

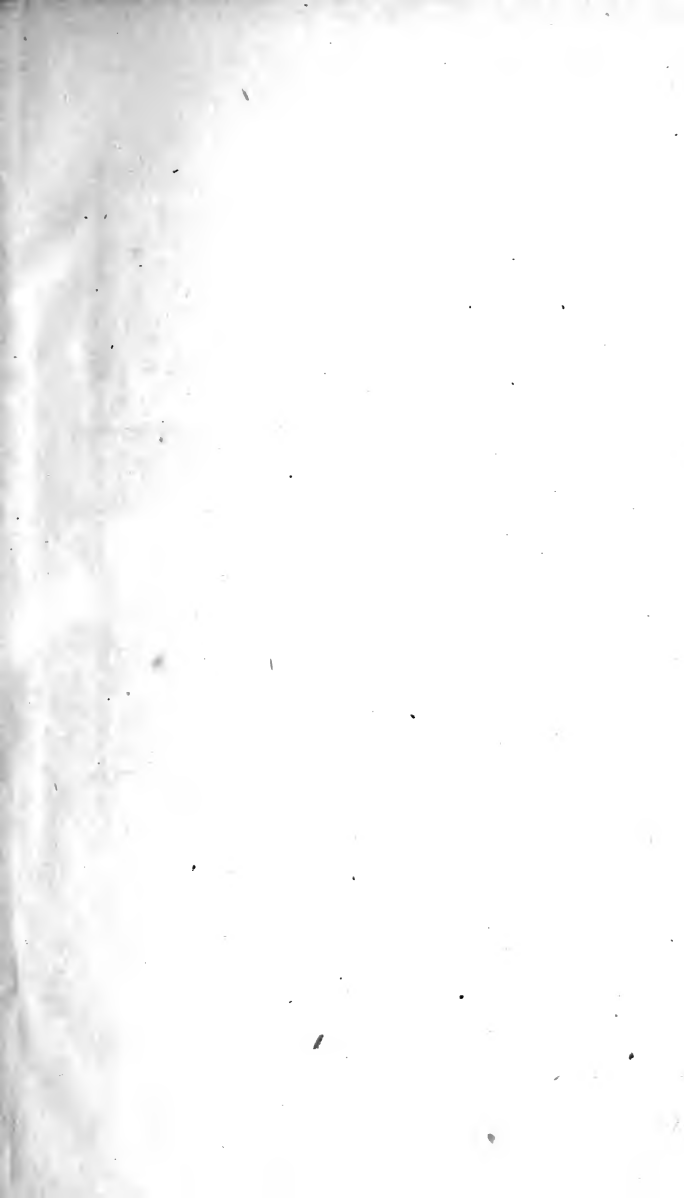
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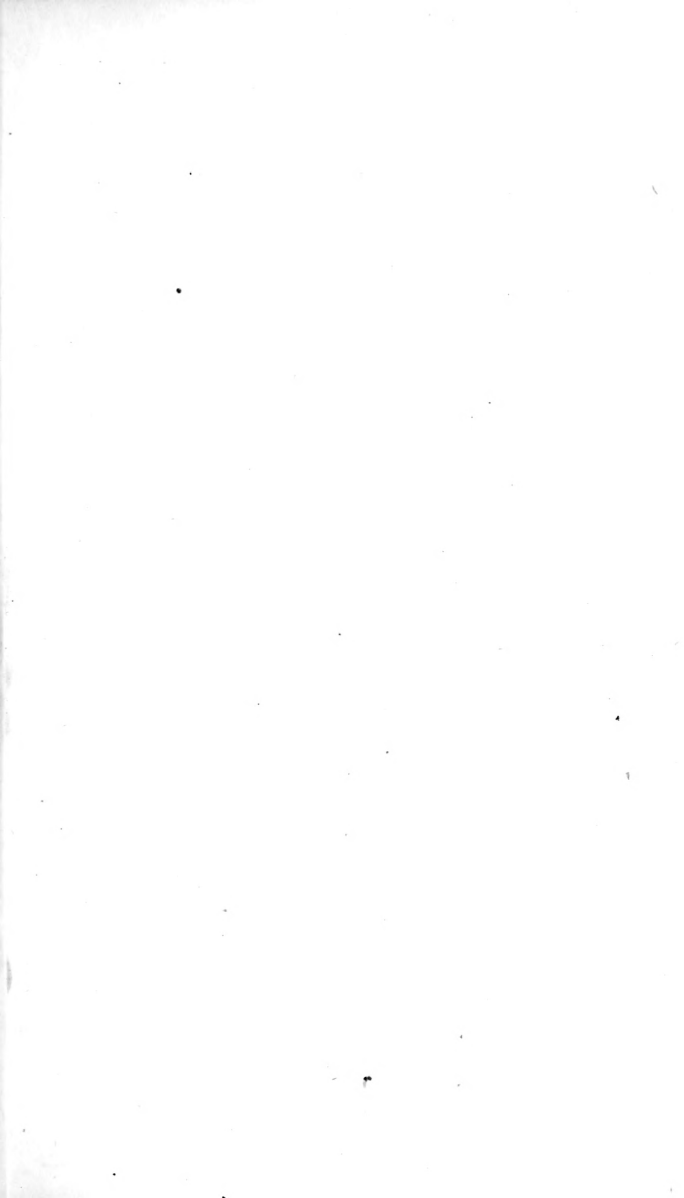
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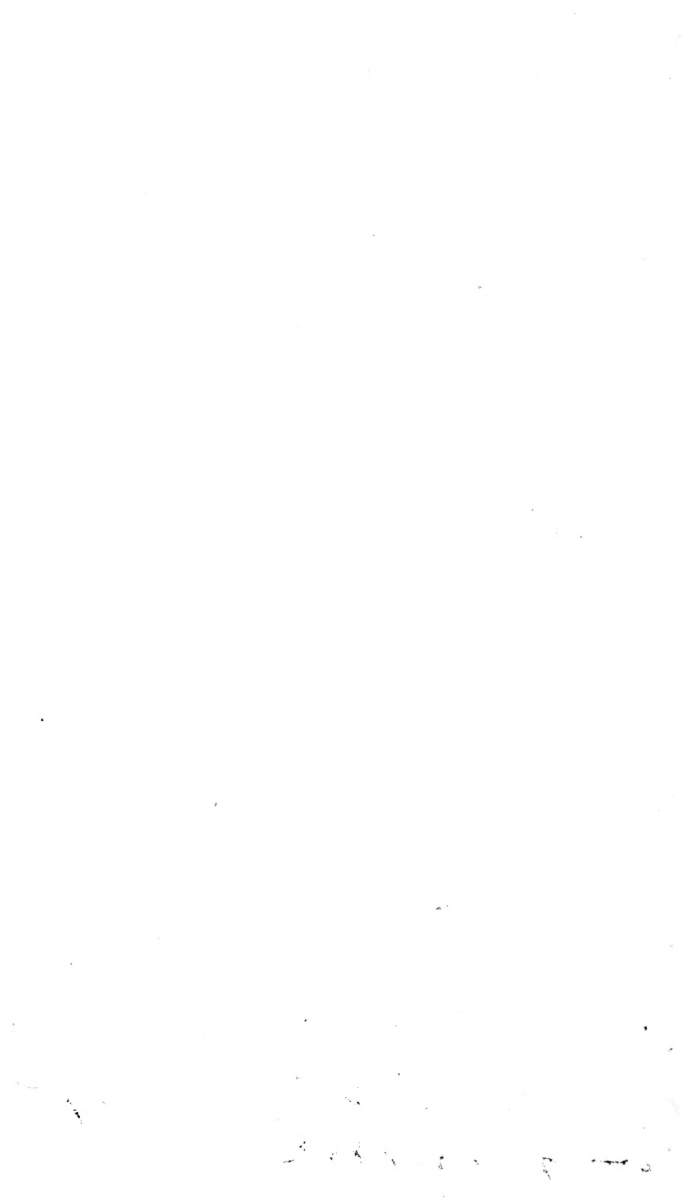
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.









422.

THE
SPIRIT WORLD;

OR THE

Caviler Answered.

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BY JOEL H. ROSS, M. D.,

Author of "Hints and Helps to Health and Happiness."  
—"What I Saw in New-York."—"Wrong  
Side of the Line," &c., &c.

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P R E F A C E.

As the trackless path of every mortal who is on his way to the land of immortality, is filled with fearful snares, visible and invisible, fraught with temporal and eternal ruin, the author has endeavored in a familiar manner to warn his fellow-traveler to beware of wily and seducing tempters and temptations which beset him at every step, from the cradle to the grave. The writer desires and aims in this work, which is largely founded upon fact, to stimulate all to journey, carefully, watchfully and prayerfully, through this dark valley to the spirit-world.

He, moreover, indulges the hope, that through the instrumentality of this humble volume, grace divine may

lead some precious immortal to ponder upon his prospects—scrutinize the foundation of his hopes—count the cost, and estimate the danger and the guilt of living a single day in peril, while an opportunity remains to lay hold on eternal life.

THE SPIRIT-WORLD.

CHAPTER I.

B. At our last interview, friend S., I suspected that your views were somewhat skeptical in relation to the revealed realities of the *Spirit-World*. Hence, soon after leaving you, I resolved that, on the first suitable occasion, I would call your attention to the momentous subject, and, if possible, induce you to look at your prospects, examine your hopes, test your foundation, abandon your skepticism, and lay hold on eternal life. Such a season

seems now to be opportunely presented, and as the day of final reckoning is rapidly hastening, and may overtake and overwhelm us before we meet again, if we do not improve the present moment; let me entreat you to earnestly and honestly ponder upon the soul's existence and destiny in the spirit-world.

S. What do you know about the invisible state and habitation of departed spirits more than I, Mr. B? Have you seen any of the inhabitants of that land from whence no traveler returns? Or have you by any means received any special revelation which you wish to communicate?

B. No, friend, it is not because I have a *new* revelation to which I would invite your attention, that I address you; but because an *old* revelation

fills me with a strong desire to call you aside from the busy throng and thoughtless multitude, that we may commune together in a familiar manner upon those topics which eminently demand our serious consideration, without delay. Are you ready and willing to spend an hour with me in contemplating the relation that man sustains to the spirit-world and that world to him—his prospects and his destiny?

S. Well, I do not see what you can have to communicate, that I do not know already; and hence, I might naturally ask, what good will it do me to turn my thoughts in such a direction? But, presuming that it can do me no *harm*, it appears very proper that I should listen; for it is written, "If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself; but if thou scornest, thou

alone shalt bear it." Possibly you may suggest something worthy of notice, should it be destitute of novelty ; and if so, I hope to have an ear to hear. It is certainly true that we are all hastening to that world of which you speak. But whether we can do anything *here* to affect our destiny *there*, is another question.

B. O, yes, we can do much; nay, everything here to make our residence there an abode of delight, inconceivably glorious. But there, we can do nothing to make one hair white or black. As the tree falls, so it lies. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." The husbandman cannot make amends in harvest for his neglect in seedtime. Neither can he expect to gather wheat when he has sown only tares.

S. This is very true, as far as this world is concerned. Whether it has anything to do with our existence in a spiritual state, I know not.

B. If it has not, why did infinite wisdom select such figures, and hold up to mortals such illustrations as everywhere abound in revelation? We are left to "sow to the flesh and reap corruption, or sow to the spirit and reap life everlasting," according to our own choice. Hence, if we are free at all, we settle our own destiny for eternity by the exercise of our own free-will.

S. I can hardly believe this doctrine.

B. It is the doctrine of the Bible, whether you believe it or not.

S. What! poor frail mortals, creatures of this dark world, helpless as infants, and almost as ignorant, left to work out for themselves utter destruc-

tion, that they may forever remain in hopeless wretchedness in the spirit-land? O, no, I can't believe that.

B. Why not!

S. Why not? It is enough to make a man perfectly wretched to think of it.

B. Undoubtedly it is; and it ought to make every one wise enough to secure his own safety, when the way is pointed out, and while he can do so if he will. It would make you uncomfortable to be told, at an unexpected hour, that you must abandon your habitation to the flames, or perish with it. So, if you were starting out to sea on a long voyage, full of hope and joyful anticipations, to be told by the captain, soon after leaving port, that you must forsake the ship and row for the shore, or sink to the bottom of the ocean, would be very unacceptable

news. But would you have the painful truth withheld?

S. O, no! In such a case I should want to know the worst of it; because to remain in ignorance of the facts, would be one of the worst things that could happen to me.

B. Well, then, never think of disbelieving the testimony of inspiration because it makes you feel uncomfortable. Or, in other words, do not deny what you know to be true; for if you did not believe it, you would not be disturbed by hearing it. The fact that you are thus disturbed, proves conclusively that you are in a sinking ship. But the "Ark of Safety" is still in port, and there is room within for you. It is bound for the most blissful haven in the spirit-world, and will safely and surely conduct you thither, if you will

accept a passage "without money and without price." This is your last and only chance. Will you enrol your name on the list of passengers ?

S. It seems very proper that I should do so, but still there may be terms of admission with which I may not be able to comply, although you say the offer is without money and without price.

B. There may be terms that you *will* not, but none that you *cannot* comply with at once. Terms there are, but they are *reasonable*. Terms there are, but they are *unalterable*.

S. What are they ?

B. Just the very best that could be offered. Terms so easy and simple, that I fear they will be despised or neglected. Only forsake thy sins, and cast thyself unreservedly upon the for-

giving mercy of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, and thou shalt find peace eternal beyond the river of death.

S. But suppose I do not comply at once, but endeavor to bring my mind in due time to bear upon the point, that I may be able at length to make an intelligent decision.

B. How would you like to be saved in this gradual way from the flames? I think such deliberation in a man professing to be your friend, would be received with strong suspicion. Suppose that you meet a man who is in great distress, whose instant relief you know, and he knows, to be within the power of your agency to effect; and you offer assistance, and he says, "*I will think of it until to-morrow.*" What would you think of *him*?

S. I should think that he was either

insane, or determined to suffer rather than to accept of my services.

B. What else will your gracious Redeemer think of you, if you treat his offers with such indifference? What is it but saying, I had rather remain in my sins, and risk all the consequences, than to accept at once of such offered grace? But remember that there is no promise or encouragement for those who delay. To-day is the accepted time. To-morrow the Ark of Safety may be out of your reach. Terms so easy cannot be rejected with impunity. Wait one day, nay, one moment too long, and a great ransom cannot save you.

S. It may be so, but I hope for better things.

B. What! hope for prosperity in rebellion, and for salvation in sin?

Such a hope may be to you like giving up the ghost.

S. Well, I feel half inclined to beg to be excused from any further conversation on this subject, as I find that I am not likely to enjoy it. And yet I am hardly prepared to do so; for, somehow or other, I have an impression, that I ought to listen to what you have to say on this solemn subject, lest I should meet you hereafter in the spirit-world self-condemned and self-ruined. How bitter the thought, how keen the pang, how sad would be my condition, if I should there find that I had lost all the blessedness of that world, by turning away my thoughts from the subject to which my attention is now so unexpectedly directed. But then, I do not believe in any such thing after all.

B. Yes, we shall there meet, and you do well to lay these things to heart. In the unknown regions of a boundless, endless world, where everything, both good and bad, has the stamp of immortality—where “he that is holy shall be holy still, and he that is filthy shall be filthy still,” shall meet a company that no man or angel can number, and with emotions that no tongue can describe. There, some shall shout, Hallelujah! we are saved. Others shall cry, Alas! “the great day of his wrath has come and who shall be able to stand!” There you will call to mind this interview, and, perhaps, say with an enraptured tongue, O how fortunate that I ever met you in yonder dark valley, and that you then pointed me to this peaceful world; and how rich the

grace that caused me to improve the passing moment.

Moreover, you may possibly meet me under very different circumstances, and say, Oh! that I had known what a step I was taking when I turned away from the path which you pointed out. Oh! that I had profited by that friendly message which I shut out of my thoughts as soon as I could, lest it should disturb my peace. My peace! What a delusion! I never had any peace! What a thought that I never shall have any forever and forevermore! Yes, immortal, we shall meet in the spirit-world; but under what circumstances we little know. Let us therefore be wise.

But this is not all. We shall meet there *soon*; let us therefore make haste to prepare for the journey. A few

more trials,—a little more pain—here and there a tear,—another fleeting moment, throbbing pulse, gasping breath and opening grave, and we are there—there forever! There in weal or woe. Take not another step until you take the right one.

S. And what is the right one?

B. Certainly not to cavil, not to delay, not to do violence to conscience, and not to grieve away the Holy Spirit. I have seen men, who, while they were under conviction and felt their need of aid from above, and who knew perfectly well that they were in an unrenewed state, and exposed to that death which never dies, still find fault with the truth, trifle with the means of grace, sin against light and knowledge, quench the Spirit, cast off fear, and restrain prayer, until it became fear-

fully evident that they were forsaken and left to serve a hard master and receive bitter wages. Take not such a step as this, precious immortal, lest it plunge you into keen despair.

S. Perhaps I do not understand exactly what you mean by finding fault with the *truth*. We do not all look alike, nor see alike, nor understand alike, and possibly we shall not exactly agree in these matters.

B. In essentials, I hope that we shall not disagree. Do you not take the Bible for your rule of faith and practice ?

S. O, yes, but you know that the Bible is explained in many different ways.

B. Well, we had better let the Bible explain itself, and we shall find nothing to lead us astray. I suppose you

believe that the Bible is a voice from heaven ?

S. Yes.

B. That it speaks to men ?

S. Yes.

B. That they are bound to give heed ?

S. Yes.

B. That none can refuse or neglect to do so with impunity,—that holiness and happiness, sin and suffering are inseparable ?

S. Well, for every crime that a man commits, I believe that he suffers.

B. Suffers *where* and *when* ? What is the nature and what the extent of that suffering ? Do you believe that sin unrepented of kills beyond the tomb ?

S. It may be so. Indeed, I once believed it. But my views have chan-

ged. I suppose you will say that I am now beginning to cavil.

B. Well, if you have changed your views or your belief in regard to spiritual things, one of two things must be true. You were either wrong before the change or you are wrong now. And if you are *right now*, then I am *wrong*; and, as we are bound for the spirit-world, to have our destiny fixed forever, and as it is highly important that we should embrace no error here, which can painfully affect us there, let us candidly examine the discrepancy of our belief. If we are wrong, we ought to know it. Let us, therefore, shrink not from a careful examination of that subject which must soon and forever occupy our thoughts. Now, if you believe the Bible, you

must believe that future misery is no less revealed than future happiness.

S. True, I believe in punishment, and I suppose that every man when he does wrong has a hell in his own bosom.

B. Well, admitting this to be the only source of misery, and suppose the man carries this sting with him throughout the countless ages of eternity; how, I ask, with this eternal consciousness of guilt, is the man to be happy.

S. I do not believe any such thing. What! is man to carry this viper in his bosom forever. Reason forbids such a conclusion.

B. Although we ought to let the law and the testimony settle this important question, yet as you appeal to reason, let us for a moment listen to her voice. And what is her testimony?

S. Why, she says, most assuredly, that a God all-wise, all-powerful and all-good, will never suffer such a disaster to befall his creatures.

B. No, sir, you will find that she says no such thing. She says, as God has already suffered every soul of Adam's race to become tainted with sin here, it is probable that it will affect all hereafter. Reason without revelation knows of no delivery from sin. She says, as you have never found the spot where guilt and suffering did not follow you, so neither height nor depth, length nor breadth, life nor death, things present nor things to come, shall ever be able to separate you from the consequences of a depraved heart. As a lion never becomes a lamb by being brought from Africa to America, so neither will a sinful

man ever lose his individual character, or become an angel, by simply being changed from time to eternity. This says reason and common sense.

Now, suppose a deadly viper should strike its poisonous fangs deep into your flesh, and you should start in the twinkling of an eye, and fly with the rapidity of lightning to some distant region where no reptiles are known ; would that save you ?

S. O, no ! I should carry the poison with me in my own body, and should consequently be in as great peril there as here.

B. Ah ! yes, your reason is now very orthodox. You are quite right, and were you at the moon or among the stars you would be no better off, than on the earth. But, in addition to this, suppose that you should leave behind

a perfect antidote, and go to a region destitute of every remedial agent, how would the case then stand ?

