thirty chapters the several collocutors are permitted to reason and wrangle, and darken counsel by words without knowledge, in order to make the contrast more striking when Jehovah at last breaks silence from on high, and vindicates his own procedure. But when you advert to its real structure — when you group the different elements of its poetic painting — when, under the canopy of a dark cloud, you see the patriarch blasted and life-weary, and his three friends assailing him with calumnious explanations of his sore affliction: but above that cloud you see Jehovah listening to his loyal servant, and his pious, but narrow-minded neighbors — listening with a look of fatherly fondness, and

from heaven's cornucopia* ready to shower on his servant's head the most overwhelming of vindications —the blessings twice repeated, which Satan snatched away: when you see this, and when you know that Jehovah is to be the last speaker, instead of nervously striving to torture into truths the mistakes of Bildad and Zophar, and Job himself, you feel that their mistakes are as natural and as needful to the plan of the book, as are all the cross-purposes and contradictory colloquies of a well-constructed drama. And when so understood, you feel that all the rather because of the misconceptions of the human speakers, the book is eloquent with divine vindication, and teaches what Cowper sings so touchingly—

> "Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take!
> The clouds ye so much dread
> Are big with mercy, and shall break
> In blessings on your head.
>
> "Blind unbelief is sure to err,
> And scan his work in vain;
> God is his own interpreter,
> And he will make it plain."

Perhaps, no portion of Holy Writ more needs a key than the book which has suggested the subject of our lecture. On the one hand, "Ecclesiastes" has always been a favorite book with infidels. It was a manual with that coarse scoffer, Frederick the Great of Prussia; and both Volney and Voltaire appeal to it in support of their sceptical philosophy. Nor can it be denied that it contains many sentiments at seeming variance with the general purport of the

* Job xlii. 14, Keren-happuch; *i. e.* Horn of Plenty.

Word of God. "Be not righteous overmuch; why shouldest thou destroy thyself?" "All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not." "There is a time for every thing. What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboreth?" "As the beast dieth, so dieth man. Do not both go to one place?" "A man hath no better thing than to eat and drink and be merry." These texts, and many like them, are quoted by the moralists of expediency; by the fatalist, the materialist, the Pyrrhonist, the epicure.

On the other hand, many able commentators have labored hard to harmonize such passages with the sayings of Scripture; I may add, they have labored hard to harmonize them with other sayings of Solomon, and other passages of this self-same book. But I cannot help thinking they have labored in vain. For the moment, and when reading or listening to some eloquent exposition, you may persuade yourself that such texts are, after all, only peculiar and paradoxical ways of putting important truths; but when Procrustes has withdrawn his pressure, and the reluctant sentence has escaped from the screw and lever, it bounds up elastic, and looks as strange and ungainly as ever.

These are the closing words of "Ecclesiastes:" "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep his commandments; for this is the whole of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." This is the conclusion of the matter, and a wise and wholesome conclusion,

worthy of Him who said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." But what is the "matter" of which this is the "conclusion"? To ascertain this we must go back to the beginning. There you read, "I the preacher was king in Jerusalem, and I gave my heart to search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven. Then I said in my heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth: therefore enjoy pleasure," &c. In other words, you find that this matter was a long experiment, which the narrator made in search of the *summum bonum*, and of which "Ecclesiastes" records the successive stages. But how does it record them? By virtually repeating them. In the exercise of his poetic power the historian reconveys himself and his reader back into those days of vanity, and feels anew all that he felt then; so that, in the course of his rapid monologue, he stands before us, by turns, the man of science and the man of pleasure, the fatalist, the materialist, the sceptic, the epicurean, and the stoic, with a few earnest and enlightened interludes; till, in the conclusion of the whole matter, he sloughs the last of all these "lying vanities," and emerges to our view, the noblest style of man, the believer and the penitent.

