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REV MORTIMER BLAKE D.D.

SOUNDINGS.

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W. Blake

SOUNDINGS

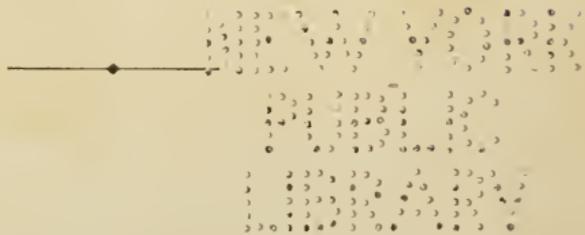
BY

REV. MORTIMER BLAKE, D.D.

EDITED BY HIS DAUGHTER,

Mrs. EVELYN L. MORSE.

WITH PREFATORY NOTE BY REV. JACOB IDE.



BOSTON :

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PREFATORY NOTE.

THE late Rev. Mortimer Blake, D.D., the author of these discourses, was well known as a ripe scholar and profound thinker. He had a mode of expression singularly clear, forcible, and original. When he was seen in the pulpit, something more than the ordinary exposition of Scripture was expected.

He seemed like one who had sailed over the ocean of truth, not merely glancing at its surface, but exploring its depths and bringing up rich treasures.

He skillfully avoided the seaweed and barnacles of profitless speculation and dropped his lead where it was sure to fasten itself to the priceless pearl. For this reason the title *SOUNDINGS* has been given to this book.

Perhaps no other word could more concisely and comprehensively indicate the nature of its contents. The old proverb is reversed in this case; all *is* gold that glitters here.

It is believed that no commendatory word will be needed to induce those who were accustomed to listen to Dr. Blake's pulpit addresses to renew the old and sacred associations by the perusal of this volume.

To others, the testimony of one long connected with him in a ministerial association may be interesting and important. He says: "I have noticed when any difficult subject was to be investigated, Dr. Blake was generally appointed as the essayist."

The rare wisdom and culture of one who was consulted by pastors and laymen far and near, in circumstances of perplexity, are here partially exhibited, laying the public under special obligations to his daughter, Mrs.

Evelyn L. Morse, who has prepared this work for the press.

It is a remarkable fact that these sermons appear in print just as the author left them at his decease, scarcely a sentence being added or changed.

The writer of these few prefatory words feels honored by this privilege of calling attention to the writings of one who was formerly his revered instructor, his predecessor in the ministry at Mansfield, and his cherished friend for many years.

JACOB IDE.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
OF
REV. MORTIMER BLAKE, D. D.

IN the year 1675, that part of Dedham which afterward became Wrentham was hastily deserted by its few inhabitants through fear of the advancing braves of Philip of Pokanoket, who had already burned and sacked Medfield. When, after the close of hostilities, they returned to rebuild their burned dwellings, there came with them John Blake, of Sandwich, with his wife and their son Robert. The boy grew up there and became the father of ten children, of whom three were among the original settlers of Keene, New Hampshire. A fourth, Josiah, remained in Wrentham, and was a lieutenant in the colonial troops. Of his large family, Philip was among the young men who rallied to the drum after Bunker Hill, and became commissary - major at Dorchester Heights. He afterward returned to Wrentham, was a deacon in the church there, and in 1800 bought a farm in Franklin and removed thither with his family. Ira, one of his younger sons, developed special skill as a worker in brass and iron, and also a fond-

ness for books and study. In his young manhood he migrated to Maine, where he became school-master, and also master-mechanic. He there met, and in due time married, Laura, daughter of Captain Augustus and Chloe (Fisk) Mowry, a young lady of rare beauty and of fine intellectual gifts. Their eldest son, Mortimer, was born in Pittston, Maine, on the east shore of the Kennebec River, June 10, 1813. After the close of the War of 1812, in which he had seen service, Ira and his family, comprising now two children, removed to the old home at Franklin, Massachusetts, where they remained permanently.

Mortimer as a child was not of vigorous constitution; but he inherited from his father a passionate love of books, and from his mother an unusual mental endowment and a fine memory. His tastes in this direction were fostered not only by the common school but more by the privilege, which he eagerly seized, of delving in the small but solid libraries in Franklin. One of these, abounding in heavy quartos and folios, was the gift of Benjamin Franklin, for whom the town was named. There was another, owned by share-holders, comprising a hundred or more volumes of history. His grandfather, Philip Blake, and the town doctor, Spencer Pratt, had books which were freely put at his disposal. He has himself drawn, in a few lines, a humorous picture of the boy of ten tugging away the huge folios of the Franklin Library, while Dr.

Emmons, the custodian, looked on with kindly smile. He refused nothing and skipped nothing, whether history, medicine, or theology, albeit sometimes a little staggered by hard words in such tough works as "Lardner on the Logos." But the difficulties only stimulated his desire to conquer them, and so, when one day he discovered, in a chamber cupboard of a family at the City Mills, a Latin grammar, he felt that his fortune was made. That incident he afterward marked as the determining point of his whole future life. Alone and unaided, in the intervals of farm labor, he wrestled with the unknown tongue. Soon after he purchased, in Providence, an Ainsworth's Dictionary for a dollar and a half, which nearly emptied his pocket, and in due time secured a Virgil. He was not yet fifteen. For two years he worked patiently by himself, with such good effect that some of the leading gentlemen of the place urged that he should have a college education.

Just at this time, in 1829, Rev. Elam Smalley was settled in Franklin as the successor of Dr. Emmons. Mortimer's grandfather one day hinted to him that if the new minister would hear his recitations, he would pay the tuition. No grass grew under his feet that day as he hurried to the minister's, and finding him responsive, systematic study was begun forthwith. The young parson was pleased with his pupil, assuring his landlady that the boy learned "as easily as water runs down hill."

In the same winter a German Jew named Seixas, whilom a teacher of Hebrew at Harvard, came to live in town, and gathered a Hebrew class from the neighboring ministers. Jacob Ide and Sewell Harding, of Medway, and Elisha Fisk, of Wrentham, were in the class, and so was Mortimer Blake, by Mr. Smalley's special suggestion; and the shrewd Jew kept the clergy wide awake at their work by now and then calling up the lad in the corner to prompt them when they lagged.

In the autumn of 1830, Medway Academy was started by Abijah R. Baker, a recent graduate of Amherst. Thither Mortimer went, and the year following entered the freshman class at Amherst. It would be interesting, did the limits of this brief sketch allow it, to follow him as he traveled, by such conveyance as could be had, to the Hampshire Hills; to look in on the routine of the college day, from the pitiless rising-bell at five o'clock in the morning to the retiring-bell at nine P.M., and to catch a few glimpses of his life there as it is described in a few letters which have been preserved. We should find him already developing the versatility that marked his after life: playing the flute in the college orchestra of seventeen pieces; teaching music with a class of twelve on the flute; drawing with a facile pencil; interested in all that went on about him while paying strict attention to college duties. But we can only draw back the curtain from a single event, in his junior year, which,

like the finding of the Latin grammar in his boyhood, marked a life crisis. In March, 1834, he wrote home of a quickened spiritual feeling throughout the college, and of the new-found rest that some had reached. Of himself he wrote modestly, tremblingly, but in the repressed exuberance of his hope, which made him long to see the beloved faces again, and especially to talk with his affectionate and revered grandfather concerning the new light that was dawning within him. It had cost him a hard struggle: he had been withstood by grim unbelief in his own breast; but he had looked the doubt in the face, and cried for grace to help, and had triumphed, and though alternating for some time between hope and fear, he pressed steadily on from that point.

He graduated in the class of 1835 and returned home. By his exertions an academy was started in Franklin, and he became its teacher, studying theology, meanwhile, with his pastor and former tutor, Mr. Smalley. Rev. Jacob Ide, Jr., of Mansfield, one of his pupils at that time, draws a graphic picture of his work there, emphasizing especially his rare tact and versatility, and the success he had in inspiring his pupils with ardor in their studies. Under his touch nothing was dry: botany, geology, astronomy, were illustrated by out-of-door rambles, and plainer studies by ever-ready illustrations from his own experience or research. He roused ambition and zeal, awak-

ened curiosity, played skillfully on the love of humor, and made school-life a fascination. He had rare adaptation for this work, and only his subsequent success in the ministry prevents a regret that he could not have continued in it.

He was married, February 21, 1837, to Miss Harriet Louisa, daughter of Joseph and Susan (Fisher) Daniels, of Franklin, a union which lasted for almost forty-eight years, and was only sundered by his own death. For one year he taught the Hopkins Academy at Hadley, and then began his pastoral work.

In the spring of 1838, in the town of Mansfield, then a straggling village of twenty-two houses, two stores, and a meeting-house, occurred one of those ecclesiastical excitements, so rife in those days of the Unitarian exodus, and a few earnest men and women withdrew from the old church and set up worship in the school-house. In August of the following year Mr. Blake preached one Sunday for the young church, and two weeks later was invited to supply the pulpit for six weeks, with a view to candidacy. The result was a call and its acceptance, and on the fourth of December, 1839, "on a cold and blustering day," he was ordained to the ministry and to the pastorate of the Mansfield Congregational Church, and there for sixteen years he labored quietly and assiduously in every good work.

It was a day of beginnings for both pastor and

people. A church of forty-nine members, a parish of forty-nine families, a congregation of about a hundred, and a Sunday-school of eighty-four, — this was the equipment. Add to this that the church owed eighteen hundred dollars on its house of worship, and depended on the Home Missionary Society for two hundred dollars a year toward current expenses, and it becomes evident that his position was no sinecure. A revival in the first year added twenty-one to the church. Then came six years of very plain and sometimes discouraging but far from fruitless effort, since, at the end of this time, the debt was paid and the church assumed self-support.

We can not follow this history in detail. Here, as always, Mr. Blake was not only pastor of the church, but wielded in a variety of ways the telling influence of an educated Christian man in the community. He had private pupils most of the time; he taught drawing and instrumental music; he was on the School Committee, and was the means of establishing the High School, the first teacher of which, Mr., afterward Rev., Josiah D. Armes, studied theology under his tuition. Besides all this, he found time to lecture on education, temperance, and other matters of vital interest in a New England town. His monthly missionary concerts, held in the High School building, were of exceptional interest. The minister's house, too, was in those days a hotel, and a

motley company it was that passed in procession through its doors for sixteen years. Among the rest, in the dark days of fugitive-slave laws, was a family of slaves, father, mother, and children, *en route* for the Canadian Canaan, and they found this station of the "underground railway" trustworthy.

During these years many invitations came to him to consider other fields, but he was too much interested in his work to leave. At length, however, the Winslow Church of Taunton made a more effectual plea, or the time had come when he felt a change allowable, and amid universal regret he left the Mansfield Church, now strong and well-trained, for the more important county town.

He was installed in Taunton, on the fourth of December, 1855, and here for the twenty-nine years of his life remaining was his home and his work.

Into this work he put all the qualities, ripened now by experience, which had made him a marked man from his youth. He was never physically vigorous, but his mental alertness and his systematic habit enabled him to accomplish a vast amount of work, and to gain a quiet but predominant influence in the community and in all the region round about. A shrewd and keen but kindly observer of men and things, widely read in the direction of his own aptitudes, full of quaint and happy metaphor, abounding in quiet humor, his preaching, unadorned by any oratorical method,

gained wide-awake and eager listeners. He had a strong sympathy with young life and was apt in addressing it. His historical tastes led him into valuable work in the lines of local history. He was a member of the Massachusetts Historic, Genealogical Society and of the Old Colony Historical Society. In educational work no man has had more influence in Taunton. As member of the School Board, trustee of Bristol Academy, and president of the trustees of Wheaton Seminary at Norton, he exerted a marked influence. The City Library owes much to his wise and fostering care. In his Ministerial Association his influence is predominant, and he was scribe and manager of the Taunton Conference of Churches during its whole history. From far and wide he was sought for counsel and suggestion, and his uniform tact and courtesy, coupled with a shrewd sagacity, gave him exceptional qualifications for such work. On the executive committee of the Massachusetts Home Missionary Society, and in connection with the Congregational Sunday-School and Publishing Society, part of the time as secretary, he proved himself equal to wider tasks and a conservator of broader interests.

He had strong convictions, but hated controversy and knew the value of silence. He gained a wide control of interests, but never by any self-assertion. His methods as a pastor were quiet and undemonstrative but characterized by wisdom and

tact. As a citizen he fulfilled to an unusual degree the ideal of an educated and Christian man, applying his high theories of ethics and public spirit in his relations to the community and the state. His literary work, outside his professional routine, was varied and multiform, though much of it was not prepared for print. In essays, reviews of books, and the special work of the Publishing Society he was always busy. He was fertile in topics for his own work and that of others. His published writings include two funeral sermons, published in 1844 and 1845; "Gethsemane and Calvary," 12 mo., 1844; "Address at the Erection of the Emmons Monument at Franklin," 1846; "Import of the Covenant, a Sermon," 1846; "The Duty of Mutual Forbearance, a Sermon," 1846; "The Maine Preventive, a Fast Day Sermon," 1852; "History of the Mendon Association," 358 pp., 1853; "History of Franklin," 1880.

In 1868 his Alma Mater conferred on him the degree of doctor of divinity. In 1880, by the kindness of his people, he had, what he was peculiarly qualified to enjoy, a European trip, in company with his wife, and part of the way with his younger son, who remained in Berlin to pursue the study of physics under Helmholtz. His health, which was improved by the trip, was, however, too seriously impaired to be fully recovered. Four years more he wrought on under difficulties, and then passed into wider spheres. His

death occurred on the twenty-second of December, 1884, in his seventy-second year. He left behind the companion of all his working years, four children, — two sons and two daughters, — and five grandchildren. His loss was severely felt in his church, in the city, and in all the region where he had been so long and well known. It was a genuine sorrow that followed his departure. His influence, incorporated in a hundred ways into the life of the community, can never be eliminated. Content to forego notoriety, he gained what is infinitely better, — the hearty appreciation of those who knew him and a lasting influence for good in the sphere where his life was spent.

H. P. DE FOREST.

TAUNTON, February, 1886.

SOUNDINGS.

I.

ANIMATE NATURE.

A SUMMER SERMON.

Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord. — PSALM 150: 6.

SO closes up the Book of Psalms, the hymn-book of all ages. Moses, and David, and Heman, and Asaph, and others had sung the praise or implored the help of Jehovah from their own separate experiences — soloists out of the great company of the saints; but their several voices blend at last with the grand chorus of the Church, in the one hundred and fiftieth psalm, which closes with this magnificent outburst of praise.

Notice the peculiar structure of this last of the Psalms. It is a tenfold exhortation to praise, in the same form of words enclosed between two hallelujahs. It first tells *where* God is to be praised, “in his sanctuary and in the firmament of his power” — that is, on earth and in heaven; next, *why* he is to be praised — “for his mighty

acts, and for his excellent greatness"; and then *how* he is to be praised — by every kind of then known instrument; and lastly, that no voice or sound-utterance shall be left out of this universal pæan, — the Psalmist closes, "Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord." It is a call upon all earth-voices, all existences, to praise God.

It implies and assumes that every thing that hath breath, that is, hath capabilities of expression, can praise him: that is, all things on earth, when we understand them, will, as if with a vocal call, excite in us an exaltation of Jehovah. The language suggests especially the non-intelligent, and the oftenest overlooked, existences as exalting God. Let us take out this one suggestion for our study to-day.

God is praised by his meanest works. In these summer days, when every one loves to be out-of-doors amongst the voices of non-intelligent things, it is worth while to remember that they are really telling us somewhat, and to try to understand and detect, in the noises of field, wood, and shore, the perpetual and universal song of praise which goes up to God.

We generally lift our eyes up to the skies when we would see the wonders of God: as if he were praised only by the greatness of his works. The vast blue canopy, where God dashes his cloud-pictures and brushes them away again with his breath, on which he hangs his lamps when his

children go to bed, — this canopy we usually turn to, to excite our praise of him who has hung it upon nothing.

But now I would have you look down and about your feet for the little voices in the shrubs and grasses which say, softly but distinctly, "Praise ye the Lord."

First, observe closely the greatness and diversity of this chorus of small singers, and second, their song-burden.

The hills and the valleys are carpeted with grass, pranked with a million flowers, of countless variety of form and color and odor, yet each with its own full complement of organs and juices, and so exactly conformable to its pattern as to admit of nicest classification. Every-where, from mountain-top to dell-bottom, you find them in their season. Not a thimbleful of earth collects in the rock-crevices, but some lichen or fern starts up from it. As if there were still scantiness of room to show the possibilities of vegetable life, the dust sediment in every pool throws up its spire and flower-stalk, as a specimen of what may be underneath. Even the salt-sea depths rock their growths to maturity by the deep waves, and then send them ashore on the billows as samples of the work going on below the waters in regions which man can not explore.

The botanist Linnæus said that he could cover with one hand on the grass evidences enough

to confound all the skeptics in Sweden. He was right. The greensward of the fields and the pools of the sea-shore speak in one voice to praise him who has filled them with the breath of life.

It seems to me there was a divine intention in the invention and use of the microscope so near to that of the telescope — not fifty years' difference in their scientific use (1608 and 1658).

The telescope had just showed that worlds exist all about us which the naked eye had never detected, and it upset all the old hypotheses. It removed our earth from its supposed place, in the center of the universe, out amongst its smaller satellites and dependences. Consequently man shrank wonderfully in his self-importance. Skepticism, always watching for such suggestions, quickly concluded that man, the brief inhabitant of this small patch of creation, could not be the subject of enough consequence to the Creator to have received a special revelation, a visit from the Son of God, and a divine sacrifice for his salvation. It seemed to be all over with our Bible and our Christianity.

But just then the microscope revealed another universe, tapering in the opposite direction, toward nothingness; and so man still actually stood in the center of creation, where his Maker had put him. If he was at the foot of an ascending series toward the cherubim, he was at the same

time at the head of a descending series toward the sponge.

Thus the name of Jehovah, so legibly written by the stars as its letters, is read also in the minute characters writ on the leaves of the trees and in the grass, and his praise is sung by the rustlings and chirpings of insects as distinctly as by the music of the spheres. We detect the one song in the minutest flower, in the facet of crystal, in the rays of the water-drop, and the motions of the animalcules. Nothing is silent. Every smallest thing has on it the mark of its Maker, and it is by putting these together that we rise to an idea of the manifold goodness of the Almighty.

But we must come down very much closer to this microscopic creation if we will hear its small voice praising the Lord. It may seem a very humble service, but I would have you catch some of the nameless harmony of voices from the highest to the lowest of creation. Please attend to the evidences in the song: —

First, of the thoughtfulness of God.

You detect his thoughtfulness in the minute and skillful finish of all, even the smallest of his works. There is nowhere any sign of slighted, half-finished negligence. There are no inefficient failures of contrivance, no disappointed and forsaken endeavor, no careless indifference of result. Every thing shows the most studious inventiveness, the exactest finish, even in the invisible atoms of creation.

I can not here give you visible proof of these statements; but if you have, or can borrow, a microscope, you shall convince yourself easily that the Creator does have a regard unto the work of his hands. Examine, for example, the wing of a common house-fly, which you only despise in these sultry days, for its sticky feet and drowsy hum. Notice the skill with which that wing is attached to the body, so as to leave it entirely free and yet never compress the tiny vessels which convey its life and vigor and motion! Observe how the frame-work of the wing is interbraced according to strict mechanical science, the braces stouter and oftener nearer the joint and lighter and less toward the tips. See, too, the almost invisible net-work of veins and nerves woven through it, and then the thinnest of gauze coverings over all, yet impervious to the air. Observe, finally, its exact ratio, in size and strength, to the insect to be wafted by it—so exact that not a particle more or less can be altered. Could any chance, or blind law of selection, plan or make a despised fly's wing? Yet how many pairs of such wings, as precisely fitted, as equally perfect, and each exactly alike in the same species in every part of the world, are flitting and buzzing through the still air of every summer, since the hour that Adam first went forth in the garden in the cool of the day!

Does not their gentle hum tell every-where of

the thoughtfulness of the Maker of all things? Think what an exhaustless ingenuity in devising the countless diversities of insect life! What minute exactness in finishing this winged family — by many a million larger than the human race — which flits through its one short summer and perishes!

How little can we comprehend of the nice forethoughtfulness of that hand which fashions the meanest of things with all the carefulness of the greatest! And then, however far you carry your examinations, you can not pass beyond the limits of his skill! Though you multiply lenses until almost the primary atoms become visible, still no boundary to the divine thoughtfulness appears. The whole chain of beings swings by the same subtle links of skill. The herds which swarm and pasture underneath a leaf display as skillful an adaptation to their function as man to his. And as proof that the Creator fainteth not, neither is weary, they are made in countless numbers every-where, in every spot of mould and in every drop of water round the world.

From the unvarying exhibition of the same attributes in every department of animate existence, we are sure that this thoughtfulness and skill are essential characteristics of the great First Cause of all things. “As for our God,” Moses sang, “his work is perfect.” That Cause can not display itself other than it is, and we know, there-

fore, that it is a thinking, planning, anticipating Intelligence, aiming at an end always, and never missing it through defective inventions. This is the alone conclusion we reach, and every fresh exploration loads us with confirmatory proofs.

But, second, do the voices of nature praise the Lord only as an Intelligence? Does the testimony of nature stop at this conclusion? We are not yet satisfied. We long to know if this omnipotent Intelligence has any soul within it, any disposition of heart to use his infinite ability and his studiousness of planning and making, so as to intentionally promote the comfort or enjoyment of his creatures. Does the Lord think of, or care for, or intend that the animal life, however short, shall be pleasant? Has he any emotions, any moral feelings or sympathy, and does he appreciate the returning gratitude or the love which we may feel toward him, or recognize any service which we may offer?

These are queries which have excited human interest and feeling in all ages. What do the voices of all things reply? What is the burden of their song?

We know that power does not necessitate goodness, nor intelligence moral sensibility. A steam-engine is tremendous in energy, but it will stand by a crushed railway-train without a throb of sympathy for its victims. Power and goodness can be separated. The Almighty is infinite in skill and

energy, and in intelligence, but we must know what disposition goes with this boundlessness of power. Is it a ruthless force or is it directed by goodness?

This is the weighty dilemma of the ages, asked by every thoughtful soul sitting in Nature's darkness. Does this Power care for me? Is he displeased at my disregard, and pleased if I adore him, and will he take care of me when I step out of this world into—I know not whither? Is there any answer in the song of praise from "every thing that hath breath"?

It may seem to you, perhaps, a very trivial way of reaching at a reply to such an important question, but what the little mute earth-children of a month or a day shall say will weigh more than the learned arguments of men. Men trying to reason out their way to light from their inward instincts have often stultified themselves, but whatever the animate world below us may testify will be a true guide, because it has only a passive concern in the question, and answers without knowing the value of its reply. If God *be* lacking in feeling for his creatures in any degree, that lack will show itself, first and most, among the lowest and meanest of his works. This was the wisdom of Solomon's exhortation: "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise;" and our Saviour had the same idea when he directed his doubting and mistrustful hearers to consider

the lilies, and to note the care of God over the sparrows. "If God so care for these, will he not much more care for you, O ye of little faith?" The point of search, therefore, is this:—

Has the Maker of all shown any regard for the enjoyment of his animal creation? Are they, through any divine arrangement, happy after their measures of capability? This is the simple problem touching the inherent divine goodness, and you have not far to go for its answer.

When you are rambling abroad toward one of our sunsets, why do you stop in your path to inhale the fragrance, to enjoy the sights and sounds of the earth getting ready for night? Why do you sometimes linger on your homeward way until the sun goes down with his rainbow robes about him, and even until the evening star lights her lamp and sets it in her window to call the lesser stars out into the sky? Some spell of attraction is on you, penetrating and soothing your earth-tired soul. What is it but a sympathy with the apparent joyousness of nature! Each bird has retired into its closet of leaves, and is closing up its day of work, after its own untaught promptings, with its song-offerings before the door of its home. It is the evening song of nature unto God, praising the Lord out of its own content.

Solomon, who had so deeply studied into the meanings of nature, read it as a voice of joyful-

ness, and he puts into the mouth of the Head of the Church, "Lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land." Can you help believing that the Maker does regard the enjoyment of even his lowest creatures, when you see that they express it even in their movements?

It seems to me that the God looks down pleased upon the delights of his mute creation out-of-doors, as any father does upon the gambolings of his own children on his lawn. The calm of our summer sunsets is the smile of God upon the world. Notwithstanding the wickedness and woe of man, all the works of God are to him good, as the world was before sin entered into it. He shows his intelligence in the skillfulness of their production, but his loving heart in the joyousness of their activities. The capacity of a moth or a beetle is not too insignificant for him to fill it with content, and he does not scorn to gladden the little heart of the robin and sparrow with songs, nor despise their instinctive returns of delight.

I must not omit one fact of special value: that is, that the Maker has made the necessary tasks of his creatures pleasurable. Work is a condition of being. We have made it a curse by our disobedience of law, but it has a singular delight to the animal creation.

I have time for but a single illustration.

Watch any pair of birds that have selected their building-spot in one of the trees of your lawn. How many miles they have flown in the examination of sites! How many untranslatable dialogues they have had in discussing the situations! See their patient industry for days, in collecting material from field and hedge: slyly bringing it, straw by straw, and thread by thread, and then weaving it with their simple tools of a beak and a pair of claws into an exact hemisphere. This they must do every spring. It looks as if their Maker were like an Egyptian task-master; but he has made it, through their instincts, a pleasurable necessity, as their specially jocund singing over their work plainly shows. It were well for grumblers and strikers to take a lesson of cheerfulness out under the trees, and from the little house-builders so full of music over their work.

When you are tired and weary and complaining, go outdoors and catch the spirit of the birds. Find rebuke and relief in these humble teachers of the thoughtful kindness of your own Maker and theirs. If he cares so much for the sparrows as to crown their instincts with song, how much more will he care for you, O ye of little faith!

When you complain of your tasks, imposed for your own development into patient obedience, may you be shamed back by these little jovial

preachers of work into contrition that you love your Father in heaven so little and forget his goodness to you so soon! While these days are so lively with every thing that hath breath praising the Lord, see that you wind up your psalm heartily in the hallelujah, Praise ye the Lord!

JULY 8, 1883.

II.

CHRISTIAN LIGHT-HOUSES.

Among whom ye shine as lights in the world.—PHILIPPIANS 2: 15.

THIS comparison of Christians to lights is very expressive and beautiful; and, as I have watched the lights along the shore, it has struck me as doubly forcible.

Philippi was situated upon the banks of a swift and crooked river and but a few miles from the sea. The difficulties of its approach made beacons or lights, along the banks of the river, a necessity to safety, and the apostle, with heaven-guided skill, selected his language so as to make his meaning vivid and permanent in the memory of the Philippians. Therefore he says that the few Christians in Philippi are like the lights which shape the course of her boats which sail up her crooked and rapid river.

The text is not an exhortation that these Christians of Philippi should shine as the lights do, but a declaration that they do shine in a dark world as the lights do in a dark night — that is, Christians are as prominent and effective in the midst of crooked and perverse men as the light-houses along the coast in a dark or stormy night. It

is not a definition of duty but a statement of fact. The Christian is, as our Saviour said, "a city set on a hill, which can not be hid." There is no concealment for him but by extinction. He is an open "epistle known and read of all men," and measured by what is written in him, clear or blurred, true or false.