S. Instead of the change being beneficial, it would prove hopelessly fatal.

B. Then, precious immortal let me urge you to beware how you leave this world with the poison of sin in your soul, hoping to find a remedy in the world to come. There is no remedy there. But the old serpent, the devil, who bit you *here*, is there. The worm that never dies, and the fire that shall never be quenched, are there ! No cleansing stream, no healing balm, no blessed hope, no Saviour's blood is there. Here you have been wounded, and here you must be healed or never. The remedy is here and only here.

For such a deadly poison as sin,

there is no antidote but the fountain which gushed forth on Calvary. And if you go away to the retributions of eternity, without feeling something of the healing efficacy of a Saviour's blood in your own soul, you will assuredly carry the poison with you, which will be a living fire within you, to consume the last ray of hope, while in the spirit-world you will wish in vain for another change.

S. But is it not written that we shall *all* be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye?

B. Yes, it is thus written, and it shall surely come to pass. This corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality! *This* change is inevitable. But it is nowhere written, that, when the last trump shall sound, the wicked shall be

transformed into the image of the righteous. But it is written, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still, and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still." Then the righteous shall be changed from earth to heaven, and the wicked from earth to hell, and that change will be final.

But *here*, a great and glorious change can be secured. What a thought for mortals! that although we carry the sting of sin in our own bosoms wherever we go in this vale of tears, whether at home or abroad, by land or sea, on the top of the highest mountain or in the bottom of the deepest valley, yet we can be changed and made so pure that not a spot shall be left to tell that we have ever been stained. Who would ever think of such a change, without the revelation of the gospel? Who

can comprehend it? Certainly not the angels in heaven. This is a glorious mystery.

But this is a moral change, with which a change of place has very little to do. We must remember that death is no sanctifier; that it changes our position, but not our character, to make us either better or worse.

S. Well, I admit that this is a mysterious subject, and one which I suppose we shall all understand better hereafter. Perhaps, however, we shall be little the wiser or better for discussing it here, although I must say that I have been somewhat interested during this unexpected interview, yet you perceive that it has become necessary for us to adjourn.

CHAPTER II.

B. Well, friend, I am glad that it is our good fortune to meet again. We are now a little nearer to the spirit-world than when we separated, and of course ought to feel a deeper interest in spiritual things. I hope you have come to the conclusion to give up your skepticism, and embrace the truth in simplicity, that you may enjoy the companionship of a clear conscience and the blessedness of an inspiring hope.

S. Well, sir, as I remarked at our first interview, I do indeed profess to take the Bible for my guide ; but I am

perhaps farther than ever from adopting your views in relation to future punishment.

B. I hope you take the *Bible* view rather than mine, or any man's.

S. I do, sir, and that book informs me that, "as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him;" and can he thus pity them and yet permit them to perish.

B. O, no, not those that *fear* him. He even pities those who do *not* fear him, while he spurns them from his presence, as they desire not the knowledge of his ways, and will not bow in submission to his will. Still he pities them, and says, "Oh! that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes."

A kind and tender father may consent, and even desire, all things considered, that a guilty, irreclaimable son should remain in prison for life, rather than to have the existence of others put in jeopardy by his running at large. And more than this he may do. He may consent to have him even atone for his crimes with his own blood. Nay, more. He may pass sentence of death upon his own son himself. It has been done.

S. But no man who is fit to be a father would suffer his child to commit a crime which would make him obnoxious to the penalty of a violated law, if he could prevent it.

B. Yes, he would, and does, and you very likely do the same thing.

S. What!

B. To try his fidelity, you may give

your son access to money which is not his, and an opportunity to appropriate it unlawfully to his own purposes, when you might prevent it by locking it up. You will of course do all you can to prevent any dishonest act, as far as good example and good counsel are concerned. But still you will and must leave him free to choose for himself.

So the great Father of all saw fit to leave man free to act according to his own choice, giving him at the same time laws by which to regulate his actions, clearly pointing out the penalty of a violation. That penalty is hopeless despair, so that those who break the law, expose themselves to the wrath and curse of the law-giver. The law has nothing to do with pity or pardon.

Its appropriate function is to mete out to all, merited weal or woe.

S. Then of course all the human race are lost forever, for "no man liveth and sinneth not;" and who can therefore be judged by so strict a rule, and not experience the overwhelming consequences of disobedience?

B. Nothing else can be expected, so far as the law is concerned. But we have a more glorious salvation than any which can come by the law. Besides the announcement in the law, that "the soul that *sinneth* it shall *die*," it is revealed in the gospel that the soul that *repenteth* it shall *live*! But this glorious declaration which brings life and immortality to light, is not the voice of reason, neither is it the voice of law.

When there was no other eye to pity

nor arm to save—when the dark and doleful picture of a helpless and ruined race was presented before the eye of heaven, there came forth one with blood-stained garments, and exposed his bosom to the glittering sword of justice, and said, let the iniquities of earth's immortals be laid upon me. Let me drink for them the cup of wrath, and taste for them the wormwood and the gall, and feel for them the pangs of death. Hence the remarkable proclamation of his forerunner, "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world."

S. Ah, yes! this is truly good news, and I am willing to admit that it is a more glorious doctrine than reason ever revealed, and by it I am willing to abide. Indeed I know not what else I can desire or need to secure my fu-

ture safety. If the Saviour of the world "tasted death for every man," and bare the sins of the world in his own body on the tree, and has offered, and will, to the end of time, offer to all the needy, eternal life "without money and without price," I know not how such a display of the compassion of an Almighty deliverer can be reconciled with the eternal loss of a single soul.

B. The Saviour has done all this, blessed be his glorious name—let heaven and earth be glad. He has done more. He has sent his Spirit into the world to urge men to do, in return, their part; for there is no doctrine more clearly taught in the gospel than that man's redemption is a *conditional* salvation. All the offers made in the gospel to perishing men attended with a promise, are made to such as comply

with its requirements, and to none else. The gospel no more offers salvation to a single soul who will not comply with the terms given, than the law offers eternal life to those who break it.

S. Conditional salvation! What an absurdity!

B. Perhaps you would prefer to believe that there are no terms at all. That it makes no difference what you do. That it will all amount to the same thing at last, whether you pray or steal, serve God or the devil. Many would gladly believe this doctrine, if conscience would let them.

S. O, no, sir, you greatly mistake my belief. I am well aware that the gospel enjoins repentance for sin, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

B. But do you acknowledge these acts to be indispensable to salvation?

S. I see what you are aiming at. You need not expect by your cross-questions to make me recal my own words. But— but— who that does wrong, does not repent. And who that lives in a gospel land, does not believe in Christ ?

B. Many go on in sin, waxing worse and worse, who, regret far more that their opportunities for committing crime are so limited, than that their guilt is so augmented. So that it may perhaps be said that they repent that they cannot do worse. As to their *faith*, they have less than Satan, for the Bible declares that devils not only believe, but tremble. What said the Saviour on a certain occasion to those who stood around him, heard his words, and saw his works? “Ye also have seen me and believe not.” “Ye have

both seen and hated both me and my Father.” Thinkest thou that these individuals exercised that faith in the Lord of glory which he requires? Or that they cultivated that penitent spirit which is acceptable in his sight? If they did, don't you think that he had a strange way of showing his approbation?

S. I know not how it might have been with those individuals, though, to be honest, I must confess that I should consider their faith and repentance of a doubtful character, to say the least. But, I suppose, that no man can exercise faith without help from above, for we read that faith is the gift of God.

B. True it is, and would you therefore hate both Christ and his Father, in order to obtain it? Faith is the gift of God and so is the air we

breathe, and he is as able and as willing to give the former as the latter. Will you cease to expand your lungs because you can receive the life-giving atmosphere only as a gift from your Creator. And if you refuse to use the proper means for your own preservation because you are dependent upon him for existence, will he breathe into your dead body the breath of life? We must remember that while faith is truly the gift of God, we have just as much power to *accept* the gift as to *refuse* it. But suppose it were not the *gift* of God, but that we had to *purchase* it, would that make our prospects any better? Would he compel us to buy it, if we had wherewith to pay the price, or would he leave us as now, free to accept or reject?

S. But the Saviour says, "no man

can come unto me except the father which hath sent me, draw him," and if he draws one, will he not draw all?

B. What do you understand by drawing? That he will move men towards the kingdom by *physical* force?

S. Of course not, but by *moral* power.

B. This he does, but, alas! how few follow him. How often does he in mercy stretch out his hand all the day long to the rebellious. How often does he by his providence, by his word and by his Spirit arrest the attention of the poor wanderer, and draw away his thoughts to serious things, and in melting tenderness invite him to turn and live, while his invitations of mercy fall upon his callous heart like a summer shower upon a barren rock. How often has he thus drawn you, while you would not follow. And what

has he said about it? "Because I have called and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded, but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh: when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me." Do not deceive yourself. "Many are called, but few are chosen." Have you never seen the time when you had a stronger desire to have some experimental knowledge of spiritual things than you have at present. Was there not a time when you had serious fears that all was not right?

S. It is true that I have sometimes had much more feeling on the subject than now. But what of it?

B. Then were you drawn toward Him "who is the way, the truth, and the life." Why did you not follow on? Whose fault was it? And whose responsibility is involved in it? Are you waiting to be *drawn*? If you wait a little longer, you may be drawn in the wrong direction. Are you waiting to be *called*? As sure as you are a living man, I fear you will soon hear a call too loud, and too late! Hark! I now hear a voice, solemn as eternity! What meaneth it? "Ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins; whither I go ye cannot come!"

S. Well, I was once foolish enough to let this very passage so affect me that I was more than half inclined

to beg for mercy. But I was soon ashamed of my weakness, and shook off those foolish forebodings by coming to a different conclusion respecting the meaning of this and all similar texts.

B. I thought so. I was inclined to think, during our first interview that you had been the subject of the Spirit's convicting influence, and that you had resisted his overtures, and provoked him to depart from you.

S. I know not why you should have come to any such conclusion, for I never said a word to any other person on the subject concerning it.

B. It was not because I had heard a word except from your own mouth.

S. And certainly you did not hear it from me.

B. Actions sometimes speak louder than words.

S. What did I do, pray tell, that revealed to you my past history?

O. God Almighty generally puts a mark upon those who reject the special influences of his Spirit. I tell you, friend, that it is no trifling affair to pass through such a season, and to resist such an influence. It leaves a man a great deal nearer the bottomless pit than he ever was before. It prepares him for caviling. It leads him to false doctrines. It arms him against the truth, and transforms him as it were into a rock, so that invitations, mercies, warnings, threatenings and judgments fall upon him in vain.

But lest you should reproach me hereafter in the spirit-world for lack of plain dealing, I must now frankly tell you that you were not so much ashamed of your weakness, of which

you speak, as of your Saviour whom you reject. I must tell you what that despised and neglected Redeemer says about such treatment, for I would not for the world keep back one word which he would have me speak.

S. I would of course have you speak so as to be understood, whether I am benefited or not. But I do not think that a trifling indifference to him who is so much above our conceptions, can materially affect my destiny beyond the grave.

B. Hark ! fellow traveler, hark ! Do you not hear that voice, those significant words, clear, solemn and distinct ? “ Whosoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation ; of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory

of his father with the holy angels." Now this makes it very clear that those who are ashamed of Christ and his cause, will have little reason to expect his favors at the judgment of the great day.

S. The translators were not inspired men, and I presume that such passages are not rightly rendered. Does it look reasonable that I shall die in my sins, and be forever excluded from the society of the blest and the happiness of heaven?

B. It is very unreasonable indeed that you should take such a suicidal course as to exclude *yourself* from all good in the spirit-world. But if you will not have salvation on the Saviour's terms, what is to be done? If you love darkness rather than light, he must necessarily prepare a dark abode for your

habitation, for it is his plan to give every one his choice—light or darkness—life or death—heaven or hell.

But, remember, that if you make a foolish choice, you alone must bear the blame and suffer the consequences. All the inhabitants of heaven and hell will say that it is your own fault, and conscience more than all. Even Satan and all the hosts of fallen angels will reproach you, saying, “What a foolish, stupid, and self-ruined wretch has come to join our ranks! Guilty, guilty! See! there is no such spot on us as cleaves to thee! How defiled with sin, and stained with blood Divine! Thou hast murdered the Lamb of God, and refused his pardon. Do you think that we would ever be thus foolish and guilty, if such offers were made to us as you have spurned? You

were told plainly that all this would come upon you, that you were madly rushing on to ruin, and yet here you are. See what a strange work you have done! Behold the desolation on the right hand and on the left. Is not the destruction which has now come upon you quite as bad as it was ever represented to be?" What an end! or rather, what a *beginning*!

It seems to me that you must be aware that you have too much at stake to cavil with the truth. As to any wrong translation of which you speak, I think you have little to hope for in such a refuge. You are aware that thousands of learned and honest men, who fear God and walk in his commandments, testify, both living and dying, that our present version is a fair and truthful representation of the ori-

ginal copy. Their testimony on any other subject you would never question. Why so skeptical now? Possibly you would not find so much fault with your Bible if it did not find so much fault with *you*. I suppose that you will approve of the translation of any text which leaves you undisturbed in your sins. Let us try the test. "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." How do you like this translation?

S. It is a beautiful text, and I know not how you can read such a passage without becoming as incredulous respecting future punishment as myself.

B. Yes, it is a beautiful passage, but perhaps it would not have been quite so acceptable to you in its present translation if I had quoted the

whole text, as it does not seem to give much support to the doctrine which you are trying to believe, and know to be false.

S. What is the other portion ?

B. "But that the wicked turn from his way and live ; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways ; for why will ye die ?" Now this looks as if our Creator was very much in earnest when he thus expostulated with the wicked, but it does not look much as if they were in the path which leads to life.

S. And I do not see that the whole taken together proves that they were in the road that leads to death.

B. It simply proves that those who do not turn from their evil ways must perish in the world to come ; and also proves the genuineness of the transla-

tion far more conclusively than my first quotation could have done.

S. I do not see what reason you have to come to either conclusion. If the Almighty has no pleasure in the destruction of the wicked will he suffer it to come upon them?

B. Why not?

S. Because we are informed that he does his pleasure in the armies of heaven above and among the inhabitants of the earth, and will he permit events to occur which give him no pleasure?

B. Certainly he will, and does, every day. For if he is pleased with those who curse and swear, and lie and steal, and rob and kill—and if he delights as much in those who hate, as in those who love him, the Saviour died in vain. Hence, although it is no pleasure to him that mortals sin, yet sin they will,

so it is no pleasure to him that the incorrigible suffer in the spirit-world, yet suffer they must and do; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. This truth is as clearly established in the Bible, as the Divinity of the Supreme Being, the eternity of his existence, and the happiness of heaven.

S. Possibly not, according to the right interpretation.

B. It was the Father's good pleasure from the foundation of the world to give to the children of men the power of choice, and to make their choice his criterion in deciding their future destiny. Hence, there is no alternative but to choose, and during the brief interval of our earthly existence, we must choose life or death, weal or woe. And as his terms are so easy, the way of life so plain, his offers so inviting,

and the reward so great ; who that is so reckless as to spurn all, will have any cause to complain if it is still his pleasure to carry out his original plan, though his merited wrath falls heavily upon those who will not obey the gospel? With any other construction, this text would be a perfect riddle.

S. Why so ?

B. Suppose that when these words, " why will ye die," were first uttered, some one had said, speak a little plainer to the people lest they mistake thy meaning in regard to *death*. What would have been the probable answer? They know very well already that I spake not of *natural* death ; for whether they turn or not, this is their inevitable portion. They also know that I spake not of *moral* death ; for even a child knows that he is already dead in tres-

passes and sins. Moreover, none but a skeptic, who wishes to pervert the truth, will ever think of giving it any other meaning than the second or *eternal* death ; for every living man is already involved in every other form of death. Now, are you willing to take the responsibility of saying, that, whether men turn or not, they shall live forever ?

S. Well, I should not like to say that. But you were going to show how the text proves the genuineness of its translation.

B. You are aware that it is not human nature to condemn *self*. In all our transactions, we naturally put the best side out ; so much so, that with what we know of human nature, we expect that if we detect any exaggeration in the statement of any individual in relation to some transaction in

which he is personally interested, that it will be found in favor of the party making the statement. Hence, if I had any fears of an incorrect translation, it would be concerning that very portion of Scripture which is glad tidings of great joy to the world. I should fear that more encouragement had been given than facts would warrant in the end, leaving man to be overwhelmed in his false hopes.

Now it augurs a bad cause for us to find fault with the sacred page. I admit that it is a painful truth to contemplate, that one soul unreconciled to God, is every moment exposed to all the horrors of the second death. Painful as it may be, however, it does not alter the fact. There stands the "thus saith the Lord." And how painful the thought that every one who is

thus exposed, is so from his own choice, and persists in remaining so, in spite of all that can be said and done to urge him to escape. The most fearful declarations of the gospel, are all made in mercy to man, that he may awake and flee from the wrath to come. If your house was in flames over your head at midnight, would you prefer to have me sing you to sleep rather than to disturb your peace by crying, fire—fire?

S. O, no, it would be very natural for me in such a case to want to know it in time to either quench the flames or escape from them.

B. Then take warning now, and escape for thy life, for there is but a step between thee and the fire that shall never be quenched. I am fearful that you little realize the danger to which

your excuses and procrastination are subjecting you. If you were to go to the grave-yard and kneel down over the remains of some departed neighbor whom you knew had been devotedly attached to temporal things, through a long life, to the neglect of things spiritual and eternal, and lay your ear on the damp, cold sod, and then whisper forth an earnest request, begging him to speak to you from the tomb; and should he be permitted to comply, and address you in such language as one from the spirit-world might consider expedient, what, think you, would be his message?

S. Indeed it is more than I can tell; for I never thought of disturbing the repose of the dead with any such request; and hence it would be impossible for me to say what would be the

nature of any communication from such a source, if it were possible for me to give to the dead an ear to hear, or a tongue to speak.

B. Well, we may reasonably conclude that although such a communication might embrace much concerning things of which we now know little or nothing, yet we should probably be greeted in something like the following manner, viz. :—When I tabernacled in the flesh, I made many great mistakes. I lived as though time would never end, or eternity begin. I was often urged to prepare for an approaching dissolution, and reminded of a natural tendency to procrastinate, and the imminent danger of delay. Still, an almost irresistible sensibility bound me down to earthly things, so that I hardly realized that I was mortal, and knew not

that I stood upon the grave's-mouth until the tomb swallowed me up. True, I sometimes intended to set my house in order, and make preparation for a dying day ; but I greatly deceived myself by supposing that I should find a more convenient season at some future time. But this I never realized. My days and my privileges passed rapidly away, and I found myself an inhabitant of the spirit-world before I was hardly aware that I had begun to live. But had I known what I now know, not all the pleasures or temptations of earth could have possibly induced me to let the momentous point of time allotted to me among the sons of men pass unimproved, as I spent my day of probation. But not a stone can now be turned ; not a moment can now be recalled ; not a mistake can be recti-

fied; not a pang can be removed. Nothing can I now do to alter the past, or improve the future, or to induce those whom I have left behind to beware of launching into the spirit-world in such a state.

That you may not have occasion to regret a similar mistake, I feel constrained to give you warning, for I am fearful that a hope that all may end well at last, some way or other, without any effort on your part to secure a happy eternity, is the great delusion with which Satan will drag you down to the chambers of death. At our next interview we will take up the subject again, if the Lord permit.

CHAPTER III.

S. Well, Mr. B——, you promised to resume the discussion at our next meeting, and as we are again fortunately thrown together in the same path, under favorable circumstances for such a theme, let us pursue the subject; for I somehow feel inclined to talk with you a little more about the spirit-world, although in many things we may not agree.

B. Whether we agree or not, the case will be properly decided, for the judge and the witnesses are now present.

S. But who are the witnesses of whom you speak?

B. The Great Omnipresent Spirit

and Judge of quick and dead, and your conscience and mine ; and a record of their testimony is kept, and will be presented in the great court above.

S. You recollect that before we last parted, you expressed a fear that I might trust to a simple desire for happiness without any effort to obtain it. Now, as this desire is universal—as not a single human being can be found on the earth who does not desire a happy abode beyond the tomb—and as we may conclude that this desire was never given to tantalize the human family, may we not suppose that these cravings for happiness are tokens of universal salvation ?