This we believe to be the true idea of the book. We would describe it as a dramatic biography, in which Solomon not only records, but reënacts, the successive scenes of his search after happiness; a descriptive memoir, in which he not only recites his past experience, but in his improvising fervor becomes the various phases of his former self once

more. He is a restored backslider, and for the benefit of his son and his subjects, and, under the guidance of God's Spirit, for the benefit of the church, he writes this prodigal's progress. He is a returned pilgrim from the land of Nod, and as he opens the portfolio of sketches which he took before his eyes were turned away from viewing vanity, he accompanies them with lively and realizing repetitions of what he felt and thought during those wild and joyless days. Our great Edmund Burke once said that his own life might be best divided into "fyttes" or "manias;" that his life began with a fit poetical, followed by a fit metaphysical, and that again by a fit rhetorical; that he once had a mania for statesmanship, and that this again had subsided into the mania of philosophical seclusion. And so, in his days of apostasy, the intense soul of Solomon developed in a fit of study, succeeded by a fit of luxury. He had fits of grossness and refinement, a mania of conviviality, a mania of misanthropy. He had a fit of building, a fit of science, a fit of book-making; and they all passed off in collapses of disappointment and paroxysms of downright misery. And here, as he exhibits these successive *tableaux*, these fac-similes of his former self, like a modern lyrist on St. Cecilia's day, he runs the diapason of his bygone frenzies, and in the successive strophes and antistrophes, as it were, feels his former frenzies over again, in order that, by the very vividness of the representation, we may be all the better "admonished." *

* Chap. xii. 12.

"The preacher was king over Israel, and because he was wise, he taught the people knowledge. He long sought to find out acceptable words, and that which was written was upright,"* a true story, a real statement of the case. "And by these, my son, be admonished." Do you, my son, accept this father's legacy; and do you, my people, receive at your monarch's hand this "Basilicon Doron," this autobiography of your penitent prince. These chapters are "words of truth;" revivals of my former self — reproductions of my reasonings and regrets — my fantastic hopes and blank failures, during that sad voyage round the coasts of vanity. "By these be admonished." Without repeating the guilty experiment, learn the painful result — listen to the moans of a melancholy worldling; for I shall sing again some of those doleful ditties for which I exchanged the songs of Zion. Look at these portraits — they are not fancy sketches — they are my former self, or, rather, my former selves: that lay figure in the royal robes, surmounted first by the lantern-jaws of the book-worm, now exchanged for the jolly visage of the gay *gourmand*, and presently refining into the glossy locks and languid smile of the Hebrew exquisite: now chuckling with the merriment of the laughing philosopher, curling anon into the bitter sneer of the cynic, and each in succession exploding in smoke; not a masque, not a mummery, not a series of make-believers, but each a genuine evolution of the various Solomon — look at these pictures, ye worldlings, and

* Chap. i. 1, 2, 12, 13.

as in water face answers to face, so in one or other of these recognize your present likeness and foresee your destiny.*

There is little difference in men's bodily stature. A fathom, or thereabouts — a little more or a little less — is the ordinary elevation of the human family. Should a man add a cubit to this stature, he is followed along the streets as a prodigy; should he fall very far short of it, people pay money for a sight of him, as a great curiosity. But, were there any exact measurement of mental statures, we should be struck by an amazing diversity. We should find pigmy intellects too frequent to be curiosities. We should

* "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God," and it is not the less "profitable" because some of it is the inspired record of human infirmity. Thus, in the 73d Psalm, which is just a lesser Ecclesiastes, Asaph says — "Behold, they are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency." But at last he recovers his "feet which were almost gone;" and Asaph's "conclusion of the whole matter" is, "For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee. But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all thy works." Nor is Ecclesiastes the less "profitable for correction and reproof and instruction in righteousness," because a large portion of it consists of the dark reasonings and futile experiments of one whose "steps" had actually "slipped." Apart from the incidental instruction with which its successive portions abound, its great lesson must be sought in the very contrast betwixt its intermediate reasonings and its grand conclusion. Whatever may be the merits of the view above given, the lecturer is persuaded, that the better we understand the plan of every Bible book, we shall be the more convinced of the plenary inspiration of Scripture. He need scarcely add, that there are other elements in the structure of Ecclesiastes which his limits did not allow him to develop.

find fragile understandings to which the grasshopper is a burden, and dwarfish capacities unable to encompass the most common-place idea: whilst, on the other hand, we should encounter a few colossal minds, of which the altitude must be taken not in feet, but in furlongs, — tall, culminating minds, which command the entire tract of existing knowledge — minds whose horizon is their coeval hemisphere; or, loftier still, prophetic minds, on which is already shining the unrisen sun of some future century.