Let us trace out this impressive figure of the apostle into some of its instructive applications.

The system of lights along the coast is designed for the protection of property and life. The ocean is a broad and pathless expanse. It has no guides or direction marks of its own. When a fog or the darkness of night settles down upon it, you can not tell which is the way you are going, or should go, to reach your destination. All your guides are external to yourself—the sun overhead, or the north star in the night, and the single dot of light shining along the top of the waves from some distant headland. Without that one beam of light, you would be a helpless wanderer until the morning.

Light-houses are a necessity of safe commerce, and it is a dictate of humanity and prudence that government should build and sustain these lights and enforce the proper care of them by vigorous laws and penalties. For none can tell how many lives may hang upon the fidelity of one light-keeper, and it is interesting to see how much thought and skill and money have

been spent in locating them on every headland, and projecting ledge and sand-bar, in buoying out the channels, and in anchoring the lightship at the reefs and on the shoals, so that no mariner need mistake his way for want of ocean guides and harbor warnings. Thousands of dollars are paid yearly to sustain this system of coast lights, and all approve of it as a humane necessity to the men who must feel their way from shore to shore across a dark and pathless deep.

The Church of Christ has likewise been planted in the world of men for a similar design — to be as lights in the world for the guidance and salvation of men in the gross darkness that envelops them. Neither the world nor human instincts furnish any guides to the soul. They must be set up on the shore by outside hands and maintained by outside resources. And God has therefore planted his Church on earth, and gathered it, and settled it, and watches over and sustains it as a light to them that “sit in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death”; and how wisely has he planted its branches all along the coast of time, where they seem to be most needed! — men called to be disciples here, there, and every-where, in places of peril, temptation, and difficulty of finding the way. No one spot of earth is devoted to the saints and filled with them to the neglect of the rest, but they are scattered in all cities and villages, and spring up in the valleys and plains.

You can find Christians almost every-where, if you are disposed to search for them. But it is a pity that so many misinterpret the end of their conversation, and forget that they are called to shine as lights in the world, and that this is the main object of their being made Christians, but suppose that their one duty is to work out their own salvation in utter forgetfulness of their greater duty to let their "light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" !

But again, there are certain pre-requisites to a light-house essential to the fulfillment of its function, and without which it can not be a serviceable light-house at all.

First. It must have a definite fixedness of position. Wherever it may be located, on the sandy point or on the beetling cliff, it must stay at its post. As soon as a new light is built, its position is exactly marked on the standard charts, and notice is given by the government to all nations of its place and bearings, with a full description of its peculiarities, that it may not be confounded with any other light in its vicinity, and if any changes are afterward made in any small particular, these are published with equal distinctness, because fixedness of position and character are necessary to the reliability of a light. It must be always distinguishable in its one place, at what-

ever hour or from whatever point in the sweep of the ocean it may be seen; and every Christian needs an equal fixedness of character, whenever the light of his example is needed as a guide to his fellow-man.

How harmful and confusing is a Christian whose life is full of contradictions, whom you can not count upon in any dark or trying hour! To-day he may be enthusiastic and full of burning exhortations to his whole neighborhood. To-morrow, he is off with the world, floating with the tide of popular interest in some purely secular object. What is such a fluctuating Christian better than a light-ship adrift—swinging now a league to the north and anon as far to the south of the shoals it is set to mark for the seaman's avoidance? He is but as a wave of the sea, driven of the winds and tossed. No, there is nothing but that a Christian should be firmly planted on the Rock of Ages, as Minot's Light is bolted down upon its ledge—settled and grounded in the truth, and never moved from his place, however the winds may blow and the floods descend and beat upon him. Especially in the dark night-time of apathy, or in the swift-running tide of false religions, must the Christian be steadfast and unmovable, having his hope as an anchor to his soul, sure and steadfast. These floating Christians, that head up or down, and swing by a long cable, with the tide of popular sentiment, are most unsafe guides to

inquirers after the paths of true safety. You can not well be too fixed and sure in your Christian stability, that men may always know where to find you, and, seeing your position, may know where good anchorage is to be had.

Second. The light-house needs to be, not only fixed in place, but elevated enough to be visible from all directions. A light-house behind a hill, or in a thick woods, is of no use or value, however brightly it shines. Nobody can see it to be guided by its brightness. But our government is necessarily particular to plant its lights upon the most conspicuous elevations, and where they shall shine unobstructedly upon the world of waters.

Perhaps there is no light on our coast for which so many eyes search in the dark nights as the Highland Light, on the north-eastern side of Cape Cod; for here is the first land seen in coming from Europe, and stretching at its base for miles out to sea are belts of sand-bars where many a vessel has in past days been broken in pieces. How useless were a light there, placed in a valley or behind a hill! But our government has placed it upon the highest bluff, and lifted its lantern nearly two hundred feet from the water, and placed in its tower the largest and brightest possible light, so that no one shall fail to see it miles from the dangerous coast. And there it burns steady and clear and brilliant, night after night, through all the months, to welcome the

European wanderer home, and guide him safely by the perilous shoals into the bay. How like a sturdy and self-reliant Christian, conspicuous for his heavenly aims in the community! How unlike the disciple who covers up his hope in Christ, and keeps silence when his Master's name and the truth are assaulted! The Christian ought to stand out before men plain to their view in the steady and unabashed consistency of his testimony, seeking even a more open place for his witness of Jesus and the Word of God.

Third. The light-house needs to shine steady and clear and bright. Its very value is in its light. By day it is only a landmark, and no more useful than a tree, or a barn on a hill; but when the night settles down, and hides the shore signs and guides, then does the special value of the light-house beam forth.

I love to watch the coming on of evening upon the sea-shore, the fading day, the coming dimness, the disappearance of steeple and tree and hill, the faint twinkling star, the gloom of the dark restless waters, and then the points of light in the horizon, flashing out along the shore, as the sun goes down, and glowing brighter and brighter as the darkness thickens, till they look like burning eyes steadily searching over the seas for the tired ships that are caught by night-fall away from home. There is an indescribable fascination in the gleaming lights of the sea: some unchange-

ably burning with clear white or red light; some with regular waves of light and darkness; some with quick flashes at regular intervals, to distinguish them from others.

But there is far higher beauty in the pure and steady light which flows from some Christians' lives, who may seem, in the daylight of prosperity, to be only landmarks; but when the clouds of trial come down, or the evening of life settles upon them, shine out in the sweet tender light of Christ's presence, brighter as the darkness deepens, and clearer as the storm hurtles through the skies. How much help does one such steady Christian living give, of guidance to souls still tossing outside the harbor mouth and away from home! Were such piety to cease, religion dulled down to irregular flashes, what a dark ocean of uncertainty should we have to navigate! And the beauty of it is, and the awful solemnity of it too, that the Christian does not know how many, and whom, he may be guiding by his light or misleading by his unsteady dimness.

The solitary light-keeper, who rises, and ascends his tower in the evening to light his lamp, and again at midnight, when the storm rages, climbs the iron steps to trim his wick for a fresher glow, does not know how many eyes are watching for the fruit of his short labor, nor how many lives hang upon his fidelity; and he never will know till the sea gives up its dead to tell their tales.

So no Christian knows who is watching him, and taking direction from his example or encouragement from his inconsistencies. You are never out of sight, the light of your example can not be hid. The power of your style of living reaches out into the world, and may control the course of strangers whom you shall never meet in the world.

It behooves us all to be filled with him and from him who is the only true light, that men may take knowledge of us, always and every-where, that we have been with Jesus and learned of him.

SEPTEMBER 5, 1875.

III.

PILGRIMS.

This word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.—HEBREWS 12: 27.

EVEN while Zerubbabel and Joshua were restoring the temple and institutions of the Jewish Church, God foretold a thorough shaking to come, demolishing the Mosaic economy they were reëstablishing, and the building on its cleared foundations of the new Christian dispensation.

The text refers to this prophecy (in Haggai 2, 6): “ Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land ; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come : and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.”

Paul refers his countrymen to this prophecy as an argument why they should leave the old and tumbling Judaism, and cling to the new rising gospel of Christ. He says, substantially, that the commotions of their time were really the work of God, shaking off the loose additions attached by men to the truth, so as to bring out fresh and distinct and permanent elements of his kingdom on earth. His argument assumes it to be the

aim of Providence to remove the temporal for the revelation of the permanent. This precisely is what God proposes and promises to do, and the upheavals and discordances and persecutions of all time only indicate this shaking process, for the removing of every thing which is shaken by it, that the things that can not be shaken may remain.

The text, therefore, gives a solution of the changing theories, and sometimes bitter strifes, for opinion among men, and suggests what the real aim of God is, in submitting his truth to the criticisms and contentions of the world, namely: to bring out to view his own truth, separated from human additions and coverings.

Perhaps no better field of illustration of this grand drift of divine Providence can be found — none certainly with which we are so familiar — as our own New England. The nearness in which we stand to-day to its great anniversary of the landing of the Pilgrims suggests a brief study of this field of illustration.

Two hundred and sixty years ago last night, December 8 (o.s.), the party sent out on the shallop for exploring Massachusetts Bay had struck upon an island in the midst of a cold rain-storm. Finding it a small island, and secure from Indians, they spent to-day (which was Saturday two hundred and sixty years ago), as Governor Bradford says, “in drying their stuff, fixing their pieces, resting themselves, and giving God

thanks for their many deliverances." They remained over the next day (Sunday, and their first Sabbath on land in this western world), and on Monday made their first landing on the Plymouth shore, "to their great comfort," says Bradford; and it must have been, after their long journeying across the ocean since September 6 (O.S.), eighty-six days from shore to shore, when now we cross in nine days!

It was a migration which attracted small notice at the time, but it has since grown into a force that has shaken, and will yet more shake, the things that are made, that those things that can not be shaken may remain. At this distance of over two and a half centuries we can take in enough of its history to trace with some confidence the shaking process of the Lord. At least, it will do us good, when thinking back to the seed-events of 1620, to detect as well as we can the apparent aim of Providence in the affairs of that past day. These facts stand out obvious:—

First. The remarkable preservation of our New England for centuries from a migration which would have brought with it the Old World fallacies and half-truths. For nearly a hundred and fifty years after the New World became known to the Old, no colony came to settle in this cold latitude. Some such movements were projected and some individuals came, but the vast solitudes discouraged them, or the hostile Indians drove

them away. Even the hardy Icelanders, who attempted one exploration of our southern coast, and penetrated our own river within ten miles of us, nearly five hundred years before Columbus' discovery, found no motive to persist in a settlement. The land lay all those years within the knowledge of the old nations, but they felt no motive to come hither. God was keeping New England open, and waiting for the occupancy of a people whom he was training to take possession.

Who can fail to see the hand of God covering all that while these fields and forests from human eyes, when you remember that the trade of the Indies was then the great ambition of Europe to secure, and their knowledge of geography told them that the shortest way to India was straight west, across the Atlantic to the wealth of Asia. Some great experiment of infinite wisdom was evidently to be tried on these shores, and therefore they were kept clear until the experiment was ready.

Second. Notice, side by side with this protection of our territory, the preparation of a people to occupy it for the Lord's experiment.

The story is too long to tell now; but it was "the Lord's doing, and marvelous in our eyes," that to a few humble men and women had been given such clear eye-sight as to read in their new English Bibles, of Wicklif's and Tyndal's translation, the true nature and composition of the

Church of Christ, and had such a courage of their convictions as to believe, and say, and stand to it, that a state church could never realize the ideal Church of the Lord Christ. But, coming unto these truths as they did, through a forest of artificial growths, — man-made theories and practices in religion, — they would have built some, at least, of these fallacies into their structures of living upon their newly found truths if they were left to build quietly along-side the old cathedral services. Therefore, God shook them out of their homes in and about Scrooby and into the entirely different country of Holland. They quarried the corner-stone of their Church ideal in Scrooby, but carried it away with them, and Scrooby, the birth-place of the Pilgrim and the New Congregational movement, was left desolate.

There were some other adherences to be shaken from the Pilgrims before they were ready for the New World, and they were, therefore, compelled by their own convictions to leave Amsterdam for Leyden. In this quiet city they had twelve peaceful years to explore the Word of God for his own simple truth, and to train the next generation in the Christian principles for which they had already suffered so much. God gave them this repose for thinking out and maturing their conclusions, and building them into a harmonious Christian system, having the clearer daylight of the reformed churches of Holland to work by, and

the wise head of Robinson as a master-builder. We can not fail to trace the hand of God in these removals and shakings of the ante-pilgrimage period, that so they might become simple and pure believers in the Word of God, and bring over to this side of the ocean only the plain and well-winnowed seed for a new planting of the gospel. It was well said of them that "the Lord sifted three kingdoms that he might have pure wheat to sow in this New World."

As a result of such a long and hard shaking, they brought only such convictions of truth and duty which had stood the severe tests of expatriation, vigorous debate, and persecution. Thus purified, as it were by fire, the Pilgrims came to these shores — but a handful of them at first, like-shaken and like-minded — to lay the foundations of many generations. God first made them fit and ready to be the pioneers of "a church without a bishop and a state without a king," and then he brought them across the sea in such an humble way as to attach to them no worldly following, but to draw only men like-minded with themselves. He cleared the coast of savages, and landed them in midwinter, and amongst storms which drove them for refuge and strength deep within their fundamental doctrine of the immediate and sovereign agency of God in the affairs of men. Under the pressure of this deep-felt truth they framed their religious and civil polity

close to the supreme headship of Christ, and built it on the principle of man's immediate and supreme responsibility to Christ.

Thus all the surroundings of the Pilgrims, from their first church covenanting together in Scrooby to their civil compacting in Provincetown Harbor, shook and sifted out of them all the things that could be shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which can not be shaken might remain; and these last only they brought with them.

The Pilgrims were not singular in passing through such a shaking process for the purifying of their principles. The same explanation may be applied to other parties of men grouped around a truth of God; but these people are a near-at-hand illustration of a grand truth, whom this time has suggested for our study, and have therefore been selected.

It is necessary to call your attention to the fact, thirdly, that the history of New England, since 1620, has been a record of the shakings of principles, to distinguish and separate the unstable from the stable and permanent.

The deeper you study into the moving influences which fashion our history, the more you shall discover that all movements have some truth or principle underlying, about which contentions and struggles gather to disturb the surface of society. If you should write out a list of the

chief events in our New England history, what would they be but contests over principle to determine what should be shaken off, and what should remain? Whether in Church or State, in education or morals, we contend not about territory, nor for mere triumphs of force, but for some truth, or against some error so regarded. The anti-slavery war was really against the theory that one man can, by any claim, own a fellow-man; and that claim was at last shaken off by throes which almost flung the nation. The present anti-liquor war is about another theory, that the commonwealth or the town may license wrong, as drunkenness is admitted to be; and the people will have to be shaken until the fallacy of license shall be flung off, and truth of prohibition (as time shall fully develop it) shall remain as the victory of the contest. It will go on until the right conquers; for God is in all conflicts where his truth is involved, and he will not be quiet, nor allow society to be quiet, until that truth comes out clean and established in the convictions of men.

And if in these civil questions, which touch mainly the outer estate, God is interested to bring out the right, much more is he interested when the theories questioned touch the Christian liberty and growth of the souls of men.

The Puritans of the Massachusetts Colony, not having had the discipline of the Pilgrims of the

old colony, brought with them some ideas which belong to things that are made. They had contended so vigorously in Old England against the interference of the State in matters of conscience and in ecclesiasticals, that in this New England they put the State below the Church, and made its power a servant to Church ends. The reaction of their liberty here carried them beyond their perpendicular. They made church membership a condition of citizenship, and suppressed by force dissent against Church supremacy. A conflict soon came on, and the colony was shaken with Antinomianism and the Half-way Covenant, — a compromise bridge between the two parties, with witchcraft and what else, until the excrescence of the Church headship in civil things was dropped off. The shaking still continued, until other fallacies fell out of the convictions of the time and more correct views took their place.

I must not follow this interesting line of thought further. I will say, that the real history of Massachusetts has not yet been written. The surface facts have been collected, arranged, and published ; but the real issues involved and the actual steps of progress made have not been told, perhaps can not be yet. The scaffolding still envelops and mostly conceals this rising Church of the Lord. There is an abundance of blocks and chips in the lumber-yard ; but what of its timber will be used and what rejected for burning, it is not

well to prophesy, until the top-stone be brought forth, the staging be removed, and the shoutings of completion shall be heard. But I have no doubt that at last it will come forth of all its shakings without a loose or heterogeneous plank in it from apex to corner-stone. For God is in the midst of the disturbances and throes of society, subjecting every theory and opinion to the test: that the false may be flung away and the true be grasped with unrelaxing fingers.

But this is enough to set before you the illustration of the text. Let us use it for our own profit.

First. It is not to be inferred that we have yet reached all of the alone true and permanent in religion.

So long as men come into the world ignorant and with an evil heart of unbelief, they will be inventing new coverings for old truths, to make them attractive. They will be building new bridges across the boundaries of the kingdom of God. Errors will be mixed with truths, and will have to be exposed and shaken off. Even the doctrines which one generation has amply proved to be true, by its discussions and conflicts, and changes of opinion, will be called in question by the next generation, and have to pass through another shaking off of their falsehoods. The way has been and will yet be, theories, discussions, changes of opinion, and the falling off of the false

for the revelation of the true, till we come unto the full knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus.

Second. Let no believer, therefore, be fearful of the demolition of God's real Word, when even the majority call its truthfulness in question. It is no sign the mountain is going to fall because the storm-fogs enwrap it and the gales howl amongst its peaks and crags. The clouds will be only riven in their assault, and, when the gale goes by, its peaks will stand forth as grand and unmoved as before. We need have no fears of speculations and debates so long as God guides the result. Nothing will be loosened and fall but that which ought to be shaken. The skepticisms of to-day hurtling about the Word of God are no new inventions. You can find the same objections against the Bible almost anywhere in the past of Christianity. They are old missiles which knocked off some human additions to the truth, and then fell dead around the base of the pillars of its temple. Let men question the accuracy of the Scriptures, and even its inspiration, — let them doubt the creation and the fall of man, his lost state and his redemption through a crucified Redeemer, — men's opinions do not determine God's truth. The Almighty does not ask men what he shall reveal. The sun shines on if clouds do hide it, and the daylight draws nigh if all the owls in the thick tree-tops say they can not see it.

Only be sure that your faith abideth in the real truth, and you need not fear the sky will fall, and your heavenly stairs fall with it. God is able and willing to take care of his truth. He is only shaking it that our attachings may drop from it, and it alone may be exalted in that day. But, —

Third. There is a still more practical and personal application of our line of thought, and it is to the truths or fallacies which may lie in your own personal convictions.

For example, you who are professing Christians came into the Church with certain conclusions of the gospel, and certain theories of the Christian life. Since that day you have been under the shaking process of divine Providence, and what has been the effect? Perhaps you thought your great duty was done when you professed your new Master. Has that idea been shaken out of you, or do you still think that you have only to keep that which is committed to you? Be sure that the experiences of your life are intended to lead you to see and then to drop all false and imperfect ideas of Christian living, and to grasp with a more loving tenacity the true conception of the service of your Master above. They are aimed to give you purer conceptions of the truths of God's Word, and to throw out of your belief all which is of human invention. How, then, is it with you to-day? Do those old truths which have sustained the hearts of God's saints in all

ages seem truer and dearer and brighter now than they did when they first glimmered into your horizon, or are you drifting away in questionings and uncertainties about these landmarks of the way to heaven? A grave question, surely, and worth your prayerful thought. I leave it with you for this very use. Once more, I may say, I am greatly anxious that you young people should comprehend the drift of your life, and the great intent of your God to guide you into all truth, as the only valuable outcome of your living.

You naturally draw many pictures of what you should like to be and aim to be. Some of the pictures have already faded. Are any of them in fast colors, painted by truth? The wisest of kings said, "Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." Are you coming into this filial obedience? Of one thing be sure: the edifice of life which you build — the palaces of hope and the way to them — will be shaken until all the false and temporal shall fall, and only the true be left standing. Do you know and love enough truth now to be a shelter for your head when the false is taken away? One is the truth, and the life, and the way. Have you yet taken refuge in him? I leave with you, my young people, this question for your private answering to him who is longingly listening for your reply.

DECEMBER 19, 1880.

IV.

MEANING OF SOLOMON'S SONG.

The Song of songs, which is Solomon's.—SOLOMON'S SONG 1: 1.

A MINISTER said to me some months ago: "If Solomon's Song were not in the Bible, I should hesitate some time before accepting it." This remark, and others similar nearer home, have put me upon a fresh study of its claims to a place in the sacred canon, and its meaning as a whole. The result has been that a new beauty to my eyes gleams from it, which I must needs set upon my little candlestick before you, that it may give its light to all that are in the house.

I must premise here, that our version loses much of the delicate imagery of the song as Solomon wrote it, because it was rendered into the coarse and sensualistic English of the times after Charles II. We miss therefore the real exquisiteness of its Oriental ideas, for this translation has much over-covered and perverted the real truths couched in its imageries, and thus misled readers to undervalue its teachings. But of this further on.

I. The book has its proper place in the Old Testament, and therefore has a divine purpose and a spiritual meaning.

Some critics, viewing the song only as an amatory poem, have flung it out without hesitation. But it is found in the oldest lists we have of the books of the Old Testament, as compiled by Ezra, after the return from the captivity, and he was certainly under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in making up the sacred canon. The jealous Jews, after his day, carefully protected and accepted the holy writings of their religion and saved this. The great body of critics, of all subsequent time, admit that the book does belong in the sacred catalogue.

The few objectors bring no sufficient reasons for a contrary conclusion. We accept it therefore as one of the inspired books of the Word of God. It must, therefore, set forth some truth connected with the purposes of a divine revelation, and bring some valuable instruction for the subsequent time, and even for the latest ages of the earthly Church! Solomon's Song therefore has a meaning higher than the connubial loves of the king of Israel and some Shulamite maiden.

II. What is this meaning?

The first step toward an answer is to know the historical basis of the poem. This is not difficult to gather out of its dramatic framing. Some young maiden is brought out of the hill country to Jerusalem, to be added to the harem of the king. She has, however, a young shepherd-lover at home whom she is thus compelled to leave.

But the splendors of the royal court, the persuasives of its young women, and the honor of becoming a wife of Solomon, even upon his own ardent compliments and solicitations, are not enough to make her unfaithful to her plighted lover. She is enthusiastic only for him, against all the temptations of the palace and the court, and her fidelity finally triumphs in her release and return to her mother's home and her native hills.

This is the simple story on which this dramatic song is built. Such an incident might readily have occurred in the gathering of the many wives and concubines of the king of Israel, and it should naturally arrest the attention of Solomon when he knew it, and become a nucleus for the sober thought and poetic inspiration of this wisest of the monarchs of the world. Solomon caught it as an illustration of the solemn dilemma in which Israel then was, — as between the divine kingdom and an earthly, — and flung around it the richness of his own poetic genius to win a serious pause among the wise men of his nation to the peril before them.

The three chief characters are: Solomon, the maiden Shulamite, and her invisible rustic lover. The daughters of Jerusalem, the watchmen of the city, the brother, and the little sister are side-lights on the meaning, and give poetic completeness to the poem.

Assuming this simple historic basis (which lies almost on the surface of the song), we may ask, second, What is its general significance?

There are almost as many answers as commentators, but they are generally reducible to three theories:—

(1) That it is a marriage-song, written to be performed during the week while the Jewish ceremony lasted, for the entertainment of the guests; destitute, therefore, of any spiritual significance or claim to divine inspiration. This is approved by the anti-biblical school.

(2) That it is a setting forth of the true love which should be the basis of every marriage, and therefore a real protest against the polygamy of which Solomon's palace was so fearful an example. This somewhat lifts the song, but not high enough to place it on the shelf with the other inspired books of our Bible.

(3) That it is an allegory, in the luxuriance of Oriental imagery, of the love between Christ and his Church. This does indeed give a sacred character to the poem, and has become, in general, the accepted solution of most Christian writers.

Under this theory, Solomon is interpreted to be the type of Christ, and the Shulamite to be his Church. So have I read it and enjoyed it for years, and still regard this as the ultimate inner meaning which remains to the Church now that its significance for the times of Solomon has worn away.

But there is another distribution of the types, giving a new path to the primary meaning, which the royal and inspired author immediately intended to impress upon his own age, and which lifts this song to the place and title he gives it, as the "Song of songs, which is Solomon's," the highest and best of all his poetical compositions.

Out of the whole one thousand and five, which Solomon's wonderful and comprehensive genius invented, this is the queen, in his own judgment, and the only one of them all which the divine Spirit has claimed as his inspired work, and has inserted into the Word of God, for the guidance of the world, unless, possibly, the seventy-second and one hundred and twenty-seventh psalms belong to Solomon.

This primary and intended meaning is the dangerous dilemma of Israel as between an earthly monarchical kingdom and its secular glory, on the one side, and the divine government with its spiritual simplicity, on the other. Solomon represents, not Christ, but a purely secular kingship, such as had already begun in Israel. The Shulamite is the Israelitish nation, as holding the true Church, already drawn in great part away from Jehovah, and in great danger of becoming wholly intoxicated with the glory of Solomon and his secular prosperity. The shepherd left behind among the valleys, and the real lover of the Shulamite, is Jehovah himself, the true king of

Israel. The maiden of Shulem is tested between these two rival claimants to her heart and hand.

Within this first meaning lies a similar yet deeper significance, after which Israel after the flesh was the precursor of the true Israel after the spirit, — now the Church of God, — and the unseen lover of Palestinal Israel became “God manifest in the flesh” to the world. Ultimately, as you see, the two streams of meaning run into one, on whose banks the flocks of these later days now rest themselves at noon, going forth by the footsteps of the sheep of the old fold.

That first application to Israel is a grand light, irradiating many dark things in Israel's history in the age of Solomon and afterward. I can not, of course, now show how all this is; but I may erect some guide marks which (if you will follow) shall lead you directly into the true meaning of Israel's trials, and the deep and grand significance of this Song of Songs.

First. Solomon's Song was written by him in the height of Israel's temporal prosperity. He had composed her internal factions and their strifes; he had put under quiet tribute the surrounding nations, whom his father David had subdued; he had opened channels of trade with all the then known ports of the world. He had “made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars made he to be as the sycamore trees that are in the vale, for abundance.” (1 Kings 10: 27);

and "Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking, and making merry" (4: 20); and "Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even unto Beer-sheba, all the days of Solomon" (4: 25). Externally, no nation had ever been so rich in quiet prosperity. It was the high noon of summer in the promised land, the brightest and best glory of a secular kingdom under a wise king.

It was in the midst of this prosperity that the true spiritual ideal of Israel came to the thought of Solomon, in the figure of a simple, sincere maiden from the northern hills, and he was led to write his Song of Songs to show her peril of losing her purity in the luxuries of his kingdom.

Second. Remember, again, that Solomon was the wisest of men, with a God-given wisdom, which led him to detect the peril which begirt his nation of being seduced away from their allegiance to Jehovah, to a love of merely wordly glory of secular kingship. The renown of his wisdom not only attracted scholars and *literati* to his court, but drew other kings to his capital — even the Queen of Sheba came from her distant South Arabian home — to lay their hard questions before this royal teacher. Solomon, and his intimate friend, Hiram, king of Tyre, Josephus says, were wont to exchange riddles, or occult sentences upon deep problems. So that

altogether it was an uncommon age of the world, when its kings played at deep conundrums and held contests of wit on the puzzles of the ages.