B. The old homely adage seems to be a very appropriate reply to your inquiry. “ If wishes were horses, beggars might ride.” A simple desire for

an abundance will secure nothing for the sluggard but poverty. But even where proper means to secure an end are not neglected, a simple and a sincere *desire* is a very improper criterion by which to predict the issue. Every man desires uninterrupted *prosperity*; and no man enjoys it. Every man wishes to become *independent*; but if he has no better reason than that to expect it, he will probably be disappointed. Every man desires immunity from all pain and sorrow, and more intensely pants for life than for any earthly good, and yet no power, human or divine, interposes to make him proof against the arrows of death. Hence we discover, that he who trusts simply to his own desires, leans upon a broken reed, as his only security lies in a proper reception of the truth.

S. Well, in this conclusion I believe that you are right. But the question is, what is a proper reception of the truth? One man believes one thing, and another believes something else.

B. Yes, and the inspired word informs us that some are given up to believe a *lie* that they may be damned. But this is one of those passages which I suppose you will condemn as a mistranslation, as it very evidently speaks little in favor of what you wish were true. And if the doctrine which you are half inclined to advocate, just to keep conviction and salvation out of your heart were true, a slight mistake in the present version is quite evident. It would seem that it ought to read, given up to believe a lie, that they all might be *saved*. Possibly you might prefer to admit that some punishment

must be the consequence of sin, and consent to have the passage rendered, Given up to believe a lie, that all might be damned on earth and saved in heaven.

But even this translation would not satisfy that class who advocate a purgatorial system of salvation. Hence, a further modification would be demanded, namely, given up to believe a lie, that they all might be damned on *earth*, and damned in *hell*, and saved in *heaven*.

S. I think, sir, that you are trying to make my belief appear ridiculous.

B. I only wish you to see how foolish it is to try to bend the truth to your own carnal desires, instead of bending the knee and bowing your heart in humble supplication before him who never turns away the penitent. But

as no translation will please all, and as the blessed gospel will not let down its high and holy claims to accommodate any, we had better let it stand unaltered, and rather endeavor to obtain a translation of our priceless souls "into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," for "without are murderers, and idolators, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie."

S. Well, I am willing to abide by the present version. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Now this, I think must satisfy you that the final restitution of all things is clearly predicted, and that when all shall confess Jesus Christ to be Lord, to the glory of God the Father, there will be few left in misery.

B. What if every criminal under sentence of death should confess that he who pronounces sentence against him, is a righteous Judge, to the glory of the Court, and honor of our laws; would such a confession set him free from the penalty of a violated law? The time shall surely come when every knee shall bow in willing or unwilling submission to the King of kings and Lord of lords—when those cavilers who said, who is this? “Is not this the carpenter’s son?” shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord—nay, when every reviler and blasphemer, and all the

devils in hell, who in the days of his flesh confessed that he was Lord to the glory of God, "for they knew that he was Christ,"—when all the countless hosts of heaven, earth and hell shall acknowledge not only the goodness but the justice of him who sitteth upon the throne, to the glory of God the Father, and then we shall understand what he means where he says, "the wrath of man shall praise him."

S. If any part of the human family are in danger of eternal damnation, it ought to be so stated in plain words.

B. It is so stated, and in language of such awful import that I am surprised that any living mortal should dare to call it in question, lest he should be left to "believe a lie." There is awful meaning in this passage.

S. *Where* is it so stated?

B. In the gospel according to Mark, iii. 29. "But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation." Now, according to your belief, you must be ready to say that this is not a fair statement which the Lord of glory made to his enemies ; for, if there is no such thing as sin against the Holy Ghost, which hath never forgiveness, there is certainly no danger of committing it. And if they did commit it, as there is and can be no danger of that which does not exist, they could not have been in danger of eternal damnation, if there were no such punishment for the wicked.

One would suppose, that after loving our fallen race so much as to die for them, that this glorious Saviour would have used such language when address-

ing the multitude, as could have been understood. And if he who spake as never man spake, has anywhere intimated that all his foes shall be as his friends, that all the wicked and they that forget God shall be turned into heaven, we ought to find it so stated in pretty plain language, for it is said in so many words that they shall be turned into *hell*.

S. But learned men tell us that hell means the grave.

B. Well, then, it ought to read, The wicked and they that forget God shall be turned into the grave; and what becomes of the *righteous*? If the Saviour ever intended to convey any such impression, I think, if not before, at the crucifixion, or at least previous to his ascension, he would have given something like the following testimony.

Having spoken of eternal damnation and of the blackness of darkness, and of the impassable gulf, and the worm that never dies, and the fire that shall never be quenched, and of the sin that shall never be forgiven, neither in this world neither in the world to come; and having made many other announcements which might cause needless alarm, I would therefore have it distinctly understood that I never meant it when I said so.

There are many false teachers in the world, therefore be on your guard lest they disturb you by exhorting you to "strive to enter in at the strait gate," saying that "many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able." True, I said so to the Jews, but I intended my remarks for those who are in the habit of entering the gates of Jerusalem at

a late and unseasonable hour, and for similar procrastinators. Moreover, all that I have said respecting the peril, the guilt, or the future destruction of the wicked, means little or nothing, for there is no difference between the wheat and the tares, the sheep and the goats, the righteous and the wicked; or between heaven and hell.

Now, my dear friend, we ought to find this statement, or its equivalent, in the Bible, to make it safe for any one to indulge the slightest hope or expectation that all will end well with those who live and die in sin. Have you found such testimony?

S. Not precisely such testimony as that.

B. I think not.

S. Perhaps I shall not be able to find such proof as will satisfy *you*.

B. I think not.

S. I expect to find such testimony as will satisfy *me*.

B. I think not.

S. You know that I am a plain, unlearned man, and do not profess to be able to confute those who disagree with me on religious subjects.

B. On this ground we have neither of us anything of which to boast. But we have as deep an interest in the important subject of redemption as the most learned. And as the rule of faith and practice, and the road that leads to joys on high are so plain that a 'way-faring man, though a fool, need not err therein,' we may perhaps receive as much benefit ourselves from this interview, if we cherish a right spirit, as if we were learned divines.

But I think you will find that the

difficulty of presenting Scripture testimony to prove your theory, lies not so much in want of skill to select appropriate texts, as in the actual absence of the proof itself. I have not yet discovered that you have any proof which satisfies *yourself* that all is well. Man naturally loves to feel that all is safe on the other side of the grave, and no matter what he does on this side. But we have already seen that it will not do to build upon such a foundation, and beware how you lean upon a broken reed.

S. Although I do not wish to deceive myself, which is worse in some respects than to deceive others, yet I am not willing to believe that a portion of the human race are to perish forever, and sink lower and lower in

the dark regions of despair as long as eternity endures.

B. To become skeptical concerning everything we see and hear, which shocks our feelings, would be to act the part of a madman. It is a shocking truth, I admit. But more shocking still, if possible, to contemplate the fact, that men hate and reject the very provision that has been made to prevent their final destruction. It gives me pain to think that you make so much effort to persuade yourself that all will finally be saved somehow or other, instead of accepting at once a risen Saviour's offer, which would certainly secure a crown of everlasting life. But I fear that you will never wear that crown in the spirit-world.

S. Why have you such fears?

B. Because, in the first place, as you

do not wish to give up your sins, you are trying to satisfy yourself that it is not indispensably necessary. You had rather be saved in some other way ?

S. But is it not written that he shall save his people from their sins ?

B. It is so written, and what stronger proof would you have that you are not one of his chosen ones, for he does not thus save *you*. He saves *his people* from their sins, but not others. He saves those from their sins who hate sin and mourn over it, and earnestly beg to be delivered from it. Those who love sin and cherish it, and "roll it as a sweet morsel under their tongues," he leaves to their own chosen way, saying, "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone." But, another reason why I fear that you will never secure your everlasting peace, is, because

you are like the Israelites who, after being brought to the very borders of Canaan, turned their backs upon the promised land.

S. What has this to do with my condition?

B. Nothing, perhaps, so far as their acts were concerned. But I was going to tell you in what particular you imitate their example. You have been brought near to the heavenly Canaan, and yet you have refused to enter the kingdom. You once saw the time when the blessed Spirit whispered in your ear, "This is the way, walk ye in it."

But you would not obey. You were ashamed to have it known that you had any anxiety about your everlasting peace, or the least desire to become a friend of the lowly Saviour; and

hence you grieved away the blessed Spirit from your heart, and I fear that such a season may never return. I always tremble for any man who has thus been forsaken of the Holy Ghost. It is a fearful thing to quench the Spirit, and men at such times know not what they do. I have noticed that such men are generally ready to embrace all sorts of error in preference to the truth.

A great sacrifice has been made to procure redemption for our race, and salvation is freely offered even "without money and without price," upon the simple terms of acceptance by faith. Now, after the ransom price of the world's redemption is paid, the great gospel feast provided, and the invitation sent abroad, saying, "Come, for all things are now ready," if a man

will not accept, (for it is a *will not* if he does not accept,) if he spurns all the kind offers of heaven—slights all the counsels of God—rejects all the invitations of Christ—resists all the influences of the Spirit, and dashes the cup of salvation from his lips, the only portion for him is, an eternal residence in his own place.

But how rapid is the flight of time. It reminds me that there is but a step between us and eternity, for how soon do we find it necessary to part. If permitted to have another interview this side of the spirit-world, I hope that I shall find you walking and rejoicing in the truth.

CHAPTER IV.

S. Good morning, sir. Since I last parted with you, I have pretty much come to the conclusion that we had better drop the further consideration of matters in the spirit-world, for I think that our conversation has had an unhappy effect upon my mind, as I before intimated that I suspected such a result would follow.

B. I should be very sorry indeed, to have your feelings disturbed by our interviews, for I would rather do you good, than harm. But I am glad to hear you say that our conversation has affected your mind, although you call it an unhappy effect, for I suspect what you consider an unfavorable impres-

sion, is no more nor less than an awakened conscience, which you would at once hail with thanksgiving, if you realized its importance. But in what way have you in body or mind been disturbed?

S. I have been unhappy by night and by day, not even enjoying a respite during the hours of sleep. I recently had a very singular dream, and my mind has not been at rest since.

B. Well, I have little faith in dreams, but still I am willing to listen to your account of it, for the good Book says, "he that hath a dream, let him tell a dream," and possibly its meaning may be made clear, or at least the cause of it.

S. Ah! I know the cause of it full well, as I have intimated already.

B. Was it a troubled mind and a

guilty conscience? Was it a lively sense during your wakeful moments, that all was not right?

S. Well, I retired to rest, and after musing awhile upon life's checkered scene, I fell asleep. A strange feeling came over me, I knew not why, and a venerable looking personage stood before me, and beckoned me to follow him. With reluctance I obeyed the signal, and my guide led the way through a dark and winding valley which seemed to be bounded on one side by gigantic frowning mountains, and on the other by what appeared like an impassable gulph; and I said to my guide, What is that? pray tell me, stranger, what dreadful place is that? There is something dolefully strange and awful in its aspect; what can it mean?

“Don't you know?” said he. “Did you ever see anything like it?”

Never, said I; neither do I ever expect to see aught to equal it.

“*Can* there be anything else so unutterably awful?” said he.

Never!

“Then, you ought to know what it is.”

Is it *hell*?

“Ah, yes! It can be nothing else. You have heard of the blackness of darkness, and there it is. You now behold the gateway, the borders, the foreshadowing, the beginning of that hell, which is the final dwelling-place and portion of all who ever did or ever will transgress without repentance.”

Horrible! What an abode! Let us run! If that is the dark dwelling-place of lost angels and lost men, I have seen

enough ! Let us turn back as fast as we can, said I.

“Utterly impossible,” said he. “No, there is no retracing our steps. We can only proceed, and it is therefore the more important that we be careful to shun the broad road in which you see the multitude pressing on to ruin.”

I noticed that both before and behind, and on my right hand and on my left, myriads of human beings of all nations, grades, and ages, were pressing on with ceaseless tread throughout the length and breadth of the vale. All seemed to be going in one direction, and none returned. Many stumbled and fell, and quickly disappeared, and their places were occupied by others.

But what seemed very strange to

me, was, that whenever any one thus disappeared, I fancied that I heard, either in the direction of the gulph, indistinct lamentations, or above the tops of the mountains, sweet songs of joy. I then ventured to ask my guide the meaning of this strange phenomenon.

He looked up, as though about to direct my attention to the upper world, and in a moment his face shone like an angel's, and just as he uttered the words, "Blessed are the dead who"—an old man, but a few steps ahead of us, with a brazen, forbidding face, gasped and fell, and cries of anguish reverberated through the caverns of the dark gulph, which so attracted the attention of my guide as well as my own, that he paused; and as he turned his eye that way,

his countenance suddenly changed, and he said, "Wait a little season, the explanation is at hand. We are on the way to the spirit-world, and this is to all, a journey of trial, and those who go through this valley with a right spirit—with an earnest desire to please the Judge of all, will soon join those who sung that sweet song above the tops of the mountains. Those who do not, alas! for them. They are undone."

This he said with a solemn emphasis that thrilled my very soul, and reminded me at once of our conversation about the spirit-world, and I felt very unhappy.

B. It is very natural that a subject of so much importance—one in which you have such a vast interest for time and eternity, should have been upper-

most in your mind before closing your eyes, and if it occupied your thoughts while they took little cognizance of the flesh, it is not at all strange. But I hope your emotions, even during the hours of slumber, will lead you to beware how you delay making preparation for the spirit-world, for *you* will soon stumble and fall, and others will occupy your place.

S. As I went on, with feelings that I cannot describe, I could but ask myself the question, can I do nothing to secure prosperity in this important, momentous journey? Is there no encouragement for travelers in this dark vale—no repentance for the past, no hope for the future? While revolving these questions in my mind, an individual with a sly, cunning, skeptical look, drew near.

“What has happened to thee, my good friend?” said he. “Why art thou sad? Thou art in the right road; just look and see! Behold! the whole world are going in the same direction. Thou art as well off as the rest. If these are all safe, thou hast nothing to fear. And if they are all in danger, what canst *thou* do? Canst thou stay the wheels of time, and escape the common fate of man? It is folly to give thyself any trouble about the future, and especially as the Bible informs us that all things shall work together for good.”

This salutation only made me the more uncomfortable, because I could think of nothing but a wolf in sheep's clothing, and hence I said to him, You, sir, are a dishonest man, or you would not mutilate the word of God, for that word says that “all things shall work

together for good to them that love God," and to those who do not, there is nothing promised but tribulation and wrath.

B. Well, it seems that you are either more orthodox, or honest in your dreams, than during your wakeful moments, for had it been a reality I fear that you and the skeptic would have agreed too well. But how did he stand the rebuke?

S. He looked very angry and hurried away, exclaiming, "Thou art full of priestcraft." And my guide said, "It is well to get clear of such enemies as soon as possible." I thought so, and was glad to see him start, although he immediately began to stir up and fill the air with dust to turn me out of my way; and not satisfied with this, he returned and impudently and hate-

fully gazed at me with a scornful frown and malicious look, that I could hardly endure. His countenance became distorted and frightful ; his eyes were red with rage, his breath horribly offensive, and his whole body seemed inflated with passion.

“Silly man !” said he, “to worry thyself about a little sin. Of course, we have all, more or less, come short, or gone astray ; but what of that ? Who expects to answer for every erroneous step which he may chance to take in this dark valley ? Why don’t these things disturb me ? I was once as full of superstition as thyself, and I suppose that I should have remained as unhappy to this day, if I had suffered my mind to be led into bondage by religious fanatics. But you see that I am clear of such fetters, now.”

I thought that I then had strength and courage to reply with a good deal of spirit, as I said to him, Your condition is now no better than mine, unless it is better to go blindfolded to destruction, than to endeavor with your eyes open to escape. And as to your evil deeds for which you do not expect to be held responsible, they may drag you into a more fearful bondage than superstition. If all your rebellion and unbelief—all your hatred and rejection of Christ and his gospel, and all your love and practice of sin, is to be unnoticed, how are you to be judged according to your works.

When I reminded him of his downright hatred of all good, (and this I felt compelled to do, I know not why,) and the fearful victory which he had gained over conscience, and the probable

destiny that awaited him, to which he was drawing near, his anger was greater than ever, and his curses more abundant, and he seized me with a strong grasp, and a hand, oh, how cold! and said, "What dost thou mean?"

I mean to warn thee of approaching danger, said I.

"How did it come to be any of thy concern whether I fare well or ill, beyond this vale?" said he. "Who told thee that there was any doubt of my good estate hereafter? And if my danger was twice as imminent as thou dost represent it to be, dost thou suppose that I would be foolish enough to be influenced by such a fanatic? Here is a man coming up behind, who has been warned for days, months and years, by the most eloquent and zeal-

ous of all fanatics, and what has it all availed? He is still as"—

His hand suddenly became relaxed and fell to his side, as he uttered these words, and his eye with a strange glare became fixed upon the object of his remark, and I turned to see what unexpected event had thus caused the bold cavalier to quake, and behold the man had given up the ghost, and I heard a voice saying, "He that being often re-proved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy."

Then fearful flashes of lurid flame seemed to stream up from the dark abyss in the distance, and I heard a dreadful lamentation that no tongue can describe, which almost paralyzed my every nerve, and when the cry, "The harvest is past, the summer is

ended, and I am not saved," was distinctly heard, the hardened skeptic trembled as he shut his eyes and stopped his ears, saying, "I have no desire to see or hear anything which reminds me of the time when, through the influence of a disordered imagination, I was well nigh driven to despair, and was a wretched sufferer day and night until I resolved to banish all foolish thoughts of sin and suffering from my mind." And so, said I, you prefer to shut out from your mind, the knowledge of your true character that you may go down to an abode of eternal darkness, with a lie in your right hand, crying Peace, peace, while scoffing at things sacred and divine, as though to make your own destruction sure.

After a mock-laugh, he replied, "I

have heard all these things before—you can tell me nothing new, for I was once almost persuaded to become a Christian. I was foolish enough to run this way and that way for religious counsel—I asked Christians to pray for me, and tried to pray for myself, and read books, and heard sermons, and shed tears, and made promises, and all to no purpose. But as I grew older, I grew wiser, and I had now rather hear a man swear than pray; and the thundering rumblings in yonder murky, smoky abyss, are music compared to the psalms and hymns of shouting fanatics.”

When he observed that he was once almost persuaded to become a Christian, and when it seemed to me that he was now almost or quite beyond the reach of mercy, your remarks at a

former meeting on this subject flashed across my mind like a burning flame, and rent my inmost soul as with a barbed arrow, and I knew not how to endure such awful forebodings. But still I did not, could not awake. I seemed to have no power to break the spell, or to stir. When I did awake, however, I was surprised to see what had been the state of mind, during my dream, in relation to my strange course of reasoning.

B. I suspect that the day is not very distant, when you will find that your conclusions were too well founded for your everlasting good, if you do not speedily pursue the course which conscience marked out even in a dreamy imagination. But as you say that you did not awake during the exciting mo-

ment, what became of him who so disturbed your peace?

S. Well, I did intend to beg to be excused from any further consideration of spiritual topics, but as it has now become necessary for us to close this interview, I will finish my dream at our next meeting.

CHAPTER V.

B. Well, friend, it is our good fortune to meet again this side of the spirit-world.

S. Good fortune! I think that if these interviews made you as unhappy as they do me, that you would not consider your fortune a very good one. Indeed I would toil hard for a whole month to banish from my mind all thoughts and effects of that awful dream, of which I am confident that I should never have known anything, if you had not called my attention to the spirit-world. But, instead of forgetting it, I add more to it almost every night. I think about it by day, and dream about my dream by night, and

although I am not exactly prepared to believe in your doctrine, and though it was nothing but a dream, yet I would give anything to know that the history and destiny of that wretched individual was not, after all, *my own* !

B. Whatever you might have fancied the destiny of the cavalier to be, you have no excuse for remaining one moment unreconciled to God, and exposed to the awful overthrow of the wicked. And if you have reason to fear that you had in your dream a foretaste of approaching wretchedness, then surely you ought to see to it that you halt no longer between two opinions, as you know not what a day may bring forth. Perhaps this is your last call, your last chance, your last hope. Oh ! turn, I beseech you, for the spirit-world is at hand. Escape for your

life, I pray you, and do violence to conscience no longer, for mercy I trust is yet in store for you. But remember, there was a time when it was said, "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone." I suppose you thought in your dream, that this had been said of the poor man who seemed so hardened and abandoned.

