



THE SUNRISE
MOONDAY
AND SUNSET
OF THE
DAY
of
GRACE

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BY

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The sunrise, noonday, and
sunset of the day of grace





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BY
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To my Father,

WHOSE NOONDAY IS PROLONGED BEYOND THE
APPOINTED HOUR OF SUNSET.

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SUNRISE.

And Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child. — I SAMUEL iii. 8.

SUNRISE.



THE child was Samuel. His parents had placed him in the tabernacle at Shiloh. From his birth he had been set apart to the service of the Lord. When he began his sacred duties he was a little boy. Girded with a linen ephod, he was permitted to assist the priests in their daily ministrations. His was the light work of the sanctuary. There was a recognition of his ability to do something in the sacred tent. He was not turned away because he was a child. The high-priest became interested in his growth and education; he "was in favor both with the Lord, and also with men." With conscientious fidelity and with a cheerful zeal he won his way to general popularity. Religion is not repulsive. When the Sun of Righteousness

lights up the soul, there should be evidences of that gracious Presence in the beauty of the countenance as well as in the activity of the hands and feet. A God-fearing child is not expected to have the manners of a sedate man. Genial, honest play is just as commendable in its season as self-sacrificing work is in its own time. The Divine Eyes look for that which is natural and spontaneous, rather than for that which is forced and constrained. When the compassionate Saviour invited the little children to come unto him, he had no thought of robbing them of their childhood with its happiness; he wished only to add his blessing to the many blessings which were already theirs.

While Samuel was still a learner in the service of the Lord he was conscious of a strange call which reached him as the night was closing and the day was about to break. It aroused him from his sleep: his own name was audible. Instantly suspecting that the aged Eli was requiring his presence, he arose and reported himself. But the high-priest had not spoken; he knew

nothing of the nature or quality of the voice which had been heard. By his advice the boy went back to his bed. There he must have waited eagerly for a repetition of the unearthly sound. Children must not be expected to recognize the first intimation of a divine influence in their souls. Yet when that influence is felt, it is impossible that the soul should be dull and listless and indifferent. A second time the name of Samuel was audible, and a second time the high-priest was aroused by his faithful assistant. But still his mind did not grasp the situation. He referred the calls to the fancy, or the dream of childhood. He was not quick to detect the interest of God. But when for the third time he found Samuel at his side, and when he heard the urgent appeal of the boy, Eli, somewhat experienced in the methods of Providence, recognized the profound significance of the voice. He "perceived that the Lord had called the child." A revelation was evidently about to be made, and Samuel was to be its recipient. Quietly and reverently he told him just

what he should do, and then waited anxiously to learn the meaning of the communication.

The familiar story, as we are to use it, opens a subject which every friend of children must love to consider. An old man believes that a child has been called of God. An ordained minister of religion — the high-priest of the Hebrews — welcomes a little boy as the messenger of the Lord. That is all. But is not that enough to start very earnest and serious thought? The child whom God calls is not to be neglected; is not to be kept at a distance; is not to be disparaged. In his visible kingdom there should be a prompt and cordial welcome for every such child; and the nurture of the household of faith should be directed towards the maintenance and the development of the responsive faith of children. Let us surrender ourselves to the leadership of this thought, as we propose, and consider the three practical questions: Does the Lord still call children; unto what does he call them; and how shall it be known that they have been called?

Does the Lord still call children? There are many instances of the divine call in the records of the Bible. The Lord's interest in and welcome to children is frequently mentioned by the writers of the Old and the New Testaments. Several notable characters, like David and Josiah, like John the Baptist and Timothy, were selected in childhood for a great and important life-work, and were then trained under especial and providential influences. Even where a distinct call to service was not given in early life, there are most satisfactory evidences in many cases that the hand of the Lord was shaping the discipline of home and school to prepare a useful career. Saul of Tarsus was called into the apostleship of the Christian Church when as yet the Church had not been organized. But the training of the young Pharisee by Gamaliel was the most complete equipment that could have been given for the service which after years were to witness in the labors of Paul.

Such divine watchfulness is not to be limited, however, to Bible times. He who

is "the same yesterday and to-day and forever" has not lost his interest in childhood. His voice has been heard, and has been heard constantly, in every century. He has told us that the early years of life are the hopeful years; that character is formed in youth; that there is danger of losing all concern for sacred things if first impressions are disregarded; that it is possible to *grow up* into a knowledge of holiness under gracious influences; that the divine attitude is represented by the Redeemer when he extends his arms and clasps little children to his bosom. The invitation is to children, the promise is to children. The Church of our Lord Jesus Christ is not behind the Church of the older dispensation in providing a welcome for children. Their piety is appreciated, their service is approved, their happy, hopeful lives are the joy of many devout souls. Unnumbered multitudes of children have responded to the call of the Lord, have witnessed a good confession, have reached Christian maturity, have died in a ripe old age, with a comfortable

hope of enjoying the felicity of heaven. If you should strike from the roll of the Christian Church every name that was entered in childhood, you would leave for recognition the merest fragment of the Lord's host. Some years ago the inquiry as to the age at conversion was made in a conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church; and it appeared that of one hundred and forty-nine ministers who reported, the average age at conversion was fifteen and three fifths years, and about one sixth of the number were converted when less than twelve years of age. In a revival which occurred in the State of Virginia it was found that there were seventy-nine converts from ten to twenty years old; forty-eight from twenty to thirty; sixteen from thirty to forty; fifteen from forty to fifty; seven from fifty to sixty; four from sixty to seventy; and one from seventy to eighty. And every pastor of experience who has been permitted to welcome children to the table of our Lord will bear witness to the fidelity of these youthful converts. With few exceptions, they do