Such a mind was Solomon. His information was vast. He was the encyclopædia of that early age. He was an adept in the natural sciences — "he spake of trees, from the cedar to the hyssop; he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes," as the sacred historian simply words it; or as our more pompous diction would express it, he was a botanist, and acquainted with all departments of zoölogy, from the Annelides up to the higher vertebrata. His wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the East country, and all the children of Egypt. And then his originality was equal to his information. He was a poet: his "Songs" were upwards of a thousand. And a moralist: his Proverbs were three thousand. He was a sagacious politician; and as the chief magistrate of his own empire, he was famous for the equity and acuteness of his decisions. He had a splendid taste in architecture and landscape gardening; and his enormous wealth enabled him to conjure into palpable realities the visions of his gorgeous imagination;

whilst, to crown the whole — unlike Moses and many others, men of stately intellect, but stammering speech — the wisdom of Solomon found utterance in language like itself; and whilst the eloquence still lived of which the Bible has preserved some examples — crowned students, royal disciples, came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon.

Now, this man, so mightily endowed; if you add to his intellectual elevation the pedestal of his rare good fortune, mounting the genius of the sage on the throne of the sovereign — this peerless man, this prime specimen of humanity — it would appear that Providence raised up for this, among other purposes. From the day when Adam fell it had been the great inquiry among men, Where and how to find the true Felicity? And though the Most High assured them that they could only find it where they had lost it — in unison with Himself, and in His conscious friendship: of this they were quite incredulous. It was still the problem, Apart from Infinite Excellence, how shall we be happy? Though Blessedness was not far from any one of them, in delirious search of it, men burrowed in gold mines, and rummaged in the rubbish-heaps, drilled deep into the rock, and dived deep into the sea. And though none succeeded, few despaired. There was always an apology for failure. They had sought in the right direction, but with inadequate appliances. They were not rich enough; they were not strong enough; they were not clever enough. Had they been only a little wealthier; had they been better educated; had they possessed more leisure, talent, power — they were just about to touch

the talisman: they would have brought to light the philosopher's stone. And as it is part of man's ungodliness to believe his fellow-sinner more than his Creator, the Most High provided an unimpeachable testimony. He raised up Solomon. He made him healthy and handsome — wise and brilliant. He poured wealth into his lap, till it ran over. He made him absolute monarch of the finest kingdom which the world at that time offered — and, instead of savages and pagans, gave him for his subjects a civilized and a religious people. And that he might not be distracted by wars, and rumors of wars, he put into his hand a peaceful sceptre, and saved him from the hardships of the field and the perils of the fight. And thus endowed and thus favored, Solomon commenced the search after happiness. Every thing except godly, he devoted himself to the art of enjoyment. And in carrying on his own experiment, he unwittingly, but effectually, became God's demonstration. Into the crucible he cast rank and beauty, wealth and learning; and, as a flux, he added youth and genius; and urged the furnace to its whitest glow, with all the ardor of his vehement nature. But when the grand projection took place, from all the costly ingredients the entire residuum was, Vanity of vanities! And ere he left the laboratory, he made ink of the ashes; and in the confessions of a converted worldling, he was constrained to write one of the saddest books in all the Bible.

His first recourse was knowledge. Communing with his own heart, he said, "Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my

heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. And I gave my heart to know (more) wisdom, and to know madness and folly (that is, fun and satire): I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." And, as he adds elsewhere, "Of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness to the flesh."

No, no. *Carpe diem.* Life is short, and learning slow. Quit that dingy study, and out into the laughing world. Make a bonfire of these books, and fill your reed-quiver with bird-bolts. Exchange the man of letters for the man of pleasure. And so he did. "I gave myself to wine, I made me great works, I builded me houses, I planted me vineyards." But here, too, he was destined to disappointment. For the coarse pleasures of the carouse and the wine-cup his cultivated mind had little affinity; and when next morning revealed the faded chaplets, the goblets capsized, and the red wine-pools on the floor of the banquet-hall; when the merry-making of yesternight only lived in the misery of the morning, he exclaimed, "Such laughter is mad; and such mirth, what doeth it?" And so of the more elegant pastimes — the palace, the fish-pond, the flower-garden, the menagerie, the enjoyment ended when the plan was executed; and as soon as the collection was completed, the pleasure of the collector ceased. "Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun."