S. Indeed I did, and I reminded him of it, although I can hardly account for such replies as I made to his assertions when he told me that he had once been almost persuaded to become a Christian. You will never see that season again return, said I. You once saw the time, as you say, when you tried to pray. But what an awful prayer you uttered. And how fearfully is it answered!

"What do you know, sir, about

the nature of, and the answer to my prayers," said he. "How do you know what I prayed for in those days?"

It is evident that your prayers were of the same nature then as now.

"What!" said he, "do you mean to accuse me of praying now?"

Yes, you pray now, just as you did then, and just as thousands of others did, and do still, to their own destruction. By so doing, they do not gain a victory over their sins, but over their souls. This prayer which you have so long offered, is very short, comprehensive, and effectual, namely, "I pray thee have me *excused*." That request has been granted, and you will probably be forever excused from all peace and joy in the spirit-world. Now, although I am a poor, miserable sinner myself, and know not that I

have any thing better to look for, than you, yet I would not for a thousand worlds possess such feelings and such a spirit as you manifest.

“No, fool! you have nothing better to expect, nor as good either. There is a place in that world of which you speak, where fanatics are all shut up together, and I don't wish or intend to go there.”

Your day of scoffing will soon be over, said I, as your day of grace is probably already past. There doubtless was a time when the kingdom of heaven was brought very near, when the door was thrown wide open before you, but you refused to enter, and abused that golden moment, hardened your heart, stifled your conscience, blinded your eyes, shut your ears, and resisted all the gracious influences

of the good Spirit, and I tremble to think that there is nothing left you but “a certain fearful looking-for of judgment, and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries.”

Muttering curses, he again left me, and joined himself to the rabble, and went on laughing at death and mocking at sin, crying, “Peace, peace.”

While pondering upon his condition and prospects, another individual drew near, and with a much more agreeable salutation, begged the privilege of asking a few questions, to which I gladly assented, hoping to have a more profitable interview than I had with the last, though I found him to be a despiser.

“What think you of *Christ!*” said he. “It is said that he once appeared in this valley, and at a certain time, and on a

particular spot, poured out his blood to wash away the guilty stains of sin ! Have you heard such news ?”

O, yes, there is not a doubt of it ; and how much we need to be cleansed in that fountain, for we are corrupt.

“ I know it.”

It can take away the foulest stain !

“ I know it”.

It can give spiritual life to those who are “ dead in trespasses and sins,” and fill the sorrowful heart with unceasing joy.

“ Yes, I know it.”

This is good news to those who realize their need of such an Almighty helper. But what think *you* of Christ ?

It is indeed well to be able to apply to such a deliverer, in time of need. I often feel that something must

be done, and frequently fear that I shall come short of an interest in his atonement, because I am not quite ready to give up the world. I believe that he is able and willing to save all who come unto God through him. But I think that there is time enough yet, and that he is, withal, a little too strict."

Can it be possible that you, too, are a despiser?

"Softly."

You shock me, and I must express my horror!

"Not quite so loud; I do not wish to have my opinions published abroad."

Well, it is truly a sad calamity for such opinions to go abroad, and the very announcement sends a cold chill through my inmost soul. Is it possible that the vast multitude who

through this dark valley are all cavers?

“O, no ; not all,” said my guide, who had for a long time seemingly left me to my own reflections, to find out by experience something of man’s deadly opposition to God, and his gospel, while in a state of nature, as he said, “But wait a little ; thou shalt see by-and-by the effects of unbelief, and the fruits of delay.”

This he said with such a solemn emphasis that I greatly trembled, for I knew not whether he had reference to some calamity about to befall the individual who had just turned away, or myself ; and I thought that I tried to cry aloud, Lord Jesus, have mercy on my soul. There ! stop, stop ! said I, to my guide. What is that, pray tell ! Didn’t you see a group of human be-

ings take an awful plunge headlong into that dreadful fiery gulph? Hark, hark! I think I hear wailing and mourning voices from that direction like cries of despair; it is an unearthly cry; 'tis awful,—what meaneth it?

“Thou art right,” said my guide, “it is the cry of despair. Such cries as mortals cannot utter or describe.”

But who are they who so strangely disappeared?

“One of them was the man who laughed and mocked at sin, and called thee a fool. The man who said, ‘there is time enough yet,’ was also among the number, and all were of the same class of despisers, and all meet the same doom.”

Then was I ready to cry out again, Lord Jesus, have mercy on my soul, and save me from the second death.

“If thou wilt repent of all thy sins, and forsake all that thou hast, and follow him,” said my guide, “thou shalt triumph over all thine enemies, and safely reach the abode of the just, and reign forever with the King of kings, and Lord of lords, and be filled with untold and everlasting felicity in the spirit-world. But never find fault with his terms, nor flatter yourself that there is any possible escape or hope for those who try to climb up to heaven in some other way. See to it that you take no refuge in any false doctrine.”

When he said this, he looked very sharply in my face, and paused a moment. I then felt inclined to change the conversation, and hoped that he would not again allude to the subject of false doctrine; for, somehow, it

made me feel very uncomfortable. Just at that moment he stepped up close to my side and whispered a few words which seemed like coals of fire in my ears, though they chilled the rest of my body to shivering. "Satan is baiting his hook with this false refuge every day," said he, "for thousands; and he sees and knows very well that you are half inclined to swallow it. Indeed you have once or twice taken the bait, with a hair-breadth escape, already, and if you are not cautious how you touch it again, you will find that the angler has proved too successful for the welfare of your poor soul."

This fearful announcement, the truth of which I could not deny, filled me with gloomy and horrible forebodings, and I looked sharply at myself to see if I was not already on the fatal hook,

ready to be dragged down into the fiery deep. At that moment I saw two individuals, hand in hand, rushing toward the pit, and I cried out, What can be done to save these deluded mortals from the fearful abyss, for they seem to be helping each other forward as fast as possible as though they were in haste to be ruined. What can be done ?

“Nothing!” said a voice behind me. “Nothing can be done for those who will not walk in the path which is ‘so plain that a way-faring man though a fool need not err therein.’ Nothing can be done for those who ‘love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.’ Nothing can be done for those who love sin, and hate the author of life and rush madly to destruction. Nothing can be done for

these, but that which has been done already, and all that they reject.”

Another bound and they sank out of my sight ; and I heard a voice from above, saying, “ Though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished.” Again my guide drew near, and said, “ Let me tell thee one thing—as ‘ face answereth to face in water, so the heart of man to man.’ Now, remember, that by nature thou art inclined to go in the same direction, and exposed to the same overthrow. Therefore be careful, and watch, and pray, and walk in the holy commandments of the King Eternal, or else no warning can save thee, nor ransom deliver thee. All do not come to such a dreadful end as did those of whose departure thou hadst a glimpse. Didst thou not hear, but a moment ago, that

sweet voice, saying, 'There is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance?' Indeed, many repent and choose that better portion which shall not be taken from them, and rejoice even here in the midst of trials and sufferings. Hence, we perceive that joy and sorrow, weal and woe, light and darkness, and life and death seem strangely mingled together in this dark, perilous valley of probation."

As we walked on together, my heart swelled with emotion that I will not attempt to describe, and, lo, three females suddenly came from different directions and approached a young man who was just before us, and saluted him. I was much struck with their appearance, and wondered from

whence they came, whither they were going, and what could be the object of their mission, for they seemed to have been sent with some special message.

I observed that when he met them he was not at ease—that he looked this way and that, as though he would fain flee away. I pitied the man, because he seemed so unhappy, and I thought that I heard him say, “Is this a dream, or is it a reality? Is it possible that some of you have come from the spirit-world to remind me of my mortality?”

There was a remarkable contrast between the females, and as I wondered what it could possibly mean, and knew not how to account for it, my guide said, “These are representatives of three worlds.” One of them was clothed in a robe of pure white, of

exquisite beauty and matchless perfection. Her face seemed to be glory personified. She pointed to heaven and said, "My son, will you follow me?" And alas! how did my heart throb and seem ready to burst when he shook his head, for I then understood his character in a moment, and knew that he was in fearful peril.

"Then must you follow *me*," exclaimed another of the females, whose apparel looked like rags dipped in ink, and whose face seemed to bear marks emblematical of the death of deaths; and she turned toward the gulph. To this declaration he made no reply, but appeared unhappy, and I heard a voice from heaven, saying, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

Then I noticed that the other female who was clothed with a checkered garment, which indicated, as I thought, that she still belonged to earth, seemed anxious to shake off her impressions, and she said, "Brother, let us go;" and they all went on together.

But they soon came to a little rill, and here they all stopped. The female who wore the beautiful robe again addressed the young man, with great earnestness and awful emphasis. "Poor man! Deluded, ruined man! How sad and wretched will be thy latter end. Down, down into that eternal furnace of fire and smoke wilt thou sink forever! In that deep abyss, whose boundless vortex no lightning's flash can ever span, wilt thou mourn without hope, and cry without relief, and suffer without end! And now, O

man, I call heaven and earth to witness, that I have warned thee of coming wrath—that destruction certain, terrible, and eternal will surely be thy doom, unless thou dost quickly turn.”

She then drew still nearer, as though to give him a parting kiss, and dropped upon his cheek, a tear. He tried to wipe it off, but it left a stain. “You can’t do it!” said she. He tried again, and again she said, “You can’t do it!” He dipped it seven times in the rill; “No, no, you can never do it,” said the female. “That spot is my witness which shall testify for me at our next meeting, that I have warned you of approaching danger.” So saying, she rose to heaven, and I heard a loud voice saying, “He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him.”

Although this strange meeting well nigh sunk me to the earth, yet there was one circumstance which to me was very gratifying. The faithful warning which the female addressed to the man before her ascension, had a happy effect upon the female in checkered attire, for, said she, "I will walk with the wicked no farther;" and she hurried away out of their sight as hard as she could run, while a sweet voice in the distance proclaimed, "She has chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her."

But the man walked on with the female who was clothed in the dark, shabby garment, and with as much indifference as though nothing had happened, crying, "Peace, peace;" and I turned to my guide and said, Stranger, there is no hope for that poor man.

He looked solemn, and said, "Very little."

As I turned from the stranger to take another look at the pitiable objects, behold, the woman had disappeared, and the man seemed to be enveloped in gross darkness, struggling to make his way through, and over numerous obstacles, without knowing where the next step would land him. At length he fell. An individual, whose face bore strong marks of benevolence, drew near and kindly lifted him up, and handed him a bright shining lamp to guide him through the wilderness, which he instantly dashed to the earth, and with a loud and boisterous voice said, "Who sent you here to meddle with my affairs? Who told you that I wanted any of your assistance?"

Can it be possible, said I, to the stran-

ger, that this wretched man will ever receive another offer?

“O, yes,” said he, “and thou shalt witness it, for his end is near; and may the good Spirit deliver us from such a doom. But what he does, that he will do. Come, I will show you his end;” and he hurried me over a vast plain until we came to the foot of a mountain, where we halted to make observations. But I begged the stranger to go on, for, although, I hardly knew why, I felt anxious to climb the hill, and as we drew near the top, I saw that it was brilliantly illuminated, and was more beautiful than any other spot that I had ever seen; and as the light did not resemble the light of the sun, or the moon, or any artificial light, I looked for the source of the beautiful rays, and lo, heaven was open and

pouring down upon the mountain-top, a flood of such glorious effulgence as mortals never behold.

In the centre of this illuminated spot stood a ladder, and it reached up to heaven, upon which many shining ones were constantly ascending, who seemed to shine brighter and brighter as they went up higher and higher, beckoning to all around to follow, and sending up their thanksgivings for every addition to their number.

Beyond the circumference of this illuminated circle, the darkness became dreadful, except during brief intervals, when the faint and frequent flashes of distant lightning indicated an approaching storm. Hence I said to my guide, Let us tarry here, until permitted to ascend the ladder to leave all the darkness and wretchedness behind.

Whom should I now see standing near the foot of the ladder, but the wretched rejector of Heaven's offers, for whom I had before given up all hope. He seemed to be musing upon some purpose of heart, but finally lifted his eyes to heaven, and saints and angels came forth with smiling faces, and stood around the top of the ladder, and beckoned him to ascend.

But he shook his head, and would not take the first step! Then came forth the beautiful female that I had before seen in my dream, and she pointed to the spot on his face, and a bright flash of lightning quickly followed; and when he saw that all gazed at the dark mark, he instantly covered it up. But the guilty hand seemed to become transparent, and when he saw that he could not hide it, he went a

little way and sat down on the sand, and looked out upon the thick darkness, as though he had more affinity for that, than for the light of heaven, or because he thought that in the region of darkness, was the only place where he could hide the evidence of his guilt.

Then, a terrible flash of lightning and thunder that shook the mountain, started him to his feet, and he walked up to the foot of the ladder, and looked up once more into heaven, and there came forth one, "fairer than all the sons of men," and offered him a crown of everlasting glory if he would confess his sins, and ascend the ladder.

The lightning, thunder and tempest paused, and all heaven waited for his decision. Every eye was fixed upon him; every ear was open, and every tongue was still; and such a moment

of awful solemnity—such a sense of my own unworthiness—and such a presentiment of coming wrath, I had never known.

In sullen silence he received heaven's last overture—heard heaven's last invitation, and saw heaven's last shining light, and then lifted up his hand toward him who had done so much to save him, and with the spirit of a demon said, "*Away with him!*" And with a look of unutterable pity, that insulted, rejected Saviour replied, "You shall die in your sins, and where I am you can never come."

The door of heaven was shut, and darkness thick and frightful followed, the tempest raged, the lightning flashed, the thunder roared, the mountain trembled, and in the midst of a doleful lamentation, the earth opened and

swallowed him up, and with horrible emotions I awoke, feeling that if your doctrine was true, my condition was fearful. But it was only a dream.

B. Yes, it was a dream, but pray God that it may not be in vain. I once had similar dreams myself, such as I never could forget. If the All-wise and ever-present spirit of the eternal God, brings into the mind of man, a serious thought during the hours of repose, which the man afterwards recalls, he is under solemn obligation to improve it. That this is sometimes the case, there is not a doubt.

S. But what evidence have you of this? What is the voice of inspiration on this subject?

B. "For God speaketh once, yea, twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when

deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed ; then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man. He keepeth back his soul from the pit." I have been much interested in hearing your dream, and probably we shall find in the Spirit-world that it embraced more solemn and alarming truth, than you now wish to believe. At our next interview, which I hope will be soon, we will further consider the subject of our future well being.

CHAPTER VI.

B. Good morning, Mr. S. I am happy to meet you once more, while you are a "prisoner of hope."

S. A prisoner of hope! I never expect to be any thing else. But, according to your theory, I suppose that you would have me shut up in *despair*.

B. Nay, my friend, I would have you cheat Satan out of at least one victim. I did indeed express a fear that eternal death might be your portion, and I know not that you have yet made the least effort to avert such a doom. Remember the end of the caviler.

S. Now, I do not wish to hear anything about that, for it makes me ter-

ribly uncomfortable. I have been trying hard to banish it altogether from my mind.

B. You never can, neither in this world, neither in the world to come. It will ever be like the dark and inefaceable spot on the man's cheek. "God has spoken once, yea, twice," hearken to his voice, and if you are honest in saying that you never expect to be any thing but a prisoner of hope, remember that he says, "The expectation of the wicked shall perish." And again, "The hope of the unjust perisheth." What worse thing can come upon us, than to have all hope perish? This looks as if there would come a time when the wicked shall experience the same doom, as did those ruined individuals who cried out, "Silly man," "priestcraft," "time enough yet."

S. I should like to know what you would have me to do.

B. Why, simply give up your false hopes, forsake your false refuges, shun false teachers, and renounce false creeds, and then with an honest heart, and humble spirit, "receive the ingrafted word which is able to save your soul." Now, without this act, have you any reason to believe that you or any other man will ever know what it is to ascend that ladder, and enter into that uncreated light and glory, of which you had a glimpse in your dream? Or do you still cling to your former refuge, and fancy that you have sufficient evidence to prove the final salvation of all men—such evidence as satisfies *conscience*?

S. Conscience!

B. Yes, conscience.

S. Whose conscience?

B. Your conscience.

S. Of course I have such proof as ought to satisfy every reasonable man's conscience, for it is so clearly revealed that it is absurd to doubt.

B. Revealed where?

S. In the Bible, of course. Where else would you find such a glorious doctrine brought to light?

B. I think you will find it any where else rather than there.

S. What! do you say that *my* Bible does not reveal such a sentiment?

B. I say that *mine* does not.

S. I am not responsible for the imperfections of your Bible, and if it leads you astray, I can only pity you, and give you fair warning that I am not accountable for its influence.

B. Well, neighbor, Bibles generally

agree better than men, and, perhaps, the good book which you profess to receive as a revelation from Heaven, is like mine, after all. And first, let us have some of the strong testimony which *your* Bible contains, in favor of the doctrine which you know to be false, for, if I mistake not, I shall not find it necessary to resort to mine, to expose this fundamental error, into which Satan is trying to plunge you to your destruction.

S. Let the following truth speak for itself. "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." What say you to this.

B. A blessed and glorious doctrine, and set forth precisely as it stands recorded in the first copy of holy writ.

that I ever possessed. Was it not for this announcement, I should be of all men the most miserable. This is the foundation of the Christian's hope, and—

S. Yes, I thought this would straighten out your orthodoxy a little. I concluded that you would find my Bible not so destitute of strong proof as you supposed.

B. Not quite so fast, if you please. Don't you see that you are taking down testimony for your opponent? A few more such passages would make the devil abandon you as a hopeless subject, to announce among fallen spirits his utter failure. This blessed revelation, is not only the foundation of the Christian's hope, but an affecting pledge of the future and everlasting destruction of the wicked.

S. Oh, how full of unbelief ! I was going to say that *you* would perish for want of *faith*.

B. Well, when a man knows that he is in an error, it is pretty hard work to avoid betraying his struggling conscience, and as the principle is written in your heart, no wonder that you express it.

S. If God loved Adam's race so much as to give his only Son to die for the whole world, will not all be benefited.

B. He no where intimates any such thing, and what right have you to extend the benefit to those who will not accept it ? If a man should spread his table with ample provision for all the hungry poor in town, and invite them to come and partake, without money and without price, could those claim

or expect any benefit who refuse to attend ?

S. Of course not.

B. True, they would receive the benefit of an invitation, and merit the displeasure of the master of the feast, and the disgrace of foolishly spurning a kind offer. So, the provision which is made for men in the gospel, greatly benefits those who accept it, and renders far more intolerable the condition of those who reject it.

S. How do you know that any will refuse to come to the gospel feast, and consequently perish ?

B. Because, He that spake as never man spake, said so, and isn't that enough ? He has settled the question both for this world and the world to come—that many refuse to come while the door is *open*, and actually make

application after the door is *shut*. “Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.” “Strive to enter into the strait gate, for many I say unto you will seek to enter in, and shall not be able, when once the master of the house is risen up and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are, depart from me all ye workers of iniquity.”

But to return to the text that you quoted. Suppose that in traveling through a strange country, I should ask a man by the way-side, how long it would probably take me to reach a certain town, and he should say, “One hour, if you take the *right road*.” Should I need any to tell me that there

was a *wrong* road? If I believed the stranger, I should be perfectly satisfied that there was a right and a wrong way.

So when the Bible, or rather its author, said, "that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish," took it for granted that all understood perfectly well, that whosoever does *not* believe in him shall not escape. And if our gracious Redeemer when he uttered these words, did not intend to be so understood, he ought to have said, God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that all might have eternal life, whether they believe in Him or not.

But what said he on another occasion? "He that believeth not, shall be damned." Now do you suppose that the Great Teacher thought that

his wandering children would recognize him as an advocate of the same doctrine which the devil taught four thousand years before in the garden?

S. What doctrine?

B. Why, the doctrine of irresponsibility. "Hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden." That you shall be held responsible for every disobedience? It is not true, and God knows it. "Ye shall not surely die." Now friend, as you have received your articles of faith from the mouth of him who "is a liar, and the father of it," had you not better renounce it, and adopt the creed of a better teacher, and seriously ask yourself the question whether those who will not believe in, nor accept of the meek and lowly Saviour as "the chiefest among ten thou-

sand, and the one altogether lovely," ought not to perish.