better, they give less anxiety, than older converts do. At this very hour, in homes, in Sabbath-schools, in sanctuaries, and in mission-stations, the call of the Lord is heard by children. They are taught that the Lord wants them. They are urged to give themselves up to him. Religion is made attractive. God's service is presented as the grandest pursuit of life. The belief is influential that it is better to sow and to reap wheat and corn than it is to leave the fields to be covered with "wild oats." If Christ does not fill the youthful heart, the devil will surely find room there. Pre-occupancy is the best moral safeguard. Send a young life out into the world with a positive love of virtue, and vice will make few conquests; send a young life out into the world with a positive love of grace, and there will be little opportunity for sin to make its appeals. This is the wisdom of experience. Men have learned this truth after much hardship and after many disappointments. Education has this reference. The endeavor is constant to provide against the

evil day. Is it to be supposed that the Lord God is less wise than man? Is it to be supposed that he who watches the sparrow's flight, that he who hears the young raven's cry, that he who clothes the grass of the field, that he who even numbers the hairs of the head, that he fails to call children into the kingdom of his own dear Son? No. When we have his character to assure us, when we have his word to inform us, when we have the history of his Church to confirm our belief, we cannot hesitate to recognize the call of the Lord as addressed to little children.

In the standards of the Presbyterian Church this precious truth has great prominence. "All children born within the pale of the visible Church," says the Book of Discipline, "are members of the Church, are to be baptized, are under the care of the Church, and subject to its government and discipline; and when they have arrived at years of discretion they are bound to perform all the duties of Church members" (chapter i. sec. 5). The Directory for Worship (chapter ix. sec. 21)

repeats and amplifies these plain statements, and then adds that "the years of discretion in young Christians cannot be precisely fixed. This must be left to the prudence of the eldership. The officers of the Church are the judges of the qualifications of those to be admitted to sealing ordinances, and of the time when it is proper to admit young Christians to them."

Unto what does the Lord call children?

The life of the Earl of Shaftesbury touched most of the reformatory, philanthropic, and Christian endeavors of the present century. He was certainly a great and a good man. His ancestors were illustrious noblemen, but no one of them was remarkable for godliness. They were men of the world, who found their portion in this life. The Earl, however, — whose recent death has made his life a subject of review, — was called in childhood to the usefulness which gave to him such distinguished pre-eminence. Somewhat neglected by his parents, he became the especial charge of a godly nurse, whose

devotion to her Saviour secured its fruitage in the accomplishments of the Earl. Thus she became God's messenger, through whom his call reached this young soul. Then, while still a youth, this sensitive nature was brought into sharp and decisive contact with a spectacle of unusual degradation when he witnessed the drunkenness of certain base fellows who were carrying the lifeless body of a comrade to the grave. Again — and now clearly and emphatically — God's call reached him. His entire life was outlined. He surrendered himself in holy consecration, not simply to God, but also to the service of his fellow-men in God. From that hour his resolution dated. The call was heard. His response was announced. Christian duty became the rule of life, and an unequalled career began to open, with its splendid possibilities of grand and loving service.

Can it be questioned that God's call announced the service? Did it not face the child towards the events which were awaiting manly conviction and courage? Yet just what is evident in that notable life is

evident to a degree in every other life. God calls children to himself in order that he may use them in his service. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *unto good works*, which God *hath before ordained* that we should walk in them." The "good works" are always the ultimate reference. Childhood is prized by God not only for its own sake and for the sake of its personal salvation, but also for the sake of its usefulness. The children of the Church are the hope of the future. Trained in the fear of God, they may be expected to meet the demands of duty, and to lead the large and generous movements which are God's thought for the race. Looking back, we can see how this has been; and looking forward, we can believe that such leadership will have similar importance in the years to come. The youth of the past have been charged with the responsibility of suggesting and of forwarding our principal organizations, which seek the elevation and evangelization of mankind. God has called them to this service. They have been wiser than

they supposed themselves to be. What stirring events have waited upon the prayers of the young men who knelt beside the haystack at Williamstown, and there made the consecration which directed our country's interest in Foreign Missions! What a splendid career was wrapped up in the call which made our friend Mr. William E. Dodge a child Christian! How many of us enjoy the grateful consciousness of knowing that our lives were shaped by God's regard for us when we were quite young? He might say to us, as he said of old to King Cyrus: "I girded thee, though thou hast not known me." Thus every life is providential, just as every plant is dependent upon the heat and light of the sun. The life may be inconspicuous and humble; or it may be prominent and influential. The plant may become an oak, or its nature may be that of the violet. "God is girding every man for a place and a calling, in which, taking it from him, he may be as consciously exalted as if he held the rule of a kingdom."

The call of God, at whatever age it is heard, contemplates the rectification of character and life. Character and life require such a rectification. Explain the matter as we may, it is nevertheless true that there is disorder in human nature. The nice balance of the mechanism has been disturbed. The melody is inharmonious. There is evidence of the presence of disease. Just so soon as the so-called innocence of infancy has passed away, selfish and ungovernable traits begin to appear. A child need not be very far advanced to manifest the fact that he is a *little* sinner. The actions are not those of a saint. Nothing but the reality of sin can explain the peevishness, the disobedience, and the fondness for naughty ways. Then, by and by, this mother's darling may exhibit a degree of violence which is startling, and the so-called innocence of infancy may be succeeded by the life of an Aaron Burr. There is no need that we should enter upon a discussion of the vexed questions of original sin and total depravity. Proof is not wanting of actual

transgressions, and the proof is furnished by the experiences of our common humanity. "There is none that doeth good, no, not one." In this particular there can be no exemption. The demand, "Ye must be born again," is of universal application. The innocence of infancy is a misnomer. There is no innocence. There never has been any innocence since the Fall. Our race can never hope to attain unto innocence. A superior opportunity is ours in the privileges of tried virtue which are presented by our Lord.