But there still remained one solace. There must

be something very sweet in absolute power. Though the battle has been going on for six thousand years, and the odds are overwhelming — a million resisting one — yet still the love of power is so tremendous, — to say to one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Do this, and he doeth it — the right to say this is so delicious, that, sooner or later, the million lose the battle, and find the one their master. Now, this ascendency over others Solomon possessed to a rare degree. "The Preacher was king in Jerusalem." He was absolute monarch there. And to flatter his instinct of government still more, surrounding states and sovereigns all did homage at Jerusalem. But no sooner did he find his power thus supreme and unchallenged, than he began to be visited with misgivings as to his successor — misgivings for which the sequel showed that there was too good reason. "Yea, I hated all the labor which I had taken under the sun, because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? Yet shall he have rule over all my labor wherein I have labored, and wherein I have showed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity."

And I need not say how the experience of most worldlings has been Solomon's sorrow repeated, with the variations incident to altered circumstances, and the diminished intensity to be expected in feebler men — vanity and vexation of spirit all over again. And as we are sometimes more impressed by modern instances than by Bible examples, we could call into court nearly as many witnesses as there have been hunters of happiness — mighty Nimrods in the chase

of Pleasure, and Fame, and Power. We might ask the Statesman, and, as we wished him a happy new year, Lord Dundas would answer, "It had need to be happier than the last, for I never knew one happy day in it." We might ask the successful lawyer, and the wariest, luckiest, most self-complacent of them all would answer, as Lord Eldon was privately recording when the whole bar envied the Chancellor, — "A few weeks will send me to dear Encombe, as a short resting-place between vexation and the grave." We might ask the golden *millionaire*, "You must be a happy man, Mr. Rothschild." "Happy! — me happy! What! happy, when just as you are going to dine you have a letter placed in your hand, saying, 'If you do not send me £500, I will blow your brains out'?" Happy! when you have to sleep with pistols at your pillow! We might ask the clever artist, and our gifted countryman would answer of whose latter days a brother writes, "In the studio, all the pictures seemed to stand up like enemies to receive me. This joy in labor, this desire for fame, what have they done for him? The walls of this gaunt sounding place, the frames, even some of the canvasses, are furred with damp. In the little library where he painted last, was the word 'Nepenthe?' written interrogatingly with white chalk on the wall."* We might ask the world-famed warrior, and get for answer the "Miserere" of the Emperor-monk,† or the sigh of a broken heart from St. Helena. We might ask the brilliant courtier, and Lord Chesterfield would tell us, "I have enjoyed all the pleasures of the world,

* Memoirs of David Scott. † Charles V.

and I do not regret their loss. I have been behind the scenes. I have seen all the coarse pulleys and dirty ropes which move the gaudy machines; and I have seen and smelt the tallow candles which illuminate the whole decorations, to the astonishment of an ignorant audience." We might ask the dazzling wit, and, faint with a glut of glory, yet disgusted with the creatures who adored him, Voltaire would condense the essence of his existence into one word, "*Ennui.*" And we might ask the world's poet, and we would be answered with an imprecation by that splendid genius, who

> "Drank every cup of joy, heard every trump
> Of fame; drank early, deeply drank; drank draughts
> That common millions might have quenched — then died
> Of thirst, because there was no more to drink."

But without going so far as these historic instances, I make my appeal to all the candor and self-knowledge here present, and I ask, Who is there that, apart from God's favor, has ever tasted solid joy and satisfaction of spirit? You have perhaps tried learning. You have wearied your flesh acquiring some branch of knowledge, or mastering the arcana of some science; and you promised yourself that, when once you were an adept, it would introduce you to a circle of transcendental friends, or would drown you in a flood of golden fame. You won the friends, and found them so full of petty feuds and jealousies, so cold-hearted or so coarse-minded, alongside of this special accomplishment, that you inwardly abjured them, and vowed that you must follow learning for its own rewards; or