S. All men do undoubtedly believe in Christ, as far as they have any knowledge of him.

B. Far from it! Not only do the tribes of Israel almost to a man, professedly disbelieve in him, and practically reject him, and at this very moment have the vail of unbelief upon their hearts; but thousands who are nominally Christians, are equally destitute of saving faith, and I fear that you are among the number.

S. What! do you mean to insult me by calling me an infidel?

B. No, friend, I do not intend any such thing. I simply wish you to look at the subject in the right light. Presuming you to be honest in supposing that you are not an unbeliever, I beg

leave to ask you what it is to believe in Christ?

S. Why, I suppose it is simply to believe in the record given of him.

B. Far more than this is necessary to salvation. "The devils also believe and tremble." But their faith, which is probably far more operative than yours, is not saving.

S. I believe that Jesus Christ is Almighty in power, and all-perfect in love.

B. So does Satan.

S. I believe that he laid down his life on Calvary to atone for a guilty world.

B. Of this the devil never had a doubt.

S. I believe that he was the great teacher sent from God; that he went about doing good, and was put to

death by wicked men; that he rose from the dead, and ascended up on high, to make intercession for the children of men, where he ever liveth and reigneth King Eternal, the only mediator between God and man.

B. All this the devils believe, and much more, and if *thou* dost not believe more, thy faith will be “found wanting,” when thou art weighed in the balance.

S. Well, I know not what else you would have me believe.

B. It is not only necessary that you should believe in the record which is given of the Saviour, but it is equally necessary for you to believe in the record given of *yourself*. Do you believe that you are a poor, guilty, defiled, undone sinner, “dead in trespasses and sins,” and exposed to the wrath of an

offended Judge, with nothing to commend you to his favorable notice, and hopelessly and eternally lost without the interposing grace and mercy of God in Christ your Redeemer ?

S. I am not aware that I have done anything which is so very bad. I have no particular distress on account of my sins. I do not feel that I am lost, neither do I wish to believe such a doctrine ; and if this is Christian faith, then I must confess that I am an unbeliever, for I should hardly have a doubt of the positive and certain salvation of every soul of Adam's race, if it had not been for that foolish dream, the cause of which I have already mentioned, and from the effects of which I have not fully recovered. But the weakness of that hour is no criterion.

B. No, we have a far better standard than dreams and visions, and if you would receive it with as little caviling, and as much confidence, as your judgment dictated on that occasion, and as conscience does still, you would soon learn both the simplicity and power of faith at the foot of the cross.

S. Well, I do not feel that I am in such peril as you describe, or as fancy pictured in my dream.

B. So I supposed, and hence I made the remark which appeared to you somewhat uncharitable. But it seems that it was nevertheless true. Only in proportion to your belief that you are a poor lost sinner, can you believe in a needed Saviour. The holy angels believe in Christ as the Saviour of lost men, but they can never believe in him

as *their* Saviour, nor can their faith though never so sincere, ever prove saving, for they are not lost.

The devils in hell, can, and do believe in Jesus Christ as the Saviour of all who sincerely repent and believe, but they can never believe in him as the Saviour of angels or devils, hence their faith too, is of no avail.

So you may believe that Jesus Christ is divine—the Father's co-equal Son—that he was made flesh and lived and labored on the earth—suffered on the cross—slept in the grave, and in three days triumphed over the bars of death—in short, believe all that is recorded of him, and still more, and yet you will have no more saving faith than a rock until you have such a sense of your lost and undone condition, as shall constrain you, in the simplicity and

sincerity of a little child, to cry out, "Lord save or I perish."

S. But did not Christ say, the Son of man is come to save that which was lost?

B. Yes, and blessed be his glorious name for such a revelation. Who can comprehend what would have been our condition if he had not come on such a mission? And who can describe the augmented guilt and misery of those who now, under the full blaze of the gospel, spurn the sacrifice and reject the provision made for their redemption?

S. Well, now I think we are coming to the point. If he came expressly from heaven to earth to perform such a redeeming work, shall his mission prove a failure? Has he not love enough, and skill enough, and power

enough to do all that he intended, and all that he promised to do?"

B. O, yes, there is nothing lacking on his part. But, remember, that he never intended or promised to save any against their *will*. For such as do not become his willing and obedient children, he has made no provision but the bottomless gulph. True, the atonement which he made is sufficient for all the countless millions who avail themselves of its benefit, from the beginning of the world to the end of time. But not sufficient for a single man who says, "Away with him;" "I will not have this man to reign over me," and maintains his opposition through life.

Moreover, the Saviour, with this distinctly in view, uttered those touching words, which ought to settle the

question at once in the mind of every man, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" "O that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes!" On this point, the Scriptures are very plain and the testimony very abundant.

S. Well, as I have duties to attend to, I must beg leave to be excused from further discussing this subject on the present occasion, and perhaps this unexpected debate had better be closed altogether, for I fear that no good will come of it, though I would not wish to

conclude it abruptly, for I must confess that some of your reasoning has rather interested me.

B. I think that we have reason to fear no harm, and I cherish the hope that you will yet listen to that voice which says, "This is the way, walk ye in it;" and in the meantime, I shall remember you before the throne of grace.

S. But why this gratuitous service? I have asked no man to pray for me.

B. This does not in the least diminish my obligation to obey a sacred command.

S. What command? Who told you to pray for me at this particular time?

B. He who has an ear to hear, and power to save.

S. Show me your authority, and I will surely acquiesce.

B. I have authority which includes all men, all time, and every place. "Pray without ceasing"—this embraces the time. "I will therefore that men pray everywhere," and this embraces the place. "I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men," and this certainly embraces any and every man.

S. Well, I believe that you are right, after all, and surely I have no objection to your obeying the injunction, for I hope that all things may turn out well with us in the spirit-world.

CHAPTER VII.

B. How do you do, friend S. ; walk in, I am glad to see you once more among the living. We are somewhat nearer to the spirit-world, than when we last met, and I hope somewhat better prepared to launch our bark upon the great ocean of eternity.

S. I know not how it may be with you. But with myself, nothing seems to be as I would have it.

B. Well, is it as the Lord would have it ?

S. I fear not.

B. Can't you improve it ?

S. Perhaps I might, a little, if I should try ; and possibly I should make it worse.

B. There is very little danger of that, if you look to the right source for help. But what is the difficulty? Do you begin to be dissatisfied with your hopes and prospects for a future state? Is your confidence in the doctrine of universal salvation, a little shaken?

S. Not a *little*, I might say, if I had ever had much. The truth is, I was always afraid that it was one of Satan's traps. I would have gladly believed it if I could, for I wanted to feel that all was safe. But I found there was no use in trying it any longer.

B. What brought you to the conclusion of renouncing, like an honest man, this false doctrine?

S. A variety of incidents have conspired to this result. I need not mention them all. A little daughter, a darling sweet child, whom I loved

dearly, and grieved much, by taking her out of the Sabbath School, after she had apparently become more attached to it, than to her daily meals, had no little influence in bringing me to the sober determination to strive no longer to believe a *lie*.

“Father, dear, let me go to the Sabbath School a little longer,” said she, one Sunday morning, with tears in her eyes, which well nigh melted my heart. But I had set down my foot, and so I said No, never, never! As long as you live, step not into that school again, to learn priestcraft and nonsense.

“O no, father, we do not learn nonsense there,” said she, with a trembling tongue. “We study the good word of the Lord, and I love to hear the teachers talk about Jesus, and good men, and angels, and heaven;

and I love to hear them talk to the children, and tell them what they must do to go to heaven where Christ and all good people, and good angels live ; and I love to hear them pray with the children, and sing with the children ; for they love the children, and the children love them. I am a great deal more happy since I went to the Sabbath School than I was before. But I should be happier still, if I could go again."

Conscience lashed me most severely for depriving my pet of an enjoyment so perfectly reasonable, to say the least. But I saw that I could never endure, in my present state, her influence, if she continued under such instruction, neither could I refute her arguments, though presented in artless simplicity.

“Father, was Jesus Christ a teacher sent from God?” said she, on a certain occasion, after a season of apparent meditation.

Yes, my child, said I; he was the best of teachers. He taught both by precept and example. Don’t you remember that it is said of him, that man never spake like him?

“Yes, father dear, I learned that, at the Sabbath School, and I wish you had let me stayed there longer, to learn more about the Saviour. It wouldn’t have done any hurt, would it? But I was going to ask, if you thought that he intended his teaching for little children, and expected that they could understand what he said.”

To be sure he did. Have you never heard that he said, that the way which he had marked out was so

“plain that a wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein?” And on another occasion, that he had “hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes?”

“Yes, father, I remember something about this. But what does it mean? Why did he hide these things from the wise and prudent?”

I suppose he meant those who were wise in their own eyes—too wise to acknowledge their need of instruction from him, while little children hearkened to his voice, and understood his words. I know not what else he meant, my child.

“You know, father dear, that a child cannot understand a *man*, unless he means what he says. And how can I understand the blessed Saviour, if he says one thing and means another?”

O, my child, he don't deal with his children in that way. He never leads his dependent creatures astray.

“I hope not. Father, he says the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal. Now, if these solemn words mean what they say, I can understand them. If they mean any thing else, I cannot, and I don't see how any one, old or young, can ever know that he has given them the right meaning. Father, you said to a gentleman the other day, that Jesus Christ did not mean that the wicked should go away into everlasting punishment. But how do you know that ? Has he said that he did not mean so ? I am afraid, dear father, that Jesus will never be pleased with you, for trying to make him say what he did not say ; and for trying to make

his words mean what they do not mean?"

This troubled me not a little, as you must know, and I turned it off as well as I could; but she continued, "I read in the Bible the other day, of a great *gulf*, and as Jesus himself said, that it was fixed between the righteous and the wicked, in the other world, and that none there could get over it, I thought that he would be displeased with you for saying that no such gulf as he had pointed out, was there, and I felt badly, and I asked the Lord Jesus if he would not help you to understand the Bible, just as little children understand it. Father, I am really afraid that he is now hiding these things from the wise and prudent? Don't you think so? It makes me unhappy to think of it."

Folly, my daughter, said I. Where did you get such foolish notions? I thought you said that it made you happy to go to the Sabbath School; but I think that you have learned there how to become unhappy.

“Well, father, would it make you miserable to know that I was in great danger of being burned up in this house this very night?” said she.

Of course it would, exceedingly so, said I.

“Would you then prefer to be ignorant of my danger, that you might be the more happy?” said she.

What ails you, my child, said I, that you ask such strange questions? Do you not think that I would wish to know the worst of your case, so long as there was the least hope of preventing such a calamity?

“Yes, father dear,” said she, “and though it makes me unhappy, yet I wish to know the worst of yours, while there remains the least prospect of saving you from the flames which shall never be quenched. But remember that Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, said himself, that “he that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.” Now, ever since you began to talk so much with men when they come here, about everybody’s going to heaven, I could not help fearing that you were trying to climb up some other way. Father, it is easy for *me* to believe in Jesus, and it makes me happy. Is it not just as easy for you to believe that he means what he says? I think you

will find it hard work to make *him* believe that he means anything else."

When she uttered these words, a dreadful struggle between conscience and self-will began. I not only regretted that I had ever sent her to the Sabbath School, but also regretted that I had ever taken her away.

But still I remained inflexible, giving no consent for her to return; and to lull conscience to sleep, I went the succeeding sabbath to hear a universalist expound the law, and tell the congregation about the numerous and grave mistakes of Christ and his inspired apostles; at least one could infer nothing else from his argument, and I noticed that many seemed to be greatly pleased with the new doctrine; and no wonder, for men naturally dislike restraint, and hate responsibility.

The teacher went on to show the sagacity of one of the disciples, the substance of which was as follows. The Saviour, a little while before he was betrayed, had told Judas that it were better for him that he had never been born. This, the preacher admitted. But Judas, being a universalist, perhaps, was not altogether pleased with the charge, and afterward went and dashed down the thirty pieces of silver, and to get satisfaction hung himself, to let the world know how much sooner he could go to Heaven from the gallows, according to his creed, than the Saviour could from the cross.

I not only saw the absurdity of the doctrine, which must lead to this very conclusion, if believed, but I had long noticed that those who professed the strongest measure of faith in this creed

apparently had the least conscience, and could curse and swear the most.

B. Ah! yes, I have known by experience, a little about the effects of such faith. When I was a stripling, I was foolish enough to advocate this doctrine, and I suppose succeeded far better in satisfying others of my sincerity, than myself. I then talked just as you did when we first met, and probably felt very much as you did: and I suppose exhibited the same kind of works. But during this time, I often thought of the passage where it is written, "He shall save his people from their sins," and conscience, not being easily bribed or silenced, would always tell me that according to this rule, I certainly could not be one of his people.

S. It happened that I overtook the

parson the next day as he was walking with one of his congregation who was notoriously intemperate, and as I felt that he had not cleared up the doctrine to my satisfaction, I followed along a little behind, listening to the conversation between them, as they happened to be conversing upon their favorite creed; and at length they went into a public house where I followed, and we all sat down in the bar-room, and the man at once called for a drink, and then resumed the conversation.

“You know, sir,” said he, “that I was taught to believe that no drunkard should ever inherit the kingdom of God, and I suppose that you can tell me whether I ought to believe such a doctrine or not.”

“You know,” said the teacher, “that

I preach that men ought to live sober, righteous, and godly lives in this present evil world."

"O yes," said the man, "nothing less could be called preaching. They *ought* so to live, but, suppose they do not. What then? Is there a place in the kingdom of heaven for those who now and then take a little too much rum?"

"Most assuredly there is," said he, "for the Lord Jesus Christ tasted death for every man; and he said to those who surrounded him a little before he left the earth, 'I go to prepare a place for you.'"

"But did he not say this to his own disciples," said the inebriate.

"Well, I suppose he did," said he, "but he said, 'In my father's house are many mansions,' and I think there is

some place there for those who gratify their appetite a little too freely here.”

“Thank you, sir,” said he, “this is just the news for me. Landlord let us have another drink.”

“But remember,” said the preacher of smooth things,—who began to feel a little uncomfortable, “if you continue to drink to excess, that it will cost you much—that you will be the sufferer.”

“What will it cost me to drink as much as I please?”

“A bloated face, a trembling hand, a ruined character, a broken hearted wife, starving children, and a premature grave.”

“O, that’s nothing, I shall only get to heaven all the sooner,” said he, with a triumphant emphasis.

By this time, the preacher began to manifest a disposition to get clear of

his companions who had gathered around him. A shrewd looking man whom the preacher evidently suspected of skepticism, said, "Sir, there is a set of men in the world who teach that 'the wicked shall be turned into hell and all the nations that forget God.' But I was much gratified to hear you say yesterday, that there was no hell but the grave; and no burning gulph, but a bewildered imagination; and no blackness of darkness but that which priestcraft has thrown over the immortal mind. I observed that the doctrine which you advocated, gave great satisfaction to the audience, and I exclaimed to myself almost involuntarily, Poor souls! what should we do, if it was not for this good news which we hear to-day. But, after all, does not this doctrine license men to sin?"

“Not at all,” said the suspicious preacher. “Where did you ever hear of a preacher of this faith, who did not advocate the importance of living an honest, upright, blameless life?”

“It would be singular preaching indeed,” said he, “if he advocated anything less. But suppose his hearers do not see fit to practice his precepts, what then? What if half of his congregation should turn robbers, and cut the throats of the other half? Is there any penalty for transgression?”

“Certainly there is.”

“What is it?”

“If a man does not do unto others as he would have them do unto him, he must of course expect to suffer.”

“Suffer where and when?”

“Why, more or less through a long

life, according to the nature of the offence."

"Do you mean to say that all his sufferings terminate in death?"

"I think they do. Would you like to suffer longer?"

"That has nothing to do with it. It is true that I would not like to suffer at all. But a violated law does not ask the criminal how long he would like to suffer for his crime. It is not the transgressor's province to modify the penalty. Now I covet a large sum of money which my near neighbor has in his possession, and I am determined to obtain it, if I have to get it by unlawful means. What will it cost?"

"It will cost you a guilty conscience, sleepless nights, and the ill-will of that neighbor."

"I am willing to pay this price, and

as you have found out that forever means only 'three days,' I shall carry out my intention, though it will probably cost a little blood; and it gives me great satisfaction to know that for this I need not fear any future retribution, or"—

"Hold, friend! Can it be possible that you understood me to say that you were at liberty to take the life of your neighbor?"

"Not in so many words. But there can be no objection to it. According to your doctrine, the greatest possible amount of happiness will inevitably follow its consummation. To carry out my plan to the accomplishment of my darling object, I suppose it may be necessary for me to put aside one of my neighbors; but I think that the more I kill, the better, if heaven is a

better place than earth ; and I should at the same time find in my success, a heaven upon earth ; and should I be arrested, and even found guilty, you know our Judge is a man of too much sense to condemn me. O, no, he would never do that, but would rather spare so useful a citizen to perform the same kind office for others. Moreover, if I should happen to fall into the hands of a Judge of a little less liberal faith, who should pass sentence of death upon me, and execute it, don't you see that I should go to heaven all the sooner for it? What a glorious doctrine this is ! But don't you think that it is going to heaven a little too easy ? I am afraid that we shall find a good many hard customers there."

"I never advocated any such doctrine as this."

“Yes you did, exactly such a doctrine, only you had a little mask on, while preaching. But, every body could see through it, as well as through an open door. And if you are unwilling to admit it, answer me one question. Does the impenitent murderer go to heaven or hell, when he dies?”

At this moment some of the bystanders (for there were several of the same faith) were almost ready to gnash upon him with their teeth for presuming to thus call in question the teaching of him whose doctrine harmonized well with itching ears; so that there was much more noise and confusion, than argument. But the champion, although evidently anxious to give up his seat to almost any body who would take it, yet doubtless thought it would hardly do to be vanquished by a man

of such humble pretensions, said, "How do you know that the murderer, or any other one ever dies without repentance?"

"Because," said he, "the great teacher himself said to the Jews, on a certain occasion, that unless they believed on him, they should die in their sins, and where he was, they should never come. They did not believe on him, but cried, 'Away with him.' Again he said, 'For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.' Now, without inquiring whether the murderer's righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, let me ask one question. Can

you, as an honest man, say that *yours* exceeds it?"

"I cannot say," said the preacher, "how much righteousness they had."

"Why," said the man, "you are the very one to know." 'Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?' Don't you know that they were considered the most exemplary men of their day? Don't you know that they were scrupulously moral—that they fasted twice in the week—paid tithes of all they possessed—strictly observed the Sabbath, and sacred festivals—that they fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and did many other good things? And with all their good deeds, don't you know that the King Eternal, who looks right at the heart, and sees the end from the beginning, pronounced them unfit for the

kingdom of heaven. Now, friend, your righteousness must not only be equal to, but it must actually *exceed* theirs, or all your preaching will be vain, and you will die in your sins, and have your portion with false teachers."

This unexpected plain dealing, and charge upon the preacher, quite enraged him; so much so, that it was soon evident that he was less moral than even the Scribes and Pharisees, and I fully resolved in my own mind that I would do violence to conscience no longer, and hurried home as fast as I could. But as I approached my dwelling, the voice of prayer arrested my attention. I listened, and heard my darling child say, O, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on my dear, dying father, and help him to believe

the truth ; and when I went in, I told her all that was in my heart, and she rejoiced, and gave thanks.

B. Well, my dear friend, your daughter might well rejoice, and give thanks, and it does my heart not a little good to learn that you have taken one step in the right path to the spirit-world. The first step is often the hardest of all. Having put your hand to the plough, I hope you will never look back. Your dear child, I trust, will soon be welcomed back to the Sabbath School.

S. Indeed, I shall rather encourage than prevent it, for I am confident that she knows what it is to believe and love the truth.

B. I hope you will yet know, yourself, what it is to rejoice in that blessedness which flows from a hearty ac-

ceptance of Christ and his gospel. A foretaste of the abounding felicity of the spirit-world may be obtained here, by poor travelers like ourselves.

S. I suppose it may. But I do not feel that my prospects for the spirit-world are any better than they were at our first interview, although I am determined to cling no longer to false refuges, if I know it. There are many things in the Bible that I do not seem to understand.