This is the significance of the call. It is to rectify the disorder; it is to afford the true centre of crystallization; it is to present the proper standard; it is to bestow needful grace,—that the Lord calls children. He wishes to mould and to fashion them properly. We speak of a state of nature, of the naturalness of sin, of wrong-doing, as an inevitable evil. In a certain sense we are right. Yet in the highest sense we cannot say that the natural is the deformed, the diseased, the decrepit. Nature works towards an ideal

perfection. A truly natural life would be an absolutely perfect life, like the life of Jesus. Now, this is what the call of the Lord contemplates. He wishes to take each one of us as we are,—sinful, disordered, diseased,—and to make us what we ought to be,—holy, disciplined, and useful. He plans to organize character anew, to direct its activities, to bring up its weaknesses and to enlarge its outlook, to enrich its estimates and to develop its energies, to make childhood a true and happy and beautiful childhood. Then let the child grow. His growth will be conditioned by his consciousness of God. Grace in his heart will become graces in his life. We shall want him to be natural, just as his Lord does. Samuel was not Eli, and he was not required to be. Eli was an old man, and Samuel was only a boy; yet the boy had in him the making of a better man than Eli was.

Our criticism of the religion of children must never make use of the estimates which may be appropriate to the religion of their parents. Children are unconven-

tional, outspoken, frank, and impulsive. They cannot restrain their feelings as older persons can. Their thoughts are very apt to be their actions. Yet how often we chide them for actions which are a hundred-fold better than our thoughts! Instead of treating them as children, instead of encouraging them to be sweet, lovely children, we lead them to believe that they must *be* as we *do*, not as we *are*. We can be quiet and demure and reverent, even if our minds are occupied with thoughts which make the Father's house a house of merchandise. Those were happy children who saluted Jesus in the courts of the temple at Jerusalem; and yet the chief-priests and the scribes, who had tolerated the money-changers and the dealers in small wares, rebuked them for their disregard of the sanctity of the place. Alas! we are mistakenly zealous for our Lord's honor. He will care for it himself. We need not fear. Most welcome to him is the joyous naturalness of youthful natures which have responded to the gentle call of his love.

Little Majorie Fleming—Walter Scott's friend—went to heaven before she was nine years old. Yet she had heard and had answered the call of our Lord, and the charm of her life was the sweet music of the tuneful harp. Scott's friendship, it is true, has immortalized her name; and yet her simple Christian life has long time proved a beautiful witness to the reality of the religion of childhood. She was young, very young, when she learned the lesson, which older people are very slow in learning, that we are dependent upon God for the grace of each day. "I will never again trust to my own power," she wrote in her Journal; "for I see that I cannot be good without God's assistance. I will not trust in my own self." Could you ask for more? Can mature piety write a better sentence? Then let us understand the call of the Lord, and let us always be considerate of the faith of little children. For the Master once said,—and how impressive are his words!—"Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that

in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."

But how shall it be known that children have been called by the Lord? We are not told how Eli was led to perceive that the Lord had called Samuel. I think, however, that we need not be at a loss to discriminate this divine call. The evidences of the religion of childhood are within our reach. We may appreciate, and may use them.

They are not associated with a marked crisis. Childhood seldom dates its experiences from a vision on the Damascus Road. The youthful life has not been engaged in persecuting the saints. There has been no debauchery, no shame. The materials for a crisis are not present. The unfolding of a germ, slowly, gently, unobtrusively, is the order. That germ is the call of the Lord, which has resulted in the genuine conversion of the child. At some time the Holy Spirit has renewed the nature, — when, you may never learn, unless the angels tell you, by and by,

when they sang the song of this new birth in Christ.

But if the date of the new birth is not recorded with pen and ink, the evidences of that supreme event will surely appear. What are they? I reply that it would not be possible to enumerate them. We may, however, speak of three principal, distinctive characteristics, which seldom fail to be noticed.

An increasing conscientiousness. Some one has said that conscience is God's voice in the soul. We are certain that a sensitive, intelligent conscience is proof of godliness. The godly man distinguishes between right and wrong, and he always aims to do what is right. Conscience is an old-time judge on the Bench, to whom questions are submitted for decision. The judge must be wise and honest if his decisions are to prove helpful. An ignorant judge is useless, even if he is honest; and a wise judge is dangerous if he is not honest. It is so with conscience. As a guide, it must be educated. Men may be perfectly conscientious in

believing a lie, and entirely conscientious, as Saul of Tarsus felt himself to be, in committing very great crimes. Religion educates conscience. When, therefore, you discover that a child is increasingly and wisely and honestly conscientious, you may look for stronger evidences of the call of the Lord; but you must look in hope.

Repentance towards God. A Christian child will do wrong just as a Christian man will. He will get angry, and be selfish, and will strike his playmate, and will use many "words better left unsaid." Then he will be sorry; but his sorrow will quickly have an upward as well as an outward look. He will turn to God, as David did when he had wronged Uriah and his household, and he will say with David: "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." Repentance is the instinct of religion. When you observe repentance, then may you believe that the Lord has called the child.