you won the fame — you secured the prize — you caught the coveted distinction, and like the senior wrangler,* you found that you had "grasped a shadow." Or you tried some course of gaiety. You said, "Go to now — I will prove thee with mirth: therefore enjoy pleasure." You dressed — you took pains with your appearance; you studied the art of pleasing. But even self-love could not disguise that some rival was more dazzling, more graceful and self-possessed, and had made a more brilliant impression: and you came home mortified at your own sheepishness and rustic blundering; or, if content to mingle passively in others' merriment, tattling with the talkers, and drifting along the tide of drollery, was there no pensive reflection as, late at night, you sought your dwelling? — did you not say of laughter, It is mad? and of mirth, What doeth it? Or, perhaps, at some pleasant time of year, you made up a famous ploy. And the excursion went off, but the promised enjoyment never came up. Mountain breezes did not blow away your vexing memories, nor did the soft sea-wind heal your wounded spirit. In the rapid train you darted swiftly, but at the journey's end you were mortified to find that your evil temper had travelled by the same conveyance. And though it was a classic or a sacred stream into which you looked, not even Arethusa nor Siloah could polish from off your countenance the furrows of carking anxiety, or the frown of crossness which wrinkled there. The fact is, all will be vanity to the heart

* Henry Martyn.

which is vile, and all will be vexation to the spirit which the peace of God is not possessing. When you remember how vast is the soul of man, and also what a mighty virus of depravity pervades it, you might as well ask, How many showers will it need to make the salt ocean fresh? as ask, How many mercies will it need to make a murmuring spirit thankful and happy? You may as soon ask, How many buckets of water must you pour down the crater of Etna before you convert the volcano into a cool and crystal *jet d'eau?* as ask, How many bounties must Providence pour into a worldling's spirit before that spirit will cease to evaporate them into vanity, or send them fuming back in complaint and vexation?

> "Attempt how vain—
> With things of earthly sort, with aught but God,
> With aught but moral excellence, truth, and love—
> To satisfy and fill the immortal soul!
> To satisfy the ocean with a drop;
> To marry immortality to death;
> And with the unsubstantial shade of time,
> To fill the embrace of all eternity!"*

It was autumn with the Hebrew commonwealth. Like withered leaves from the sapless tree, the Jews easily parted from the parent Palestine, and were blown about adventurers in every land; and like that fungous vegetation which rushes up when nobler plants have faded, formalism and infidelity were rankly springing every where; and it was only a berry on the topmost bough — some mellow Simeon or Zacharias — that reminded you of the rich old piety.

* Pollok's "Course of Time," book iv.

The sceptre had not quite departed from Judah, but he who held it was a puppet in the Gentile's hand; and with shipless harbors, and silent oracles, with Roman sentinels on every public building, and Roman tax-gatherers in every town, patriotism felt too surely, that from the land of Joshua and Samuel, of Elijah and Isaiah, of David and Solomon, the glory was at last departing. The sky was lead, the air a winding-sheet; and every token told that a long winter was setting in. It was even then, amid the short days and sombre sunsets of the waning dynasty, that music filled the firmament, and in the city of David a mighty Prince was born. He grew in stature, and in due time was manifested to Israel. And what was the appearance of this greater than Solomon? What were his royal robes? The attire of a common Nazarene. What were his palaces? A carpenter's cottage, which he sometimes exchanged for a fisherman's hut. Who were his Ministers and his court attendants? Twelve peasants. And what was his state chariot? None could he afford; but on one special procession he rode on a borrowed ass. Ah! said we so? His royal robe was heaven's splendor, whenever he chose to let it through; and Solomon, in all his glory, was never arrayed like Jesus on Tabor. His palace was the heaven of heavens; and when a voluntary exile from it, little did it matter whether his occasional lodging were a rustic hovel, or Herod's halls. If fishermen were his friends, angels were his servants; and if the borrowed colt was his triumphal charger, the sea was proud when, from wave to wave of its foaming billows, it felt his majestic footsteps moving; and

when the time had arrived for returning to his Father and his God, the clouds lent the chariot, and obsequious airs upbore him in their reverent hands. Solomon's pulpit was a throne, and he had an audience of kings and queens. The Saviour's synagogue was a mountain-side — his pulpit was a grassy knoll or a fishing-boat — his audience the boors of Galilee; and yet, in point of intrinsic greatness, Solomon did not more excel the children playing in the market-place, than He who preached the Sermon on the Mount excelled King Solomon.