B. If the Bible contained nothing but what finite minds could fully comprehend, would you think that it was a book from the infinite, incomprehensible, and eternal Spirit.

S. I suppose that it is reasonable for worms of the dust to expect to find mysteries in such a book. But I cannot understand how all can be judged

according to their deeds, and yet all the wicked be condemned to the same place of punishment, and of the same duration.

B. Perhaps a simple illustration may assist your reflections a little. Suppose that the penalties for stealing, robbery, fraud, murder, &c., were, according to our statute laws, all imprisonment for life in the same prison, or upon some desolate island. And suppose that you were unfortunately among the number, and while dragging out a miserable existence, you should exclaim, "Oh! that I had not defrauded my neighbor! He dwelt securely by me, and had the utmost confidence in me. How could I have done such a deed. I wish I could forget the base act, for it torments me day and night to think of it." "Ah!

your punishment is nothing to mine," says another, "for I robbed a confiding friend of all his treasure, and it is impossible for him to ever regain it." "Alas!" says the third, "all this is nothing to my dreadful burden. I wickedly killed my brother." Now, can you not see that although imprisoned for life, and all in the same place, that their misery would not all be the same?

S. O yes, I see it clear enough. We can't get rid of conscience. And conscience will neither accuse, or excuse us unjustly.

CHAPTER VIII.

B. Well, friend, as conscience is immortal, and as every moral act stamps it with an indelible impression, how vastly important is it that we should possess a conscience void of offence, while passing through this vale of tears, and snares, and woes. To do this, we must trust alone to the sustaining grace of Jesus Christ. Those who fail to do this will not fail to find conscience worse than a barbed arrow in their inmost souls when they are introduced to the spirit-world.

S. It is sometimes like the worm that never dies, even in this world, for mine does nothing but accuse me continually.

B. And why, is this your experience?

S. Because I do not follow its dictates, I suppose you will say.

B. Do you suppose that conscience would ever accuse or condemn you for giving up the sins and follies of the world, and for giving your heart and affections to Jesus Christ?

S. O no. I am fully assured that it would not. But how can a poor helpless mortal do such a work? It is almost nothing at all that I could do, if I should try.

B. It is very little that you can do, I admit, but your condition is none the worse for that. And if you could do as much as all the combined effort of angels and men can accomplish, it would be no better, for you would then be, as you are now, responsible for what you *can* do, and nothing more.

And because you can do but a little, and because a very little is required of you, will you neglect to do that ?

S. It appears very reasonable that every one should do his duty, do all that he can to make himself and others happy. Yet, after all, it seems to me that the Saviour, after doing and suffering so much to redeem the lost and wandering, will hardly suffer them to perish.

B. Be not deceived. There is no such doctrine taught in the Bible. He has truly done a great work for man, blessed be his great and glorious name. And he now requires a very little on our part, and this is mainly to accept of what he offers, without money and without price. Suppose some individual of immense resources should invite you to meet him midway between your

abode and his, that he might bestow upon you a vast *treasure*. Would you consider it a hardship to comply by walking a mile ?

S. Certainly not. Under such circumstances I should esteem it a privilege and a pleasure to walk the whole distance.

B. But suppose you should do otherwise, and say, Well, if he is disposed to do so much for me, it is altogether unnecessary that I should move an inch ; for reason teaches me that his benevolence will never suffer an intervening mile to frustrate his kind designs. Would not your refusal to comply, argue very conclusively that you spurn both the *gift* and the *giver* ?

S. Of course it would, if such an unreasonable act were possible. And

I should prove myself totally unworthy of his kind regard.

B. An act more unreasonable, and fraught with infinitely greater peril, is perpetrated every day. Now, let me remind you, that He who holds the destinies of worlds in his hands, and in whom we live, and move, and have our being, invites us to draw near and accept from his hand the gift of eternal life. Now, will you accept of such a gift? I am aware that you cannot fully comprehend its value, here. But, O, can you not realize something of the importance of its possession! In the spirit-world, whether in weal or woe, you will need no one to remind you of the vastness and richness of the benefits of such a gift. The high and holy praises of heaven, and the deep

and doleful wailings of hell will bespeak it.

S. Alas! friend, you remind me of what I saw in my dream, and it makes me almost shudder to think of the frightful end of those who trifled with eternal things.

B. Then surely you will not imitate their example, therefore let me caution you against the danger; for many trifle with their own immortal interests although they do not intend or suspect it.

S. But there are so many kinds of religionists in the world, that I know not which to believe, for every one says that he is right.

B. You mean there are so many counterfeits in the world. But these only prove that there is also a genuine religion. Shall I tell you how it hap-

pens that there is so much false religion among men?

S. If you please.

B. Simply because so few go to Jesus Christ for their religion. Those who apply to him, always obtain the pure form. He never gives any other. The quantity may vary, but the quality is uniformly the same. There may be "diversity of gifts, but it is the same Spirit." Pure religion can be obtained no where else, and yet multitudes go anywhere and everywhere but to the Saviour of the world for their religion, even to the devil.

S. But it will do no good to attempt to go to the Redeemer for any favor, unless we go aright.

B. Well, why should you go in any other way?

S. Indeed I would not. But can I go in my own strength ?

B. If you were to apply to any other source for help, in whose strength would you go ? From whom did you receive strength to arise from your bed this morning ? From whom do you expect to receive strength to perform the journey of life ?

S. From him who is Almighty, and from him alone.

B. Very true ; then bear in mind, that each one of your muscles whenever it moves, has a little of his strength, and whenever it has not, it is paralyzed. I say *his* strength, for you must remember that those muscles which move you about, are his. So, as long as you have the faculty or power of choice, and will to go this way or that, or to perform one thing

or another, it is also through his strength that you are enabled to do it, whether you do it for good or evil. He has given no such strength or faculty to the brute. It can neither love nor hate him. And as you derive all your faculties from him, will he not as willingly give you strength to come to him for his blessing, as to depart from him to receive his curse?

S. It seems that it must be so.

B. It is so. And yet multitudes foolishly and fatally shut out the blessings of heaven from their immortal souls through the unreasonable excuse that they cannot come to Christ in their *own strength*, and so use the strength which he has given them, in rejecting him. Men do not realize how hard they work to secure their own ruin. But those who pray to be

excused from the salvation of their souls as it is offered in the gospel, ought to remember, that if they will not accept of Christ's offered grace, he will give them their chosen portion and with it, give them as much strength to endure his displeasure as he would have given them to enjoy that boon which they so blindly reject. Now, will you come to Christ with all your weakness, that you may receive strength? With all your blindness, that you may be enlightened. With all your sins, that you may be forgiven, and with all your poverty, that you may be enriched?

S. I would if I could.

B. Well, if you cannot come, then is your case perfectly hopeless. And how would you like to hear others announce it? Suppose I should say,

there is no possible way whereby you can be saved. That you cannot repent, that you cannot believe, that you cannot accept of an offered Saviour, and that you may as well give up all hope, and sink down into despair.

S. To believe this, would truly be an awful thought, and I hope that my case is not quite so bad. But what can I do?

B. Repent, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. This you can do, and it is all that he requires, and then love and serve him with all your heart. Take his yoke upon you, for it is easy, and his burden for it is light.

S. Oh! that it was as easy for me to turn, as it was for my child? But I feel that it is otherwise. It is hard for me to confess my guilt. My heart is so hard that it will not relent. The

temptations of the world, and my besetting sins, and my wicked companions, are ready to swallow me up. And then, the darkness of my mind shuts out all the light, and almost excludes every ray of hope.

B. Then turn quickly, precious immortal, "for why will you die?" Let me tell you why it is easy for children to enter in at the strait gate. They are willing to confide in Christ, and obey him. They understand simple requirements, and instead of mystifying them, as do those who wish to find some excuse for disobedience, they simply obey them; and you can do the same thing, if you will. The act is precisely the same in all cases and ages. The only difference is, it is not quite so easy for you to become a little child. In other words, you are not

so ready to take the simple truth just as you find it recorded, and obey it from the heart.

S. Yes, it is something so, I believe. But still I go on from one day to another, hoping that it will be better with me the next, and the next, and yet I am growing harder and harder.

B. Yes, and further and further from the kingdom. You may as well turn at once. You will never find it easier, and perhaps you may never find it possible, after letting one more opportunity slip. The devil is ready to spring his trap upon you, and he cares not what kind of bait he uses, if he can but secure his prey. He is perfectly satisfied to have you wait for a more convenient season, and wait for more feeling, and wait for anything, while standing on a slippery steep,

with a woful gulf beneath your feet, which is dark enough, and deep enough to prevent your escape, if you fall; and doleful enough to chill and wither every vestige of hope forever!

S. But do I stand on such a slippery steep?

B. Yes, awful as is the thought, there you stand, with the deluded, thoughtless, and presumptuous multitude, notwithstanding that fearful declaration, "Their feet shall slide, in due time!" There you stand, as it were, over the very gulf of which you had a glimpse in your dream; and lest you slip, ere you are aware, and sink to perdition, with those who would gladly tear out their tongues, and throw them back to earth, if they could, to apprise the wicked of their end, and beg for

water to quench their ceaseless, burning thirst,—turn, turn !

S. What do you mean by throwing back their tongues to earth ?

B. Ah! they come not oft, but dreadful are their tidings when they come ! “Father Abraham, send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame !” Being informed that that was impossible, as no one could cross the impassable gulf, the lost one requested that Lazarus might be sent back to earth, to warn his five brethren to beware how they followed him to that place of torment. But he was told that it would do no good, as one rising from the dead would have no saving influence over the living, who reject Moses and the Prophets. Now, have you made any

effort to escape such a doom as called forth the bitter cry to which I have just alluded?

S. I fear that I have not taken the first step towards it. It all appears dark and dismal to me, as the night of death.

B. If not, then for the love, peace, and happiness of your own soul; for the prosperity of others; for the joy and satisfaction of angels, and for the honor and glory of your Redeemer, no longer delay. You know not what a day may bring forth. Think how many there are now in the dark prison of despair, who, just as much intended and expected to prepare to grapple with the "King of Terrors," as you do, but they put it off one day too late. This may be your experience, before to-morrow morning. You do not think

so, neither did they. They thought a little more procrastination could do no harm. They thought that a little more rebellion could not subject them to such fearful peril—a little more unbelief, and love of sin, and neglect of Christ were ventured upon, and they fell to rise no more, and their good resolutions and intentions perished with them.

S. I presume that I am in all the peril that you represent, but, somehow or other, I do not *feel* it, as I would wish to.

B. I am aware that this excuse is a sufficient barrier to keep many precious souls out of the kingdom of heaven. Oh! how many mistaken souls are this moment waiting for feeling, without suspecting the delusion. They fancy that they would attend to the

salvation of their souls at once, if they had a little more feeling, while they consider not that if they had twice as much feeling as usual, they would stifle it, if they could. One moment's reflection ought to convince them that men exceedingly dislike to feel that they are in danger.

S. But will a man ever escape from any danger without feeling?

B. No more than a stone, and hence the importance of cherishing, instead of resisting the strivings of the Holy Spirit. But you do not need feeling enough to crush you, to lead you to the "Ark of Safety," unless it is your own fault. Now if the physician should pronounce your case to be hopeless, you would probably feel the force of the declaration, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return,"

more than, if you enjoyed perfect health. But do you not at all times sufficiently feel it, to use daily care in preserving your life? What stronger feeling do you need?

S. It is natural for men to cling to life, and therefore they will use means to preserve it. But in spiritual things it is different.

B. Take another example. It is written, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Now, you believe this declaration, as much as the other, and you can feel the importance of shunning a spiritual, as well as a natural death, if you will; because you know that you have sinned and are consequently under condemnation. Now, friend, do not deceive yourself in supposing that you want more feeling, while you stay away from the

Cross. There is the place to feel. Look to him who hung thereon, and live.

S. I know that this is what I ought to do, and it is what I intend to do. My understanding is convinced, and I hope to feel the importance of it.

B. You do feel it. No man is convinced of anything without feeling. How much feeling did the blind man need, to stimulate him to apply to the Great Physician for help? Just as much as you need, and no more. He felt that his case was a bad one, and I trust that you do not wish yours to become worse. He believed that Jesus of Nazareth could give him sight, and do you not equally believe that none else can open your spiritual eyes to behold the wonders of redeeming grace? He had also sufficient confi-

dence in the loving kindness of the Friend of sinners, to say, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me." And where, at this enlightened age of the world, is your faith, that you have not got even the blind man's confidence?

He felt that in Christ was his only hope; and do you not know and feel that your condition is no better. He was aware that the favor which he sought, was of vast importance to him; and are you not sensible that you need a still greater blessing? Moreover, he was determined to test the power and goodness of an Almighty deliverer without delay; and will you not be as consistent, that you may be as successful?

S. If the Saviour was now present as he was in those days, it seems to

me that I should at once apply to him for help.

B. Then you prefer to walk by sight. This the blind man could not do. He had to take the testimony of others. And O how much stronger testimony have you. You cannot doubt that he is just as much present with all his love to pity and power to save, as he was when he said "According to your faith be it unto you." And what more can you need.

S. It does seem as if there was nothing in the way but myself, and I hope that I shall not continue to stand in my *own* way.

CHAPTER IX.

THROUGH the kind providence of our heavenly Father, we are permitted to meet once more on his footstool, Mr. S., to resume the consideration of that topic, which ought above all others to fill every man's mind with anxiety of deep and thrilling intensity, for its importance has no limits ; it is altogether as boundless as eternity. With such interests at stake, I trust that you are not waiting for feeling to move you to secure the "pearl of great price," as you were at our last interview.

S. I saw then, sir, that it was perfectly unreasonable and unsafe to wait for anything, and yet, here I am waiting still.

B. Waiting for what? To see if the Lord of life and glory will not come and force you into his kingdom against your will? You may wait for this, in vain. Haste then, precious immortal, haste to Christ, the sinner's friend. To wait for more feeling, is altogether unsafe. To wait for less, is presumption. Hark! "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," is the advice and the command of the Judge of quick and dead. No allowance is made for excuses or delay. No permission to seek anything else first, not even the security of natural life, which is far less important. Now, do you not sometimes fear that you will after all come short of eternal life while neglecting to seek first the kingdom?

S. Yes, I often have such fears. When I lie down at night, I say to my-

self, Well, who can tell but that before the dawn of another day, I shall open my eyes in that dread world where there is neither morning nor evening, rest nor sleep, friend nor hope, joy nor peace—no pleasant sight or pleasant sound—no smiling face or cheering word, no sympathizing heart or helping hand—but woe unmitigated, woe unutterable, woe eternal! To have an existence in the spirit-world under such circumstances, what an end! Who can endure the thought?

B. You need not endure the thought, unless you prefer to remain exposed to the reality. Unless you prefer to wait for feeling, until your experience shall overwhelm you, I hope you will count the cost while the door of grace and hope is open. Your danger is far greater than you suspect.

Many have been almost ready, as they supposed, to enter the kingdom: perhaps had fully resolved to do so, and possibly expected the all-important work to be done in less than one short week, and would hardly have tolerated the expression of a single doubt from any one concerning their safety, when some adverse influence carried them away, as with a flood, until their seriousness vanished, and their hopes too, as they finally landed in the great gulf to go no more out forever. I tell you that you have no time to lose. There is a shorter step between you and death, than you suspect.

S. Yes, I know it must be short and uncertain at the best. I have had fair warning, and if I perish, it must be my own fault. But that makes the mat-

ter so much the worse. I can imagine something how it will be with me in the dark world of woe. I shall wish that I could fasten the blame upon others. What indescribable horror will the thought that I have murdered my own soul, produce! What unearthly agony to call to mind these interviews and other friendly warnings,—more especially the repeated invitations of the gospel—the voice of love and mercy which reached my ears from Calvary; the proffered streaming blood of the atoning Lamb of God; the numerous and aggravated attempts to stifle conscience, pervert the truth, quench the Spirit, avert conviction and secure my own destruction!

As soon as I shall have become conscious of my existence in that dread abode should such be my woeful doom,

I think I shall say, Well, here I am at last, notwithstanding all my warnings, convictions, fears, and resolutions, to endure, what so many vainly tried to describe. Oh! horrible! Have I come to this! Oh! what a state! How awful! I can find nothing here that has an end! I wish I could die again! Oh! death, cut me down once more! Rocks and mountains fall on me, crush, hide, and annihilate me! Vengeance of heaven, fall on me and blot out my existence forever! Alas! I am lost, and how doleful is my condition here, with all my undying faculties wonderfully quickened and capacitated for suffering! But it is all just, for I now see what I have done.

B. Oh! fellow-man, and prisoner of hope, it seems as if you already had a foretaste of the dread reality, and yet

you are letting the golden moment for securing a passport to a brighter, better world, slip ; although you are tottering upon the crumbling verge of unutterable ruin. I charge you by all that is desirable in heaven, and woful in hell, to stop ! Stop, while you can : turn while you may ; flee while there is hope, profit by what you see, hear and feel, or your fears will be more than realized, and a great ransom cannot deliver you.

S. Alas ! how dark and gloomy are my prospects, and how difficult does the work of preparation for the spirit-world appear. *It is all midnight.* How can I work in the dark ? I see no dawning of the day. O that I could see such a light as I saw on the mount, in my dream.

B. Yes, it is both dark and difficult,

and how can you expect it to be otherwise, so long as you will not come to the light, nor cease increasing the difficulties. If you will come to Christ, you shall have light, and joy, and peace; and the difficulties which appear to you like mountains shall melt away into a pleasant plain. And why you delay one moment, I believe no mortal can give any good reason. If you had an earthly treasure in peril, if necessary to secure its safety, you would at once bring into requisition, time, energy, men, and money.

Suppose that you had a very valuable country-seat, upon which you had bestowed labor and money, until you had made it all that you could desire. Made it capable of affording an ample supply of earthly comforts for yourself and family. On this pleasant

spot you intend to spend your days, and expect to be undisturbed, as you suppose the title to be perfectly good.

But accidentally as it were, I happen to discover a flaw in that title, and perceive that your property is in the most imminent peril. That in passing from A. to B. at a remote period, the transfer of said premises was conditional. Certain obligations were to be discharged by the party of the second part, on or before the expiration of a given day and year, or the said premises were to revert to the party of the first part, his heirs and assigns; which has been wholly neglected up to the moment of my discovery, which happens to be on the last day of the appointed time for securing the title, with but an hour's sun above the western horizon. With this startling

fact, I fly to you with the utmost speed, and the communication falls upon your ear like a thunderbolt. Under such circumstances what would you do ?

S. Do everything in my power, of course, to discharge the claim.

B. Would you delay ?

S. Not a moment. I should think of my family and of our comfortable sweet home, and should say, Alas ! *if I tarry a moment we are undone* ; and in order to be prepared for the emergency, I should send some one up stairs and another down ; one this way, and another that ; and to all I should say *run, run.*

B. Why would you act so promptly ?

S. Don't you see that the interests at stake would demand it ? Nothing less would answer. True the Clerk's

office, where the obligation must be discharged, might not be a mile off, and the expense attending the act to be performed might be very trifling. But the result of a little delay would not prove so trifling.

B. At this critical moment, suppose that an old friend, after performing a journey of a thousand miles to transact some important business with you, calls at your door, and declares that he must see you now or never. In this dilemma what would you do ?”

S. Just as soon stop to do business with a beggar.

B. Why treat your friend so rudely ?

S. Because I could not afford to treat myself and family worse. I could not consent to gratify even a friend, at such an expense, and I should cry, Let me *go* ! O let me *go now* !

B. But suppose at that moment, a fearful thunder-storm should begin to pour a torrent upon the earth, and the streaming lightning dash a portion of your habitation to atoms, setting fire to the rest ; in the midst of the crash and the cries of " Stop, stop ! the house is all in a blaze," would you start ?

S. Most surely I would, and I would only wait to reply, I cannot help it, your lives are all spared ; and as for the house, it must burn down to ashes or others quench the flames. The ground on which it stands, cannot burn and I must secure my title to that, or lose all ; let me go ; let me go !