The whole book of Proverbs is a collection of these riddles or analogies between material facts and spiritual and moral truths. The Song of Songs is but a lengthened parable, drawn out and adorned luxuriantly in a dramatic form. Wisdom, of which Solomon has so much to say, took, in Israel, a direction different from that of philosophy in Greece. It did not speculate, as the Athenians did, upon the origin of things. The first verse of Genesis had settled that; but it turned to problems of practical life and to the spiritual significance of earthly providences. The surpassing wisdom of Solomon is shown in the depth of his penetration, and his piety (in the earlier part of his reign) in the truths which his pen wrote for after ages.

Third. The practical wisdom of Solomon, and the developing perils of his prosperous reign, would lead him to do his best work for the benefit of his own time, rather than for the distant ages, after Christ should actually have come. There is, therefore, an unavoidable assumption that his highest poem should have primary reference to the relative dangers of his own age, while it is an equally obvious fact that, as Judaism was the precursor of Christianity, so shall his thought be made to sweep down to the Christian ages, and to warn us of our dangers as well. His first

meaning had a Jewish application, but in it the Spirit hid a second meaning for Gentile use. Once more.

Fourth. It was high time to set forth to the thinking men of Israel the real idea of the Hebrew nationality, as a kingdom of God on earth, to be made a center of the divine agencies for the spiritual uplift of the world.

Until the days of Saul the Hebrew history had been strangely remarkable for the direct controlling agency of God in its affairs. There was no king but Jehovah, no palace but a tabernacle, where the cloud of Jehovah's presence was. Moses, Joshua, and the judges brought all their questions of state policy directly to Jehovah for solution, and they received their orders from the voice of the Lord, out of the cloud. The divine idea was to have a nation ruled by an invisible king, living secluded and exclusive from the Gentiles, and in pastoral simplicity repelling all ambitious imitations of earthly glory, all wars of conquest, all displays of court and camp, and aristocratic distinctions.

It was an evil hour when Israel, captivated by royal pomps, asked for a king, to be like other nations. Jehovah was offended, and Samuel rebuked them. For it was leaving the divine idea of their existence as a people, and the setting up of a mock independence of God's authority. But the nation was bent that way, and Jehovah allowed

them a king for their discipline. The first was Saul, renowned for his physical vigor, as if kingship lived in tall and broad shoulders. The second was David, a warrior indeed, who developed their military prowess, and prepared for a splendid ritual of worship, but whose Psalms wail with the conflicts of wickedness, and sigh for his son that shall be a Prince of Peace.

Next came Solomon, endued with remarkable wisdom to understand the true spiritual ideal of his nation, and to use his peaceful and prosperous reign and the august temple-service which he established in walls of gold and frame-works of cedar to recover his people from their apostasy from Jehovah, on whose very brink they were standing. While he dazzled them with the outer glory of his kingdom, he must prevent their forgetting their true glory as a people whose real king was the Lord. His wisdom taught him that their destruction lay in the way of their conformities to other kingdoms, and their true glory lay only in their devout and loving union to, and obedience of, the invisible God of their fathers. The splendors of his court had developed the imagination of his people, and it was through the same rich imageries of his dramatic poem that he attempted to awaken their spiritual instincts for Jehovah, and to teach their intellect their relation to him as their only real king. Hence, I believe, we have the Song of Songs, which is Solomon's.

Solomon is the type of an earthly monarchy in all its glory — so captivating to the ambitious and display-loving soldiers of his father. The Shulamite is the native Israel, caught with the pomp of the royal procession, and solicited to become herself a willing partner in the throne and its pleasures. She is urged by the already corrupted daughters of Jerusalem, and flattered by the honors which a queenship might give her.

But Israel has another lover to whom her fidelity has already been sworn. He is the true Shepherd King, and the real Lord of her vineyard, as against all earthly claimants.

The Shulamite is the spiritual instincts of the nation in the real and simple worshipers of God, which will “cry out for God, the living God,” and long for the plains and fields where the true Beloved feeds his flocks. The Shulamite — the true Israel — can not and must not forsake the unseen One, who holds of right her promise to be his only and for ever. The poem closes with four riddles for the deeper thinkers, and as foot-notes of explanation of its true aim to all its readers of after time. Of these riddles I may speak at some other time, but I now remind myself that I am giving a lecture rather than a sermon.

I will say therefore, finally, that the theme of his Song of Songs, though first dressed in a rich Oriental garb for Israel's thinking, is the grand theme for Gentiles as well as Jews. It is the old

question, and yet always new, of decision between the false outward pleasures and glory of this world and the humble, unattractive service and love of the invisible God. This world, in its seductions of "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," is alluring the soul on the one side, and the King Invisible on the other, unattractively clad as a shepherd, and standing at the heart's door, with his head wet with night-dews, is knocking for entrance.

This is the universal dilemma, underlying the first problem of life, rising up daily in its path and presented as every one's alternative in every age, from the forbidden tree in the garden of Eden, until the shutting of the gate to the tree of life in the celestial city. It is the unavoidable question of earthly living, though put in countless variety of forms. To Adam it was, "Will you obey God or Satan?" and the fruit of the tree hung there as a decision. To the world before the flood it was, "Come thou into the ark!" and the open door stood waiting for their answer. To the Hebrew slaves of Egypt it was, "Follow the Lord God of your fathers or the golden calf of Aaron!" and the long desert journey and the lines of scattered carcasses behind the moving camp told their decision. To Joshua it came as a drawn sword, and the demand, "Art thou for us, or our adversaries?" and he returned it to the camp, brief and sharp, "Choose you this

day whom ye will serve!" David sang it in the hymns of the sanctuary; and Solomon clad the same question in the Eastern exquisiteness of a poem which, perhaps, the Queen of Sheba carried home as a new light among her dark people.

When the King himself, immortal and invisible, came unto his kingdom, he put the same alternative to the curious crowds about him, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly of heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." When he withdrew again to the mountain of spices, he left the same word to his trusty subjects to carry to every creature and urge upon them its hearty decision.

It is the question before all to whom this gospel is now preached — the one question which precedes all others, and, till which is settled, nothing else is settled. You are each as a maiden brought into the courts of a delusive world. Around you are 'the sheen and the glitter and the empty pageants of world-pleasures. On the far-away heights where your being originated, waits, hidden, your true king and Lord. You are between these rival claimants to your heart, your life-service, to choose whether you will become the slave of the world, the flesh, and of sense; or the servant of him who leads his flock into the valleys of spice-gardens and feeds them amongst the lilies.

I have no graver problem to propose to you.

There is none older or more unavoidable. None on whose answer hang more important results. If you will choose heartily to become a servant of the Good Shepherd, you shall follow in the footsteps of a flock whose head has already passed within the heavenly fold, and whose center is now mustering along the way. Its rear ranks have not yet been formed, but it will be — a company which no man can number, gathered all by-and-by in “the green pastures and still fountains of waters.” Will you be with them or no?

MARCH 5, 1882.

V.

ORIGIN OF SALVATION.

Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? I raised thee up under the apple tree: there thy mother brought thee forth; there she brought thee forth that bare thee.—SOLOMON'S SONG 8: 5.

THE meaning of Solomon's Song I read to be, in brief, that Solomon represents the secular earthly kingdom of Israel, and especially its glory as among other monarchies. The Shulamite is the true spiritual Israel, and the unseen Shepherd-lover of this maiden is the God of Israel as her Messiah and Redeemer. The song is a dramatic presentation of the real conflict then going on, whether Israel shall cleave to Jehovah, or be seduced away by the temporal glory of a secular kingdom to be like other nations.

The result in the poem is, that the true spiritual instincts of the chosen people will elect the simple love and worship of the God of Israel to all the glittering magnificence of "even Solomon in all his glory." Such a preference arouses the curiosity to understand why an invisible and lowly shepherd should have such a strange attraction against so grand and prosperous a monarch. It was a

most natural question, and has been asked many a time since, whenever men have preferred the lowly Jesus to a tempting world of pleasure. This inquiry is properly put into the mouths of the dramatic chorus. They ask therefore, "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" To which the Shulamite answers thus enigmatically, "I raised thee up under the apple tree: there thy mother brought thee forth; there she brought thee forth that bare thee."

This is the first of four riddles, or deep problems, which the poem of Solomon propounds for the study of his wise men, and for the wise of all ages who wish to penetrate below the surface and understand the meaning of things that are going on in our world-history. My business now is to do what I can to resolve this problem of the birth of the Beloved under the apple-tree.

If we admit that the Shulamite maiden represents the true Israel of God, and the Beloved on whom she leans is the revealed God and Saviour of Israel, then the question of the chorus points to the wondrous attachment between them as a fact of worthy inquiry, and the answer of the maiden, with beautiful modesty, directs us to the birthplace of her Beloved, as a full solution of her love. We must go, therefore, to the riddle itself, and ponder its language to get our answer to the wonderful love between Jehovah and the

true spiritual Israel. We reach it by three steps of approach, or three facts of differing elevation.

At the first step of ascent stands the apple-tree, as the spot of birth of the Shulamite's lover — Israel's Lord. What can this apple-tree mean?

Suppose I ask you why the universal and popular tradition has been, and still is, that the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden which our first parents ate was the apple? Why an apple rather than a plum or a pear? The Bible gives no hint of the species of fruit, but the popular belief must have had some origin. The fact is, the opinion came to our West from the East, and was found there in Oriental poetry as long ago as the age of Solomon, and long before. In the earliest traditions and mythologies the apple-tree symbolized the birthplace of the race, and was used as a figure for the paradise in which the old nations believed the golden age of the world was spent.

The wise poet-king of Israel, familiar with the traditions of his day, used this symbol for its significance, and therefore puts it into the mouth of the Shulamite to say that her beloved originated in paradise. In simple words, he means that the Jehovah of Israel — our Immanuel — was first revealed in the Garden of Eden, at the time and on the occasion of the fall of man. It was in that hour of dreadful ruin that the Redeemer was brought forth to the knowledge, and within

the clasp, of fallen and guilty man. It was then that the Shulamite found an arm to lean on, and a strength and a guide to come with out of the wilderness in which she would otherwise have been lost for ever. As a well-known poet has tenderly expressed it:—

“Over against His dead
God sat in silence.

But, behold! there came
One, treading softly, to the house of death;
Down from among the angels, thro' the room,
He came, as comes a king, unto the place
Where lay the dead; and He laid His right hand
Of strength on her, and called her tenderly,
Saying, “Arise, Beloved, from thy sleep,
For I will ransom thee by death to life.
Arise, and live.’ And He raised her up
By His right hand, presenting her to God,
All glorious, as one who hath been dead,
But hath found life and immortality.”

— B. M.

I hardly need say how exactly and how grandly this tallies with the plain narrative of that sad time in Genesis! You will recall the facts of the holy and yet intimate fellowship of our first parents with their Creator, while no disobedience had as yet separated them and no Mediator was needed. You remember the first result of their sin, in breaking that communion, and driving Adam and Eve into the hiding-places amongst the trees of the garden. You remember the woful

arraignment of the guilty pair, their condemnation and hopeless banishment from their beautiful first home. But you know it was in this very hour, when expelled into a most literal wilderness, that the idea of a Deliverer from the curse of the fall was made known to them, in the sentence which Jehovah pronounced upon the serpent, the provoking cause of all this mischief. The sentence was the birth-word of the divine plan of human redemption from sin. "I will put enmity between thee [the serpent, which is Satan] and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed ; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

Here was Jehovah-Jesus born. The plan of restoration from the fall was now announced in the Garden of Eden, and under the very trees where the fall took place. It is a grand declaration that the idea of the divine purpose was dropped at that time in the ears of the only two mortals then on earth, and it has since been coming down the ages, often obscured, but never wholly lost sight of, until, in the fullness of time, the Beloved himself stepped into our wilderness for a while, to assure us that the long ago spoken promise of God had never been forgotten in heaven.

There is one misconception of the fact here stated in the birth of the Messiah in paradise which may need to be guarded against. It is that the plan of salvation originated with God, at that

moment of transgression, as a sudden expedient to neutralize an unexpected calamity; as if Jehovah had not foreseen, or expected, Adam would prove disobedient, but that when he did so prove, the idea was begotten of recovering him by a suddenly provided Redeemer in the untoward exigency. But no! it was not his origination under the apple-tree, but his birth, which Solomon expressly distinguishes as there occurring. He was then revealed, brought to light, and came to the knowledge of man as an existence. The Bible distinctly affirms, and many a time, that he was slain from the foundation of the world, or as Solomon, elsewhere, himself says, "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever God had formed the highest parts [the primary particles] of the dust of the world."

He who knoweth all things from the beginning foreknew with perfect distinctness what would be the result of putting spirit into flesh by breathing his own life into the earthly dust of Adam till he became a living soul. And it was no minor part of this material creation, nor after-thought, but one of the chief and first decided ends of it, that the plan of redeeming human souls from the bondage of the flesh should enter into the idea of the creation; and the fact of such help, and so coming, should be made known at the outset of the fall into sin.

Hence the deep truth and solution of the

riddle that the Beloved of the true spiritual Israel was born, that is, first revealed and brought to human knowledge, under the apple-tree of the garden, where and when the sad need itself of a divine Helper first became a fact.

I think, therefore, we have hit upon the solution of Solomon's profound allusion.

It comes to us also as a beam of celestial light across the darkness of that sorrowful hour of triumph of the spirit of evil. The guilty pair come out of their hiding-place among the trees of the garden, with faces astonished, saddened, and enlightened at what they have discovered; and they go, hand in hand, out into the large and empty world, to toil among its thorns, and their multiplied sorrows in their posterity, with one precious remembrance — the pitying love of their Creator in the revelation of a Deliverer from their lying enemy.

They have seen the Beloved, and that revelation was to them a light and a support unto their wandering and often bleeding feet through the nearly thousand years of their pilgrimage. When Abel was killed and Cain fled, and they were alone again, they could still think back to the coming child, which they saw under the apple-tree, who should by-and-by, in the maturity of his strength, grind the head of the serpent under his heel. To the true Israel, all down the centuries, that fact of a Redeemer, although as yet tarrying

amongst the spice mountains, and hid in the outside dewy night, was a bond, and a stimulus to faith which no gorgeous glory of an earthly kingdom could break.

The fervent burst of feeling of the Shulamite therefore came direct from her anxiously longing heart: "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death."

But we have not yet sounded the depth of the riddle.

Notice the manner of the revelation of a Redeemer. There is more than a hint of it in the language of its announcement. "I raised thee up under the apple tree." It is not said, "I discovered thee, I came upon thee under the apple-tree, suddenly and unexpectedly." No; but "I raised thee up," as a nurse raises up an infant, through many weary cares and watchings and studies: answered on the child's part by a slow and oftentimes dubious progress — a development responsive very much to the love and care of the nurse.

The mother who has led infancy through the uncertainties of childhood to manhood knows what it means to "raise up" children. It is after this same way (says the royal poet) that the Redeemer, first revealed as a hint to the first sinners in paradise, has become at last the strong support of the true Church to lean upon on her weary way, coming up out of the wilderness. The Church herself has raised him up.

If I mistake not, there is a great historical fact brought to us in that single word "raised up." It is a fact, also, bringing with it several grand truths for our pondering. The fact suggested is, that the development of the Redeemer of Israel has been slow. Nothing is more true, whether Solomon alluded to this or not.

If we assume that our Bible has the record of all the successive revelations from God of his plan of salvation, then it has been a very slow process of making known to men the way of their deliverance from sin and Satan. The essential fact of a way was given to Adam and Eve; so that I love to think of this first couple of the countless families of the earth as solacing their hearts (always wrung with grief as the fruits of their sin ripened around them) with the faith that a Deliverer would come; and that they leaned on this yet non-manifested Beloved, as they each went down into the valley of the shadow of death and slept in hope. They had a glimpse of the way of forgiveness in the coats of skins which the Lord God taught them to make. They stood by the smoking altar of the dead Abel, with a yet clearer hint of that way of acceptance with God, as through sacrifice. The piety of the godly Enoch was a further suggestion to them for nearly three hundred years, for he was translated only fifty-five years after Adam's death. But how little of the knowledge of Christ, and his salvation

which we enjoy, was known to them in the nine hundred and thirty years of their life! Their Redeemer was indeed to them but as an undeveloped infant of days.

It took more than forty centuries afterward, before the slowly growing conception of the promised seed, and the bruiser of the serpent's head, eventuated into the visible infant, born in the manger under the trees of Bethlehem. Yet it is not to be overlooked that, during all these centuries, the curtain before his presence was slowly thinning and lifting, and the grandeur and glory of his coming work were being made more apparent.

It were a rich study to travel through the sacred record of his revelation, coming slowly and thoughtfully from Adam down to Malachi, and noting the brightening beams of the east as the Deliverer of men draws nearer and nearer to them from the vine-hills and the gardens of spices!

Observe the increasing light of the approaching daybreak in which Noah and Job and Abraham stand. See the first beams which fall on Moses in the Mount of God, and which he brings down under his veil-covered face.

It were a grand journey for you, when you lament your little knowledge of Christ in this noonday of his shining, to go back to the darkness under the apple-tree, when the very idea of a Redeemer was itself hardly born into the minds of

the first sinners. Walk thence with Adam, till you fall in with Enoch; when he is taken up, go sit with Noah in his ark and with Job by his ash-heap; visit Abraham at his tent-door, and hear those old children of the covenant talk in their uncertain way of Him that should come, yet of whom they know so little. It may make your present knowledge seem like the warm sunlight outside of some dark and murky cavern.

One fact, I think, will most forcibly strike you: that the development of the idea of redemption has been controlled by the exigencies of the people of God. It has been the straits, and the struggling prayers of the spiritual Israel, which have enlarged her knowledge of her Redeemer and brought him nearer. It must be so; for the plan of salvation is not a philosophy, to be studied out and comprehended by the intellect,—although it has a philosophy in the deep wisdom of God,—but it is a way of deliverance from sin and death, which can be appreciated only by one who feels the burden and blight of sin upon him, and is anxious to be free.

While you feel no conviction of your ruined state, you have no idea of a Saviour nor of his work. You do not care any thing about this grandest part of the divine government, and you contemptuously say to us, “What is thy beloved more than any other beloved?” You do not hear the evening knocking, nor the solemn undertone of

God's voice of love, which sounds ever more, under all earthly noises, in the ears of all attuned souls. But come you once to a spiritual waking, and you will hear a new voice in the garden, which shall be walking nearer and nearer to you as your heart begins to tingle and cry out for the living God. In your utmost extremity, when your chains are heaviest, you will hear his hastening step, "like to a roe, or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices." It is your anxious need that raises up the soul's Beloved.

It has been so all the way down with the Pilgrim church, as it was with Israel in the desert, when the cloud of the divine presence came down at every dilemma of that people, so often getting into trouble. It has been the exigencies of the church which have clarified, broadened, and brought nearer her knowledge of the slowly revealed Redeemer. Every great emergency of the Old Testament church resulted in bringing some new resource of her Lord into her view. Each of her successive leaders has stood upon a higher elevation, and in a brighter light, and with a broader range of vision, and hence with a distincter knowledge of the Redeemer and his way of salvation.

If you compare the ideas of Moses with those of David, you shall see the growth of the knowledge of Christ during their separating centuries. From David, come to Isaiah! You seem to be

within sight of Calvary and Olivet. His blood-stained hands are on the very handles of the door which opens into the prophecies. "Behold he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, showing himself through the lattice." He is, as the song describes him, a hiding Beloved; but he does appear in his beauty to the troubled dreams of the Shulamite with increasing distinctness, until at last she hears his actual voice in the one short request, "Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it." It is Christ's call to his people to proclaim their knowledge of him, that he himself may hear their recognition of his love and grace.

That call, brethren, is still in force. It is a very tender request to the believer to give his experiences of grace, which he has learned through his spiritual straits and deliverances, to his companions. It is an argument for the conference meeting of Christians, and a hint that their talk and their prayers should be about their progress in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, rather than on knotty criticisms. It is a proof, too, that the Christian should be always learning more and more of his Lord, in his spiritual troubles, so coming into ever brighter conceptions, and a singing of his love with tenderer notes.

But you must listen to one more fact, uncovered

in the opening of this riddle of Solomon. The manifestation of the Redeemer arouses the love of his people. It is an immediate consequence to the Shulamite of coming upon the birthplace of her Beloved and her raising him up, that she exclaimed "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned."

It is one of the wondrous facts of this world, which the skeptic, and the stranger to Christ, can not explain: that so many (of like passions with themselves) should express and show such a pre-eminent devotion to Christ and his cross, in which they can see nothing attractive. The solution of such a love was the point of the profound riddle in the text.

Externally, there is no reason for it. Jesus was but a humble Jew, born in the lowest estate of the nation and of the poorest parentage. He was despised and rejected by his own people and put to a disgraceful death by the Romans. To the sight, "he was a root out of dry ground, without form and comeliness." Why, then, should men be in such a passion for him? The world outside of the charmed circle can give no explanation of

this wonder, more than the daughters of Jerusalem could understand why the Shulamite maiden should repel the throne of Solomon, and long and faint for some plain shepherd of the hills whom they had never seen.

Ah! that precisely is the explanation. The world has not seen the Beloved of the church, and therefore it knows him not; but the church has seen him, and therefore loves him with preëminent devotion. "Unto those which believe he is precious," but they can not describe the binding charm of his heavenly name. Because it is not an intellectual conception of a character, but an inward experience of his salvation from sin.

To some men, the plan of redemption appears only as a theory, a philosophy. They study it as they do a hypothesis of geology.

Having no sense in themselves of the fitness of such a scheme to their spiritual life, they coldly dissect it with the steel instruments of their logic, and the life of course goes out of it. They have before them only a cadaver, a corpse of the gospel, and it is offensive to them. It is as if they met the lowly Man of Sorrows bearing his cross by their doors, and asking them to help him carry the angular burden, and they bluntly refuse him, like the wandering Jew, even a seat under their shade-trees to rest himself.

Christ comes to men, as the plain shepherd of the hills came to the Shulamite, whom the daugh-

ters of the harem despised, because they knew not his real excellence. But to them who can distinguish true beauty beneath homely exteriors, — warmth of pure love and sympathy, — commanding almightiness beneath unpretentious modesty, the Man of Sorrows will appear as “the chief among ten thousand, and the one altogether lovely.”

Finally, the prime requisite which you need to discover the excellency of Christ is a thorough consciousness of your own sinful and helpless moral condition. Driven out of all your refuges of self-fitness for the coming life, and convinced of your certain ruin without some divine rescue, your first ray of hope will come from learning that the Redeemer has infinite love and readiest succor for just such as you, that he came to earth on purpose to seek and to save that which was lost, and that he is waiting only for you to cry to him for help. Then when you come up from the wilderness leaning on him who sought and found you nigh unto death, he will appear no longer as a stranger that tarrieth but for a night, but as the One whom your soul loveth. Thenceforth the more you lean upon him, and feel his loving and mighty support, the more your own trust and delight in him will be developed.

The plan of human salvation, revealed so feebly at first under the apple-tree of paradise, will open up its grandeur in continually new features, till

you shall cry: "Stay me with the fruit of that wonderful tree, for I am overflung with love."

Will you take our poor testimony to the blessed peace and content which a believing heart feels that has so seen the King in his beauty? If not, will you come, as the two disciples, John and Andrew did, and "abide with him till the evening?" When the night-fall gathers, and these things earthly begin to fade out in the coming gloom, how blissful a shelter for your soul will it be under the roof with Jesus, in a home lighted by his glory whose first hint was given under the trees of the Garden of Eden!

MARCH 19, 1882.

VI.

CHRIST A GIFT TO THE WORLD.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. — JOHN 3: 16.

Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift. — 2 CORINTHIANS 9: 15.

IT has been said that if, by some strange calamity, all the Bible were to be utterly lost out of the world save the first of these passages, yet we should have enough left to retain the light and hope of life eternal. This one verse alone has been the door of salvation to many and many a soul, for it expresses the substance and the solution of God's work for our redemption, and is itself a promise strong enough for eternity and broad enough for the whole world. To repeat it is to repeat the grandest of all declarations. To believe it with the simple trust of the heart is to receive Christ unto the salvation of the soul.

Let us turn our thoughts to it, then, if we can all bring ourselves into a loving understanding and a living sympathy with it; and I beg you to mark closely these plainly implied facts, as setting before you this wonderful good news of salvation:

First. Jesus Christ was a gift of God to the world. It is Jesus himself who says this to his evening inquirer.

He often and always spoke of himself as sent by the Father into the world. He told Pilate "to this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth."

Even when he was but twelve years old, he comprehended the fact that he had come to the earth on some errand direct from God, and different from the errand for which others were born into the world. Soon as he reached the proper age, he applied to John for that public baptismal consecration to his special work which was required of the priests. He told his audiences repeatedly (so that it became a familiar fact of him) that he was not here like other men, but had been sent to accomplish a particular work, and was in haste to have it done. So that Jesus understood from his childhood, and always openly claimed it, that God had given him, and sent him into this world for a peculiar object, wholly unlike the errand for which every other human being comes into the world.

Again, in accordance with this fact, his life was unique, separate and solitary from the rest of mankind. Not only his own constant assertions proved this, but the manner of his coming into the world showed that his was, in an emphatic sense, a supernatural and an extra life, given to the world by the special agency of God. He did not come in the line of ordinary generation, for though his mother was indeed the daughter of men, yet his

father was God the Holy Spirit. So that while he had the human birthright that belongs to us all, and the human body and soul of our race, still he did not strictly descend from Adam, although he was the seed of the woman, and therefore he did not belong fully unto the race of mortals that are born and live and die on earth. He was in all points like unto his brethren, and yet he was a separate unit inserted into the series of the human families and unconnected on either side. He was a golden link in the common chain, yet not really belonging to it. Like Melchisedec, he was without father, without descent, having neither beginning of years nor end of life—a sudden comer whence no other man ever before came, and as suddenly disappearing, leaving no successor, nor need of one, for he “finished the work.”

Jesus was thus a separate being, interjected and dropped amongst men, a true gift from God to the world, an extra life added to the race. No law of nature or of natural succession necessitated his coming; born not after the will of man nor flesh as other human births do come, but by the special power of the Holy Spirit, and therefore his being was not owed to the world nor to the laws which determine its population. Hence there was no earthly cause for Christ's birth, no antecedent earthly law which compelled his coming, and no reason for his being born, except that God the

Father had some special work for him to do in this world, and which he sent him in this way, through the common birth-door of other mortals, into the world to do.

Unless you deny the account of his incarnation you must admit that Jesus was in this full sense a direct gift from God to the world—a life super-added to the total life of the world, and utterly superfluous to its population, except as it was a life added to accomplish some result separate and utterly different from the objects for which the rest of the race are born into the world. And this is just the strange and surprising fact which Jesus told to Nicodemus and how much it shows us of the interest which God takes in our race, and to what extent his love to the world is able to go, that God added this Son of man to the legitimate amount of the earth's natural population. He added such a body and soul, and such a life, short though it was—a life so pure and lovely and beautiful—added it as a rare and special gift of his love to the world.