Interest in sacred things, — the Bible, prayer, the services of the sanctuary, Christian society, benevolent work. This

interest must develop. Gradually the Bible will exhibit its treasures, and they will be found to be personal. Prayer, too, will come to mean much more than saying a morning or an evening prayer. The services of God's house will ere long discover their profit and enjoyment. The friendship of good men and women will be especially prized. The question, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" will find its way from the heart to the lips.

We can well afford to wait, if we only wait with a welcome, and not with a frown. Our holy religion, the religion of Jesus Christ, is the sweetest, brightest, most enjoyable thing in the world. Old people cannot monopolize it; and they do not wish to do so. It is for children. It meets their wants; it is essential to their happiness. To them it has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of the life which is to come. Little children, young men and maidens, our blessed Lord wants to be your friend. He asks you to receive his friendship. Do not reject him, do not live without him.

CHILDREN CALLED TO CHRIST.

Like mist on the mountain,
Like ships on the sea,
So swiftly the years
Of our pilgrimage flee.
In the grave of our fathers
How soon we shall lie !
Dear children, to-day
To a Saviour fly !

How sweet are the flowerets
In April and May !
But often the frost makes
Them wither away.
Like flowers you may fade :
Are you ready to die ?
While yet " there is room,"
To a Saviour fly.

When Samuel was young,
He first knew the Lord ;
He slept in his smile,
And rejoiced in his word.
So most of God's children
Are early brought nigh.
Oh ! seek him in youth,
To a Saviour fly.

34 *The Sunrise of the Day of Grace.*

Do you ask me for pleasure ?
Then lean on his breast ;
For there the sin-laden
And weary find rest.
In the valley of death
You will triumphing cry :
“ If this be called dying,
'T is pleasant to die.”

REV. ROBERT MURRAY MCCHEYNE.

NOONDAY.

And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth. — LUKE xxii. 25-27.

NOONDAY.



STRENGTH means authority. The strong man will always be superior to the weak man. God has not made an equal distribution of the talents which are influential. "The rich and the poor meet together." Wealth is often an inheritance; and again, poverty is transmitted from generation to generation. There are names which are written upon every page of a nation's history; and there are other names which have never been associated with a conspicuous action. Physical beauty is the equipment of only a few lives; and unusual moral force is a limited characteristic. The diversity of gifts which is apparent in every social organization affords no encouragement to the Communist, who expects to introduce the new heavens and

the new earth by his theories of equality. Men are not created equal, although the Declaration of Independence says that they are. The statement is an error. The start in life is never even. The advantages and the disadvantages are evident at a glance. What equality is there between a little street-arab, whose parentage is unknown, and the child of a Christian home, whose sturdy ancestors for many years have felt the strong current of pure, honest blood in their veins?

Strength has always asserted itself. It is natural to use it; God gives it for use. The command of armies and the ability to rule nations are a testimony to the superior qualities of men who have gained prominence. They have yoked their strength with their patriotism or their ambition, and thus have driven themselves to the heights of fame. Born to lead, they have quickly accepted their birthright; and the world has been blessed or cursed by the exercise of their authority. Thus Alexander the Great spread the Greek culture over the Orient; and Julius Cæsar

placed himself at the head of the Roman legions and made the City of the Seven Hills the capital of the world; and Constantine gave Christianity an imperial recognition; and Charlemagne held back the barbaric influences which threatened to destroy the science, the art, and the religion of western Europe; and Martin Luther struck the blow which shattered the despotism of the Papacy; and Napoleon Bonaparte aroused France, and England too, from a lethargy which was the unthoughtful retention of a worn-out feudal system; and Bismarck compacted the German empire; and Lincoln made the freedom of America a grand reality; and Gladstone is braving the hatred of "the classes against the masses," that he may see justice done to Ireland before he closes his splendid career.

But if strength means authority, — as it certainly does, — it is essential that the nature of the authority should be intelligently understood. What is it? "The kings of the Gentiles," said the Master, "exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise

authority upon them are called benefactors." Theirs is the authority of despotism, or, at best, of condescension. They are acquainted only with the heathen idea. Might makes right in their estimate. They have won authority, and so they will use it as they please. If they are considerate, then they are benefactors, rather than just rulers. Self is enthroned, even deified, and the worship of self goes on unceasingly. But it is very easy to burn a candle, or to scatter a little incense, or to offer a brief adoration to self, when strength has given authority.

The Master, however, says: "No; the heathen idea is a mistake. The authority of service is alone commendable. He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve." His is the Christian law. Strength has always a ministry to fulfil. The truest dignity is found in the most abundant helpfulness. Let it be our aim to consider this law of the new kingdom in its statement, its principle, and its rewards and penalties.

The statement of the Christian law of authority. "I am debtor," writes Paul, "both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise." The Apostle might have asserted himself. He was a recognized leader in the Church, yet he had "not so learned Christ." His opportunity increased his responsibility. "Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy," is his conception of the work to which he has been called. "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." Again he states his mind concerning the duties which engage him. As Peter has said in his epistle, no one is to be a lord over God's heritage, but we are to be ensamples to the flock, constantly ministering, and that is always serving. The immediate disciples of Christ tried to use every advantage of wealth, of knowledge, and of influence to make all men know how great is God's love, and how complete is the salvation of our Redeemer. There was very little selfishness among the early

Christians. They left home and kindred, they relinquished fortunes and life's comforts, and then they went everywhere, preaching the word. "None of us liveth to himself," was their motto. The world was in ignorance and despair, and they were glad to bring the relief which their Lord had promised. Beautiful was their life, adorned by the self-denying virtues of a Barnabas, a Timothy, a Luke, and a Dorcas.