B. Yes, and you would act wisely, and neither friends nor foes, nor fire nor storms, nor floods nor fears, nor smiles nor frowns would stop you. Neither

would you wait for *feeling*. But how much time have you now to secure a title to a home in the heavenly Canaan? Do you know that the "Book of Life" will be kept open for you a single hour? The obligation against you can be discharged *now*, and your title to eternal life made secure. An hour hence it may be too late!

S. I do indeed feel to some extent the importance of such a title, but what can I do?

B. All that is required of you, which is but a little.

S. I cannot draw up the title deed.

B. No. But you can subscribe to the terms, and the Holy Ghost can seal and witness it.

S. I can never pay the purchase money.

B. No, but you can accept a con-

veyance without money and without price.

S. I cannot make a record of the transaction.

B. No, but the recording angel can write it in the book of life.

S. I can never take possession of such an inheritance without a guide.

B. No, but those pure spirits, "who are sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation," can conduct you safely to that mansion which the Lord of glory has prepared for all who will accept of such a heavenly home. Now you perceive what you *can* do. It is not much; but it is all-important. Nay, it is *indispensable*. Are these terms hard?

S. O no, they appear perfectly reasonable.

B. Then you will certainly accept of

them at once, instead of saying, "I pray thee have me excused," unless you are *unreasonable*. Now, will you do it?

S. I intend most assuredly to do so.

B. When?

S. By and bye. I hope that it will not be long.

B. Well, now tell me honestly, whether you are not flattering yourself that you have really taken a good step, because you have good *intentions* for the future?

S. Perhaps I am.

B. And have you ever thought that this was nothing but an insult to your Maker? What would you think of a poor wretch by the wayside, pretending, while thrusting a dagger into the bosom of his friend, stab after stab, that he had a good intention at heart—

that by-and-by he intended to stop and make amends?

S. I should think him a hypocrite and a murderer.

B. Then, lest you find that you have condemned yourself, remember that your good intentions for the *future*, are nothing less than a rejection of Christ for the *present*. And what worse act can you perpetrate? Can you pull him down from his throne, and thrust the spear into his side, and drive the nails through his hands and his feet, and mock him, and spit upon him?

S. No, this I cannot, and would not do, for the world.

B. But after suffering in your stead, bearing your sins in his own body on the tree, and after offering to wash you in his own blood, and clothe you

with his own robe, and crown you with his own crown, you can *reject* him. Alas! the deed you have already done, and with all your good intentions are doing still.

S. I do not feel that I have any disposition to reject the Saviour of the world.

B. And yet you do not accept of him and his kind offers. Suppose that you know your neighbor to be in present and perishing need of some aid which you alone can render. In a dark and stormy night, with much inconvenience and some suffering, you make your way to his abode. Being in haste to be sheltered from the storm, you give a loud rap as soon as you reach his door. A servant from an upper window cries out, "Who is there!" You give your name, and proclaim the ob-

ject of your visit, feeling that that will be quite enough to secure all the attention that you need. After waiting till strength and patience are well nigh exhausted, the servant re-appears and says, "The gentleman of the house does not wish to be disturbed; but you can see him in the morning, if you wish," what would you think of the treatment received for your pains?

S. I think that I should not soon trouble him again.

B. Turn your attention to one who has come a long way and on a rough path, to visit you, bringing in his bleeding hands, the ransom price of your redemption, and listen to his gracious voice, "Behold I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come

in to him, and will sup with him and he with me." Shall this heavenly visitor knock at your door, and urge upon your dying soul, the boon of everlasting life; and knock and urge in vain?

S. O no, heaven forbid.

B. Then I charge you to count the cost of shutting him out of your heart, and never dare to plead future repentance as an excuse for present disobedience. It is saying that God, and Christ, and heaven are all worth less at present, than the pleasures of sin. A greater insult cannot well be offered; and is not this rejecting Christ?

S. Conscience tells me that it is not right, and I hope to do better.

B. By what rule? What! are you going to love that to-morrow which you hate to-day? By what law?

S. I can hardly answer this question. But I hope to have a heart to do that which I suppose that I have not yet done.

B. What a delusion ! It is equivalent to saying, I wish to love that which I love to hate.

S. Do you mean to say, that I love *sin* ?

B. The Bible says so, friend ; and if it does not speak the truth, you surely will not cherish a single sin for a moment. But if you will not hate and repent of it *now*, you have not the slightest reason to hope for a profitable or even tolerable future.

S. It may be so, and I fear that it is.

B. I know very well that you cherish the hope that in some way or other you shall escape the terrible

overthrow of the wicked, although every step you take in your impenitent state, is towards the bottomless gulf. All those who persevered in sin until they met the same doom of which I am warning you, cherished the same hopes. They went on hoping that they should have a hope, until their delusive spell ended in irretrievable ruin, and you may do the same thing. And yet you will say, I hope not, while you do nothing to prevent the dread result.

CHAPTER X.

B. AT our last interview, we were considering the inconsistencies of men. It is lamentable that in matters of the greatest moment, we are often the most inconsistent. Suppose I should meet you at midnight in a dark forest where you had wandered and searched in vain to find your way out, and with a lamp in my hand, should lead you to a plain path, give you suitable directions, urge your immediate escape, and hand you the light.

Would you delay, and begin to find fault with the *path*, because it could not be followed without a light—and with the *distance*, because so many steps must be taken—and with the

lamp, because its rays did not luminate your path to the end? Would you say, Well, I am lost, it is true, but you may be mistaken after all, in supposing this to be the right path; or some part of it may be impassable; or other paths may intersect it, which I may not be able to distinguish from the original; or my lamp may go out before I reach a place of safety; or my strength may not be equal to the journey; and, worse than all, I may be devoured by wild beasts, before I get half way through the forest; and besides, I begin to hope that there is some easier way of escape, and so, all things considered, I think I had better remain where I am, until I may chance to meet some person to point it out?

S. Not at all. I should naturally know that I could gain nothing by de-

lay, and that I might as well perish by my efforts, as by my idleness. But this you know is *natural* consistency, or, perhaps, I may say that it is *instinct*. But in spiritual things it is not so.

B. I admit it, and this is the very thing that constitutes your greatest danger. If it was as natural for you to be vigilant in securing the great interests of your immortal spirit, as it is to provide for the safety of your transient earthly tabernacle, it would not be necessary for me to urge you to take the strait and narrow path and flee for life. This is the very reason why you are now in darkness—why you have wandered so far out of the way; and why you have no disposition to return. Don't you see where your great danger lies—that your case is frightfully alarming because it is

not natural for you to turn and save your soul alive? In this dark wilderness where you are lost, I meet you, and point you to a new and living way, which is Christ, and offer you the glorious light of the gospel to shine upon your path, and urge you to escape for life, before the storms of coming wrath fall upon and utterly overwhelm you; and yet without the slightest expectation of finding any easier or any other way of escape, you wander on in fearful peril, clinging to a delusive hope, crying, "Peace, peace."

S. Oh! no. I have very little peace, and fear that I shall have less still. I know that I am a lost wanderer—that I am groping in darkness—my way seems hedged up, and I know not what to do.

B. Fly, fly! You do everything but the right thing. You go every way but the right way. You look for help to every source but the right source, and you try every foundation but the right one. Why halt so long between two opinions? Why tarry so long in the plains of unbelief?

Suppose that two individuals, James and John, start on a journey together, in the wilderness, from the top of a high mountain, and selecting a stream to follow, they thread their way over beds of rocks, and through winding vallies, as the little sparkling rill leads them while on its way to the ocean.

At first, they perceive little or no choice in the banks of the stream, which is continually increasing in size and force. But at length they suspect that they are on the wrong side, and

begin to discuss the propriety of crossing over. As they journey on, the rocks become so high and steep that they cannot leave the stream, and their path becomes more and more difficult, and the river more and more swollen, almost overflowing its banks and quite alarming the travellers.

“I am sorry,” says James, “that we did not cross this stream, when it was but a little rill.” “I think we had better go back to where it is easy crossed,” says John. But as they look back, they discover at once, that to retrace their steps is utterly impossible. The current has become so powerful and so swollen that where they once walked with ease, they can now get no foothold, and hence there is no alternative but follow down the stream, and take one bank or the other, and as they

perceive that the one on the opposite side is comparatively smooth and free from obstructions, James says to his companions, "Let us try to cross over, for I fear that it will soon be neither possible to cross, nor possible to proceed."

"I fear that it is not safe to make the attempt," says John.

"Safer than to proceed, I am confident," says James, and casting all his burden aside, plunges into the foaming current, and safely reaches the shore; and as soon as his feet are upon the bank, he lifts his hands towards heaven and says, "Thanks, everlasting thanks to the Great Deliverer, I am safe, and it is gloriously beautiful over here! O how delightful! You have hardly a glimpse of it on that side. You cannot see it, you cannot realize

it, until you pass over, and the stream is not so difficult to cross after all, as you think, if you will only plunge in, with a determination to forever forsake all on that dangerous shore."

"The stream looks very boisterous, and I know that I cannot touch the bottom, and to swim, I shall have to forsake all that I have," says John.

"No matter for that," says James. "There is no use for such things here. And besides, for them you can have treasures infinitely glorious. Come over, don't wait a moment, for I now see clearly that a little farther down, the stream is perfectly and forever impassable!"

"Not yet," says John; and whom does he represent?

S. I know not, unless it is myself.

Is it possible that I am standing in such a perilous position ?

B. Yes, in greater peril still. The great gulf which becomes impassable beyond the grave, seems to begin in this vale of tears, and consists mainly of unbelief. Every man sets out on his journey on the wrong side of it, and the farther he goes, the more difficult is it for him to cross it. Little children find it less difficult to reach the shore on the right side than old men. Don't you remember how easy it was for your darling child to believe ?

S. Indeed, I shall never forget her remarks on the subject, and I believe that your illustration is a very proper one, and I am confident that my child is on the right side of the gulf, and as

confident that her father is on the *wrong* side.

B. Well, remember that you can't go back to that period of life, when your dear child crossed the expanding current, and that what you do, must be done quickly. The Saviour now beckons you over. Will you come? If you ever intend to cross, come *now*! You know not the blessedness which is ready for you, on this side. Come quickly you must, or never! You say your way is hedged up. It is true, and the stream is swelling, swelling, every hour! It grows deeper, and broader, and darker, and swifter every moment! By no possibility could you cross even now, if the blessed Saviour did not stand on the bank to help you out of the deep waters.

Now what will you do when he

turns away? Will you provoke him to withdraw his aid, and rush on down the fearful, slippery steep? You know not what you do. Why will you die? There was a time when I once thought that my poor soul must forever remain on the dark side of this dread line of demarcation. That was a day of darkness too horrible to be described. I regarded it as a complete foretaste of despair. It was well nigh despair itself. But a brighter day dawned, and blessed be the name of the Most High for helping me out of the dark waters.

S. But I have never had such feelings as you describe.

B. It is not necessary that you should have such feelings, although you may have worse. Think not that your case is less alarming. Be not deceived.

You have as much to lose or gain as any living man! You are as susceptible of weal or woe! Your eternity of happiness or misery will be as long, and, without timely repentance, more terrible will be your overthrow than that of the rich man, whose awful cries came back to earth, because you have sinned against greater light.

Desperate as was my condition in unbelief and sin; tortured by a guilty conscience, and trying to reach heaven by my own works, while every step brought me nearer the bottomless pit; yet who can tell how much greater still would have been my peril, if I had simply been *unconcerned*.

A man's condition while there is hope, cannot well be worse, nor can he have greater cause for alarm, than to be too stupid or insensible to look

at his imminent danger or make an effort to escape. Every man's case is so desperate if he has not already passed from death unto life, that to wait to have it become more so, would seem to be greater presumption than the act which cast the rebel angels down to hell. For, if the Lord of life and glory had followed them down to their dark and dread abode, and there suffered for them in their stead, and then invited them to return to their former blissful state, and had received nothing in return but scorn and neglect, every man would have said that their last act was worse than their first, though every unregenerate man in so saying, would condemn himself.

S. But I do not feel that I scorn the Saviour's offers, or treat him with neglect. I never take his name in vain,

nor intentionally break his commandments, although in many things I come short of doing my duty.

B. Well, admitting that you have not used his name in vain, have you used it in prayer and praise for the last month? Have you heartily called upon him in prayer, beseeching him to sanctify you wholly, soul and body, that you might be filled with the gift of the Holy Ghost, and have grace to make you humble, and faith to make you useful? And have you sincerely rendered to him a tribute of thanksgiving and praise for his amazing goodness and mercy to you day by day?

S. I fear that I have not, in this respect; conscience does indeed accuse me of neglecting him, but I never considered it in this light.

B. Well, now, you can hardly say that this is your only fault. But suppose that you could—that nothing whatever was charged against you, but a little neglect of Christ, let us look at *this* offence, and see if it is a trifle.

Suppose that in the circle of your acquaintance, a female of great respectability and moral worth, becomes gradually and seriously indisposed, without any apparent cause whatever. Her mind becomes depressed to an alarming extent, so that she hardly notices the babe on her bosom. Her material frame bears the marks of some unknown, but destructive agency. Her tottering steps and trembling hands evince great prostration. Her sunken and tearful eyes, and her careful and studied concealment of any

knowledge of the cause of her wretched condition, fill her friends with painful suspense. Many flock around to sympathize with her suffering, and strive in vain to ascertain the cause of so sad a change. A physician is called, but to little purpose, for as he has no skill to discover the cause of the mischief or misery, he has of course no specific for the malady.

In due time suspicion rests upon her husband. Her friends at length approach him, saying, Sir, what have you done and what are you doing to send your worthy companion to an untimely grave? He replies, "Why, nothing at all. I have not laid a straw in her way. I never spoke an unkind word to her in my life. Indeed I have not spoken to her at all in *six months*." What would you say of such conduct?

S. I would say, that he ought to go to —

B. Stop, stop! I suspect that if Nathan, the prophet, were here, he would say, "*Thou art the man.*" What is a neglected mortal to a neglected Redeemer? What can one sinful worm of the dust do for another, to compare with what that neglected Saviour has done for you? Is it a little sin, think you—a trifling affair that he will never notice, for you to withhold from him the affections of your heart, and day after day, and year after year, refuse to thank him for his dying love, and speak not a word to him in prayer or praise?

S. O no, I do not consider such a sin of omission a trifling offence. I know that I am verily guilty, and deserve to be banished from his presence. I begin to see that I am truly "dead in

trespasses and sins." But this does not give me spiritual life.

B. Neither does it drive away the disease to know that we are sick, but it puts us in a proper condition to apply for a remedy. Although there is no virtue in having a deep and humbling sense of the plague of our heart, yet without it, we shall not be likely to seek for sanctifying grace. To see that we are poor, lost sinners, is the very thing to open our eyes to see the greatness of that mercy which provided for us such a glorious Redeemer as the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the only thing that will ever bring us to the foot of the Cross. And if you feel that you are dead in trespasses and sins, why do you not haste to the Saviour of the world who can revive you by his

quickenings Spirit, and breathe into you the breath of spiritual life?

S. I know not, unless it is because I am too dead to move. My wicked heart holds me back. I have sinned against heaven and earth, conscience, truth, and conviction. I have sinned against light and knowledge, and have forfeited life, hope, and heaven!

How can I therefore have confidence to apply to him whom I have so long neglected? I need his help, I know, but I think that I have little reason to expect it. He has again and again knocked at my door, and I have as often grieved him away. He has plead with me by night and by day, beseeching me to accept of unmerited grace, and unutterable glory, and I have prayed to be excused. I have said, Go thy way for this time, and

why should he now hear me, if I should call upon him?

B. Why should you now do a worse deed than ever before? Now you see, to some extent, the guilt and the danger of rejecting the Lord of life and glory; and if, with your eyes open, you continue to withhold from him your heart, and cling to your sins and excuses, what more can you possibly do to make your own destruction sure? To save the vilest of the vile, the blessed Redeemer came from heaven to earth, and suffered in their stead, and now, do you not believe that he is just as able and as willing to save the chief of sinners, as to save those who hardly feel or acknowledge that they have any guilt to be washed away, or any need of his special interposition?

S. O yes, I believe it, and I suppose that this is what he meant when he said, "I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." It is undoubtedly true that his grace is sufficient for any poor sinner who feels his need of atoning blood, and casts himself unreservedly upon the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. But he requires time to reflect upon it, before he is prepared to forsake the world and his sins, and lay hold upon eternal life, I suppose you will admit.

B. Time to what? To rebel? Will it be easier to repent, after a few more sins are committed? Will it increase the Saviour's love, pity, and compassion; and make the way to the cross more easy and accessible, to say to him by our acts, we have not, at present, confidence enough in thy decla-

rations, to believe that thou art now ready to do all that thou hast promised, and we will therefore wait and see if we shall not have more faith to-morrow ?

How much time did Peter need to get ready to cry out, "Lord save," when he saw that he was sinking ? How much time did the blind man need to cast away his garment and lift up his imploring cry for Divine help ? How much time did the dying thief need, on the cross, to decide in his mind to make that interesting and saving request, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom ?" And how long did it take Jesus to say, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise ?" O what encouragement have we for coming to Christ at once.

S. Well, I am ashamed of my lack of confidence in his promises.

B. The whole world has reason to blush and be ashamed, in this respect. If the Saviour had said to him who hung by his side and craved his remembering mercy, I would notice your request, if you were not such a poor, guilty thief—if he had said to Mary Magdalene, I would have compassion on you, if you had not so many devils—in short, if our glorious and all-compassionate Redeemer had ever turned away a single suppliant, how vastly less encouraging would have been our hopes and prospects to-day. O, blessed Jesus, we will not withhold our hearts from thee. Lord, remember us in thy kingdom. Now, beloved friend and fellow-traveler to the spirit-world, with such glorious offers and blessed

assurances, can you longer refuse to become a friend and follower of him who has wondrous gifts to bestow upon his children in the heavenly Canaan?

S. If nothing more than the understanding was concerned, I could more than say, as Agrippa said to Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." I am not only almost, but altogether convinced that I ought to become a Christian at once. But conviction is one thing, and conversion is quite another thing.

B. Yes, and "except ye be converted and become as little children," said Christ, "ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Hence all your conviction will be worse than vain, unless you become reconciled to God. "Ye must be born again." "Ask, and

ye shall receive, seek, and ye shall find, knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Now do you believe these simple declarations?

S. Yes, I do. But we must ask in faith.

B. Well, who would have you ask in unbelief? If you believe that Jesus Christ is all that he claims to be, and means all that he says, one would suppose that it must be very difficult for you to ask, or seek, or knock, in unbelief. How can you do otherwise than come to such a friend with a confiding spirit? If you had done a thousandth part as much for a fellow-mortal, as he does for you every day, and still he doubted your sincerity, and exhibited a determination not to confide in you, would you not con-

sider it unfair, and take it as an insult?

S. Indeed, I believe that I should, and of how much greater insult am I guilty. O that I had a heart to trust wholly in Christ. He is worthy of all confidence, and could never have done so much for man, without being willing to do still more.

B. He is willing to do still more, and is now waiting to give you a more blessed assurance of it than you have ever received. Shall I tell you how to obtain it with ease, and certainty, and to your entire satisfaction?

S. If you please, it is just what I want to know.

B. Well, if I point out the way, will you walk in it?

S. I will surely try to, for it must be but reasonable.

B. There is no unreasonable requirement in the gospel. But let me first show you the path. Perhaps you may recollect of noticing in some of the religious papers, a dozen or more years ago, an interesting account of an Indian's conversion. The circumstances, as near as I can recollect, were the following :

A certain missionary, while laboring among that interesting branch of the human family, in some of our western forests, held up before the red man's mind, the duty of renouncing or giving up the world for the sake of a better inheritance in the spirit-land. The Indians, it is well known, have been from time immemorial, believers in the spirit-world. One of the sons of the forest was much affected as he listened to the discourse. After re-

turning to his cabin, he was determined to obey the preacher, and begin the work of self denial or sacrifice.

He accordingly took his *hatchet* and went out and surrendered it, by laying it down at the roots of a tree. He then prayed, "Now, O Lord, have mercy upon poor Indian," and returned to his cabin; but instead of finding relief or peace, his distress of mind increased.

Not satisfied with the surrender, or that he had done his duty, he repaired to the same spot, and laid down his *blanket*, saying, "Now, Lord, have mercy on poor Indian," but still his load of guilt was not removed.