Remember, too, it was his only gift of the kind. No other world has ever had such an extra, divine creation added to its people. Jesus of Nazareth was truly the only begotten Son of God: as John says, "The only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth"; and properly does Jesus call himself the Son of man, because there was no one man whom he could call father, but he belonged

to the whole race. He was the son of humanity, a heaven-sent insertion into the sum of human being; a new, unparalleled, and miraculous gift and super-addition to our earth's population. Why then, we ask, did God give this separate being to the world?

It is plain, if Jesus Christ did not legitimately belong to the natural succession of the human family, but was a special super-addition to it, that there could be no reason whatever for his human existence in the world, unless God had some special work for him personally to do here and for the doing of which alone he sent him. God does not miraculously create extra human lives without any object to be accomplished by them. He does not throw off beings from the finger-tips of his omnipotence, with no further aim or use for them than to show forth his power, letting them fall and meet with what fate they may in forgetfulness.

No, indeed! If there had been no special work for Jesus to do in this world he never would have existed. His life would have been the supposition of a superfluity, such as the infinitely wise God never commits. But Christ was introduced into this world to do a work which was outside of, and entirely different from, as well as impossible to, any human being who belonged to, and came in the line of, the regular generations of men.

And this work was — and we can not mistake it because he himself so often defined it — to seek

and to save that which was lost. As Paul so shortly and so grandly explains it: "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." As our Saviour himself defined it to his evening visitor: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." God created the man Jesus outside of the line of human succession, and entered into the closest and most mysterious union possible with him as the God-man, in order that this same Jesus should give himself, as God had given him, with a mighty sympathy and power, to the work of saving the lost race of men.

And if it had not been that Jesus was to do this special work of our redemption from sin, he would never have existed at all, and there would never have been such a being counted into the sum of existence as our now glorified Redeemer in heaven. Deny Christ's special work, and you leave him without any reason for being here in the world at all. Admit it, and all his history becomes radiant with clearest light and glorious with divinest beauty. Admit that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, "and you have a solution of the greatest work of God, and a door flies open before you through which you can flee from the wrath to come."

With such an assurance that there is a work which Christ is sent to us to do, as important as

such a marvelous coming shall justify, we renew the question, What was that special work of Christ? I need not take much time to explain it.

Jesus himself understood it, talked of it constantly and freely with his disciples, and tried to make his nation understand it. It radiated his whole earthly path, bursting forth here and there with additional brightness; so that the only explanation why all men have not understood it can be that having eyes they see not and hearing they will not understand.

You yourselves have read his life many a time; followed his history from the manger to the cross, till his works and his speeches are more familiar to you than your own past life: and yet perhaps even until now that strange career has never excited any curiosity in some of you to penetrate the secret of its impulses, and to understand the meaning of its painful progress and end.

But the only possible theory is that that solitary and so often sorrowful Son of man came into this world on purpose to suffer and become a sacrifice for our sins. He knew that he came to die when he was but a lad, and thought it over in his little room in the house-top at Nazareth.

When he heard the prophets read on the Sabbath, as he sat by his mother's side in the synagogue, he knew that he himself was the one whom Esaias meant as the "despised, and rejected of

men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief:" who should make his soul an offering for sin. In the dim horizon of his coming life, whenever he looked adown its few years, he could see the dark cloud of agony hanging over the cross, and he knew that his path lay directly through the garden and Pilate's Hall to the Hill of Calvary.

He knew the contempts and the hatreds and the slanderous injustice which would be piled upon him and his memory. But still for this purpose he came into this world; and it was never for a moment in his heart, even when struggling with the temptations and the agony in the garden, to shrink from the cup which the Father had given him to drink.

I confess that we can not of ourselves understand such unyielding and cheerful devotion to such a suffering life. But then, we are not Jesus, nor have we his heavenly origin: nor are we even the followers of Jesus, unless we adore and long to imbibe and have some of the spirit of his self-sacrifice — unless we understand and love and imitate his devotion to his work.

"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." The Father dwelt (permanently abode) in Jesus and he in him. The Word who became flesh was with God, and was God. That Jesus who walked before the eyes of men and seemed to be only man was full of God, and in such mys-

terious oneness with God that he could say: "'T is not I, but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." So near, in Jesus Christ, did God come to men, that when Jesus looked over the crowds at his feet, it was God indeed that was watching them through the eyes of Jesus. And when those eyes wept over Jerusalem, they were the tears of God that fell upon the hill-side of Bethany, for the rebellious city. When Jesus spake it was God that spoke to the multitude, and the thoughts and warnings and the invitations which fell from the lips of Jesus were the very thoughts and calls of God himself.

And when the Jews, no longer able to bear the burning brightness of truth, seized and demanded the crucifixion of Jesus, it was really that God of Abraham in whom they boasted whom they remanded to the cross, and desired a murderer instead to be released unto them. Strange and most wicked infatuation had they understood it, as indeed they might have done! But the princes of this world knew him not, else they would hardly have crucified the Lord of glory! No; they did not, in fact, understand the person or the errand of the Son of God. They did not stop to consider what his coming meant.

They mistook, for a restless and impracticable and useless fellow, him who was with them and yet not of them—who was the only begotten God-man, come to draw them from sin and

destruction, and they cried: "Away with him, crucify him!" Not till Peter explained it, did they see their guilt. Then they cried: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Just as every sinner cries when he learns whom he has resisted. Again we ask, How did Christ accomplish the special work which he was sent to do?

Looking at his life now, simply on the manward side (which is the alone visible side to the world), we see that he first sought an entrance for God into the hearts of men. He went round industriously among the people, making no place his home and center. He entered into their present daily troubles. He healed their sick, and so relieved their hearts of those terrible anxieties which in that age hung around diseases that their rude remedies could not cure. He freed their souls from the burdens of useless religious formalisms, heavy as yokes upon their spirits. He always had a kind word for the abject and despised. Caste made no difference to him. He could eat with publicans and sinners as sociably as with the seven-washed Pharisee.

So he touched the sad and hapless spirits of his time and they opened their hearts to him, and he gave them such a view of the real feelings of God — as so pitiful and loving and full of help — that they followed him by thousands wherever he went, that they might still longer hear the sweet tones of his sympathizing voice. Jesus thus created a

wide, tremulous anxiety and expectation of the nearness of God, so that not a few yielded to the conviction and put all their simple child-like trust in him.

I can not now describe all which Jesus did in his work; but he awakened the souls of men and he dropped new ideas into their minds, scattering them like seed-corn up and down their villages, till the land was full of grave discussions, evoking bitter hostilities on the one side, bold avowals on the other, and collisions, sufferings, and death even, between.

The ideas which Jesus let fall took root in a great many hearts, finally, and are spreading to this day in all the earth, so as no man can measure the harvest once added as a gift of God to the world's regular population.

Never till then had the world known the perfect beauty of a true life; never the lowness to which the love of God could stoop for the lifting up of polluted human souls. And none can now measure the holy lifting power which that despised Nazarene has ever since exerted on men, by his tender familiarity with the dejected and outcast, by his grave and unanswerable rebukes of hypocrisy and self-seeking, by his self-endurance of weariness and want, for the sake of the perishing, and, above all, by his cry for the forgiveness of his insatiable enemies during his dying pains on the cross.

No ; this life of the Son of man was a new element in the world — a breath of purity fresh from heaven — the very heart-life of the Invisible One interpreted through the human. It was God coming down as low as he could come, to our humble, sin-stained door, and knocking to come in, and telling us in acts of tearful sympathy of the inner feeling of his infinite heart, and of his longing for our return to him.

Finally. What, after all, is the divine impulse of this strange gift of such a being and life to the world? Jesus himself understood and told Nicodemus, in words which have not lost their tone of heavenly music to this day: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." Out of that measureless love of God came this rare, this unspeakable gift. It seems to us but a dream that a specially created and uncommon man, "in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," ever walked this world, and touched with his uplifting hand our poor and sin-entangled race! Was there One ever here who had no other object in coming but to save the lost? Who lived to teach us the nature of God, and to bear the guilt of our sins, and to show us the beauty of holiness? Who could not be diverted from his work, and had no leaning to turn from it for any trouble or weariness or shame or suffering which it might bring upon his own head? One whose tender heart was large enough to

take in all the world, with all its degrees of sinning, and could be touched with the most private griefs, and would gladly lift up the most unworthy and helpless? Can it all be? When we read his life in the Bible, are we not dreaming? Shall we not wake to find it all a most disheartening illusion?

I freely confess that this strange way of interpreting the love of God to us, by such an incarnation of Deity in humanity, does sometimes almost seem to be but a grand yet delusive picture of Eastern imagination, and the query will arise, Can such a gospel of divine grace be possibly true? But, when I shut my eyes and listen to my soul's cry within me, and when I reach forth and touch the wounded feet, and when I lift my longing empty heart to heaven, the doubt lifts itself, and I know, and must cry out: "My Lord and my God!"

And here I rest; and the query subsides, and my faith settles calmly on the mystery of Godliness, content; and what need I say more? And what can I say less than to remind you of the problem which this unspeakable gift of God brings to each one of you? If you believe in Jesus as the only begotten — lovingly — you shall not perish but have eternal life. And if you believe, your faith will love to open the door for his incoming grace to enter, and lift you up out of sin and death into life and peace.

MARCH 21, 1875.

VII.

CHRIST THE FIRST-FRUITS.

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.—1 CORINTHIANS 15: 20.

NO spot in our earth—unless possibly we except the Garden of Eden—ever centered about itself so vital and deep an interest at one time as the tomb of Joseph, while the body of Jesus lay in it wrapped in death.

No hours ever passed so anxiously among the angels in heaven, as well as among the few on earth, as while the mighty slumberer waited there motionless and silent, until the third day's dawn. The Roman guards at the door of that tomb knew nothing of the grave problem awaiting solution. The Jewish priests and Pilate gave it no serious place in their thoughts. Even the few disciples in Jerusalem hardly remembered the emphasis which their Master had given to it. They all knew indeed that a most strange and pitiful deed had been done; but none understood its significance or thought what the next event might be.

But those silent night hours were throbbing with the most weighty question which ever waited an answer. The waning moon, just past its full,

looked down through the trees, calm and serene, upon the new sepulcher in the garden, and the sun rose and set, shining all that following Saturday against its stone walls, as it did on other days. The sentinels walked their rounds through the day and through its two bordering nights. Earth gave no sign that any thing unusual was waiting solution. Even the birds sang their ordinary morning and evening hymns in the trees, and to human sight there was no sound and no movement, as if death were fearing an eruption into his impregnable castle.

The sleeper lay still in his grave-clothes and slept on through that night and the next day and through the following night again. The words which he had said — that he should rise again on the third day — were doubtless not wholly forgotten; but they must have been dimly remembered, and perhaps jostled out of thought by the still rocking violence of his death.

If the utterly broken company of his disciples thought of them at all, it was without the dimmest gleam of expectation that they could be literally verified. Their after incredulity showed that they had dared no such expectation, and we can hardly blame them; for it was an event contrary to the unbroken experience of the whole world that one should, by his own volition, rise from the dead. Still their conclusions were not finally settled, and their minds were not entirely calm on the

result, especially among the women, — always the more sensitively responsive to possibilities, — for the first glimmer of the dawn found them on their way into the garden. They at least felt the anxieties of the momentous question awaiting settlement on that third day, however vaguely they apprehended it.

But not only those few in Judæa who personally knew and had heard from Jesus the promise of his resurrection were anxiously waiting what would become of his words, but the highest interests of the whole family of Adam were really, though unconsciously to themselves, quivering on the event of that third morning. The old fathers and prophets and saints of all ages, who had fallen asleep with a hungering instinct that they should wake again some time, as well as the generations who had gone into the unknown without a ray of dimmest light in its darkness — all had actually an interest indescribable in what might occur in that one sealed and guarded sepulcher at Jerusalem. At its stone mouth was to be settled a question of immortality, of all others closest to the hearts of the human race; although none perhaps knew that its answer was then pending in that small garden.

Yes, and more than these were the angels of God and all intelligent souls in the universe concerned in the momentous problem as to what that mysterious sleeper, so scorned, abused, and mur-

dered, will next do, if he ever wake again. All things on earth and in heaven (as is now revealed to us) were hanging upon whether Jesus will, as he promised, rise from the dead. The truthfulness of God, the veracity of the Son of man himself, and the reliableness of all the promises on which the ancient saints through all the ages had laid themselves down to sleep in hope — all these are awaiting confirmation, as truth or a lie, upon the single issue, “Will Jesus rise from the dead?”

Am I not right, therefore, in saying that no so wide and so deep interests ever centered upon any spot in the earth as watched invisibly around that one new sepulcher of Joseph, in which no body had ever before been laid? But we may go a step farther, and say that its pending problem was suspended no longer than absolutely necessary for the letter of the promise.

The body of Jesus was laid in the tomb before sunset, as the law required, on Friday afternoon (of our reckoning time); Saturday passed, the Jewish Sabbath, without a sign; and very early in the morning, as it began to dawn on the following first day of the week, our Lord's Day, or Sunday, his body came out alive again from the sepulcher, thus solving at once and forever all the mighty and far-reaching problems which waited answer on his coming forth. That Jesus did thus actually return to life is a fact established by impregnable evidences, but into these evidences of Christ's resurrection I will not enter.

Paul says in our text, in his wonderful discussion of the resurrection, "Now is Christ risen from the dead"; and the Christian Church, in all the ages since his time, has built its entrance door to our belief upon that fact.

The first day of the week, therefore, has from that very resurrection morning been held as a holy day in place of the then dead Jewish Sabbath, in commemoration of the triumph of Christ over death, so that every Sunday, and not one day alone, is an Easter, singing in its sacred calm: "The Lord is risen indeed! He lives to die no more." That fact remains, and is asserted every Sunday, that Christ is risen from the dead. It can not be taken out of the human belief without rending that belief into irreparable fragments, and utterly dislocating human confidence in all history of past events. No! Christ is risen from the dead and every Sunday declares it. It is because Christianity itself and our faith in it depend upon this fact that we have a weekly commemoration of it in the consecration of the first day of every week.

But to return to the thought with which I started, and to vindicate the vast importance of the resurrection of Christ, let us consider what issues were to be either established or overthrown by that event.

First, was the truthfulness of Christ. Jesus, as you remember, had frequently referred to his

coming death and resurrection as a fact in the near future. He had first privately mentioned it to his disciples, then openly toward the close of his life. It was an event always familiar to his own thoughts, and spoken of as certain to come in its time. So positively did he speak of it that, if it should fail to occur, how could they put confidence in other things which he had said?

There is no need probably to quote these allusions of Jesus, but some are too remarkable to be omitted. It is noticeable that Jesus did not allude to his death even until after that mysterious turn in his history at his transfiguration. "The decease which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem" was the subject on which his holy visitors, Moses and Elijah, talked with him in that strange interview; and no doubt the immediately following event of his resurrection formed a part of their conversation. This whole chapter in his life was then fully in his mind; for Mark says, "As they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead"; and it is not strange, as Mark adds, "And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean." That their Master might die did not surprise them, for the priestly purpose was already heading that way; but the "rising from the dead" was so unprecedented a fact that its

meaning lingered all along as a question in their minds. In reality it lay there, ever and anon arising as a theme of talk amongst themselves until his actual resurrection explained its significance.

As John himself tells us so frequently in his gospel, it was when Jesus, with such apparent rashness, drove the traffickers out of the temple courts, and the Jews, recovered from their first astonishment, asked him: "What sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?" Jesus replied, in those memorable words which afterward formed the excuse for his condemnation, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Neither they nor the disciples then caught his meaning; but John says, with a very touching simplicity: "When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said."

There is a deal of meaning latent in that brief conclusion. They knew then the truthfulness of their Master, and a glowing light beamed back over all. That he had said unto them while yet present with them. It was necessary to their confidence in him that they should have an undoubted and undoubtable verification of their Master's veracity before they went out to preach his gospel to the people. It must too be an evidence which

could not be anticipated nor imitated, nor probable and usual in the ordinary course of things. They knew that their Master died on the cross. They saw him hanging there. They knew his mangled body was put in the tomb and sealed and guarded. They knew he had said confidently that he should rise again. How could a dead man recall himself to life? But Jesus did rise from the dead, as he said. He was, therefore, true to his word and they could confide in him as the teacher sent from God. The step from their desponding to his height of faith seemed so great that they could not at first attempt to scale it. The honest matter-of-fact Thomas would not try it until he could identify his Lord by touching the very prints of the nails and the spear-thrust in the side. But then, his doubts vanished and he cried, "My Lord and my God!" Never after this do you find him or Peter or any disciple doubtful of the perfect reliableness of their Lord.

So then that Jesus Christ is true and trustworthy, honest and sincere, has been established for all ages. If he had not risen as he said, he would have been proved a false prophet and must have sunk forgotten amongst the many of men who promise what they can not perform. But now the blessed fact stands forth, as the only always burning light on these dark shores — that there is one among the sons of men whom we can believe and follow as true and worthy of our trust.

Again, second, the Resurrection of Christ confirmed the truthfulness of the doctrines which he taught. Our Lord himself gave this coming event as a confirmation of his mission from God. To the Pharisees who demanded a sign, or proof of Messiahship, from him, he said, "No sign shall be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

While the Jews blundered over this, the logical and clear-minded Paul pivoted the truth of the Christian doctrines which he preached upon the fact of Christ's resurrection. In his memorable argument to the Corinthians, he says, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ." The argument is valid and strong, that the truthfulness of Christianity rises and falls with the resurrection of its Founder. He had given to the world this event as the critical test of his doctrines. If it failed, his claim to the world's attention and belief failed also. If he did rise as he said, it confirmed all his teachings, from his sermons on the mount to his last promises at the supper and to the dying thief at his side on the cross.

Jesus brought from the grave on that first

Lord's day morning, the signature of God endorsing the veracity of all which he had said of the divine purposes in the salvation of men. We read, therefore, with full confidence of belief the grand words with which Paul opens his letter to his Hebrew brethren: "God . . . hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things." So that the resurrection of Christ not only vindicates to us the claims of Jesus as the Son of God, and the promised Messiah, but also seals to us the truthfulness of his message, as being the very truths of God to which we do well to take heed.

No wonder, therefore, that there is such a struggle of skeptic doubt and hostile criticism against this one fact, of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is the strategic point in the kingdom of God.

It is the gate fortress which must be carried before that kingdom can be overthrown, and its king Immanuel be discrowned. Give that fact of the resurrection of Christ up and all is surrendered. Hold it, and you retain the strong tower of the name of the Lord. Paul, therefore, writes in emphasis: "Now is Christ risen from the dead."

We can imagine the glow which shone on his face while his pen was in his hand and he looked up toward the third heavens, where he had heard things unutterable, and may be seen the very nail-marked hands of that Jesus who had stopped him

among the groves of Damascus with the question which brought him to his knees. It all filled his soul, and he wrote in the sentence (in capitals no doubt, if you could see the original letters), "Is Christ risen from the dead"; and the light of that fact not only confirms and illuminates all the glorious truths and promises of Redemption, but its rays shoot forward also down the ages, brightening the anxious faces looking heavenward for a promise of pardon, and all the gloom of deathbeds and graves of God's people as they have shut their eyes and laid themselves down to sleep.

The text further shows that these two ideas glowed in the mind and heart of the apostle, because they slip off together from his pen while he is writing. Did you notice their close connection? I have a few minutes only to show it. Let us lift up the text again to notice. "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept."

A third fact, therefore, is confirmed to us by the resurrection of Christ: It is both the assurance and the sample of the bodily resurrection of all saints, and indeed of all the dead of humanity.

Our common English version fails to give exactly the thought which Paul wrote. "Slept" is the past participle, "having slept." Christ by his resurrection became the first-fruits of those having slept; that is, both before his death, and since, and also before, their own resurrection.

And again, that word "first-fruits" is somewhat enwrapped in obscurity unless you recall the ancient Hebrew festival of the wave-offering, when the first and earliest sheaf of the coming harvest was brought to the temple and waved before the Lord as both a thankful acknowledgment and a promise of the ingathering of all the sheaves to follow from the thousand hills and valleys of Palestine. That first sheaf held, clustered about it and bound up in it, the hopes of the fathers and the children of all the families of Israel for their coming summer and winter bread.

It was the evening before the passover that a deputation from the Sanhedrin had culled that sample sheaf from the gardens outside the walls of Jerusalem (while Jesus was still sleeping in the garden of Joseph); and on the morning after the passover (the precise time when the risen Jesus was presenting himself to his disciples again), that sheaf was brought to the temple and waved before the Lord. The coincidence is not accidental; God knew the inner meaning of the ceremony of a thousand years, buried all that while to the dull exterior Jewish sense.

But to us its husk has shredded off, and we have ripened divine grain, as a warrant that all so buried human seeds shall spring up to immortality in the harvest at the end of the world. The coming resurrection of the dead is, therefore, as sure to us as the past resurrection of Christ "and the

first-fruits of the having slept." We do not argue it. We take the general resurrection with all its, to us now, impenetrable obscurities as a divinely sealed fact. We do not try to explain the resurrection of the body, we look at that "first-fruits," glowing in immortal identity with the earthly Son of man that suffered and died for us, and we say, "As was the earthly, so also is the heavenly." "As he rose from the dead, so all his followers must."

I can just allude to another fact. The text illuminates another problem of our future, and, as the doubting Corinthians, so do we ask: "How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?"

That golden sheaf of the first-fruits, sample of all the sheaves to follow, answers; as Paul tells the Romans: "If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection," and Paul's heart was so full of this fact that he says to the Corinthians: "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." And still later to his beloved Philippians he writes: "We look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." That all-conquering energy of Christ scatters and breaks every objection; and

we follow the risen Lord as the pattern of our own resurrection state in the hereafter. We study all that was visible of him, and comfort ourselves together that, through this window of light, we can see through its glass darkly into that great congregation which we are soon to join and to resemble.

But I can now only lead you to this window and leave you here to look and learn: that is, if you are bearing his earthly image. If not, you need immediately to find him in his loving and holy life, and at his cross give yourself to him that you may be like him in soul now, so as to become like him in body hereafter. And I can not help saying: it is pitiful that you do not stir yourselves to this spiritual transformation — now, before death ends all chance of being born into the new life! What can I say or do that will wake up you neglecters to the mighty and endless consequences depending upon your own decision? Must some thunder-voice of calamity strike you out of sleep to hear the call of that risen Lord now speaking from heaven? or will you now attend to his Word and believe?

APRIL 13, 1884.

VIII.

INNER STRENGTH OF CHRISTIANITY.

Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.—NEHEMIAH 4: 3.

THIS impudent Tobiah was a slave and a sycophant of Sanballat; always at hand to excite his master's hostility against the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Sanballat himself was some small officer of the Persian king stationed at Samaria to keep its mixed population in some kind of order. He became instantly hostile to the mission of Nehemiah as a rival, and did all in his power (instigated and kept hot by this Ammonite slave) to perplex and thwart the resettlement of the Jewish capital. Nehemiah, protected by the Persian king's firman, could not be more directly attacked, and Sanballat had, therefore, to resort to the mean arts of ridicule and the stirring up of factions among the Jews. His bitterness was so intense that he even married his son into the Jewish high priest's family for the better advantage; and Tobiah followed the same policy to secure himself rooms in the temple itself, which Jehovah had forbidden an Ammonite to enter

forever. It was a bitter time indeed that Nehemiah had ; but it brought out brightly the grand character and patriotism of that noble rebuilder of Jerusalem, their holy city.

In Tobiah's contemptuous figure of a fox throwing down their stone wall by his weight lurked a bitter hatred of the divine worship which that wall was to enclose. It reveals, too, the contempt of that period to the reëstablishment of the monotheistic and then only revealed religion. Not only in those earlier times, but in all ages since Christ, there have been Tobiahs and Sanballats many, who have regarded and spoken of Christianity with the same supercilious irony. They have felt, if not said, of the Bible, the Church and its institutions, and indeed of all the forces with which Christianity is trying to redeem and elevate the world : "Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall."

Christianity does indeed present an unimpressive front to the world as measured by the claims and promises it makes. Nothing seemed more quixotic than the words of Jesus when he neared the cross : "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." It was contrary to all human ideas of forces, that this lowly Jew, rejected by his own nation and hanging on the cross, the object of their scorn and jeers, without a follower of courage enough to stand by him

then and there — that he in such a plight should “draw all men unto him.” It was, to human appearance, a most insane commission which was given to his few disciples, called together on a mountain in Galilee, to “go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.”

How absurd, for example, it seemed to send one man — Paul — against whom the highest court of his nation had hurled its anathemas, alone into the rich, idolatrous cities of Asia Minor, to preach among them “the unsearchable riches of Christ”! We do admire the courage of the lonely apostle, when stoned and left as dead outside of one city, pushing on to another, knowing that “everywhere bonds and imprisonments awaited him.” But still we are disposed, from a worldly view, to pity the poor man’s sure disappointment and fate. When he sets out across the border of Asia to go into the cultured cities of Greece, full of philosophers, logicians, and artists, what can he do toward turning them from these vanities to serve the living God? and when to escape a mob of his own countrymen he appeals to Cæsar and starts in a corn-ship for Rome, what fate can he expect other than a short shrift from the lions of the Coliseum? Is this the agency to lift Christianity and plant it on the grave of Paganism as the religion of the whole earth? Surely, “if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.”

Yet it has been the same story in all the ages:

that, whenever an exigency of sin and darkness has come over the earth, and the last torches of divine light have been flickering in damp and mephitic corners, the selected agent to bring back the scattered people of God and rebuild Jerusalem has always been of the same humble and unpretentious character. The ruined walls have been begun in corners, and the pieces of separate builders have been joined together. Always in the beginning of every true reformation, it has been a day of small things. . Luther made no pretence and had no idea of the mighty stir he was beginning. It looked when he started out alone to defend his theses that a fox might throw down his wall. So, too, was it when Tyndale, and Penry, and Barrowe, and Greenwood began to talk in the back-rooms of London about "the liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free"! And their few brethren had to meet in by-ways to pray together, with a watchman on a hill to warn them of the coming of the bishop's constables. What a puny show it was at Delfthaven, when the hundred Pilgrims — men, women, and children, and servants all told — took ship for this wild America, where they might, for a little while, find liberty to worship God! Yes; such humble fashion! — weak to human sight and to be overthrown easily enough.

Considering what Christianity claims and what it proposes to do, and then looking at the appli-

ances and agencies it brings forward for its work, it is not singular or unnatural, to those ignorant of its forces, to cry out with the contempt of Tobiah's "Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall." For look how the Christian program must appear externally! What is Christianity as a world-transforming force? — claiming to come by-and-by into universal acceptance and obedience, so stopping the bloody conflicts of nations and bringing their different races into a peaceful brotherhood; purifying society from its crimes and vices and all its self-ruinous indulgences; stopping the dram-drinking and the home quarrels, dispelling the ignorance and envy and feuds between classes; opening selfish hearts for the outflow of loving and helpful benevolence — what is to do all this still undone and almost unattempted work after eighteen hundred years of endeavor? What is the agency Christianity is to use? Condensed into a single answer, it is the Word of God — the Bible, no more and no less!

The truths this book brings are to be accepted, believed, loved, and obeyed, man by man; and these hearty and fast-rooted faiths are to turn this world into a garden of the Lord. One book and whatever comes out of it!