They, however, were simply following in the footsteps of the Master, who always went about doing good. He might have excused himself. He was rich, and yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich. Infinite resources of power and glory were his when he took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. From his throne he could look over the entire universe as his domain, he could call upon every force as his obedient servant, he could command the service of all finite intelligences as his right. "All power is given unto me," is his conscious

announcement, "in heaven and in earth." We cannot estimate his wealth; it is far, far above our finite understanding. Yet when he appeared among his subjects, what was his attitude? Did he bestow his blessings in a patronizing manner? Did he ever fail to convey the impression that he was here, "not to be ministered unto, but to minister"? "I am among you as he that serveth;" and that not in any patronizing spirit, but cordially, grandly, intelligently. He had no desire to apologize for his work; the work, such as it was, was in harmony with his nature. He was living a splendid truth, consequently he never held back from distress, never refused to comfort sorrow, never kept himself aloof or in reserve. "The example of Christ," says Canon Westcott in a recent essay, "so far as it is proposed for our imitation, is always the example of patience, of self-surrender, of serving, of suffering. The voice which calms and strengthens us is that voice of prevailing love which establishes its power on tenderness, and its right to teach on humility.

'Take my yoke upon you and learn of me,' Christ said, not because I am irresistible with the plenitude of divine might, not because I am omniscient with the fulness of divine vision, but 'because I am meek and lowly in heart.'" This is the key to the matchless life; only as we appreciate the naturalness, the sweetness, the benignity of the condescension, can we realize that "the Lord's words make clear beyond doubt that the blessing of power 'is the blessing of great cares,' that the sign of authority is the readiness to serve."

The principle of the Christian law of authority. Every substantial law must be the expression of a principle. Laws are often enacted by human legislation which are simply the arbitrary announcements of majorities. No true principle underlies them. They quickly exhibit their weakness and folly, and then they are repealed, or else disregarded entirely. No law can expect to secure permanent recognition if its principle is false. Sooner or later its real character will be discovered. It is important, therefore, in every instance that

diligent inquiry should be made for the principle of a law; and if that principle stands out as a distinct truth of God, it is certain that the law announcing it will ultimately prevail. Principles are to laws what wheat is to bread. Laws may be modified; their statements need adaptation to circumstances, just as bread will become stale, and as bread of one kind may not be equally palatable to all men. But principles may be utilized in many different ways, even as wheat may be carried to distant continents and to islands of the seas for the bread-making of diverse nations and tribes.

It is well, too, to realize that the great principles of the divine administration are the same in all the many departments of the government of God. In other words, God does not employ one set of principles in framing the laws of Nature, and another distinct set in forming the laws of grace. We in our limited range of observation have been inclined to separate the departments of Nature and of grace; whereas, as we may learn from Psalm xix., they are

most intimately related. The same God rules over both, and the same principles obtain in both. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork," — that is Nature. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul," — that is grace. The cross of the Redeemer is the grandest known expression of the principle of mediation; and yet every student of vegetable and animal life knows that mediation is the basis of many an interesting law. Says Hugh Macmillan of Scotland: "The first animal that gave up its life to nourish the life of another was an unconscious type, like the murdered innocents of Bethlehem, of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. There is thus a sufficient family likeness between the types of God's word and the types in his works to warrant us in ascribing them to the same divine origin, and in believing that they refer to the same great object, which consecrates and ennobles them both." Such a recognition certainly does give us a firmer grasp upon eternal principles, and a renewed consideration for

their statements in forms of law. Christianity is no longer to be looked upon as a surprise or an after-thought; it is a part of the economy of God,—an essential part, towards whose glorious consummation “the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.”

What then is the principle of this prophetic Christian law of authority? The law is clearly written on the pages of the Bible, our statute-book; and the records of Christian living and of the life of the Master himself afford beautiful illustrations of the law as it stands for our obedience. Now, what is its principle? Shall we err if we state it in these terms? “*Strength is for service;*” and that is true of all strength, as to quantity and as to quality. Strength means authority; and therefore the Christian law of authority has beneath it this noble principle. When you were a child you had only a little strength; a few pennies made up your income. You did not know much; you had few opportunities; and yet from the first you had some strength and some authority. How did

you behave? Were you ever taught that your childish strength was for usefulness, that such as it was, it was called to service; or did you not get the impression that if you denied yourself a few candies, and gave your money to some poor person, you were doing a very admirable deed, and were, in truth, a benefactor? Were you trained to realize that every increase of strength means an increase of responsibility in its use, and that when we use our strength in service, we are simply doing our duty, nothing more? But a man's attitude is not that of a child. Man-strength is not child-strength. As we grow in years and stature, we accumulate resources of one kind or another, — knowledge, money, personal influence. Now, what of these? They must be used; and how? The heathen law and principle would counsel self-gratification. "Rise above your fellows," says heathenism, "and exercise lordship over them; and if you consider them in any way, let it be understood that you are a benefactor." That is heathenism pure and simple,

whether you meet it in New York to-day, or read about it in Antioch as it appeared hundreds of years ago. Heathenism is for self, while Christianity is for others; for Christianity always commends the good Samaritan. It has no approval of self-love or of self-interest. It always urges us to consider the other man, and that not as a matter of favor, but of right. I do not think that Christianity wishes us to pose as benefactors or eminent philanthropists, or anything of that sort. There is a great deal of selfish human nature in such posing. Christianity asks us all "to do justly,"—that is the first thing; and then "to love mercy;" and finally, "to walk humbly with thy God." Ruskin has a fine remark in harmony with this thought. He says: "The one divine work, the one ordered sacrifice, is to do justice; and it is the last we are ever inclined to do. Anything rather than that! As much charity as you choose, but no justice. 'Nay,' you will say, 'charity is greater than justice.' Yes, it is greater; it is the summit of justice; it is the temple of which justice is

the foundation. But you cannot have the top without the bottom; you cannot build upon charity. . . . Do justice to your brother, — and you can do that whether you love him or not, — and you will come to love him.”