Looking at Solomon as a Teacher, the first thing that strikes us is, that he was a great querist. Next to the man who can answer a question thoroughly, is the man who can ask it clearly. Our world is full of obscure misery — dark wants and dim desiderata: like a man in a low fever, its whole head is sick, and its whole heart faint; but it can neither fix exactly on the focus of disease, nor give an intelligent account of its sensations. But in this respect Solomon was the mouth-piece of humanity. Speaking for himself, he has so described the symptoms, that a whole ward — an entire world of fellow-sufferers — may take him for their spokesman. "These are exactly my feelings. I have experienced all that he describes. I am just such another fitful anomaly — just such a constant self-contradiction. One day I wish time to fly faster; another I am appalled to find that so little remains. One day I believe that I shall die like the brutes; and, frantic in thinking that a spirit so capacious is to perish so soon, I chafe around my cage, and beat those bars of flesh which enclose a captive so god-like; I try to burst that cell which

is ere long to be my sepulchre: anon I am content, and I say, 'Eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow you die:' and no sooner is the carnival over than I start up, conscious of my crime — descrying the forgotten judgment-seat, and aghast at my own impiety in embruting an heir of immortality. One day I deny myself, and save up a fortune for my son and successor; another, it strikes me he may prove a prodigal, and I fling the hoard away. Now it seizes me that I must needs be famous; and then I grow disgusted with the praise of fools. What will cure a broken heart? What will fill an abysmal gulf? What will make a crooked nature upright? What will restore his Creator unto man, and man unto himself?"

And Jesus answers: "Believe in God and believe in me, and that faith will heal heart-trouble. Hunger after righteousness, and your craving spirit will be filled. The words that I speak unto you are spirit and life: imbibe them, ponder them, delight in them, and they will satisfy the vastest desires of the most eager soul. What will make the crooked upright? Be born again. What will restore the Creator to revolted man? God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should have eternal life." And thus, one by one, the great Evangelist answers the queries of the great Ecclesiastes. And if the sage has done a service, who, in articulate words, describes the symptoms of the great disease, how incomparably greater is the service done by the Saviour, who prescribes the remedy! After all Solomon is only an eloquent patient; Jesus is the Divine Physician.

Again: Solomon's teaching is mainly negative. Five centuries later, it was the business of the wisest Greek to teach his brethren knowledge of their ignorance. And so dexterously did he manage his oblique mirrors — so many of his countrymen did he surprise with side-views and back-views of themselves; so much fancied knowledge did he confute, and so many Athenians did he put out of conceit with themselves, that at last the Athenians lost conceit of him, and killed the mortifying missionary. And, like Socrates, Solomon is an apostle of sincerity. His pen is the point of a diamond; and as it touches many of this world's boasted jewels, it shows that they are only colored crystal. His sceptre is a rod of iron, and as it enabled him to command all pleasures, so it enables him to prove their nullity; and before his indignant sweep they crash like potsherds, and dissipate in dust. But more sincere than Socrates. His tests, his probes, his solar lamp, the Greek employed for his neighbors' benefit; such an awful earnestness had God's Spirit enkindled in the Hebrew sage, that his grand struggle was against self-deception; and the illusions on which he spends his hottest fury are the phantoms which have befooled himself. Socrates gossips; Solomon communes with his own heart. Socrates gets his comrade to confess; Solomon makes his own confession. And so terrible is his intensity, that if it be well for our modern idoloclasts and showers up of shams that there is no Socrates now-a-days to show them to themselves, it will be well for us all if we take a pattern from Solomon's noble fidelity, and if we strive after his stern self-

knowledge. And yet the result was mainly negative. He had dived deep enough into his nature to find that there was no genuine goodness there; and from the heights of his stately intellect he swept a wide horizon, and reported that within his field of view there was perceptible no genuine happiness. If he was taller than other men, he was sorry to announce that, as far as he could see, no fountain of joy now sprang in this desert: no tree of life grew hereaway. If he was stronger than other men, he had bad news for them; he had tried the gate of Eden, and shoved it and shaken it; but he feared no mortal shoulders could move it on its hinges, nor any human contrivance prise it off its fastenings.