And what can there be in this oldest of books, written some of it by a shepherd who had to flee, as a homicide, into the wilderness of Horeb for his

life; some of it written by the boy-king of a little kingdom not larger than New Hampshire, who mostly sang of his own private joys and mourned his own secret sins; some of it written by prophets who wore sackcloth for the degeneracies of their day, and who, more than one of them, had to hide from the anger which their rebukes and predictions excited; some of it written by wandering preachers jostled and driven from town to town, and all of whom save one only was put to death on account of their teachings? And this was all written hundreds of years ago in the obsolete imagery and statement of ancient times. What force of vitality can still be left in such an antique medley of history and poetry and teachings of peoples long since passed away? why is not the Bible very like a wall which a fox might throw down?

So are the skeptics and the agnostics and the critics now exclaiming as from the tops of their hillocks they look contemptuously on the furlongs of low wall piled along in scattering lines here and there around and through the kingdoms and cities and villages of the earth. In their confidence, they have sent out many foxes to upset these walls of Christian defence and attack, and are still saying that the old religion of the apostolic time is toppling, and you shall shortly see the gaps widening and the cracked and mossy stones tumbling down into the ditches. But these stones do not

yet quake or fall under their foxes' feet! Indeed, stone after stone somehow rises upon the wall and it all looks farther from breaking down than ever. Some gaps have appeared, with great shoutings here and there, but the wall still grows really, both in length and height.

In plain and sober sense, What is the strength of Christianity? Why does it still stand and grow strong under all the weight of all the foxes which are running over it? What is there in Christianity or about it, or behind it, that gives it such a grip of continuance against all the hostilities and negligences tugging to throw it down? What that gives it such a penetration and spreads its grasp on the hearts and beliefs and lives of men?

Excluding now all outside and invisible agency in the wonderful result, can we detect some of the visible forces in, and peculiar to, Christianity which give it a vitality and power so amazing?

I may claim that Christianity, or the Bible as its depository, secures the convictions of all to its truths. Paul claimed this fact as the sole solution of his wonderful success among the Corinthians, "By manifestation of the truth he commends his message to every man's conscience in the sight of God." (And he says often, "We speak that we do know and testify that we have seen.") The truths of Christianity, when plainly and simply set forth in their own undecorated purity, must,

and do, secure the inward convictions of men. If you can get the plain truth of God past the ignorance and the misconceptions and prejudices of men, and into their minds, they can not refuse to believe it. There is such an affinity between truth and the human mind, as God made it, that the two in contact have to coalesce in acceptance. The inner consciousness, or moral instincts, or whatever you may call the inside receptivity, is made to receive the truth. Hence, whenever the gospel is presented in its native plainness, nothing but a density of ignorance, or a will of refusal, can exclude its belief. It is not the ornaments of rhetoric nor the graces of oratory, though these do attract attention and allay suspicions, but it is the truthfulness of the gospel to the human mind which opens its way to the soul. Even the devils, who hate the truth with implacable hostility, still believe it and tremble at the attitude into which it puts them. And men sometimes rage at what they can not deny, as did the Pharisees against the preaching of the Lord of truth himself. The gospel, therefore, has this ally on its side, in the spontaneous and irrepressible convictions of men to its truth.

They find it "hard to kick against the pricks." Hard to oppose what they know inwardly to be true! Voltaire said in his last hours: "O Nazarene, thou hast conquered!" Charles IX., who commanded the St. Bartholomew Massacre, died

in great anguish at twenty-four years, haunted by visions of the slaughtered Christians and terrified by dreams of the vengeance of the Lord for his crimes against his God and truth. Multitudes in Christian communities are restless, full of discussion and bitterness against Christians, especially when they are conscientious and faithful Christians, because they inwardly feel that Christianity is true. Their debating about religion is more to fortify their own externalism than to persuade adherents — unless it be that misery loves company. The Christianity of the gospel, therefore, must hold its own in the earth, and spread too, while it carries in itself the power of conviction of its opponents; silencing them or converting them into friends and advocates, as it did Saul, and Augustine, and Constantine, and thousands of others once opposers.

But, second, Christianity satisfyingly answers the questions which all men are asking.

The human soul, stepping out of nothing into this earthly twilight, with only its moral instincts to guide it, must be constantly asking questions. It is not only surrounded with problems, and walks along by closed doors, but it stands on the edge of thickets of darkness that give no reply to its hails for light and guidance. The world has been asking questions from the beginning, and sages have been trying to solve them, some this way and some that, till the air

is full of contradicting answers of contending schools crying to the sons of men each: "This is the way!" "Lo, here!" and "Lo, there!" till the earth is in a wrangle, like the crowd in the town-house at Ephesus. But the more part care rather to gain followers than to learn the actual truth. Paul, standing among the philosophers of Athens, was a type of the entrance of the gospel of Christianity among men. It can answer the anxious questions and solve all the problems of the life that now is and of that which is to come. It makes no pretence to teach science or politics or historical literature, but it does tell men what they "must do to be saved," and tells them with a final authority.

You can take this precious Word of God and find in it a clear and illuminating answer to all the questions which most perplex and distress the world. Do you ever ask, with a puzzled mind, How and why you came into existence? You can get a full answer here. Do you ever ponder why you are so often confused and thwarted in your plans, grieved by losses, upset by disappointments, hedged into paths you do not like, or must walk in with sore feet? This book will explain your life-troubles. Or, do you sometimes dread the still-locked future—the close wall of darkness that encloses the next life, and sink under the self-condemnation that you are not fulfilling the end of your being, nor even meeting the de-

mands of your own sense of duty? Christianity stands waiting to tell you how these burdens can be loosed from your spirit, and how you "can run and not be weary, and walk and not faint." Does your broken and tired heart ever ask for a deliverer strong enough to lift your feet out of the horrible pit of sin, and the miry clay of evil and adhesive ways of life? Do you ever want a Saviour to come in with liberty and light and gladness into your heart, and you know not where to find him?

Dear troubled souls, this word has the full directions just upon its tongue-tip, and you have only to ask and you shall receive — only to "seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Wonderful gospel of the wisdom and grace of God! full of answers to all the troublous queries which vex human souls! What wonder if it have a hold and a power upon men who think at all sensibly upon their life in the earth! It may lie to-day unopened on your tables, while all outside things are going smoothly, and your soul is riding easy, as in a sleeping-car, through the nights of your journey toward the unknown land, but when you shall wake with a collision, or be started out of your dreams of peace by the clash of some calamity, or are startled by the specter of some anxiety, then there is none to go to for answer and calm, but this your now neglected Word of God.

I have seen it scores of times, and I know there is no book but the Bible for light in "the days of darkness which are many." Walter Scott told his son-in-law, Lockhart, in his last hours, to bring him a book. "What book?" asked the young man. "There is but one book!" answered the dying author of so many volumes.

It is this fulness of light and life which has kept a place for the Word of God in the libraries and on the private tables, and in the hands of men, because it answers their gravest questions in their sorest needs. They will not throw overboard their compass on the dark lee-shore, though they may not consult or steer by it in the open sea and sunshine.

But, third, Christianity brings the helpful sympathy which all men need and sometimes tearfully want. It strikes me as a most beautiful sample of the tender spirit of the gospel, when the adulterous woman, all her accusers having gone out without a word or a look of pity to her, was left standing before the Saviour. It was a critical moment of testing the spirit of the gospel in its Master. Shall the Great Teacher add his condemnation to break down the last prop of the woman's hope? Shall he be the inexorable judge? Lifting his head — when the last scudding footsteps had died away along the passage — he looked at her, crouched and trembling in guilt, with those pitying eyes of his, and

said simply, sympathetically, "Neither do I condemn thee : go, and sin no more."

It is the very way of the gospel among men guilty and condemned by their own conscience, if not by their neighbors. It brings the sympathy of heaven to beleaguered and fleeing human souls. This is the very spirit and essence of Christianity — loving to help all who want help, no matter how badly damaged, how shattered, how broken and disconsolate. Christianity stands by the wayside of the sons of men with tear-wet eyes and reaching hands, and sings : —

"Come, ye disconsolate, where'er you languish,
Come to the mercy-seat, fervently kneel ;
Here bring your wounded hearts, here tell your anguish ;
Earth hath no sorrows that heaven can not heal."

Remember that Thomas Moore wrote this out of his own heart, and do you think the rest of the world will ever let the melody of such a tender call die out of its "Songs in the night" ?

Will the love of God in Christ Jesus, which has a million times irradiated the darkness of utter discouragement, which has lifted up thousands of prostrate ones and set them on the Rock of Ages and put a new song of joy into their mouths, which has tenderly held up the steps tottering down into the valley and shadow of death, — will that love of God in Christ ever lose its power and be forgotten, so long as earth is

this side of eternity? No! There is a power in love which never loses its charm, and which grows dearer as its need strikes sharper.

Fourth. Christianity supplies the character on which every thing rests. It is not man's nature to be always a babe prone upon its palms. He is under a law of growth, bodily, mentally, and spiritually. His body is a mere staging which falls away soon; but the man himself within grows on without present visible limit. Grow he must, in intellect and heart; but he grows now under perversions and torsions and leanings from uprightness. His natural foundation of character is dislocated and awry, and he will grow on it distorted, unsymmetrical, and ugly in the sight of the pure. Man's corner-stone needs relaying. He must have a new foundation, a tried corner-stone under all; and then he must develop symmetrically upon it to reach the stature of a perfect man — a full and beautiful structure to the eye of his Maker.

The world has been, and is, full of distorted caricatures of men — misgrowths, monstrosities, wracked and wrenched out of perpendicular, pitching at all angles or prone along the ground, like the handless Dagon broken across his threshold. But the world needs (and never so much as now in its life) perpendicular men, even balanced on level and firm foundations, who can not be pushed nor drawn nor twisted from the right.

The world is going to ruin for want of them — men that “shall make up a hedge and stand in the gap before God and the land,” such as God tried to find and could not in Israel in Ezekiel’s day.

Now, there is nothing but a hearty faith in the gospel — living in it and growing out of it — which can grow such men of uprightness and integrity. It alone makes the man who “fears God and eschews evil,” whom you can count on and tie to in the tides and upheavals of society. You know always where to find him — close by the truth of God and in the way of right. Other men, without the Christian character, may be in the right and may be not. They will usually be found where self-interest is. Now, as it is the “gap-men” who are always wanted in exigencies, so surely will Christianity find its demands in the earth to furnish such men.

I might add that Christianity stands in the earth because it brings the hope which all men sometimes want. Man must have hope. He gives up and fails always without it; but the world-hopes, made of its poor timber, break always under the tests which alone should prove them valuable. Christianity alone promises us an escape from sin and a victory over our enemies. It must, therefore, live in the earth, so long as men are “prisoners of hope.”

When “death shall be swallowed up in victory,”

hope will end in realization, to them who have drawn their life from Christ in God. This last is the essential condition.

Remember Christianity is not an external thing, like a vehicle to ride easy in — not a wrapper. It is a life; a conformity to Christ; a loving obedience and copying of him. Once you come into this new life and you stand in new relations to the universe. “Old things pass away,” and you become “a new creature,” never to die. You begin a career upward toward God, which has no end forever. It is, therefore, the most important question you will ever meet. Shall you change to this new life and be infilled with this glory of a being that can never grow dim?

Nobody can answer it for you!

OCTOBER 12, 1884.

IX.

EXISTING ANTAGONISMS APPROVED OF GOD.

I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.—GENESIS 3: 15.

SO is Jehovah represented as saying to the serpent after the fall of man. Whatever theory we may adopt to explain the introduction of sin into the world, there is no doubt about the facts at the base of the biblical explanation. Sin did come into the world, and death by sin. The sensuous temptation, from whatever quarter it came, did triumph over the inexperience of the first man, and his disobedience did bring with it antagonisms which have not subsided unto this day. They are coëxtensive with the race, and show themselves to be waged wholly round about the race.

The main point of the text is to explain the origin of these hostilities, of which man is the unhappy object, but the explanation is valuable to us only as we comprehend the enmity itself, so accounted for. Our study of the text, therefore, compels us to these two inquiries:—

First. The enmity existent in the world.

Second. God instituted, and approves of, this enmity.

To an utter stranger passing through this world and looking only on the surface of things as he goes along, there would not probably appear any antagonisms. Things seem on the outside to have but one general movement, and the struggle, when there is any distinguishable, is apparently only to get on faster than others. But when you look sharply into the actual motive forces in the world, I doubt not the amount of conflict and collision, and even enmity, will appear simply astonishing. It will reveal itself that there are two powerful forces at work, and in opposite directions, of which man is the victim. They are operated by two influences or agencies most diverse, and tending to most opposite results, so that the world is very far from being the quiescent mass which it seems to be, and the race of men is very far from moving harmoniously in any one direction. All within him and about him is in collision, and he, poor man, is body, soul, and spirit, in a strait betwixt the two.

Let us begin with the more obvious and simple hostilities.

First. There is antagonism between matter and mind — the body and the soul. A kind of enmity exists in their very nature. One is of the earth earthy; the other is of the Lord from heaven.

The body is subject to the laws of matter. It is material, heavy, inert, and always tending to decay. In its best estate it is altogether vanity. Of itself alone it is no higher than a shrub, a clod, and returns in a little while to the dust from which it was taken, whenever the spirit leaves it to itself. All its tendencies are downward to its material origin, but even when animated by its reluctant partner, the soul, it can not put off its nature, but draws forever away from the upward tendencies of the spirit. We are so used to this down-dragging weight that we do not much appreciate it, but really, what an opposing hindrance the body is to all which our inner and true self aspires after! It can not travel any distance without external conveyance and long intervals of rest. How we would like sometimes to roam at will over all the world, so full of the wonderful displays of the skill and majesty of God, but the body says: "No, I can't go." How we would like to sit and read and think of all the grand things which are hidden in the yet unknown, or floating in the skies of the possible, but the body soon breaks the chain of thought and demands that it shall be attended to. We are its servant, and it tyrannizes over us completely. It will not sit still with us an hour, but it begins to prickle and ache, and drives us up out of our thinking to walk it about, to give it to eat and to drink, or to let it lie down and sleep.

But the soul has no such weaknesses or wants. It has its limitations indeed, but they are mostly the walls which hem it in from without. If it had no body it could run and not be weary, and walk and not faint.

The ancients had a punishment for murder, in which they tied the corpse of the slain upon the back of the criminal, and made him carry it wherever he went as long as its bones would hold together. It sat with him, and slept with him, until he died of the pestiferous burden. But there was a hardly less antagonism between him and his load than between the body and the soul. What, indeed, might we not do if we were disembodied! And what shall we not do when this mortal shall have put on immortality!

Second. There is antagonism between the world's drift and the spirit's natural aspirations.

Taking this world as it is (under the occupancy of fallen man), the main drift of it is downward.

It was supposed until lately that on the coast of Norway was a maelstrom, or a vast whirlpool, whose outer circles extended miles away from the shore, and that a vessel coming within the reach of its far-reaching whirls would be so swerved from its course as to be caught in their sweep, and, unless the seamen awoke immediately to their peril, the vessel would be wheeled about in ever-narrowing circles until escape was impossible, and they would all be carried down into its tumul-

tuous vortex. The world has such a vast sweep toward a complete engulfment of the soul and all it carries. It is quite imperceptible in its beginnings, but when it is felt it has become too strong to be resisted by the soul alone. I am not speaking in exaggerated metaphors. We are more or less conscious of such a worldly influence. The spirit of the world, as well as the friendship of the world, is enmity against God. I mean the animus, the atmosphere, the surrounding influence, the whole moving-forces of the business, the society, and the feeling of the world, are hostile to the proper aspirations of the spirit.

Fastened as we now are within the body, we have to care for it. We must eat and drink and be clothed, and to do all this takes the larger part of the time and skill and study of most of us. It is part of the curse of the fall, and it develops the hostility which God then put between the flesh and the spirit. But the peril and evil of it is that we become more interested in caring for the wants of the body than of the soul, and are gradually but surely absorbed and carried down in the maelstrom of our earthly temptations.

You know how difficult it is to be diligent in business, and not become filled with it. How hard it is for you to shut to the closet door so tightly that thoughts of business will be excluded and the world not get in! How hard it is to lock the store or shop so closely that its goods

will not follow you into the house of God! It demands a constant, sedulous resistance and an unflinching watchfulness not to be caught and carried away by the ceaseless drawings of worldly affairs. They are as constant and strong as the current of a deep and swift river.

It is so even when your secular matters move on successfully. How much stronger the tide becomes when they are perplexed and entangled! Some are driven to insanity, and not a few to suicide, and many drawn into crime, by the pressure of their worldly complications. These days are full of illustrations of the mighty force of the world's drift which has carried men whom we considered stable as rocks down stream to destruction. There must be a mighty power pressing against the true upward development of the soul of man, an antagonism in the world's spirit, ceaseless and relentless. It does not necessarily belong in the world—else God has mistaken in fitting the world for the spiritual culture of his children: but as a man is naturally, he turns this world-force against himself to his destruction. He does not stem it and grow strong by resistance. He yields to it and comfortably floats with it away from God and until he passes out of sight of heaven.

Third. There is antagonism between the evil passions of men and the steadiness of a conscientious will.

Our moral nature was made to reach out after God, and go on toward him by the steady step of a ruling determination. God is the Father of our spirits, and it is as natural for the soul to aspire to him as for any child to long for its father. There is in every heart a dull longing for God. It is often a very blind longing — a child crying in the night, but it is in the human nature. In the lowest and most corrupted you can find, there is a tender spot somewhere, which the finger of God once touched, that longs for the touch again, and for the sweet words of Christ: “Thy sins are forgiven thee.”

The veriest drunkard has times when he thinks of his pleasant boy-days, and wishes that his cursed vice could be flung off and he could see his old mother again and feel her arm about him. No; the soul can not forget its home and its longings for the blessedness it once knew. Now, if there were no opposing forces within the soul, and if those still lingering aspirations in the nature of man, and the still living conscience in the nature of man, could be let alone, they would creep their lame and slow way on in the line of the soul's true wants, and man's nature would finally get on its feet and go home to his Father's house.

Man's mental nature is not ruined; his sense of right and his wishings for a betterment are not dead utterly. His conscience has not fallen with

his heart, but there is antagonism in him, from a selfish passion for independence of God, and a willfulness against obedience to his sense of right. He is therefore internally, as Shakespeare says, "Like to a kingdom in insurrection," or as the Bible defines it, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other."

In the sober quiet of his evenings he thinks that he chooses the good and right, and he resolves that he will be to-morrow what he ought to be. He will turn-over a new leaf, put his temptations under his feet, and walk on in the way he should go, compelling the evil movings within, by an unyielding hand, to be quiet; and to-night they do lie down still and pretend to sleep. But to-morrow (perhaps you know from experience) the first event ruffles the calm of his temper and his passions burst forth in full mouth upon the frightened soul.

Every man has some predominant passion that is a special antagonist to all the steady resolves of his will. It is the concentration and top-fruit of his temperament, always with him and never dead. Sometimes it sways him permanently like a strong and steady wind, and he grows with a lurch to the leeward, like a tree on the hill-side always exposed to one breeze; sometimes it comes like a blast, suddenly and mightily, and lays him helpless at his full length.

But, whether the ruling passion be strong and steady or fitful and gusty, it none the less opposes his true growth into the image of his heavenly Father. It is an antagonistic element in him — the weakness of his character — the power that turns him out of the way. Calling it inborn depravity, or what you will, does not neutralize its destructive power nor excuse the sin of its influence. And the worst of this antagonism of the evil passions is that even a regeneration by the Holy Spirit does not annihilate them. It breaks their continuous tyranny, but does not take the soul out of their territory. It can not. They are a part of man in this life — “the body of this death” — which the renewed man must fight against and overcome as much as he can and as long as he lives. But he has this to comfort him: the promise that God will somehow eliminate every fragment of his evil, fallen nature in the life to come, and he shall there know a liberty for which he sighs in this world in vain. If he can keep his foot upon the neck of his passions, if he can fling them when they rise against his obedience of right, if he can be getting the better of them every time with less and less struggle, he may encourage himself with the belief that he is “fighting the good fight of faith,” and will finally come off conqueror and “more than conqueror through him that loved us.”

But the misery of it is that he too often

cowardly lets his besetting sin have the reins and even secretly enjoys the ride down hill.

Fourth. There is antagonism between the false and the true.

This is not merely a contrast of nature, but a direct and intentional hostility. Darkness hateth the light, and falsehood hates truth. If you calmly and rationally look at things, you can discover no reason why all men should not be supremely anxious to learn always and only the exact truth about every thing in every direction. Truth is the only thing worth knowing in this world, and the only thing safe to know.

A seaman steering across the ocean has no interest to be persuaded that a fog-bank is the land, or that a low-lying cloud is the forerunner of a fair wind. He wants to know only the facts, and steer by the facts. The passenger who comes up and persuades him by his pretended knowledge of the coast that the ship is off soundings when she is directly among the circling reefs is the bitterest enemy the pilot just then has. Far more, as heaven is better than any harbor on our whole earthly sea-coast: so is the gospel truth, and nothing but the truth, the alone proper or right or useful thing to know in this life.

Every man's reason tells him so, and yet men will snatch up their opinions on the gravest subjects along their way without the least examination of their correctness or value — content if

they have an opinion, without knowing if it be true.

When men have once adopted a fallacy, it is strange how they will cling to it and defend it! They repel any queries into its soundness. They refuse any inlook to its foundations. They resent doubts and contradictions, and, for consistency with their self-confidence, will rather go down to perdition with a lie in their right hands than to confess that they have been mistaken. Can one take up a falsehood or a prejudice without bearing the marks of its contact? Can a man handle pitch and not be defiled?

When we remember that only one side of a proposition can be true, and that every truth flings out the branches of a thousand practical applications, — that it is like a lamp whose beams flow in all directions and light up every object, — it is one of the strange results in this world that so many and so strong diversities of opinion exist, when half of them must necessarily be false.

How can a falsehood circulate so much faster and wider than the truth? Why do men admit so readily an accusation of guilt against a brother man, especially a church member, and be so slow to allow that the accused may be innocent? Why do men love to tell a scandal more than report a good deed? Why do men seem inclined to believe a lie and reluctant to admit a truth? Is it the outcome of their own self-consciousness? Is it

the sign of an adherent antagonism between truth and falsehood, in which man is deluded on to the wrong side?

I am sure, when you look at the interests which every man has in knowing the exact truth, especially on the issues of his life hereafter, and at the fact that no sincerity of belief in falsehood will arrest the ruin of mistakes, you will believe that some evil spirit of hostility to man has entered the world, and that truth has not a fair and unprejudiced chance to present itself to men. There is a direct and active hostility of error against truth which too many have no inclination to detect and resist and too many have a predisposition to accept.

But this enumeration of hostilities would be incomplete if I did not add:—

Fifth. The enmity of Satan against God and all his. This world's history is a meaningless riddle unless we admit the working of unseen agencies in its affairs. Satan is old and shrewd enough to conceal his hand from the sons of men; but we read the Bible to very little purpose if we do not give some literal sense to its plain and frequent assertions of an actual Satanic agency among men.

Of course our experiences can not go to the fountain of evil influences; but no theory will account for the career of humanity except the active presence of an evil spirit. To say man has done it all himself without help or suggestion is

to make him worse than the Bible does ; but when you accept the divine explanation the course of events is lucid enough.

God in his goodness has fitted the world of man for his development. The Spirit of all Evil interferes to arrest his development. Christ comes to bring new and stronger influences for deliverance and salvation. He can not begin his work before the enemy of all good meets him and tries to spoil his coming. He claims to be the god of this world, and he leads men captive at his will ; and he resents the entrance of the Son of God into his kingdom. He pursues him with relentless hate, and, when Christ has broken his bars asunder, he still plots to entrap and upset his feeble followers. He works through the animal nature ; through the world, infilling it with his spirit ; through the human passions ; through falsehoods of which he is the father, until all the forces in and about man are united against him, to keep him, if possible, from obeying his conscience and living for his heavenly Master. This influence of Satan is the undercurrent which sets all others to running toward destruction, and there is no other theory to fit the conditions of the problems of our moral history.

A few words on the second proposition, that God instituted, and approves of, this antagonism.

If you rightly understand it, this is precisely what the text affirms. It is a divine declaration

to Satan that he shall not prosper in his nefarious plans for the corruption and destruction of the children of men.

The Almighty will plant an enmity in the human bosom against his devices, which will ultimate in the demolishing of his devices.

According to that divine purpose announced in Genesis, there has been a warfare in, and around, man going on ever since. In this great field of the world you see, ever and anon, some hero coming out of the fight with the trophies of victory. It is a long roll of worthies, beginning with Abel and Enoch and Noah. Time would fail to tell of them. Paul has named some of the generals in this army of the Lord in his Epistle to the Hebrews; but the rank and file — the privates — in the encounter against Satan can not be told nor known until you shall see them face to face, a hundred and forty and four thousand of them, with the Lamb, on Mount Zion, who have “washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb;” with palms in their hands.

They are samples of the kind of enmity which God has put against the seed of the serpent, and this enmity of Christ’s people against sin is to go on until the head of the serpent is bruised by the heel of the Son of man, and his plot of iniquity is killed. The antagonism will go on, but with weakening energy on Satan’s part, until the time to favor Zion shall come, when the Son of man

will put on his weapons of victory, and this world-long hostility shall be brought to an end by the universal victory of his gospel in the earth, and the coming in of her thousand years of glory and holiness and rest.

You have, then, roughly defined before you the leading spirits in the strifes of this world. There are two forces, or drifts, and two dominant agents, or leaders. Under which king are you serving, and to which force do you bow? It is no rhetorical question. It touches the tendency and final end of your life. You can not be on both sides at once. The Son of God, the Captain of our salvation, dissipated that delusion in his sharp words: "He that is not with me is against me." You are now, every one, actually on one side or the other.

If you want any impulse to set you on the right side, remember that God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, the holy angels and all the good men of all ages, are on one side together, against the world, the flesh, and the devil, and that their side alone will come off conqueror at last. Now is your time to stand with them lest you be counted among their enemies, and can by no means deliver yourselves from their terrible and eternal defeat.

The great problem is, Are you for Christ or against him?

FEBRUARY 16, 1879.

X.

THE DREAM OF PILATE'S WIFE.

When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him. — MATTHEW 27: 19.

MATTHEW alone has recorded this incident in the trial of our Lord; but it has none the less its value in the impressive interest of that great event of the world. It gives an intensely realistic picture of the perplexities of the Roman governor, and brings on the stage one more witness of the outrage of that cruel day, and one, too, from a most unexpected quarter.

It may be well to revive your recollection of the order of incidents in the trial of Jesus. It was Friday morning. Jesus had been arrested last night and compelled to spend it sleepless before Annas and then Caiaphas. As soon as daylight permitted, he was brought before the Sanhedrin. Thence they led him to Pilate for a civil sanction of his determined death. Pilate, satisfied of his innocence, had sent him and the crowd with him to Herod, as belonging to his jurisdiction, and was congratulating himself that he had so luckily escaped a dilemma.