“Alas for the rarity
Of Christian charity
Under the sun!”

How little honest love there is between man and his brother man! We are but playing with love when we talk and sing and act as we do; our castles are all in the air; our love-pictures of an approaching golden age are the mirage of the desert. But Jesus was a practical reformer, and we may be sure that he left no plans for castles in the air. The magnificent structure which he planned is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being its chief corner-stone. To this structure the principle, “*Strength is for service,*” is essential. If we recognize the personal obligations of this principle, we shall be far on the way towards Christ-like living.

For the perfect naturalness of this principle is one of its distinguishing characteristics, — naturalness as respects its agreement with eternal truth and with the activity of God. It is natural that strength should serve. God is omnipotent, and who fails to enjoy the benefits of his service? “He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” He dispenses his bounty with an open hand. He is so magnanimous that he seldom makes us feel that he is doing some especial service. “Is n’t it wonderful that he should treat us so!” exclaimed the penitent whose heart had just been touched by the grace of God; and his negro slave, who had long time been a man of faith and prayer, answered promptly: “No, massa; it’s just like him.” Now, God’s thought must be ours, and God’s attitude must be ours, if we are to excel. His principle is to be expressed in our laws. “*Strength is for service.*” It must overflow in service, as the fountain overflows in fertility to the plain; it must bloom into service, as the

seed germinates, and finds the beauty of flower and of fruit; it must express itself in service, as a mother's love for a sickly child accepts gladly the monotony of nights and days of confinement. Spontaneous and cordial must be the service of Christian strength; then, and not till then, it will conquer the selfishness of the world.

The rewards and penalties of the Christian law of authority. These are numberless. Some of them are known here in this world, and some of them will be known in the next. The "Come, ye blessed," and the "Depart, ye cursed," of our Lord's great judgment-scene were pronounced in view of the uses of strength. "I was hungry, and ye fed me;" "I was naked, and ye left me so."

To the individual, the law means the very best of life's returns, or the worst. If he obeys the law, and lives as the Master directs, he will be happy and useful; whereas if he disregards the law and lives in opposition to its teaching, he cannot be truly happy, nor can he be useful, although

God may use him in spite of himself, even as he makes the wrath of man to praise him.

Settle the matter early in life, my friend, and understand that you are here to serve. Such is your attitude as a human being. Do not think too much about philanthropy, or about pity for the masses, or about your condescending to work for the ignorant; but just understand that you are to serve with such strength as you have, and to serve because it is the right and the manly — nay, the God-like — thing to do; that any other conception of life is contemptible; that any other use of opportunity is heathenish rather than Christian; that every increment of strength, whether of money, of knowledge, or of influence, means new opportunity and a new call. Then the true self, that hidden man of the heart, will steadily expand; then the eye will grow brighter, and the range of vision will enlarge; then God will be companionable, and the things of God will be the enduring riches, whose enjoyment has eternity for its day.

But if it be otherwise, if you disregard the law of Christ, you must suffer, and suffer forever. With strength misused, with opportunities neglected, you may become very rich, and very learned too, and very influential, and exercise authority, and be accounted a benefactor, just as it was with the kings of the Gentiles in our Lord's day. But you cannot be happy, — with the Bible in your dwelling you cannot be happy if you live the heathen's idea; and when you meet God, and he asks you why you have lived so, you will be speechless, with the Bible in your hand. Poor, mistaken soul! there is no living over again a human life. Selfishness has commanded the service of strength, and this is the miserable end of the service. Speechless in the presence of God, the wretched soul is dismissed to the left hand, where the idea of heathenism must be incorporated in many laws.

To the community the law of Christ is the earnest of progress. If this law is disregarded, as it is, and as it has been for centuries, the many evils of our social sys-

tem are inevitable. We can make very little advance against crime and degradation and poverty until we consider one another. Institutional charity, always popular, is fairly good; but it does not begin to be as good as the personal, generous activity of unnumbered Christian lives. Let it be known, and widely known, that the law of Christ is to be operative; that every man in authority, be he emperor, king, president, or governor, is conscious that he is only a minister; that every man of wealth is convinced that he is only a steward; that every man of intelligence is persuaded that he holds his knowledge in the service of his fellow-men; that every favored child is taught that he must think of those less favored, — and what a thrill of strange hope would pass over the world! How the dwellers in wretched tenements would rejoice in the expressions of strong, rich sympathy! How the oppressed and down-trodden masses of the old world would respond to a greeting which would seem like a stirring of the leaves after a long pestilential drought! How young

men and maidens would clasp hands with their seniors who could enter cordially into the feelings of the youthful heart!

“If the vision tarry, wait for it.” And so we will. Christ’s law is based upon the truth of God; and that truth will prevail. Men will welcome it. Then it will assert itself; and finally its triumph will appear in a happy, prosperous, contented social order, which shall obtain in every quarter of the globe.