As conscience told him that he had not yet done his duty, that he had not sacrificed enough for Christ, he went out again, bowed down with a sense

of sin, and a desire to be free, and gave up his *rifle*, which he could not well spare, but which he was determined to surrender though he starved. He then repeated his former prayer, but obtained no answer. With a sad heart, and slow pace, he walked back and forth, greatly depressed and feeling that he had nothing more of any value to give.

At length it occurred to him that he could give one thing more, and he went and cast himself down and said, "Now, Lord, have mercy on poor Indian, I give away *myself*." Now, I need not tell you that this was the turning point—that the Red-man's load of guilt was taken away—that he could make the forest ring with his praises to the Great Spirit

Now what say you to this? Is it not a very simple and reasonable act?

Could you ask for easier terms? Can you give, or do anything less, and prosper in this, or the spirit world?

S. I cannot deny that the Red-man was wiser than I. His act, prompted by a sincere heart, was doubtless the sum and substance of all his duty. It was reasonable, and I feel that it would be very *unreasonable* for me to refuse, or neglect to do the same thing.

B. Be wise then while you are convinced of the propriety and importance of such an act, wait not a moment, for this may be your last call; haste while you may and throw yourself down at the foot of the cross and say, "Here, Lord, I give myself away, 'tis all that I can do."

S. It does seem to me that I would do it in a moment, if the Saviour stood where *you* do.

B. You can do it easier now; for what you prefer is a corporeal act, and in that case you would be obliged to bring into requisition both the mind and the body, for you can see at a glance, that were you to present your body before him in any position whatever, if he were present in the flesh, while destitute of any sincere desire of soul to honor and glorify him, it would be an abomination in his sight, an insult demanding the judgments of heaven. Hence, consecration to him always has and always will depend upon the state of the heart; and it is therefore just as easy, probably easier, for you to love holiness and hate sin, than it was for the Jews when Christ beheld Jerusalem and wept over it.

The act of giving yourself away to

Christ to be his willing and obedient servant forever, is purely an act of the mind and heart, and it is as easily performed now, as it would be if the Lord of life and glory should come down and stand before you with all the splendors of the upper world. Now there is but one important question for you to settle, which is, will you open your heart and receive by faith the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world, or will you suffer this golden moment to pass, while you "treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgments of God."

S. Oh ! no, I cannot think of letting this precious opportunity for securing an interest in the blissful world, where saints immortal reign, pass unimproved, for I think I have no reason to ex-

pect a more favorable season, if another.

B. It is altogether unknown and uncertain whether the present hour does not turn the scale. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone!" Oh, how would you cry out for mercy, if you saw your danger as I once saw mine!

S. Well, now it does seem to me that I shall see my way more clear if you will favor me with a brief history of your conversion.

B. The best way for you to see your duty and yourself, is to come at once to Christ, the fountain of light and life, and not stop a moment to look at creatures. Although I know not that my religious experience can throw the least light upon your path

of duty, yet I would gladly gratify you and give you “line upon line and precept upon precept ;” but you must bear in mind that the experience of every individual is somewhat different from others in certain points.

CHAPTER XI.

B. From my earliest recollection, *religion* was a subject of acknowledged importance. A dear mother early taught me its precepts, and conscience responded to its claims. Yet, with a professed regard for revealed truth, I remained “dead in trespasses and sins”—a perfect stranger to the spirit of the gospel, and as great a stranger to my own real character.

My first serious impressions occurred when I was about thirteen years of age, during a revival of religion in my native town. I then had such feelings as I had never experienced before, but knew not why. To some extent I saw my danger, but I knew

not how to escape. I felt anxious, but I knew not what to do. I saw something of the plague of my heart, but I saw not the remedy. I knew that I was in darkness, but made no suitable effort to obtain a ray of light. I heard converts talk, and pray, and sing; and saw their friends rejoicing over the redeemed, and heard the song of thanksgiving as it went up to heaven from many enraptured tongues; but still everything seemed to be clothed with a deep, dark, mysterious aspect, and of the nature of that spiritual change in which the new born soul rejoiced, I remained profoundly ignorant, for "the natural man cannot discern the things of the Spirit, because they are spiritually discerned."

S. The same, I suppose, is my condition now, and how can I therefore

discern spiritual things any better than you did?

B. The same need not be your condition, and will not be for a moment, if you will come to the light. What would you think of a man's walking in darkness and in peril, and stumbling as he walked, and complaining of his lot and the difficulty of finding his way, while refusing a good light, and putting out such as were given him? Or what would you think of him, if after the day should dawn and the sun arise to pour a flood of light upon his path in spite of him, if to show to the world his determination to walk in darkness he should shut his eyes, and then say, If I could only see as well as those who have their eyes open, I should do differently, and feel differently.

But my condition at that early age was somewhat different from yours at the present time. You have had line upon line, warning upon warning and promise upon promise. You have had your duty clearly pointed out, and you know just what you must do to be saved. But although, from my earliest childhood, I had heard the law and the gospel proclaimed, yet I knew little about the new birth, or the way to derive any special benefit from the gospel, and it so happened that at the time which I have adverted to, when many were born into the kingdom, and my own mind was stirred up, not a word that I can recollect, was addressed to me personally, in relation to the condition of my soul. This I have always regretted ; for I do believe that a very few words at that time, would

have led me to the cross. I mention this, because it shows the importance of being "instant in season and out of season" in pointing the precious soul to the spirit-world.

S. I agree with you perfectly, and it reminds me of a similar season and experience, and I believe that if I had met you then, and heard from you all that I have heard now, I should have been ten years rejoicing in the kingdom of grace. But I did not intend to interrupt you.

B. An incident occurred at that season which made a deep impression upon my mind. At mid-day, while passing my neighbor's barn, which was situated near the road side, I heard the voice of prayer, while the doors were all shut and stillness prevailed

without. It arrested my attention—I halted, listened, and marvelled.

I well knew the person thus engaged in supplication, who had but a short time before been perhaps as thoughtless as myself. But I saw the change, and said to myself, what is it? As he poured out before the Lord Almighty, the desire of his soul, in simple, hearty, agonizing prayer in behalf of a perishing world, I felt convinced that he had received something which the world could neither give nor take away. I often felt constrained to stop after that, to ascertain whether I could hear the same voice of prayer.

Yet, strange as it may seem, I am not aware that I made a single effort to obtain that spiritual change of which I heard others talk, and which I fancied that I desired more than any-

thing else. The good Spirit evidently came to my door and knocked, but I did not heed his voice, nor accept his gracious offer.

Though hardly aware of it, I soon began to think less and less, and feel less on the great subject of the soul's salvation, until my accustomed insensibility returned, and with a heart harder than before, I waxed worse and worse. Now, I had more reason than ever before to tremble. But I knew it not. Few realize the danger of outliving their convictions. For the succeeding six years, I hardly had a serious thought, but loved, and served, and worshipped the world as I had opportunity.

During my nineteenth year, after a short residence among strangers in a pleasant town, my neglected Lord

touched me, and laid me low with typhus fever, and then and there I made the first solemn vow that I can recollect. The days were tedious, the nights were long, my bed was hot, my room was dismal, my mind was dark. But my solemn vow was heard. The Most High rebuked the disease vouchsafed his recovering mercy, and speedily sent me home to my friends, while my promise was as quickly broken. But that unredeemed pledge long haunted me by day and by night.

The following year, I took up my abode in Western New York, where for a little time I remained in much unconcern respecting my future destiny. But subsequently my mind became much disturbed by dreams.

S. Then it seems, sir, that I am not the only dreamer in the world. I

should like to know if your dreams were anything like mine.

B. It is of very little consequence now, what they were. I only mention the fact to show the state of my mind. They were, however, strikingly similar to the one you have related. I professed no faith in visions of the night, and yet my dreams at night made me unhappy through the succeeding day.

Although I felt inclined to fear that these dreams were a warning voice, still I loved the world more than its Maker, and served the creature better than the Creator, while morally certain of eternal death if I went down into the grave unchanged. Such was my unwillingness to receive salvation on the terms of the gospel—such was the influence of sin and Satan, and such my presumption, that although warn-

ed by day and night of my danger, I continued unreconciled to God and exposed to his provoked displeasure.

It may well seem strange how a rational being can see all that I saw, and feel all that I felt, and believed all that I believed, and yet dare to procrastinate.

S. It does not seem so strange to me, for it is very much my own history. But I have a very great interest to know how you broke up the procrastinating habit. I am in hopes that your experience will be of some service to me, yet.

B. There was a time when spiritual things rarely occupied my mind, and it is not so strange that I then made no effort to secure my own safety. But that I should have suffered myself to remain in conscious peril,

and not put forth an effort to secure my eternal all, seems truly marvelous.

But let it be remembered that during all this hazardous procrastination, *I seriously intended to repent!* Ah! yes, and my good resolutions gave me strength and courage to rebel more and more. Without this good intention for the future, a single day's experience would have been intolerable. Hence, pledges for the future, are spiritual narcotics, which keep the conscience quiet, calm the fears, stifle convictions, and ease the soul along down that delusive stream, which imperceptibly terminates in the great gulf of ruin.

During the summer of 1826, an inducement to take up my abode in Rochester, led me to that city, and on my way to the town, I felt unusually seri-

ous, and yet I knew not why. I recollect distinctly of trying to account for my uncomfortable state of mind. I thought it strange that my spirits should be so depressed at that particular time, while the day was fair, the journey pleasant, the company agreeable, and my decision to go to the city, perfectly satisfactory. Things visible and invisible seemed to remind me of death and the spirit-world, and earth, air, and sky ; men, beasts, and birds ; nature, animate and inanimate, seemed to be enveloped in some strange and unaccountable shade of darkness and solemnity.

The mystery depended upon my ignorance of the fact, that the natural man never ascribes his seriousness to the agency of the Holy Spirit, and if he is informed that he is the subject

of such an influence, he is generally unwilling to believe or acknowledge it. It cannot be denied that men naturally have such an aversion to holiness, that if they are solemnly declared to be under the special influence of the good Spirit, they will frequently resent it more, than to be accused of fellowship with the devil and his angels.

After entering upon my duties in the city, I found that the impressions which had disturbed me on my journey, still remained upon my mind, and I now resolved to cherish them.

S. That was a good resolution, was it not?

B. If it had not been made, I verily believe that the everlasting destruction of my unhappy spirit would have been secured. O yes, that was a blessed decision, and I hope you will so far

at least, imitate my example. But you know that I have already said, that while men are making their want of feeling an excuse for procrastination, the great danger and probability is, that the more they feel, the more they will try to stifle their convictions.

I now resolved to examine more carefully than ever, my future prospects, but kept all my feelings and resolutions to myself. I soon began to see clearly that I was a guilty, condemned wretch—knew that I deserved to perish—everything earthly dwindled into utter insignificance—my way seemed hedged up, and my path overhung with clouds of interminable darkness both day and night.

I now began to try to pray, though the act seemed little else than solemn mockery, and indeed *was* nothing else,

because I still withheld my heart. Of course such prayers were unanswered. The Bible had long been a neglected book, but as I had read it through three or four times when a child, many texts came to mind with power unknown before.

In returning to my lodging room on a certain occasion, I found that some person, either by intention or accident, and which it was I never knew, had left an old and nearly worn-out copy of the sacred volume lying upon the window. This message from heaven I gladly seized, and daily examined as I had opportunity. But the more I read, the more terrible did my guilt appear, and the more certain my destruction.

Soon after this investigation was commenced, my agony of mind be-

came almost insufferable, and was perhaps as perfect a foretaste of dread despair as any redeemed mortal ever realized.

I now began to think of my long forgotten and unredeemed pledge, which I made on a sick bed in another city, to which I have already alluded. That promise I well knew, was not made to man; and I knew equally well that it had been wickedly broken.

At length I came to the conclusion that I had "lied to the Holy Ghost," and thus committed the unpardonable sin, and that I was left to see that which I could not escape. To attempt to describe the state of my mind at this doleful moment, would be perfect folly, and hence I will only say that it was unutterable, and yet I could not

endure the thought of remaining in a *passive* state.

Here I resolved to take one step—a step so reasonable and important, that I hope you will at once test its value, even before I proceed to say another word.

S. I hope that I may be induced to do so, if it is important that I should. But what was it?

B. I said to myself, “Now, let what will happen, with my consent, *neither shall business, or pleasure, or sleep, or rest, or anything else whatsoever, divert my attention until the important question is settled.* It is with me *now or never*, and shall be with me, *Christ or nothing.* And so I suspended all worldly pursuits and gave myself up to prayer and meditation; and that nothing might steal away my thoughts,

my desire was to be shut out from the busy world as much as possible, and accordingly I selected two very appropriate places for retirement. One was my bed-room ; the other was a closet of great antiquity, " whose builder and maker is God."

Probably you are aware that a beautiful river called the Genesee, passes through the central part of the city, and that within the town is a perpendicular fall of ninety-six feet, where the celebrated " Sam Patch" and one or two others took their *last leap!*

The banks on either side of the stream below the falls for a considerable distance, are equal to the falls in height, and nearly or quite perpendicular, with here and there a place where one can wind his way down to

the bed of the river. This was my favorite place of resort, because I could here in a great measure be shut out from the world, where no voice disturbed me, but the voice of the Almighty speaking through the cataract.

Between the water's edge, and the lofty rocky banks, a smooth sandy beach invited my roving feet, and there I walked, and mourned, and wept, and prayed, and like the poor Indian, found no answer of peace, because I resigned only a few worthless straws.

While wandering up and down the river, searching for something I knew not what, and mourning over my fate, and almost despairing of hope; the dashing, foaming torrent, rushing over the flinty precipice, and thundering down to the bottom of a boiling pot, reminded me the live-long day of the

roaring billows and burning waves of the great abyss, to which I feared that I was fast hastening.

S. When you saw your danger so clearly, and felt it so forcibly, and knew that through the mercy of God in Christ was the only possible chance for you to escape, why did you not throw yourself upon that mercy, and end the controversy?

B. For the very reason that you do not do the same thing now. I was waiting to make myself better, while making myself *worse*—waiting for more feeling, as though there was some virtue in that, and waiting for I knew not what. Thousands are doing the same thing now, to their awful peril. I knew very well that I stood in jeopardy every moment. But, oh! I was so blinded by sin, that I did not

discern the simplicity of the Saviour's gracious offer. I did almost everything but the *right* thing. It was hard for me to learn the lesson which the benighted Indian so soon acquired with a ray or two of light, with a word or two of advice. Often did I cry out aloud, "*too late!* Why did I put it off so long? I am lost!"

Thus did a guilty conscience accuse and condemn me. The heavens over my head seemed like brass. The earth was dark and dismal, and all therein except immortal mind, seemed as worthless as a bubble. Out of the midst of that darkness which no tongue can describe, did I cry long and loud for help, and yet left the all-important thing undone.

Three days of awful anguish were mostly spent at this place.

On the afternoon of a pleasant Sabbath towards evening, during the first month of autumn, I went into my chamber feeling that the struggle was all in vain, and resolved to cast myself wholly and unreservedly upon the tender mercy of an Almighty Redeemer, to be disposed of according to his own righteous will, let my fate be what it might ; knowing that without his gracious interposition, hopeless and endless despair were inevitable.

As I turned my thoughts towards Calvary, and once more took up the blessed old Bible, to see what a voice from heaven might say to a poor wretch undone, at an unexpected moment, and in an unexpected way, the all-cheering rays of the Son of Righteousness beamed into my darkened, trembling soul, filling my astonished

and disappointed heart, with light and love, and peace, and joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Now, my eyes were opened, and I was ready to exclaim, how could I have been so long in taking such a reasonable step. O how much I have lost by my inexcusable delay. And how did I reject the blessed Redeemer even in my very prayers. Alas! that I did not sooner realize, that, to make myself *better*, was perfectly impossible. To wait to make myself *worse* was downright folly, madness and presumption!

Thus the good Spirit led me, as I hope and trust, to the Rock of Ages, and permitted me to hide myself behind the cross, and caused me to confide in him who is the "chiefest among ten thousand and the one altogether lovely," while he took from my weary soul

that dreadful burden of guilt and delivered me from the bondage of sin.

But strange as it may seem, yet such is the natural tendency to legality, that I soon found myself sighing for my former distress, fearing that I had not yet had conviction enough, when I had had tenfold more than I should have needed, if it had not been my own fault. And if I had had my agony multiplied a thousand fold and continued without end, I should have been as far from meriting the least favor, as if I had been as senseless as a block.

But when I tried to pray, I praised. When I tried to weep, I rejoiced, and when I tried to be sad, I shouted for joy. Then I said to myself, what is this? And I ran out of the house, and literally obeyed the desire of my heart, shouting and singing as I ran through

the streets. I recollect distinctly that the thought came into my mind, that those who saw me thus giving action to my feelings, would very likely take me for a lunatic, although I had just come to myself, though I hardly knew it.

Thus, according to your request, I have given a brief though imperfect history of my conversion. Now do you think, that I began to seek the salvation of my soul too soon, or persevered too long?

S. No, I do not.

B. Do you think that I devoted my time too exclusively to the work for my own safety?

S. No.

B. Do you suppose that I was too much in earnest?

S. No.

B. That I ultimately had too much joy?

S. No.

B. Do you think that in your case a change is less needful than it was in mine?

S. Far from it.

B. Can you with safety be less in earnest, or less prompt in striving to enter in at the strait gate?

S. Certainly not.

B. Then go and do thou likewise, and thou shalt know what it is to pass from death unto life, and to be filled with the love of Christ. Wait not for feeling—wait not for a more convenient season—wait not to secure a title to earthly possessions—wait not for sick-bed repentance—wait for nothing, lest the Spirit let you wait and remain unsaved forever.

S. No, I must not, I cannot, I *will not* delay; I have waited too long already, and I wonder that I am here. What a mercy! Oh what a wretch! But I fear that I do not feel as you did.

B. Feel as I did! It is not necessary. Feel as I did! I would not wish any one to feel as I did for three dark, dreadful days; unless such an one should be so wedded to self and sin, that nothing less could break the spell. Why do you look at me? If I am getting between you and Christ, let me go, let me fly, let me hide myself in the dust in a moment. I had no excuse for staying away from the fountain of light to mourn in darkness for a single hour; neither have you. *Give yourself away to the blessed Saviour at once, 'tis all that you can do. No-

thing more is expected—nothing less will be accepted. No matter how guilty you are, if you will turn from your sins to Christ. He turns none away, who do not turn away from him. If you shut him out of your heart, he will shut you out of his kingdom. If you give him your affections, he will give you a seat at his right hand. If you deny him before men, he will deny you before angels. If you will at once forsake all for Christ, no good thing will he withhold from you forever. What say you to making friends with the friend of sinners? He comes to poor mortals with both hands full of blessings for needy souls. Will you say, Come, Lord Jesus, and take up thine abode in my heart, and give me the victory over sin, Satan, and the world?

S. The Lord helping me, I will. To remain longer a wanderer in the wilderness, after having the path which leads to the heavenly Canaan so clearly pointed out, would greatly augment my guilt, if not secure my everlasting destruction. Oh, pray for my poor trembling, guilty soul; I am in dark waters. Do you think that light will ever break upon me? Oh, upon what a horrible tempest am I tossed. The Lord have mercy on my soul!

B. Don't you remember the light that you saw shining out of heaven upon the top of the mountain?

S. O yes, a glorious light; I wish that I could see it again.

B. There is light in heaven still, and it shines all around you now. Don't you remember that fair One who

came forth and beckoned the rejecting skeptic to his embrace?

S. Yes, I do, and O that he would beckon me to come to him now.

B. He does beckon you to follow him now, and he has long waited to see if you will accept of his invitation. O cast away every weight, and throw aside your garments which are all defiled with sin, and make haste to take shelter under the shadow of his wings, for a great and terrible storm is approaching—make haste!

S. Yes, yes, blessed Saviour, I will come to thee, and give thee everlasting thanks for such an offer. O thou glorious, compassionate, beneficent, all-worthy Lamb of God I come to thee. Poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked, and sinful as I am, I cast myself upon thee.

Now, fellow-traveler, I hope that I may never cease to give thanks to him who permitted you to meet me with a warning voice in this perilsome world, for through the influence of these interviews, and his sanctifying Spirit, in joy and peace with all the redeemed I hope to meet you in the *Spirit-World*.







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