But the relief was very short. The prisoner is again rushed before him with some old robe of Herod's over his shoulders in evidence of Herod's opinion of the man — as a harmless enthusiast. Pilate, knowing somewhat of the popular enthusiasm in favor of Jesus (when he had entered Jerusalem a few days before at the head of a jubilant throng of its citizens), and feeling that the emergencies of his situation were becoming politically threatening from the always restless and plotting priests, was struck by a happy thought of throwing the disposal of Jesus upon the decision of the same people who had so lately shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" Every truly Roman instinct in him impelled him to release the prisoner out of the priestly hands. He felt convinced, from Jesus' whole air, that the wonderful man was innocent, and he had told his accusers that he found no fault in him. All the indications were so promising toward the people's demand for the release of Jesus instead of the notorious robber Barabbas, that Pilate had even ascended to the seat where public sentences were given, to be ready for the expected decision of the crowd in favor of Jesus, and so he would escape the peril of his own position.

It was at this moment of his waiting that a messenger from his wife hurried to him with her urgent request, "Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him."

Such a request must have stiffened his already formed purpose to free himself of the bloody conspiracy; and, had he been less a politician and more a man, it would have saved his name from the stigma of murdering the King of the world. The message was a witness to the innocence of the meek and silent victim before him, speaking out of the night and from the dream-world of the woman whose life and happiness he had chosen to be wrapped up with his own. But the poor man had already weakly committed himself to the uncertain mob now frenzied by the appeals of the implacable and relentless priests. It went against the whole instincts and education of the Roman husband, and he publicly washed his hands in testimony of his feeling; but the damning fact still remains that, despite his convictions and despite the warning of his wife, he "gave sentence that it should be as they required."

So terminated that mockery of boasted Roman justice, and so fell the tender appeal of the troubled wife, speaking from the terror of her dreams to the weak-backed politician of Rome.

But our interest is with the dream and its significance. It passed then as a secret from the wife to the husband through one messenger, and as an affair of no wider notice, and no hint is given of its contents; but the fact that the Holy Spirit saved the incident, and the pen of one evangelist has written it for the world to know,

assures us that we lose some of the divine teachings of the trial of Christ if we do not study what we can of this morning dream of Pilate's wife, of the just man.

Was it a supernatural dream or a natural? The early writers on the Scriptures have held the former idea; later critics chiefly the latter, and as it seems with the better reason. God did, indeed, often reveal his will through dreams and visions of the night and even to non-believers, but he did not ever resort to miracles when he could reach the same results by ordinary processes. There were suggestive influences enough abroad just now to project themselves naturally into the thoughts and direct the dreams of a woman so sympathetic of heart and so closely connected with one of the chief actors of that eventful day as Pilate's wife.

Jesus had been in Jerusalem for several days and the main center of talk among its crowded and excitable people. It could not well be that Pilate, so watchful against an outbreak of his restless subjects, was ignorant of the stir which Jesus was making, of which Herod had heard; nor could his wife fail to share more or less in his knowledge and anxieties of the hour. It was only the day before that the priests had applied to Pilate and had procured a band of soldiers to arrest Jesus. It was only last night and very late toward morning that they had brought him with some

hubbub from Gethsemane into the city. And during the night they had been conducting him, with more or less noise, hither and thither from the house of one priest to another. Full of rage and the excitement of success, the crowd were neither calm nor silent.

Some of all these disturbances in the streets (more or less crowded with the multitudes who had collected to attend the great annual feast) must have penetrated the procurator's palace, and the smothered hum of it must have reached the bed-chamber of his wife. She herself says it was a dream of the morning which had distressed her. It is, therefore, perfectly natural to believe that the occasional hubbub in the street, magnified to her by its uncertain occasion, broke in upon her slumbers, and her partly ignorant interest in the strange man of whom so many strange rumors had reached her ears turned her dream to him as the cause and the victim of some indefinable dread.

Tradition says that her name was Claudia Procula (shortened to Procla). In the gospel of Nicodemus she is styled "a proselyte of the gate;" that is, a Judaized Roman—a semi-convert to Jehovah. The Greek Church has made her a saint, as one of the early believers in Jesus, all which is, saving perhaps her name, only tradition, and at best only probable. We only know that she was a Roman matron of patrician family, and

of the cultured moral instincts of the higher classes of Roman women.

The Roman custom, in the time of the Cæsars, allowed government officers to take their wives with them to their provinces (as it had not allowed before); and this woman, as the event shows, was worthy of the liberty, and would have been a helpful companion indeed to her entangled husband had he heeded her warning. This warning was born of a dream, but it grew out of fact and deserved his regard. The dream itself needed to have no supernatural cause nor element in it. It was a natural suggestion of her surroundings on a mind sensitive to justice and strongly sympathetic with the welfare of her house.

But as to the dream itself. Have we any clew to its character? Solomon says, "A dream cometh through the multitude of business." And such a dream always weaves into itself somewhat of the outside thoughts and pressures of the day. Pilate's wife tells the character of her dream in the reason of her warning message. She says: "I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him." Of two things, therefore, we are sure:—

First, that Jesus was the subject of her morning dream, and second, in such a way as to involve her in suffering in many directions.

Putting yourselves in her place, you can not widely miss the contents of her dream. In that

always turbulent city, now full of excitable strangers, aroused by the presence and words of Jesus, so deadly hated by the dominant priests, and yet himself so calm, dignified, and full of loving helpfulness, with your sympathies inclined to this victim of relentless enemies, you would dream of indignation against the hateful plotters, of baffled endeavors to extricate him, of the time when the case would be reversed, and the now victim should have his foes under his feet, and when all who had failed to defend the innocent should be self-condemned and publicly shamed.

It can not be very wide of the fact to believe that Pilate's wife's dream had just these same elements in it — of sorrowing sympathy with Jesus, of vain attempts to rescue him, of the startling developments which should come of his death, the terrible surprise, calamity, and regret that should rebound to her house if her husband should have any thing to do with the fate of this just man.

It is this idea which the celebrated artist Doré has put upon his canvas of Pilate's wife's dream in his gallery in London. The anxious, troubled eyes, like a somnambulist's, gazing at the misty figures set in dreamy light, will chain the observer as long as he shall stand before the picture. You seem to be actually looking up the stair-case of Pilate's palace, on whose broad, half-way landing stands Pilate's wife in a dreamy and disheveled maze. Behind her, at the top of the flight of

stairs, is her chamber, dully alight, and her bed tossed as if just left, and yet so tossed as to leave you in doubt if she be not still within its tumbled coverings, and the figure before you be a mere phantom of itself. Just behind her side, and against the marble stair-rail, is an angel (with partly spread wings and in resplendent light), whispering into her ear the dream, which also spreads itself out to her left. To her they are misty figures, but plain enough to your eyes. Of these Jesus is the central figure: as the Son of man, glowing in wonderful but soft light—as he might have appeared on Mount Tabor or to Mary at the sepulcher. Around him are the soldiers kneeling in awe, the Jewish rulers cowered and muttering with pointing fingers, and the disciples full of glad surprise. The light of Christ's presence wraps them all, some in light and some in shadow, while his face has a calm and a beauty indescribable. It is the calm of righteousness lighted by the glow of victory. Behind him, and far on to the very background, are the multitudes of his disciples of all the past and coming ages, from Adam and Abraham and David and Elijah and Isaiah, down to Constantine and Charlemagne, Luther and Gustavus and Cranmer, and on and on, until the grand assemblage becomes indistinct in the luminous splendor of a cross in the very horizon, and amongst the celestial hills, whose light shoots its beams down along the ages and

through the ranks of saints and martyrs and round the head of Jesus till it gleams across the angel's wings and lights up even the face of the troubled dreamer standing dazed and perplexed on the stair-way.

That sweet, womanly face, of so much beauty, yet so perplexed and anxious, and almost hopeful at the vision of the coming kingdom of the "just man" now awaiting his sentence at her husband's mouth — that face is a wonder of suggestion! Once seen you shall never forget it. Under its three wonderfully handled lights — from her bed of dreams behind, from the Son of man before her, and from the cross of hope in the far-away future — her face gains that dubious expression which belongs to dreams, but which the angel's whisper is almost lighting up with a softening calm.

The artist's idea of her dream is the development of Christianity to the mind of this heathen woman, and the consequent sad state of her household if they count not boldly amongst the defenders of its founder and king when he should stand to-day before the bar of the Roman court. I can not but hope that the troubled sleeper may now be awake and calm enough in the bright glory of that once-waiting just man, for whom she alone pleaded when the rest of the world was mad and even his disciples had forsaken him and fled.

But there is, I believe, a deeper teaching in this

one incident than we have yet reached. Let me now ask your attention to it under these suggestions.

I. The power of the pure life of Jesus, as a witness for himself and for Christianity.

It can hardly be that the Son of man, who had concentrated the attention of the whole nation upon himself, should have entirely escaped the knowledge of so quick-sighted a ruler as Pilate. Indeed, we know the contrary; for so much of his character and power of life had already pervaded the royal palace that his name and his purity had penetrated even the world of dreams of its pagan mistress. Jesus already stood in her conceptions as "that just man," who was not, therefore, to be wronged in the slightest measure. Her anxious appeal to Pilate becomes, therefore, a most touching testimony to the power of the life of Jesus above all the craft of his enemies. It shows the purity and beauty of the impression which he had made upon all outside of his determinedly bitter enemies.

Such a woman, so earnestly pleading out of the depth of her dreams, ought to be accepted as a witness to the grand character of the founder of Christianity. It is a rare man indeed who can stand in the focus of criticism and still be called a "just man." Many appear spotless at a distance, but intimacy usually reveals some stains and defects in them which spoil common mortals;

but Jesus was, to the closest inspection, holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.

II. Like him is the gospel which he preached and established as the only ennobling salvation.

Let Pilate's wife be an advocate for your faith in the only perfect man of the world. The spirit of the Roman lady's dream is the only dream of Christ which will be realized. What became of her we do not know. She must have known generally of the results of the great crime of the world to which her husband had cowardly assented in spite of her warnings. If she followed Pilate to Rome, whither he was soon after summoned to meet the accusations of the Samaritans, she probably heard of the resurrection of Jesus, and the story of his return in the clouds to heaven. If she followed Pilate to Switzerland (whither, it is said, he returned, and died a suicide in anguish at his complicity in the guilt of Jesus' death), she there learned something of the beginning of the fulfillment of her warning dream. It may have been there, near Lucerne, into whose lake-waters Mt. Pilatus dips his rocky feet, that Claudia Procula strolled and listened and sometimes heard the believers' songs as they carried the gospel message amongst the Swiss valleys.

But whether she knew further of Jesus or no, his kingdom which she saw in a dream has been expanding down the ages, like the river of Ezekiel's vision, and is to-day the only kingdom which has

stood, and still stands, and will stand, alone of all the powers that then or since thought themselves stable. Israel has gone into exile. Greece has fallen into fragments. Rome is a buried ruin under a pretentious episcopal despotism. Paganism has retreated to the dark corners of the earth. But the once frightened twelve have become as many millions, and the power of the name of Jesus is more potent than ever to compel the loving adoration of human hearts.

III. I hasten to say, third, that Jesus enters into the dreams of all.

I believe no man can so lock his heart that some thought of Jesus shall not get a sometime entrance there. In this Christian land his influence so pervades the reading and talk and thinking of society that you can not escape some knowledge and thought of him. He will look upon you from some corner, and you will come upon him unawares at unexpected and unprepared times. You can not shut out of your sight that patiently waiting Son of man.

And he stands now, as then, before you to be judged. You are to decide for or against him. The question of what you shall "do with him that is called the Christ" is very likely to come literally into your dreams, and you shall suffer many things because of him. Many a skirmish do you have with his demands when you go to your bed weary with earthly cares and their

empty issues, and with the tossing unrest of your unsatisfied souls. It is part of your lot of dwelling in this Jerusalem of the gospel that you should come into such contact with him who wrought for your redemption and eternal peace in this same city. If you rightly heed the Christ in coming to your right thoughts and enlist for him as the Holy One, your Saviour, it will prove a dream worth having; but however you treat him, whether as did Pilate or as did his wife, he is still the standing problem of your life and you will rejoice in, or suffer, many things because of him.

But do not (as my last suggestion) act on the false inference and advice of the wife of Pilate, who said, "Have nothing to do with him." In her idea, probably, there was no fallacy. "If these priests will murder him," her thought was, "let them, and not you, take the whole responsibility." So Pilate understood her and most cowardly washed his hands after her message, as if that would cleanse his soul from fellowship in guilt, when he himself "delivered Jesus unto them to be crucified." In vain then and since does Pilate wash his hands in the Lake Lucerne, when the mists and the rains come down from Pilatus and the Righi on its waters. There was no negative position for Pilate, such as his wife's words suggest to us; and, let me add, there is no negative position for one of you to-day. You can not

“have nothing to do with that just man.” You can not give him nor the claims of his death a complete go-by. He is a personage to be accepted as a master, or rejected; and, whether you mean it consciously or not, you are continually doing the one or the other. Not a few, annoyed by the discomfort of the pressing claims of the gospel, determine to avoid religion altogether. They think it makes them unhappy, spoils the little enjoyment they have, and offers no repaying substitute; and why should they be wretched before their time!

It is not religion, but the want of it, and your distaste to it, which makes you suffer many things on account of Jesus. You follow Pilate more than his wife, and he was the one who drowned himself in despair at his rejection of Christ.

There is but one thing for you to do with Christ and you will be at rest. Accept him as your Master, Redeemer, and Lord! Then your dreams will be like hers — peaceful and glowing with the luminous cross in the horizon of your future, and will ultimate where there is no more night.

NOVEMBER 6, 1881.

XI.

PLEA FOR THE LITTLE ONES.

Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. — MATTHEW 18: 10.

IT is a very tender and lovely characteristic of our Saviour that he always showed a peculiar interest in children (still indicated in the rite just observed), and that they reciprocated his regard. I know not how many instances are given of his taking little children sometimes into his arms, often putting his hand upon them in blessing, speaking of them always in most kindly words, as if there were some more intimate fellowship of his soul with theirs than with the harder and less impressible men and women he met.

It emphasizes this fact that the incident before us probably occurred in Capernaum, which Jesus had made his home after he began his ministry. The children of that village all knew him and hailed his returns from his travels through the land with gladness; and there were always enough of them about him whenever he wished to point his teachings by reference to them. As a feature of our Saviour's character, this his love for little children

is worthy of your especial attention, and it gives special interest to the place he has opened to them in his visible church.

But I have now to do rather with his own explanation of his interest in them, as he so lovingly gives it in the text: "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."

To catch the force and beauty of this reason of our Saviour for a reverent interest in these little ones, I must lead you through some may be dry exegesis of our Saviour's allusions.

It was the Hebrew belief that angels have some special oversight of the affairs of men. This faith is traceable back as far as Jacob; and the Scriptures nowhere contradict it, but assume it to be a truth. The later Jews believed in guardian angels over individual persons, as when Peter knocked at the disciples' door after his wonderful release from prison and Rhoda ran into the room to tell them of his coming, they affirmed that she was beside herself: it was not Peter she saw, but his angel.

There is no reason to doubt that this Jewish faith had its foundation in truth, for, as Paul asks, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Our Lord did not refuse but silently accepted the popular faith, and on it based his

defence for his own deep and loving interest in the little ones.

But his language in the text seemingly says somewhat to the contrary. He says: "In heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven," as if their angels are not directly ministering about these little ones but are always in the immediate presence of God and, therefore, far away from their charge. But here again we must remember the Oriental idea of service. The favorite servants of an Eastern king are not those that are sent into the outside provinces, but they who are admitted to his immediate presence.

Especially the nurses of the royal children are allowed a constant and intimate access to the king. So that to "always behold the face" expresses simply an especial intimacy and interest. Our Lord means to say, therefore, that the Father in heaven bestows a peculiar interest and love upon the little ones themselves, by and through his allowed and close intimacies of their angels. He regards the little ones so tenderly that he admits their angelic attendants always into his presence.

The fact, therefore, can not escape us that God himself holds these little ones as his peculiar favorites, and, therefore, that the Son of God was only interpreting the divine interest in them when he gathered them about himself, and demanded that his disciples should not despise them or cause

them to stumble. So far we can see our way clearly, but we now come to an obscurity where opinion is divided.

Whom does our Saviour mean by "these little ones"? Some say his own young and weak disciples, hardly yet brought out of the false teachings of the Pharisees. Others take the words to apply literally to the Jewish children that were always flocking about Christ, both when he was on his travels and at home in Capernaum. I do not see the necessity for restricting the meaning to either one of these; for his words have an equally forceful application both to young children and to young believers, and both are included in the reason of his words and in their warning. To see this let us first apply our Saviour's words literally to little children.

I confess myself a lover of, and advocate for, the little ones, and I believe that the Saviour's caution needs sometimes an emphatic repetition: "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones." The helpless children have too often a hard and troublous time of it from their very first coming into the world, and I do not wonder that the good Lord takes so many of them quickly back again unto himself, as if offended at their sometimes reluctant and heartless reception.

It is far too often that they are regarded as a bother and an interruption—as disturbing the order of the house and compelling the parents to

give up their visitings and their evening entertainments. Not a few mothers show their offence by leaving their children as much as possible to the care of ignorant and unsympathetic nursemaids, so that they may not be prevented of their worldly recreations.

But even when some due care is taken, and some parental love is felt, the children will be a perpetual anxiety, and deepening anxiety too, as the love grows stronger; for are they not, in the beginning, most helpless and dependent? and are they not constantly exposed to perils, diseases, and death? Looking only at those disturbances and anxieties which the advent of children occasions, the impulses of self-ease in some persons repel their coming and, far oftener than is suspected, unlawfully and wickedly prevent it.

But the despising of these little ones follows them perhaps still more after they have escaped the perils of landing on these earthly shores. It is shown in a dislike of children which some shamelessly acknowledge, and do not hesitate to manifest; as, for example, when they repel the sympathy of children. The affections of the little ones are in a constant outflow, luxuriant as the spring vine, and as fond of clasping those that love them and throwing all their love and confidence around them. But some adults will receive all their warm sympathies with a freezing coldness and indifference, as if children had

no right of recognition, no feelings, nor sense of rejection. How many of these tender hearts have grieved in wordless sorrow at repulsions which they could not understand! Their elders may pass by their sobs contemptuously, but a wound has been made in their young hearts which will leave a perpetual scar that their angels never forget to tell God of.

These little ones are also despised by repelling their curiosity. They are come into a world to them overflowing with wonders. If they have any quickness or worth in them they will be full of curiosity and full of constant questionings. It is their very life to get answers to their queries; it is their intellectual food to understand all things; and in their ignorance of the bounds of the knowable, and in their confidence that their elders, who have been in the world so long, must understand every thing, they will ask questions often unanswerable. The development of the child-mind is one of the most captivating studies. The unexpected side of problems which they will seize upon, their shrewd penetration and seizure of hints at solution, their original and acute theories, their quick puncture of fallacies, — how can an adult be indifferent to their hungering reach, and repel their questionings, so earnest and so important to them? As soon refuse an answer to a lost traveler on his weary way.

But, still worse, are God's little ones despised

by a neglect of their soul-culture. And yet what scores and hundreds are left utterly untaught of that blessed One who so longed for them as to take them from their mothers' arms for his special blessing! They are left to grow into vice and profanity and contempt of all sacred things. Oh, so pitiful is the state of thousands of little ones in our cities, herding like young animals in squalid tenements, and never knowing one real pleasure of childhood; never knowing the glow of loving homes; never a soul-deep natural joy; never the blessed knowledge of their one mighty and pitying Saviour in heaven, whose heart is always going out toward his neglected and despised little children on earth! Is it strange that so many children grow up distrustful, hateful, and vindictive,—enemies of the God of whom they have been told nothing, and of man from whom they have received little but evil and cold neglect?

In view of it all we can not but feel that our Redeemer certainly meant (what his words literally say) that God does hold his children on earth in his especial regard, and allows their ministering angels a constant approach to his face.

Jesus remembered how many of the babes of Bethlehem had once been killed to reach him, and his tender heart could not but tell the world of weeping mothers that "in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in

heaven." So from this literal point of reading the text there is a sweet and beautiful meaning in the Saviour's words, and we think we see reasons why it may be so.

First. They are recent comers from his own hand.

Time and age have not yet had opportunity to spoil the fresh imprint of God upon their natures. Job affirms: "Thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands;" and we may surely believe that the Creator will not allow a little child he has so fearfully and wonderfully made to be despised without his intense displeasure. God told Jonah, when he complained at what he thought an injustice to the suddenly smitten gourd: "Thou hadst pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand?"—that is, one hundred and twenty thousand little children, and does not the Lord have special regard for his own-made little ones in all other cities and towns?

Second. They are full of undeveloped probabilities for good as truly as for evil. To us the little child at first exhibits nothing but weakness and complete helplessness. It lies where it is put, and when forsaken can only cry itself to death. But God sees in it all the glorious capabilities for good

which he has given to it, and he sees as well all the fulness which can ultimately come out of it rightly treated on earth. To him the child appears not a mere helpless babe, one of a thousand like it, but it is the full-aged adult, nay, the ransomed or condemned soul in its immortal ripeness. Why should he not, therefore, have all regard for it in its present helplessness and forbid that any should despise his little ones and so wreck their grand future? Surely no one who can at all sympathize with the divine expectations will fail to share in God's tender interest for the little ones of the earth — an interest so lovingly expressed by the Saviour of men when he moved and mingled among the families of earth!

That one instance when he took little children in his arms and blessed them should be enough to throw a divine wall of loving defence about all the little ones of the earth.

When they brought Him their babes and besought Him,
Half-kneeling with suppliant air,
To bless the brown cherubs they brought Him,
With holy hands laid on their hair.

Then reaching His hands He said lowly,
“Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven,” and then
Took the little brown babes in the holy
White hands of the Saviour of men;

Held them close to His heart, and caressed them;
Put His face down to theirs as in prayer;
Put their hands to His neck, and so blessed them,
With baby hands hid in His hair.

— *J. Miller.*

But the spiritual sense (which some prefer) of application to Christ's young believers is not without reason and profitableness. Let us turn to this interpretation.

The little ones in the family of Christ are not necessarily the young in earthly years but are young in the new regenerate life, as being recently born into the kingdom of God; and, therefore, the breadth and depth of their relations and duties to the Redeemer and their knowledge of the truths and resources of his grace are strange and novel as well as incomplete and uncertain. Older Christians are too apt to despise these freshly converted disciples of the Master, because they do not exhibit the stability of mature disciples; but they forget that they are now only babes in Christ.

Especially if they be young in years as well, we forget that their piety will have the features of youthhood and its impulsiveness. They are too often disesteemed as volatile and unstable; but what sobriety or stability is to be expected of them who were but yesterday born into the kingdom of God? They see as yet, men as trees walking, in the twilight of their new morning. Even the adult and educated Paul was led off into the wilds of Arabia, after his conversion, to spend three years in forgetting his former Pharisaic notions and in learning the new gospel which he was to preach to the Gentiles.

Regeneration is but the first and sudden change

in the character of the moral affections. It turns the choices of the will from a supreme selfishness to a love of God and of obedience to him. But it does not instantaneously reconstruct the whole character, and immediately harden it into the rigidity of unbending principles. That is the after-growth of a long, patient, and wrestling culture, even years of professed service to Christ, as the too many sad defections of old Christians show. Why, then, shall you expect the maturity of age in the childhood of Christian experience? Why despise Christ's little ones if they have not the strength and consistency of adults?

I am not defending the levity of young Christians, but rather showing our liability to despise them because they are young. And I believe there is more of this kind of offence given to young believers than older Christians are aware of. What if I specify how it may be given so as to cause them to stumble.

First. By neglecting them. When the young disciple first comes into the family of Christ there is joy over his repentance among Christians as well as among the angels. Some greet him with true Christian brotherliness, expressing their joy with real warm-heartedness. Some speak it in words, but without much depth of glad sympathy, and possibly say nothing to him and indicate nothing at all. But after the first congratulation, not a few end their interest and leave the

lambs of the flock to make their way as they can without an after-word of sympathy or encouragement. After their conversion they are simply neglected on earth, while their angels still behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

What is more disheartening to the young Christian, all aglow with the thrilling first experiences of a new love to the newly found Redeemer, than to find older Christians cool, unenthusiastic, and apparently indifferent to his company and his prosperity? I doubt not many a new disciple, tremblingly hoping in a new life, has been stumbled and has fallen into distrust of his own conversion, and has even wandered darkly uncertain for months in his dim infancy of Christian hope, if not gone back altogether. He has been like a child left in the highways to the chance crusts which he might find by the way-side, when he ought to have been lovingly led into the house and fed and cheered and encouraged in the name of the Master by his elder brethren.

Second. We may despise Christ's young disciples by suspicions and doubts of their continuance. How often young Christians are met with the remark: "Well, you are confident now and full of ardor, but you will soon be losing your enthusiasm, and looking back and mingling in your former frivolities"! Cheerful encouragement that to a new-born child of Christ! and not seldom given. It may prove true — yet, the prophecy of

failure will be very likely to help on its own verification.

How can such croaking give stamina to resist temptation to backsliding? The young Christian wants the cheering word, the stimulating encouragement, if ever, when he first takes his sling and stones to go out against his Goliaths, not when he comes back bringing their heads into the camp. If you have suspicions of their perseverance far better over cover these by a hopeful word to them and a live-long trust in him who has promised to carry on his good work in whomsoever it has been begun "until the day of Jesus Christ."

When young Christians do relapse and wander back into worldly conformities, it is often because their elders have not cordially welcomed them into the center of their group, and have not watched them and lovingly helped them over their hard places, but have, if not criticized their weak steps, at least looked doubtingly at their progress and openly prophesied their fall. The skillful general does not put his raw troops to the front, and leave them unsupported and then tell them they will be routed. The Church ought to have equal wisdom for its young recruits.

But the tenderest and yet most forcible argument against despising the little ones of Christ's great family comes from the deep and loving interest in them of our Christ in heaven. Need I remind you how tenderly Jesus bore with his own

stumbling twelve disciples? It were worth your while to follow him even to the cross to especially note how he treated them. Christ never despised the feeblest cry for help; never overlooked the faintest sign of a longing for him. Nay his heart beat the warmest toward the weakest, and Christ was the interpretation of the feelings of God the Father and the sample of what our own feelings toward the babes in Christ should be. We do not hesitate to say, therefore, that from the first moment a sinner has a longing toward home he becomes a subject of the intense interest of God, and ought to be of every Christian. He sends his spirit to blow upon that spark of the new life. He does not quench the smoking flax but he watches its kindling into desire and resolve; and that soul's ministering angel takes his message of help from the very lips of the Father in heaven.

God cares the more for the beginnings of the Christian life because of its very feebleness and uncertainty, and he gives special helps to his little children when they are first trying to learn to walk in his ways. The whole Bible is full of the assurances of this blessed fact: of which, if any of you are seeking to become a child of God, you may assuredly take the comfort and the encouragement. If older Christians, the professed disciples of Christ, do not express any interest in your wishings and seekings, if they do not ask after your spiritual progress or sympathize in your

missteps and falls, if they seem to despise your seriousness as if it were a passing fancy — still you may know that there is one, nay, more than one, even a heaven full of angels watching your attempts with the liveliest sympathy, and with instant readiness to help your first weak call for uplifting. Yours may be the merely flitting wish to be a child of God, but the angel carries even that up to the presence of the Father in heaven, and finds instant admission for the happy news. It is a precious moment to you, little ones in Christ, to be the center of so much thought in heaven. Do you feel weak and hesitant? there is all the more interest for you there.

I know some of you are not without the movings toward a new life, and I tell you that, though Christians about you may say nothing helpful to you, the Lord is full of thought for you. He is tender toward your weak hesitations. He is waiting for your hearty decision. He does not despise your blundering endeavors to live for him, but he is displeased when you stop with so many helps heavenward, and when any despise your first short steps.