There was once a queen — so runs a beautiful story of the children — who was sick with a painful malady, and whose recovery was promised if the world’s fairest rose could be found. This rose was to be the expression of the purest love. In every direction faithful subjects looked eagerly for roses, and the sick-room was fragrant with the perfume of their offerings. “The rose of first love was brought, and the rose of science, and the rose of maternal affection, and the rose of sorrow. But in vain. Health refused to come, and death seemed imminent.

“‘I have seen at the altar,’ said a pious

old bishop, 'the world's fairest rose. A band of maidens were at the Holy Table of our Lord to confess their faith; and among them was one whose simple purity was radiant with devotion, so that I felt that I was witnessing the truest love.'

"'Blessed, thrice blessed is piety,' replied the sage; 'still, thou hast not found the world's fairest rose.'

"Then came the little son of the queen, with glistening and tearful eyes and outstretched hands, on which rested a silver-clasped book.

"'Mother, oh mother,' he exclaimed, 'listen to what I have been reading.' And he sat beside her, and read from the Book of Him who so loved the world that he gave himself up to death to save sinners.

"And a faint rosy gleam passed over the queen's cheek, and her eyes grew brighter and brighter, and her limbs felt new strength, for there was wafted to her the fragrance of the world's Fairest Rose, — the Rose that sprang forth from the sacred blood of Calvary.

“ ‘ I see it ! ’ she said exultingly as she sprang from her couch. ‘ Never can one die who looks upon that Rose, the fairest in the world. Justice is its strength, and love is its beauty, while grace is the perfume which it freely scatters. ’ ”

“ I am among you as he that serveth. ”
Think of the Master ; then use your authority as he used his.

WORK.

What are we set on earth for? Say, to toil,
Nor seek to leave thy tending of the vines,
For all the heat of day, till it declines,
And death's mild curfew shall from work assoil.
God did anoint thee with his odorous oil
To wrestle, not to reign! And he assigns
All thy tears over, like pure crystallines,
For younger fellow-workers of the soil
To wear for amulets. So others shall
Take patience, labor, to their heart and hand
From thy hand and thy heart and thy brave cheer,
And God's grace fructify through thee to all.
The least flower, with a brimming cup, may stand
And share its dew-drop with another near.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

SUNSET.

*The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree :
he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that
be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in
the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth
fruit in old age ; they shall be fat and flourishing ;
to shew that the Lord is upright : he is my rock,
and there is no unrighteousness in him. — Ps. xcii.*

12-15.

SUNSET.



THE Psalmist must have had many aged friends whose lives were useful and beautiful in the service of God. His psalm is an accurate description of the origin and development of the graces which are the adornment of aged saints. The palm-tree and the cedar of Lebanon are his comparisons as he indicates the method of growth whose perfection is so attractive. Nature asks for many years in which to mature the palm-tree or the cedar. They respond slowly to the influences of soil and climate. But their strength and fruitfulness abide when other trees, "which spring as the grass," have decayed and perished. "The palm grows slowly," says Dr. Thomson in "The Land and the Book," "from generation to generation, uninfluenced by those alternations of the

seasons which affect other trees. It does not rejoice overmuch in winter's copious rain, nor does it droop under the drought and the burning sun of summer. Neither heavy weights which men place upon its head, nor the importunate urgency of the wind can sway it aside from its uprightness. There it stands, looking calmly down upon the world below, and patiently yielding its large clusters of golden fruit from season to season. They still bring forth fruit in old age." This intelligent writer, so long a resident of Palestine, was on a visit to the cedars of Lebanon when he wrote that "these old trees around us, and most of those on the highest ridges of the mountain, extending for several miles to the south, are genuine representatives of Lebanon's most ancient groves of cedars. There need be no hesitation in regarding them as the surviving descendants of those forests whence Hiram's skilled hewers of timber cut down cedar-trees for Solomon to use in building and beautifying the temple of the Lord at Jerusalem. They

have not died out or been replanted by man since that distant day."

Thus the righteous flourish and grow. Time leaves its marks upon them; but they are marks of increasing vigor and usefulness. "The young Christian is lovely, like a tree with the blossoms of spring; the aged Christian is valuable, like a tree in autumn bending with ripe fruit." Grace secures a mellowness of experience which God gathers for his own use in heaven when it is perfectly ripe. Meanwhile it is a witness to his fidelity, a little gospel in the life of holiness, "to shew that the Lord is upright." The aged servants of the Lord are here, amid the busy scenes of active life, to speak calmly and wisely of the deep significance which each event of life contains, to illustrate in patience and in hope the precious truths to which they have long time given their assent, and to prove a benediction of love and sympathy to the homes which are privileged to shelter them.

"For age is opportunity no less
Than youth itself, though in another dress;
And as the evening twilight fades away,
The sky is filled with stars invisible by day."

In old age God's servants "shew that the Lord is upright" as they recognize the providential interest that has determined their lives. It is perhaps an easy thing to discover the providential interest of God in one or two of the ordinary events of life. There are many cheap interpreters who are ready to expound the thought of God. We listen with amazement to their familiarity, and even flippancy, and then regret that upon themes like these there is not more of reverence. The providence of God is a profound study which may properly engage the thoughtful mind for a lifetime. We are always inclined to accept as providential those circumstances which are peculiarly favorable to ourselves or peculiarly destructive to interests which we oppose. The south wind which speeds *us* on our way may be a head-wind to our brothers who are seeking a warmer clime. Have we, therefore, the monopoly of providence? The dynamite which destroys a synagogue of Satan may leave a sanctuary in ruins as well. Where shall we locate the providence? The truth is that we need a wider

perspective. The lines of providential interest require time for their observation. It is not possible to estimate a life aright at the hour of death. The pen of the historian is constantly engaged in re-writing the verdicts of history. Popular idols are dethroned, and the misunderstood and misrepresented heroes are exalted. The holy apostles and our Divine Lord enjoyed very little of what we call fame when their earthly careers came to a close. The criticism of Judæa, of Greece, and of Rome was unfavorable to them. But their record was safe. They were discreet and honest. The future has more than vindicated them, as they have been assigned the highest places on the roll of fame.