But if Solomon in his teaching was mainly negative, Jesus was as mainly positive. Solomon shook his head, and told what happiness is not: Jesus opened his lips, and enunciated what it is. Solomon said, "Knowledge is vanity. Power is vanity. Mirth is vanity. Man and all man's pursuits are perfect vanity." Jesus said, "Humility is blessedness. Meekness is blessedness. Purity of heart is blessedness. God is blessed for evermore, and most blessed is the creature that is likest God. Holiness is happiness." "We labor and find no rest," said Solomon. Jesus answered, "Come unto me, all ye that labor, and I will give you rest." "All is vanity," sighed the preacher. "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have peace." replied the Saviour. "What is truth?" asks Ecclesiastes. "I am the truth," returns the Divine Evangelist. Solomon was tall enough to scan the most of earth and see an expanse of sorrow;

the Son of man knew all that is in heaven, and could tell of a Comforter who, like a flask of balsam floating in the sea, can fill with peace unspeakable the soul immersed in outward misery. Solomon could tell that the gate of bliss is closed against human effort. Jesus hath the key of David, and opens what Adam shut; and undertakes to usher into the Father's propitious presence all who come through Him. Solomon composed Earth's epitaph, and on the tomb of the species wrote, All is Vanity. Accustomed to date men's history from their death, Jesus substituted, All is Heaven or Hell.

Nay, so positive was the Saviour's teaching, that in order to understand him rightly, we must remember that he was not only the Prophet, but the doctrine; not only the Oracle uttering God's truth, but his very self that Truth. Other prophets could tell what God's mind is: Jesus was that mind. The law — a portion of God's will — was given by Moses; but grace and truth — the gracious reality, the truthful plenitude of the Divine perfections, came by Jesus Christ. He was the express image of the Father. He was the Word Incarnate. And to many a query of man's wistful spirit, he was the embodied answer. Is there any immortality to this soul? Is there any second life to this body? "In my Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you, and I will come again and receive you to myself." "I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in me shall never die: I will raise him up at the last day." Is there any mediation betwixt man and his Maker? is there any forgiveness of sins? "I am the way. Whatsoever

ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Go in peace: thy sins are forgiven thee." Is there any model of excellence exempt from all infirmity? any pattern in which the Most High has perfect complacency? "He was holy and harmless, separate from sinners. This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him."

Solomon was wise; but Jesus was Wisdom. Solomon had more understanding than all the ancients; but Jesus was that eternal wisdom of which Solomon's genius was a borrowed spark — of which the deep flood of Solomon's information was only an emitted rill. To which we only add the contrast in their tone. Each had a certain grandeur. Solomon's speech was regal. It had both the imperial amplitude and the autocratic emphasis, — stately, decisive, peremptory. But the Saviour's was Divine. There was no pomp of diction, but there was a God-like depth of meaning; and such was its spontaneous majesty, that the hearer felt, How easily He could speak a miracle! And miracles he often spake; but so naturally did they emerge from his discourse, and so noiselessly did they again subside into its current, that we as frequently read of men astonished at his doctrine, as of men amazed at his doings. But though both spake with authority — the one with authority as a king of men, the other with authority as the Son of God — there is a wonderful difference in point of the pervasive feeling. Like a Prometheus chained to the rock of his own remorse, the Preacher pours forth his mighty woes in solitude, and, truly human, is mainly piteous of himself.

Consequently his enthroned misery — his self-absorbed and stately sorrow, moves you to wonder, rather than to weep; and, like a gladiator dying in marble, you are thankful that the sufferer is none of your kindred. But though greater in his sorrows, the Saviour was also greater in his sympathies; and though silent about his personal anguish, there is that in his mild aspect which tells each who meets it — if his grief be great, his love is greater. And whilst Solomon is so king-like that he does not ask you to be his friend, the Saviour is so God-like that he solicits your affection, and so brotherly that he wins it. Indeed, here is the mystery of godliness — God manifest in flesh, that flesh may see how God is love; and that through the loveliness of Jesus we may be attracted and entranced into the love of God. O melancholy monarch! how funereal is thy tread, as thou pacest up and down thy echoing galleries, and disappearest in the valley of Death-shadow, ever sounding — Vanity of vanities! O Teacher blessed! how beautiful are thy feet on the mountains, publishing peace! How benign thy outstretched hand, which, to the sinner weeping over it, proves God's golden sceptre of forgiveness, and which then clasps that sinner's hand and guides him to glory! O Thou greater than Solomon! "let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely."