APRIL 6, 1879.

XII.

WEAK KINGLINGS.

I am this day weak, though anointed king; and these men the sons of Zeruiah be too hard for me.—2 SAMUEL 3: 39.

THESE words confess David's beautiful spirit of humility and self-distrust, and at the same time show his intelligent comprehension of the real state of his kingdom. He understood the actual elements of his position. He knew, on the one hand, that he had been appointed by Jehovah to be the king of Israel. He was therefore only fulfilling his duty to him in claiming and striving to possess the kingdom. But, on the other hand, he knew the partisans of Saul were resisting his attempts, and trying to maintain the grandson of Saul in a nominal kingship. Month after month after Saul's death was spent in conflicts between the two houses of Saul and David, and family relations had become very much intermixed in the strife. The grandson of Saul, Mephibosheth, the son of David's dearest friend Jonathan, had been set up as Saul's successor, and his uncle Abner was his commander-in-chief. On David's side was Joab and his two brothers, the sons of Zeruiah, a half-sister of David.

The strife for the kingdom of all Israel had chiefly become a struggle and plotting of ambitions between these two houses : Abner and his party for Saul, and Joab and his party for David. Of these two leaders apparently Abner was the more honorable man ; but he had, in self-defence, during a conflict between the two forces, slain, with a back-thrust of his spear, Asahel, a brother of Joab, while he was in hot and unrelenting pursuit of Abner. For this deed Joab determined a revenge upon him. When, therefore, Abner came to offer his own services to David in gaining over the rest of Israel to the young king, Joab craftily plotted and succeeded in murdering Abner on his way back to his army. It was after the burial of Abner that David exclaimed to his faithful few : “I am this day weak, though anointed king.”

He foresaw that new hostilities and revenges and conflicts, he knew not how bitter and unmanageable, must come out of this bloody revenge, perhaps fatally, by arresting the movement toward a reunion of the tribes, and reducing the nation again to a defenceless prey to the hungry and waiting Philistines. Then his divine appointment to the throne must wait, helpless before the turmoil made by the sons of Zeruah, the children of his own half-sister. David, therefore, had ample reason to feel his personal weakness as against these provoking complications. His only hope of establishing the kingdom was the fact that he had

been the divinely anointed successor of Saul, and that the God who had appointed him to the throne was able to reinstate him firmly on it.

But these irrepressible relatives of his were too strong for himself to control. David expressed his view of the situation to his immediate and tried servants, for he wisely thought they ought to, and must, put their hope of success where he himself did — in the divine sanction of his purpose to secure the kingdom. They should then look, not to his skill or prowess for success, but to Jehovah himself, by whom kings are crowned and discrowned. Altogether, it was a most manly and pious confession for the young king of Judah to make.

But I have not outlined these circumstances simply to hang a photograph of David before you, in the frame of his surroundings, with anxious cares and self-distrust upon his face. David spoke as he did from a deeper sense than as a perplexed king, and his words may be repeated by a multitude of other anointed ones, who are yet weak and hard bestead on account of other's sons than Zeruiah's. Of these weak but expectant kings I propose to speak.

As I have now and then pondered David's confession I have thought how appropriately we might repeat them to ourselves, and amongst our brethren, as anointed for a kingship which we are so weak and so much thwarted to obtain.

Let us draw out this resemblance. Speaking in behalf of the company of Christ's servants before me, I may say :—

First. We are anointed to a kingship.

It is a very narrow and mean idea that the whole of our possibilities is bounded within our earthly horizon. We were not made for this world alone, and we do not enter into our real possessions when we have gained even the whole world. This earth is no more than a disputed boundary, overrun with Philistines, and full of sons of Zeruah. When you have stored up a brain full of knowledge and a sufficiency of estate for a comfortable living, and have gathered about you a pleasant and loving home, you have not then entered upon your kingdom. There are treasures not to be put in bags, and titles not expressed by initials at the ends of your names, unto which you are appointed. I am saying only familiar truths when I tell you that there is a throne for you in the great spiritual and eternal kingdom of God, and a crown with enough vacancies for all the gems you can gather in these jewel-bearing earth gulches. That is, there is a plane of living for your spiritual nature, where the true nobleness of your possibilities can unfold itself into fruitfulness and beauty forever—a realm where you can become what you are able to be at your best.

Man now seldom shows what he is capable of

becoming and was made to be. We have glints of it in some characters—a feature or two brought out sharp and distinct in an occasional picture; but, in all the best character portraits of the sons of men, there is always a dimness, sometimes an utter lack of some feature, to make a likeness not fully all which in beauty it should be. Yet you are anointed and endowed to be as beautiful and lovely in character as “the one among ten thousand,” and, in the home city of the kingdom of God, if you ever reach it, you will be the most amiable and lovely of its inhabitants; but not here and now, except that you give more attention to the present adornment of the spirit.

One sample only have we had in this world of humanity of its best in character and beauty. But the earth could not endure the sweetness and awfulness of that One’s purity, and they speedily quenched its contrasting brightness. Still it shone long enough to imprint itself upon some memories, and to beget a longing in some hearts for a transformation into the same sweet likeness. These longing ones are now the sons of God, “and it doth not yet appear what they shall be;” but at their second view of him, hereafter, “they shall be like him; for they shall see him as he is.” Then shall their sonship change into their kingship and they shall be “kings and priests unto God, to reign with him forever.” Now they simply carry the holy anointing oil upon their

head. They are sealed with his name in their foreheads and in the palms of their hands, but which they show, alas! too little and then very imperfectly.

It is not out of the way to remind you that this kingship is not, like earthly thrones, occupiable by but one at a time; for it is not an external kingdom or territory, nor a palace of earth, but it is an internal mastery and dominion of the powers of mind and soul, where each triumphant one reigns over his own obedient and loving nature, as the viceroy of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

It is also proper to say this kingship does not come to us as a matter of course through lines of inheritance. It is as broadly offered as the infinite Father of all can bestow it. He has prescribed the qualifications essential to enter this kingdom and he gives it to every one who possesses these qualifications. He has, in fact, predestinated that they shall be conformed to the image of his Son, whom he hath appointed to be the heir of all things. His anointed ones are therefore chosen in Christ, unto a holiness like Christ's; and, because they become like Christ, they shall sit down with him in his throne. As it is written: "He that overcometh shall inherit all things."

You understand, therefore, that the kingship is yours, any of you, if you will fit yourselves for it.

But if you do not, no amount of other claims of relationship and struggles at any other door, will open your way to it. Please understand, therefore, that you are each in possibility a king unto God. The divine anointing was given at your first endowment with reason, conscience, and will. To many of you the heavenly heirship was also signified in your baptism, before this pulpit or some other. God then gave assurance that you could come within the relationship of son, and needed only to show yourself to be a child of God by showing that you had the spirit of his Son. So, then, all which is embraced in being a king, — in the grand final assemblage of kings, — each with his crown and robes of coronation, shall be yours, if you have the royal character. You are then an heir of God and joint-heir with Christ to “an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,” and shall enter in by-and-by, if you do not “neglect so great salvation.”

While I speak to you, therefore, I feel that I am addressing a company of young, princely heirs to a throne, to each of whom its honors and glories are accessible, and without the least impingement upon each other's possession. You can be sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, over whom the Spirit of adoption now hovers, waiting for you to open your hearts and let that loving and holy Spirit enter in. I can not, there-

fore, regard you simply as mere pleasant companions along this uncertain way of life, enlivening it with your social amenities and friendly offices, but whom I shall leave soon, and you will go on in just the same attractiveness to others.

I do not look upon you merely as men and women, having homes and children, and all the earthly joys which crystallize around a household. I can not see you as resting here an hour from your driving week-cares, and sitting to hear patiently what the preacher may think it important to say to you. Ah! friends, you are other and more than all these, from this pulpit-view.

You are gathered in the foreground of a landscape beyond which I see, in the blue horizon, the everlasting hills dimly skirting your plain, and the pale, far-off, white towers of the palaces of the King. From your feet where you stand now I can detect the paths which stretch away over the plain toward those hills of shimmering light and converge at the gate of the city above them. I look at you as able, every one, to turn into some of those paths if you will, and which, if you do, shall bring you at last unto the "inheritance of the saints in light."

I can not know the purposes which are formed or forming within you, but I do know that here is a company of anointed ones, able to possess the kingdom of the true Israel if you will! Would that I could make you feel your nearness to the

thrones set and waiting for the princes that are to come out of this earth, with robes washed white in the blood of the Lamb! Would that I could make you feel that you shall decide, each for yourself, whether you will turn your title into a reality, and become what all heaven anxiously waits to have you become — a child of God — a king indeed, and forever! Such a possibility ought to be a reproof to all your earthly ambitions — a stimulus out of all your sensual apathy.

Second. But this “if” brings us to David’s confession: “I am this day weak, though anointed king.”

David was less discouraged by the obstacles he could see than by the invisible hindrances hidden in the future.

He had measured swords with the Philistines, and he knew their length and edge and sharpness; but in the wild elements of society around him, as yet unsettled and unrestrained, and in the vehement passions of his chief supporters like Joab, he could not foresee what mad projects might be devised and what discords might break any harmony he should attempt. It is not strange, therefore, that although he was the God-appointed king of Israel yet he felt weak before his unrevealed enemies. It is no more strange if the Christian shall feel himself to be weak, in view of the yet unseen obstacles which lie between himself and his kingdom. His sense of weakness may come to him from many sources. For example: —

The very greatness of the kingship may depress him. When we think of our possible destiny we can not repress a sense of our utter inadequacy to it; and the clearer the idea we have of that destiny the heavier presses the feeling of our insufficiency to these things. We are like little children now, who, if they understood it, would shrink from all the burdens which will fall upon their coming manhood. It is not altogether a consciousness of sin which makes us shrink from the world to come. It is not death, but what lies beyond it, that we dread — the want of definite outline, the darkness of knowledge, the impossibility of return. For, even in proportion as our idea of that world clarifies itself into a fixed conception — the greatness of the destiny! — the more it fills us with awe and shrinking timidity.

To step out of these familiar and loved earth-acquaintances into the innumerable company of angels, older than the earth and wiser than its ages, strangers all to us, and untouched by any consciousness of sin or weakness like our own! If your heart beats fast while waiting an introduction to some high dignitary of earth, shall it not sink in weakness when you think of stepping unannounced amongst the tens of thousands of the angels of God “that excel in strength”? But then, what are these “ministers of his that do his pleasure,” with reverent and veiled faces, to standing before the Son of God himself, from

whose face the heavens and the earth flee away — standing there to be punctured by his omniscient eye and scrutinized by his perfectly holy sense of right and justice!

It seems to me there is a great deal of very thin pretence in many of our hymns which speak so familiarly of God and heaven.

“Father, I long, I faint, to see
The place of Thine abode:
I’d leave Thine earthly courts, and flee
Up to Thy seat, my God;”

or : —

“Oh, for a sight, a pleasing sight
Of our Almighty Father’s throne!”

Even

“Jerusalem, my happy home!
My soul still pants for thee,”

has a boldness to be quickly dissipated, when “our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem!” We shall not feel so when we get there. Such exclamations are too like childish exultation at going visiting for the devout Christian to sing, except in very tremulous minor strains. When he shall really stand in the door, and look into the palace of the King, his voice will subside into silence, and his knees will weaken at the next step which shall carry him within the walls of holy heavenly bliss. Although he be anointed king, and “can read his title clear to mansions in

the skies," his fear will not be cast away, and his weeping eyes will hardly see to read his title clear.

But again, we feel weak for the uncertainty of our succession to the kingship. Here hangs our great anxiety. When we turn from the august majesty and crystalline purity of the throne in glory unto ourselves, we are so conscious of the utter disparity that our reception into the kingdom now seems to us the most uncertain and improper of all the results of living. The contrast strikes into us and demolishes our hope of the kingship. The clearer our vision of heaven the more unfit we feel. Our imperfections, which in our poor earthly light appear slight and easily mendable, when set in the light of God's countenance reveal a vileness that fills us with shame, and destroys all courage to lift any claim to the inheritance. We are then weak indeed.

We think we can not surely enter into that bright and holy company and dare to sit down on that conspicuous throne! And did we not distinguish One standing at the right hand of God, that same once-called Son of man, and with the same winning grace which he wore on earth, we should give up our title and our hope in despair. He alone is the ground of encouragement—our Advocate and Redeemer. But, when our doubts obscure his presence, we are weak indeed, although anointed kings.

But, once more. We are weak because the

snare and the cross-conflicts along the way are too hard for us.

David was more distressed by the selfish policies of his nearest and strongest relatives — the sons of his sister Zeruah (who ought to have been his most reliable defenders and helpers) — than he was by all the outside machinations in Philistia. We are perplexed and tormented and disheartened more by the very parts of our being which ought to aid us than by all the plots which the outside world can lay in our way. A man can stand against the world and the Devil, if the flesh will not join with them.

The martyr for the faith of Christ was not frightened by the pile of faggots, or the halberds of his guards, nor the scowling crowd of his persecutors, waiting to enjoy his anguish in the fire, because all that was in him — the sons of his own nature — was in harmony with his spirit. But it is these inward rebellions, these lingering vices of the heart, selfishness and cowardice and wilfulness and their like, which sap the courage and fill the soul with a dread of failure. We can overcome the world; but the faith which conquers it — when our besetting sins refuse to cultivate that, what can we do? These sons of Zeruah, these inward members of our own home of the spirit, “be too hard for us.”

We may as well confess it, that our present nature is not loyal. We are the rebellious and

wandering children of the King, and have made ourselves aliens and outlaws from his principedom. And therefore we must first have a new birth into the kingdom of his dear Son, and then follows a fight with our native spirit, until every thing that exalteth itself shall be brought low in love to our royal Father.

This inward subjugation of the foes within is your mission now, to prove your sonship in the family of the King, and it will take more fighting and heavier blows, and more earnest praying than I fear you are giving to it now, to make your "calling and election sure." If you do not engage in it more heartily and persistently, though you may be anointed by privilege and opportunity, yet you will never sit down in your throne in the city of the true David.

DECEMBER 23, 1883.

XIII.

NIGHT SERVICE.

Behold, bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord, which by night stand in the house of the Lord. — PSALM 134: 1.

THIS text is from the last of the “Songs of Degrees,” and has the clew of its significance in this fact. These fifteen songs composed what may be called the pocket hymn-book of the pilgrims who annually came up to the feasts at Jerusalem.

Starting from their little hamlets in neighborly groups, like rills from the hill-sides, these pilgrim bands gradually flowed into larger companies in the valleys, and moved on together across the hills toward the holy city to celebrate their annual feasts. They came from all points of the compass between Dan and Beersheba, and from the further points of Galilee and the Lebanon spurs, starting so as to reach the Holy City in full season for the feasts. The journey might occupy some of them several days. These pilgrimages were events to be anticipated and prepared for. They were like the home-comings of scattered children to the parental hearth-stone on our Thanksgiving days. Music and song beguiled

the tedium of their long and dusty way, and especially enlivened the darkness of their evening encampments. These Songs of Degrees are skillfully fitted to the needs of such pilgrimages, as you may see by studying them.

When the little groups sighted each other, as their paths wound over the hill-tops, they exchanged their greetings across the spaces in the musical response of some Psalm. One company chants : —

“ I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord ; ”

and to this hail comes the reply from some parallel hill-top : —

“ Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem ! ”

These fifteen Psalms flash with the beauty of peculiar fitness when you read them in this historic setting. You can imagine the evening and the morning air of Judah full of their sacred stanzas, flying like love's shuttles between the pilgrim companies, and so weaving them into a spiritual sympathy. These groups enlarged as they converged toward the city set on a hill, as the paths of all earthly saints do toward the temple “ not made with hands, eternal in the heavens ; ” and their last night musters them in thousands on the mountains round about Jerusalem.

Olivet and Bethany, and the plains of Rephaim

were then full of pilgrim-booths waiting for the opening feast of the morrow. Thus at last the Holy City lies before them, the palaces of the City of David, and, eclipsing all in attraction, the golden-sheathed Temple of Solomon itself, surrounded by its spacious marble-pillared courts, dimly gleaming in the twilight moon.

The hundred and thirty-fourth psalm, the last of the fifteen Songs of Degrees, was the pilgrims' last evening song, which all sang, as the light faded out of the sky and the quick-coming darkness filled the horizon and shut down on the Holy City. The psalm, you observe, is very short — only three verses, a hail and a response, — but it is intensely and most expressively natural.

“Behold!” a cry for attention. “Bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord, which by night stand in the house of the Lord. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord!” To this call comes the reply from the temple hill, and across the valleys of Kidron and Hinnom: “The Lord that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion!” This is all.

Remember that the city has become wearied with the preparations of the day, getting their guest-chambers ready for the passover suppers; and now it has lain down to sleep. Its narrow streets are empty and quiet under the solemn night. Its lights are extinguished, and no movement is visible among the houses, except the occa-

sional flashing of torches on the temple heights as the night-watch of the priests traverse the courts of the temple to see that all is in order for the morning sacrifice and the coming day's sacred services. This night-guard of the temple is the key to the significance of our text.

We are told that after midnight they took the key of the inner temple, and dividing inside into two bands traversed with a torch round about the courts to see that all was right. When they met on the opposite side they exchanged the greeting, "All is well!" and then locking the entrance-gate, they withdrew to their quarters. It was the sight from the hills of this midnight service which inspired the closing psalm of the Degrees and made it the pilgrim song of the evening before the feasts. Its emphatic phrase which has attracted our study is that which defines the time of service — "which *by night* stand in the house of the Lord."

We will here leave that company of pilgrims, waiting with song for their next morning sacrifice, and let us take this short descriptive, "which by night stand in the house of the Lord," away with us for closer study, and thereby for a broader and richer application.

First. It is no strange fact that the servants of the Lord stand *by day* in his courts to bless the Lord. To the eye and the ear which have been divinely touched to distinguish spiritual songs the whole day is every-where full of praise and

worship. Not human souls only, but all God's works do praise him in all parts of his dominions, and the house of the Lord enlarges till its walls are the blue curtains of the horizon, and its assembly of worshipers every thing that hath breath.

Do you never wake in the early dawn of some clear and resonant summer morning, when the trees and the shrubbery and the sky are full of bird-songs? Why do they put all the fire of their little enthusiasms into their first waking melodies? I ask, not for a scientific answer to the intellect, but for a higher solution to the waking soul. Are they not, like the winds and the lightnings, ministers of his, to do his pleasure? Has not God, who careth for the sparrow of the hedge and the raven, touched the instinct of the robin and the finch to sing for him to listen in the morning, before the earth-babblings begin and while the sky is empty and still of human discordances? Surely it meets our devouter sentiment to believe that the whole jocund bird creation are servants of the Lord, flitting in the domes of his house, and unconsciously, but none the less beautifully, beginning the day with a service of song to his praise, and suggesting to us an early thank-offering for the care of his never-slumbering watch while we have been sleeping in his lower rooms.

In the day-time, although these little servants of his are busy with their petty household cares,

yet their flow of fragments of song never wholly ceases ; but at night-fall their day winds up with another burst of music for their evening praise. It is, however, softer, quieter, tenderer than the morning, tearful almost, as you sit and hear it from some tree-branch while the sun sets slowly, and you think one more day of your life is ended.

Is this not a divine worship — practically so, at least, in its suggestiveness to your thoughtful selves? Can you listen to the song-choruses of the morning without a reminder of your own duty of day-service? And does not the twilight trilling call you to an evening sacrifice for all the blessings and sins of the day? And does not God give you a hint, most gently and kindly, through these flitting, winged messengers, to start your own hymn of praise also?

But the birds are not the only servants of the Lord to bless him in the day-time. To the soul in spiritual harmony all nature is a temple full of hymns of praise, so long as the bright sun holds its light to illuminate this temple of earth in which man goeth forth to his work until the evening. There is the melody of a divine worship in the fields, and especially in the forests. If you walk in their dim aisles you can not repel the feeling that you are in God's first temples. The leafy shades, the mossy and silent foot-paths, the heaven-pointing tree-trunks, and the glints of blue sky and searching sunbeams between,

enclose you like a quiet company just on the point of opening their mouths in sacred song, and your heart must throb in sympathy of worship if you have a living soul.

Even looking out from a headland or upon a ship's deck upon the great and wide sea, so flat and monotonous, there is a solemn suggestion of God in its level surface rippling in the sunlight or frowning in the shadows of sailing clouds. The monotone of its restless dash against the shore, and the nameless sounds of its distant deeps muttered along inward to the land from wave to wave as the cry of invisible spirits in trouble far away, all have the power of eternity to waken the soul to worship the unseen God.

In fine, to any devout thinker, the whole day, earth is a temple of worshipers, — without any order of service, indeed, but full of its devoutest spirit. In this temple of the Lord, no hour of daylight passes but somewhere is going on a most suggestive scene of blessing the Lord — vocal sometimes in full and set prayer and praise, but always telling man of God, and calling on him to bless his holy name. So the day is full of worship. With all its cries for help, and its moanings under cruelty, and its screeches for rescue from crime, the earth still lies as an altar, itself often the victim on it, waiting in the courts of the Lord.

But the psalm before us does not sing of the

day-worship. It is of his servants who by night stand in the house of the Lord. Who can these be that serve the Lord in the night?

“Night lays her finger on the lips
Of men, and hushes them to something like
The calm of death. ’Tis night
That stretches mournful wings from shore to shore,
Till silent lie the singers of the world
Beneath the shadow.” — *B. M.*

Who, then, are the watchers that stand by night in the house of the Lord? It is the beauty of our best and warmest prayer-meetings that they come at the twilight, which like a clasp shuts the day and its work and the night together. The day of toil and the night of rest are then sealed in holy union by a prayer and a song from the little groups of the family of Christ here and there before the Lord. No wonder we love to sing so often:—

“Sweet hour of prayer
That calls me from a world of care,
And bids me at my Father’s throne
Make all my wants and wishes known.”

He that has stood in the outer courts of the Lord during the day—whether in meditative priestly study or in the dusty Levitical routine—is glad to gather at sunset with his fellow-servants at the western door of the Lord’s temple and sing his evening prayer to the setting sun. No wonder, therefore, the prayer-meeting lives in the middle

of the week; and the harder the day's work the sweeter the evening worship.

But the night comes and ends all visible service, and the house of the Lord becomes empty and silent. In the ancient Judæan temple, when the evening sacrifice was over, people and priest departed, and darkness settled down in the courts and between their colonnades and pillars. The seven-branched candlestick burnt low and dim in the undisturbed silence of the holy place, where the crowds so lately bustled, and the incense burned, and the holy place was dark. No foot fell on the marble floors until past midnight, when the priestly guard came for once through the postern gate, and the flare of their torches fitfully lit up the arches, as its divisions marched through and around the sacred enclosure. But their footsteps at last died away in the echoing distances, and silence again settled unbroken, except as the trimmers of the lamps noiselessly attended to their periodical duties. These alone, and literally, stood by night in the house of the Lord.

Were you ever in an empty church in the night-time? There is something preternaturally impressive in its darkness and silence, as if the spirit of God invisibly poised with unmoving wing in its lofty ceilings, and looked thoughtfully down into the empty pews where believers and rejecters lately sat together. The organ is there in shadowy outline, but there is no whisper of sound from its

pipes. You can barely distinguish the place of the pulpit, but no hand lifts itself there in invitation or in warning over the now shut Bible, and no word of prayer for weary, sinning souls comes from that stand of approach to God. The hymn-books are scattered and closed on the cushions, for the eyes that read them are now also scattered to their homes and closed in sleep. It is as if the day of mercy and hope to the people were over, and the night of the end were come. Not here, then, in the literal house of the Lord, shall you find them who by night stand before him in service.

Neither in the earth at large shall you find men to stand and minister in the night-time. For the wide world is asleep, with their work-tools dropped from their hands, and their burdens of cares rolled off from their spirits. The hush of night has fallen even upon the prisoners in their cells, and the wicked for a little while have ceased from troubling and the weary are at rest. God leaves his tired children — tired with their wanderings from Him — a little while to sleep; and they lie, saint and sinner alike, defenceless in their slumbers under his all-seeing and tenderly pitying eye. Yet in the night-time God's thought goes through the world, as a mother goes from room to room to be sure that her little sleepers are in and safe for the night. In such negative way, perhaps, as *not* sinning, it may be loosely said we all do minister before the Lord in the night.

But there is a nearer and deeper sense to this night ministry. The pilgrim psalm means not, by those standing by night in the house of the Lord, the sleeping city of Jerusalem, nor the sleeping priests and Levites awaiting their courses in the next-day service. It is of the occasional torch-bearer, whose light flashes over the corridors and strikes their eye, that the pilgrims sing as "standing by night in the house of the Lord," and it is the wakeful and active servant, still busy in some Christian duty while others sleep, that stands before the Lord. There are not a few such watching ones in our earth who thus serve the Lord in the night.

I am reminded of a journey once in a night express-train. It was along the small hours of a foggy and dark summer night. The unusual swaying of the cars would permit only broken half-slumbers. I turned in the berth and looked out of the little window at my head. We were flying through a country of scattered houses, shut, dark, and apparently empty, but at rare intervals — miles between — I could distinguish a light in some chamber, dimly glimmering through the fog. I knew that some sick one was wrestling there with pain and perhaps with death, but over whom also some wakeful watcher was standing in kindly ministries. All else was hidden to me except the single misty beam of the steady lamp, but still I seemed to understand the midnight minis-

tries in that chamber, and the house, as it passed out of sight in the darkness, became to me as a house of the Lord with its night-service, which, if done in the name of a disciple, was truly and most acceptably done unto him.

How many such chambers of waiting there may be in this wide earth, where the Lord is as truly and lovingly served, and where often both sick and watcher stand equally in their night of pain and care worshiping in the house of the Lord! And not the sick only so stand.

There are those who can not sleep, even when no sickness compels their waking — whose day cares and anxieties will not let them go to sleep. Perhaps their hearts are troubled for their own remissness, or touched with sympathy for a neglected Redeemer; slighted by their own friends, for whose peril they are too troubled to sleep. It may be from any other of a thousand directions in which disturbing care has come in to keep them wakeful. The fact of their wakefulness is not itself a service of the Lord, but they are standing in his silent temples, in the night of their anxieties, and they may make a service of it, if they will remember that they are not out in a homeless desert, far away from God, and buffeted and forsaken. But if they will feel themselves to be in his house, and therefore close at home, and near the loving hand that can untangle their knots and take the load from their shoulders, and

so give his beloved sleep. It is how you bear your anxieties, and whither you take them, that decides whether in your wakeful nights you stand in the house of the Lord, or out on the moors amongst the beasts of prey.

Still another class besides the sick and the anxious has the Lord standing in the night before him. It is the afflicted, to whom darkness has spread over all things and made night every-where. The extinguishing blow does not always come from death. Any extinction of light or demolition of hope will bring its night-time for service. I have known the undoubted Christian so smitten by physical disease or lapse of brain-power as to walk in darkness and see no light, to lose hope and heart, and to write the bitter things of religious despair against himself. It was very midnight indeed when he was called to minister before the Lord.