A greater than Solomon. The cedar palace has long since yielded to the torch of the spoiler; but the home which Jesus has prepared for his disciples is a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Thorns and thistles choke the garden of

Engedi, and the moon is no longer mirrored in the fish-ponds of Heshbon; but no brier grows in the paradise above, and nothing will ever choke or narrow that fountain whence life leaps in fulness, or stagnate that still expanse where the Good Shepherd leads his flock at glory's noon. And Solomon — the splendor of his age — his grave is with us at this day; his flesh has seen corruption; and he must hear the voice of the Son of man, and come forth to the great account: but Jesus saw no corruption. Him hath God raised up, and made a Prince and a Saviour; and hath given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man. And reverting to the allusion of our outset — Solomon effloresced from his country's Golden Age — a greater than Solomon appeared when miry clay was mixing with its Age of Iron. Solomon was, so to speak, an effusion of his age, as well as its brightest ornament: the Son of Mary was an advent and an alien — a Star come down to blossom on a brier-bush — a root of Deity from our earth's dry ground. But though it was the Hebrew winter when he came, he did not fail nor wax discouraged. He taught, he lived, he fulfilled all righteousness — he loved, he died. It was winter wheat; but the corn fell into the ground ungrudgingly; for as he sowed his seeds of truth, the Saviour knew that he was sowing the summer of our world. And as, one by one, these seeds spring up, they fetch with them a glow more genial: for every saved soul is not only something for God's garner, but an influence for the world. Already of that handful of corn which this greater Solomon scattered on the mountain-tops of Galilee, the first-

fruits are springing; and by and by the fruit shall shake like Lebanon, and the Church's citizens shall be abundant as grass of the earth. On the wings of prophecy it is hastening towards us; and every prayer and every mission speeds it on — our world's latter summer-burst, our earth's perennial June — when the name of Jesus shall endure for ever, and summer as long as the sun: when men shall be blessed in Him, and all nations shall call Him blessed.

So great is this Prince of prophets, that the least in his kingdom is greater than Solomon. The saint is greater than the sage, and discipleship to Jesus is the pinnacle of human dignity. In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom, and all the germs of undeveloped goodness. He is the true theology, the perfect ethics, the supreme philosophy; and no words can limit the mental ascendency and moral beauty to which that young man may aspire, who, in all the susceptibility of an adoring affection, consecrates himself to the service and society of the Son of God. My brothers! is it a presumptuous hope that, even whilst I speak, some of you feel stirring within you the desire to join yourselves to blessedness by joining yourselves to Jesus? Is it too much to hope that some of you, who are Christian young men already, are wishing and praying that God would make you characters less commonplace, and render your influences in your day more abundant and benign? Is it too much to hope that, even from this rapid survey, some shall retire with a happy consciousness — Blessed be God! I belong to a kingdom which cannot be moved, and am embarked in a cause which cannot be defeated? Is

it too much to hope that some one who has found, in regard to godless enjoyment, "All is vanity," may now be led to exclaim, with the gifted youth to whom our poet-laureate has inscribed "In Memoriam," "Lord, I have viewed this world over, in which thou hast set me; I have tried how this and that thing will fit my spirit, and the design of my creation, and can find nothing on which to rest, for nothing here doth itself rest; but such things as please me for awhile in some degree, vanish and flee as shadows from before me. Lo! I come to Thee — the Eternal Being — the Spring of Life — the Centre of Rest — the Stay of the Creation — the Fulness of all things. I join myself to Thee; with Thee I will lead my life and spend my days, with whom I am to dwell for ever, expecting, when my little time is over, to be taken up into thine own eternity." *

* From a deeply interesting account of Arthur H. Hallam, in the "North British Review," for February, 1851.