Many and many are his servants, called thus to rise and minister like Samuel, in the night when temple-lamps burn low and dim. None can tell when his course of service may fall to him — in the daylight, or at midnight, or toward the eternal morning; but, whenever, the refrain is still answering back, as from some other hill-top morning-tinted: “The Lord that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Sion!”

So, as a final suggestion from this closing pilgrim hymn, we are not to believe that we stand in the

house of the Lord only on the Sabbath, or when the daylight of prosperity, spiritual or temporal, surrounds us, and our Christian work progresses and our hearts are light. Nay; we may be rendering a higher service and a sweeter ministry to him when the candle of the Lord burns dim in his house, and we go at midnight the rounds of his courts to see by our flickering torches if all is well.

The night service has none of the glare and parade of a full-lighted day-worship amongst a crowd of spectators; but he in whose house it is given will prize it the more for its hour of darkness, and it will certainly cheer the other watchers under the evening shadows to see our struggling light in the courts of the Lord and to believe that God has some servants always awake, even in the night. It is when Christ's kingdom is enshrouded in discouraging glooms that the piety of his people is brightest and dearest to him; and it is then, also, the surest light to any who may be feeling in their night after the door of his temple to come in and worship.

JULY 9, 1882.

XIV.

CHRISTIAN ASSURANCE OF HEAVEN.

Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off. — ISAIAH 33: 17.

THERE was little prospect of the fulfillment of these words when they were spoken, for it was a very dark day to Judah when the prophet sent out this cheery message. Samaria had been captured by the Assyrians and the most of Israel carried away; and now Sennacherib and his army were swarming by thousands across the river and over the hills of Judah, determined to wipe out this remnant of the obstinate and hated nation. To darken the dismalness of the outlook there was dissension among the people, and a strong and active party, faithless of the divine protection, were determined to put themselves under the help of Egypt.

Many of the chief men were indignant at the vigorous steps of the king Hezekiah to uproot the prevalent idolatries, so that Hezekiah stood almost alone in his loyalty to Jehovah and faith in his protection; but the king had one strong helper in the prophet Isaiah, and it was chiefly his assurances of the divine intervention which em-

boldened the king to stand, and made him a ruling majority over the situation.

But Isaiah sometimes turned to the people to infuse into them some trust in the arm of the Lord. The text is one among many of the prophet's assurances to the people. He says they shall yet see the king delivered and vindicated in the beauty of his kingship, and shall see the utmost corners of their country cleared of Assyrian invaders, and fully open to their own feet.

The prophets, and Isaiah especially, meant deeper than their words sounded; and if Judah had penetrated and accepted their messages they would not have lost the sight and liberty of the house of David. It is our privilege to take the prophecies in their inner and deeper sense—as the real heart of the Word of God, now that the external bark and sap have sloughed off and decayed by their first and literal fulfillment.

It is no contortion of the text, but an outshining of its present sense, to repeat its cheering words to the people of God and to every single true disciple of the Lord, as I do to you, children of the Highest: “Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off.”

So, instead of Hezekiah and his people trembling at the Assyrian hordes coming

. . . “down like a wolf on the fold,
Their cohorts all gleaming in purple and gold,”

let us read the Church of Christ in all ages.

The Christian Church has often been situated like the people of Judah: in the way of worldly and ambitious men, surrounded by enemies who wanted only the power to devour her, and threatened with extinction. But, like Judah, she has been often rescued by sudden and unexpected deliverances — as the angel of the Lord rescued Judah by the fearful slaughter of one hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrians in a single night. From the earliest time the Church of God has traveled down through the ages; sometimes singing in the brightness of her prosperity, but oftenest wary and distrustful — timidly creeping by giant's castles, or carefully feeling her way among crafty pitfalls.

The history of the kingdom of Christ has been a succession of perils and escapes. It has been an object of contentions by the world since the first mission of the apostles. Lying directly in the path of human ambitions, as Judah was in the path of the ancient contending monarchies, the wars of the earth have been mostly fought on its territory, and wherever the clash of arms, the Church has always felt the shock.

You do not understand the battle if you do not detect some interest of the kingdom of Christ involved in the strife. The Crusades of the Middle Ages were ostensibly for the recovery of the Holy Land and Sepulcher from the Saracens, but really rifted the clouds which enveloped the

almost-forgotten kingdom of our Lord and released a population to receive the doctrines of the Reformation. The French and Indian wars in 1730-50 were apparently a conflict between France and England for the possession of this New World; but they were really to save our land from the Jesuits and for the Bible and liberty. To-day the fight is coming on again, pretendedly to save the children from godless schools and from infidelity; but really it is to break up our public-school system and make the public pay for private priestly teaching.

The plea for Sabbath excursions is to give the hard-working people a holiday on the one day when they can afford it; but the real spirit is a God-forgetting spirit of gain: as if God had no rights to compete with the profits of railroads and steamboats and excursionists. The contest is apparently in the interests of a popular holiday; but it is really to break down the restraints of God's Sabbath law, and leave each one to do what seemeth right in his own eyes.

So, too, the cry against doctrines and catechisms and creeds is announced to be a demand for freedom of conscience and for a broad Christian union; but the practical issue is to bury the lines of divine truth and overthrow the walls of separation between the Church and the world, and so make the people of God wandering nomads without house or home, as the patriarchs were when

they first entered Canaan. The Prince of this world knows what he is aiming at, but his people are as ignorant of the strategics of his campaignings as the private soldiers of an army are of the meaning of their own marchings and fightings.

The simple truth is, this world is the field of a great conflict between Christ and the forces of darkness; and it must needs be that the people of the Lord should often seem to themselves to be on the point of extinction, surrounded as the prophet was in Dothan; but too often with their eyes shut to the angels on the hills. But somehow they have always been delivered, and have often and most unexpectedly seen their King in his glory, leading them grandly to the lands that are far off from their troublous position.

I can not speak to you especially of these deliverances. But you will remember the sad days of the early persecutions, when imperial pagan Rome hunted the disciples into the catacombs and into the deserts of Africa, until the emperor himself was touched by a vision of the cross, and was turned to become the nursing father of the Church! You remember when Protestant Germany was scoured and beaten from end to end until the young king of Sweden flung himself into the field, and ended the Thirty Years' War with the sacrifice of his life, and made Middle Europe a region of religious freedom to this day. You remember the struggles in England in the

times of Henry VIII., of Bloody Mary, and Elizabeth, and the ultimate outshining of God's free Word in its beauty from the banks of the Thames to the Scottish Highlands.

One has read the history of Christendom with shut eyes who has not seen — and very often — the King in his beauty, gleaming through the rifts of the battle-smoke, arousing the cheers of his almost desponding people. When we shall have reached the plains of unbroken peace and rest, and shall trace back the working agencies of the world's history, nothing hardly shall astonish us more than the sudden and surprising interventions of our Lord for the deliverance of his earthly kingdom.

We may assure ourselves now that the words of the old prophet of Judah are still ringing down the centuries to the Christian Church in all its present conflicts with the unbelief and apathy and implacable hostilities around it — ringing out the cheery assurance in its darkest positions. "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off." As Christ loves his Church, and loves the doctrines for which it is contending, he will not suffer it or them to be suppressed, or weakened even, except to show forth the brighter the beauty and glory of his strength.

But again, I am sure it is no perversion of the text to turn its enheartening words down to every

single follower of the Lord. We all have some inner conviction that there is a life of blessedness after this, and a world fitted for its enjoyment. To many minds it may be a very dim conviction, lying unheeded in a corner; but the instincts of immortality no doubt exist in the soul, and when it stands on the edge of the present it has an irrepressible feeling that the dropping of the curtain of this life will be the lifting of one for the life to come.

We feel toward the heavenly world somewhat as the most of us feel toward the Old World across the Atlantic. We know, whenever we think of it, that there are the homes of our fathers; the graves of the good and mighty of other days; that Westminster Abbey holds the ashes and monuments of the men whose names will never die. There is the city of Luther and Melancthon, of Calvin and Farel; the Catacombs where bold confessors and gentle children of Christ have laid buried for fifteen hundred years. When we think of it our hearts glow with a longing to stand ourselves in Bunhill Fields and the Highlands, in Rome, in Patmos, in Sardis and Philadelphia, and in thy streets, O Jerusalem!

But, for the most part, we are busied enough with our own home present, and so confined to it that we forget that just across the ocean lie the lands where the Lord walked and his disciples died and are buried. And further, as there is no

prospect that our feet will ever walk around their labors or our eyes ever look on their graves, we indulge in little rhapsodies over what we could enjoy, and bury it all among our impossibles.¹ If one of our friends is going to Europe and we go with him to the ship that will take him away, we look on him with a singular interest, that he will so soon see the grand sights: the cathedrals, the masterpieces of art, the Alps, and the seven hills in "the land that is very far off."

So it is to us with the city of God, where Christ has gathered the spirits of the just made perfect. We know there is such a home of his glorified elect, but we really and usually feel a great uncertainty that our feet shall ever stand within its gates of pearl and golden streets. Perhaps the doubt hardly takes shape enough to attract our attention. But if it does, there is enough in ourselves and our conditions to make that land farther off than Egypt and Palestine.

It is truly a very rare persuasion to us that we personally shall ever see the King in his glory! Theoretically we may admit it amongst our hopes, but to make it a confident expectation, so that we shall say it heartily and joyously, "I know that my redeemer liveth, . . . and mine eyes shall behold, and not another," is a very rare

¹ A few months later, through the kindness of a loving people, Dr. Blake and his wife spent four months in Europe, and visited many of the places he had so longed to see. E. L. M.

attainment, even when we stand on the very threshold of its realization. There are reasons for this, aside from the blamefulness of our unbelief.

The materialism of our daily life is directly opposed to the culture of such a religious hope. Our body is an inseparable companion of the soul. They walk arm in arm together amidst a constant buzz of earthly cries. The body will be cared for and fed and tended, and will make the spirit listen to it. More than a helpless child absorbs and wearies its mother will the body leave the soul little time and vigor to get by itself and train the scanty and withered flowers immortal of its true summer home. It demands more grace than most of us have to set the body down still in a corner while we try to steal a while away, and look to the lands of home that are very far off.

But this natural difficulty is greatly increased by our own self-conscious deficiencies. The confidence of victory in any strife goes far to gain the victory. We win because we believe that we can and shall win. But doubt of success is the almost certain forerunner of defeat.

It is as true in spiritual things. While you are doubting that you are a Christian at all, you can not glow very much in the assurance of hope. Though you may not doubt the glory of the King, you will doubt that your eyes shall ever see his

glory. We dare, therefore, to say only, that we *hope* we shall reach heaven; because we are now conscious of so little of the fitness for entering. When we muse upon the blessedness of the righteous, it is with a sad sigh that we are fit only to see it afar off. Hope is a compound of desire and expectation and is founded upon evidence of a new life. As our evidences of piety are dulled, our hope subsides into a saddening desire. The lands of the blest seem farther off than ever.

But again, the indifference and querying skepticism of others beget mistrust in ourselves of eternal realities. The temper of the world and the tone of its criticisms do have a strong influence over the people of Christ. The chill of a doubting atmosphere will strike into the soul and cool its ardor; and so hostile to the culture of piety and, therefore, of Christian hope is the dominant spirit of this day that the wonder is that any Christians can keep warm with them a lively hope of the coming bliss. The men we mingle with, and have to mingle with, have no glad anticipations of the life immortal and perhaps no belief in it. The songs that should be humming in all Christian hearts for the joys that are coming have no harmony with the talk of the street and little stimulus in the chambers above the earthly noises. So that we doubt sometimes really if our beliefs be not the persuasions of a

poetic fancy more than the assurances of a reasonable faith. For how can it be that such a glorious outcome of our poor present is so near at hand and that such a dazzling beauty awaits only the uplift of the curtains of the next life, when we all alike are so oblivious and uncaring!

It is too contrary to the spirit and thinkings and plannings of this world, too opposite to our inward consciousness of desert, to be able to conceive of "the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." So it comes to pass that we have but the dullest idea of our seeing the King in his glory. It does not come to the consistency of an expectation. It is but a nebulous desire and the faintest of hopes.

But over against this dim incertitude I am still able to say to every weakest believer in Christ: "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off." I say every weakest believer. I can not so distrust the distinct promises of our Redeemer as to admit that one soul, having once really trusted in him, will be lost, however far and long he may wander! If he have believed for ever so little, heaven is sure to him that believeth. As an old divine once said: "God so loves holiness that he will not suffer a soul to be lost which has ever had one holy affection." By some wonderful grace he will bring the straying child home again in season to the open door, though he come weary and wounded

and sore and late from his wanderings. I say, therefore, if you ever have truly loved God, and ever have repented of sin with a godly sorrow, and ever have really accepted the blood of Christ as the ground of your forgiveness, you "shall see the King in his beauty"! It is, indeed, a wonderful outcome of your halting and stumbling life,—a strange recognition of your sinnings and unbeliefs and neglects,—but little do we now understand the heart of our Saviour or the breadth and depth of that grace which has opened the lands that are far away to our feet.

I look upon you, therefore,—upon every Christian, indeed,—as I lately looked at the groups of the birds in the tree-tops, when taking their last flights in these northern fields and chatting of the far-off lands of the sunny South; as I looked once on a shipload of people on board a steamer bound for the Old World; as I have sometimes looked upon the dying Christian just stepping behind the curtain which hides that land from ours. Tomorrow may be, but some day surely, you "shall see the King in his beauty;" the streets of the New Jerusalem will be as familiar to you and as much like home as these houses are to you now! This cold and doubt-filled atmosphere and these colder non-respondent hearts and these stony and rugged paths will be forever passed and the now far-off lands will be under your feet and the glories of the Lamb will be real to your eyes!

What a difference between now and then ! And shall not the faintest hope of it stiffen you to do the work and bear the burdens and resist the fallacies of the present ? Shall it not quicken your sympathies and inflame your prayers for them who have as yet no hope and are without God in the world ? Pray and speak and work before you pass out of sight.

NOVEMBER 30, 1879.

XV.

DO THE DEAD KNOW OF US?

There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. — LUKE 15: 10.

I PRESENT this passage for your study, not so much for the fact it asserts, — which has a deep interest of its own, — as for the light which that fact throws upon another subject of deepest interest to us all. It is a subject which often comes to the heart for an explication and which has many an unreliable answer. It may be well to set it for once in the light of the Scriptures, if they may satisfy our longing inquiries as to the way toward the truth.

You need not to be told that we pass through only the preface of our lives in this world. Life is like the bridge in the vision of Mirza, through which the passengers were dropping unexpectedly all along its whole length into the concealing waters below. There is no one alive who does not miss some from his side thus fallen out of his sight, even from his most intimate fellowship.

So it comes to pass, as we travel along in the years, that it is not long before there are more of our friends and acquaintances on the other side

of the river than on this. We can say, as the familiar hymn hath it:—

“One family we dwell in Him,
One Church, above, beneath,
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death.”

But our instinct is strong that the multitude who have gone across and out of sight are still consciously alive somewhere. We feel assured of their continued existence, by the plain interpretation of the Scriptures; and to those who deny this authority there is the same inward conviction, deep and indestructible, of the immortality of every once living human soul. We feel it in us that the dead are not extinct. Our anxiety does not spring from any doubt of their continued and living consciousness. It comes from the fact that our assured knowledge of them stops at this point. There are a thousand questions which spring up within us about that unknown condition into which the dead have passed, and questions most intimately connected with our resignation and comfort.

When a friend of ours passes across these earthly seas, we know that his conditions can not be widely different from our own. We can consult the journals of travelers there, and so learn of their surroundings and probable manner of living. Nay, we can hear directly from them,

and know from their own hands the answers to our most interested questions. We carry their familiar looks in our mind and at any time picture them to ourselves as they are. But we have no such resorts for those who have crossed the dark sea which rolls around this land of the living. There have been no travelers to return and give us their experiences and observations of the land which no mortal may know. A few indeed have revisited this world—as did Moses and Elias; but they came to one person only, to talk with him of his coming death, and returned again speedily. They said not a word to the sole three spectators of their strange visit. Even the apostle who went to, and returned from, that unknown third heavens where the Church of the firstborn live, told never a word of what he saw, beyond the fact of his visit, and even this he concealed to himself for fourteen years.

It has not seemed wise to the Holy Spirit, in revealing to us the hidden things of God, to tell us what our hearts most long to know of those who have gone on before. The Bible is very explicit upon the things which we need to know in order to salvation. It is very copious in its narratives of the past events of this earth's history. But it gives us only suppressed hints of the world of spirits; merely the slight gleams which steal through the crevices of the door of eternity, when it opens to let pass up a summoned soul or

to let come down some angelic minister of the Lord to his earthly service.

Practically we are without reliable answers to our many questions which crowd and wait along the shores of the unexplorable sea; we are shut up to the vague impressions which we can collect and join together out of hints that will now and then drop, as the invisible workers in Christ's kingdom pass up and down on their errands. The question which perhaps oftenest arises in our minds is, whether the dead are as ignorant of us as we are of them. Some reliable information on this question will be a comfort to every human heart. It is one which has been frequently put to me, and I will here give such answer as I can and in its simplest form.

I may reply, first, that the only satisfactory reply we shall get must come from what God the Spirit may have pleased to tell us in the Bible. We can *guess*, out of the wildness of our own impressions: but this will be only a blind reaching out into the dark. We may *speculate* as to what must be, from the known conditions of the mind in its present surroundings: but, until we know its future environments, we can not learn of its workings in probably wholly different conditions. We may take counsel of our *feelings*, imagining what our impulses would lead us to do in their place: but that is the most unstable of all foundations for a faith.

Some jump all obstacles, and claim that the departed do actually come back to this world and are trying to make their presence known to us by knockings and shadowy hands and messages. But these signs are so utterly out of their character — and through mediums which they never knew and would be most unlikely to select — that the whole thing is an assumption too egregiously contrary to our sense of fitness to their once well-known character that no evidence short of another well-attested divine revelation could induce us to believe it. And then, if such tokens of their presence could possibly be proven to us, our friends must be so changed, and even degraded, in intellect, so utterly different to our latest earthly knowledge of them, that further acquaintance would be a sad loss and disappointment, a knowledge undesired. The whole idea of such earthly visitations is too belittling to the solemnities of the immortal life, and its effect on the soul's character, to receive a moment's entertainment.

We have no resort on which we can rely but the Scriptures, and these properly interpreted. What, then, saith the Scriptures about the knowledge which our deceased friends may have of us? If we can get only negative or inferential replies, we must be content with these and be grateful.

We may say, and as preliminary, the Scriptures give no evidence that the departed are present in this world with us. You shall find no declara-

tion, I think, which asserts or suggests any such general visitation. The idea that they are "the ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation" is not in the passage which is sometimes quoted, as you must readily see. On the contrary, the whole tenor of the Scripture allusions to the dead leads to the contrary conclusion: that they do not return to this world—not until the last day, when they shall come at the general resurrection, to re-occupy the bodies once theirs, then raised from the dust of the earth.

We always bring out from our Scripture reading the impression—deepened by every review—that the souls of believers in Jesus do go immediately to his presence and remain with him where he is until he shall come again "in the glory of his Father with his angels." This was the promise which Jesus gave to his disciples when he left them at the communion-table, as their consolation and cure for heart-trouble, after his return to his Father and theirs. He did not hint that the dead saints of the former time would be with them as invisible companions in their work to extend his kingdom; but that, when their task was done, they should be ever with their Lord.

The prayer of the first Christian martyr, Stephen, came out of his faith in this very promise, which was confirmed to him by his wonderful vision (while the stones were pounding his life out) of the heavens opened and Jesus

standing at the right hand of God. Stephen remembered the words of the Lord, when he saw that vision of their fulfillment, and he cried: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" Did Stephen believe that his spirit was to stay with, or come back to, such a hostile crowd? Would he wish to? Paul says once in a struggling hour of his mission-work that he was in a strait betwixt departing to be with Christ and remaining to be with his beleaguered earthly brethren.

But I need not adduce further evidence to confirm the belief that our dead Christian friends do not remain in, or even return to this earth again. The Bible gives no ground for such a belief and our instincts of propriety reject it. We can not feel that the earth is trodden by the feet of departed spirits and the air moved by their wings. It is not their robes, washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb, which some imaginative ones think they have heard rustling in their path to warn them of danger. Nor is it their voices, vocal with the heavenly song of Moses and the Lamb, which some think they have heard whispering to them words of cheer or warning.

There is a nearer physical cause in their own nerve-centers for such vagaries of a distempered imagination. We feel quite sure that the redeemed spirits of heaven have nothing to do with it or us.

It follows, therefore, that our departed friends

have no knowledge of our present, through their own personal observations, because they do not come here to watch our living: that is, we have no hint in the Bible of any such coming. It may not be out of place here to reflect that we can not feel that they will have any desire to revisit this world. It has been to them a place of trial, of sinning, and of frequent humiliating falls, after their Lord had set them on their feet—and what pleasant association can they have saved out of so much pain, so as to wish to see it again? Of course, we can not, and need not, suppose that they have lost their interest in earthly things, so far as they touch the kingdom of Christ: nor have they dropped their love for their church and their Christian brethren trying to fill their places with increasing labor: nor do we believe that the once loving ties of kinship have been utterly forgotten; but what attractions have all these compared with Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and the spirits of the just made perfect?

With hearts purified and made perfect in love, such as all heavenly souls glow with, we can not charge them with neglect, when the glories of the Lamb and the innumerable and sweet company of the church of the firstborn “shall so fill their souls with joy” that they shall have no desire to leave that glorious place for this dark sinning world of struggles and griefs; no, not even for an hour if

they could. We readily, therefore, and cheerfully dismiss all inclination to believe that the departed souls come back to this earth to learn of our welfare. I say we cheerfully dismiss it, for we feel the incongruousness of two such differing populations, and we do not wish to believe that they who have once escaped from the turmoils and broils of our streets, and trials and pains of our homes, and from their own painful earthly movings toward heaven, shall revisit the scenes of so many trying recollections, even in the shelter of a perfect and glorified nature.

But then, says the hungry heart and bereaved, does not this conclusion make an impassable gulf betwixt earth and heaven, cutting off the dead from all possibility of knowing how we fare on in our lonely journey? Must not their hearts hunger for some news from us whom they have left behind? Can they be content to be in utter ignorance of our well or ill fare? If the earthly mother is anxious when she is away from the home of her little ones, will not her heart have, in heaven, some longings to know how her children on earth are getting on? and especially whether they are walking after her in the "straight and narrow way which leadeth unto life"? Will not the members of a church, who on earth prayed and worked and denied themselves together, to bring other souls to the knowledge and love of Christ,

carry up, and afterward feel, some of that love and anxiety for the growth of the church they have left behind? Will not the pastor still remember the flock he tried to persuade to become reconciled to God, and the doctrines of the gospel which he tried to establish and defend, after his hands have taken the palm-branch and his voice has begun the new song?

Yes! There is no biblical contradiction to this conclusion. God, who shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, will provide somehow against all these anxieties, we feel sure, and in some full and satisfying way too, other than by their personal return to the earth. I say, therefore, that the departed saints *may* learn of us through the angelic ministries.

There are hints toward such a comforting possibility: first, in the frequent fact of olden time, that angels did intervene their services, and at a nick of time, which showed that they understood the best moment when to add their ministry; and, therefore, must have known so much of the history of the time as to select that moment: that is, the angel must needs have been present to put to his agency at the right time.

Notice, for example, in the account of the offering of Isaac by his father, this fact lying between the lines of the record. The altar was built on the mountain and Isaac was bound on the wood and Abraham had stretched forth his hand and

taken the knife to slay his son, when the angel of the Lord arrested his arm. It was the moment precisely when an intervention was necessary to save the life of his son. How should the angel know that moment between the lifted and the descending knife, so quick to pass by, unless he knew it by some immediate watching for the event itself? Does it not, therefore, suggest at least so much of fact as that these spiritual agents of God know passing events, and are therefore prepared to tell of them to others on their return?

But again the same fact of angelic acquaintance with human affairs underlies the deliverance of Lot from the destruction of Sodom. The two angels who stayed at his house in the wicked city all night knew of the coming fiery tempest of the next morning, and while Lot lingered — seeing no sign in the skies of the sulphurous storm — the angels knew there was no time to lose, and they laid hold upon the hands of the small family of four (an angel between each pair) and brought them out of the city at just the moment to escape the overwhelming desolation. How could they have so timed their visit unless they knew the precise juncture of safety?

These are samples only, at first thought selected, of angelic intervention in the affairs of men at such critical moments as to convince us of their intimate knowledge of the exigencies of God's

people, gained apparently by their own presence amongst men. The past history of the Church, especially in the patriarchal periods, is full of similar incidents, so full that we have no doubt of a full angelic acquaintance with the ongoings in this earth — so far, at least, as these relate to the progress of the kingdom of our Lord. But still, it is possible that these are exceptional interferences not warranting a present and general application. Are there, then, no general assertions which will cover the point of our inquiry? I think so, if I do not misread the real meaning of the Scriptures.

First is the text. In this chapter Jesus uses two differing expressions, as if of two sides of the one fact that there is joy over the conversion of sinners. First he says, this “joy shall be in heaven.” It may, therefore, possibly not be until the sinner shall reach heaven saved. The entrance of each redeemed soul into heaven will be a glad conclusion of conflict. But Jesus says again: “There *is* joy in the presence of the angels of God,” not at the conclusion of his life, but at the moment of his repentance. That repentance may be hidden in the sinner’s heart, and he may be shut in his chamber; but somehow the angels know the happy moment, and the gladness thrills their hearts as they send the news from mouth to mouth up to the throne of the Redeemer waiting for such victories. But how can the first angel

know this unless he be a close attendant of the penitent soul, and so knows the spiritual contests within him? That he tells of it, and that it goes upward to the heavenly company, I plainly read within the Saviour's words, and in them I detect a medium through which redeemed souls can learn of the spiritual attitude of the friends they have left behind on earth. There is additional confirmation of this conclusion in the assertion of Paul (Heb. 1: 14): "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" as if their service began before repentance and continued unto the end of life.

David has a grand utterance (Ps. 34: 7) which must have lifted the darkness of those old days of only glimmering twilight: "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." It is not one angel, it is the angelry: the heavenly company as one, surrounding the believer, knowing, therefore, his perils and delivering him in wise ways which ultimate in deliverance.

But your memory will supply other assertions as positively suggestive as these, that the angels of God are intimately versed in our earthly history. They are, therefore, able to inform those who have gone before us, if they wish to know.

That the angels do pass between earth and heaven, the ladder of Jacob's dream plainly

teaches. At the foot of this ladder, therefore, I am content to stand, knowing that whatever touches my spiritual weal will arrest the notice and, if need be, the service of some of the ascending and descending angels. That ladder is a bridge between us, and the holy-winged messengers are loving carriers of all the intelligence which our predecessors may desire to know of us.

If they turn their thoughts to us, it is not to learn if we are growing rich and honored and earthly-minded, but to know that we are living the humble, trustful, and workful life which is to them the alone life worth living. You may, therefore, have confidence that your departed Christian friends do know of your estate and attitude, all which the angels care to learn and they to inquire for. For the rest, it were no pleasure here or there to have it remembered or repeated.

The pressing thing is, first, to give joy to them by your repentance, and then, second, to live such godly lives in Christ Jesus that the Master shall know you with the welcome: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

NOVEMBER 5, 1882.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, the communion of the Holy Ghost, now be, and abide, with you all, both now and forever. Amen.