The need of perspective is met, as far as it can be, by God's aged servants. They occupy a vantage-ground. They can speak out of a large experience. When David says, "I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread," his remark has value, because he also tells us that he has been young, and is now old. His is the experience of one who has seen

many phases of life, and therefore it is valuable. The patriarch Jacob is led into the presence of the king of Egypt, and there he outlines his wonderful career from his childhood in the tents of Isaac to this hour in the palace of the Pharaohs. The old man is impressively eloquent as he points out the providences which have guided and blessed him. Pharaoh listens with intense interest, and accepts the blessing of Jacob at the close of their memorable interview. The Apostle Paul, from the barracks of the Prætorian Guard in Rome, sends letters to his beloved Timothy and Titus and Philemon, and to many of the Oriental churches, writing appreciatively of God's tender care, which he has known "in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren." "Being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ," his testimony to the fidelity of God carries with it conviction.

And what shall be said of the "beloved disciple," who was kept here by the Master until the close of the first century as a beautiful specimen of holy living, and whose feeble voice was often heard in earnest commendation of the preciousness of love? He was always mindful of "the tenth hour" there by the River Jordan, which dated the beginning of those providences whose interest had never ceased; and that later hour on the shore of the lake which heard the announcement, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" had been discovering its hidden meaning for more than fifty years.

Thus faith is strengthened as God's aged servants speak. They view the path from the hill-top after they have crossed the meadow and the marsh; they look upon the canvas when the artist has nearly completed his work, and the thoughtful shades of expression are clearly visible; they read the journal when the last chapter is awaiting its final word. It is impossible for them to resist the conviction that the good

hand of our God has led them and sustained them and encouraged them. They can see that there has been a wisdom above their wisest plans. Dangers have been avoided, and temptations have been repelled. Calamities have failed of their purpose, and disasters have been converted into blessings. And now it is pleasant to look back and to speak of the goodness of the Lord, and still to believe that the past has been an earnest of the present, and is a pledge of the future. He who has been true to his word for threescore and ten years will not forsake his servant in the time of old age. For his promise is on record that "even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you." God cannot forsake his servants. He must have an especial love for those who have loved him many years. This is the teaching of Providence, and our aged friends commend the lesson by the patience of their daily lives. Let us prize their instruction. Our busy Western life is some-

what lacking in reverence. The Orient has more regard for the aged. But our Bible commands us to "rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man." It is a privilege unspeakable to have among us, not only little children, with their sweet, happy faces, but also the aged, with the sunshine of Heaven bright upon their countenances. Quietly waiting upon the confines of two worlds, now looking back to point out some impressive feature of the moral landscape, and again looking on to speak of "the city which hath foundations," an aged saint is the treasure of children and of children's children; as

"... On he moves to meet his latter end,
Angels around befriending Virtue's friend;
Sinks to the grave with unperceived decay,
While resignation gently slopes the way;
And, all his prospects brightening to the last,
His heaven commences ere the world be past!"

The uprightness of the Lord is evident as the aged exhibit the practical value of divine grace. The grace of God is dependent upon his uprightness. The largest foundation-stone in the temple of

redemption is justice. If God is not faithful, what does it avail that he is merciful and kind? His mercy must rest upon his fidelity, and his kindness must rise upon his truth. When he speaks, God must always command faith in what he says. When he makes a promise, God must always convince us that he means to fulfil his word. This is one of the reasons why the love of God is so commanding and influential. It is not a mere sentiment. It is not divorced from other divine attributes. No one can trifle with it. For justice sustains love, as love tempers justice. And the grace that pardons and saves a sinner when penitent has in it an element of severity that punishes guilt and turns away from the hard and the rebellious heart. Do we not read in Holy Scripture of "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world"? And does not the sacred volume also make mention of "the wrath of the Lamb"? Jesus Christ the Saviour is considerate and tender in his offers of mercy; but when those offers of mercy are rejected,

he takes his place as judge, and the hands of entreaty become the hands of rejection. Now he calls, and says: "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." By and by he will speak in other tones, to say: "I never knew you; depart from me!" When the bridegroom was announced, the virgins ten arose and trimmed their lamps. But alas! in that supreme hour there were empty vessels and no oil for the burning. As the bridegroom entered, there went in with him the virgins five who had oil in their vessels with their lamps. "And the door was shut." Then came the foolish virgins with sighs and lamentations over their folly; but the appeal was of no avail, "the door was shut."

"Have we not heard the bridegroom is so sweet?

Oh let us in, though late, to kiss his feet!"

'No, no; too late; ye cannot enter now.'

Grace has its limitations. God's Spirit will not always strive. There is an evening twilight and darkness to the day of divine compassion.

God's aged servants are witnesses to the fidelity of his grace. They have made

trial of grace under a great variety of circumstances. It has met their expectations at all times. Polycarp of Smyrna was ninety years of age when the hand of the Roman persecutor was laid upon him. Descending to the portal of his dwelling, he invited the officers of the law to refresh themselves with food and drink while he craved an hour for quiet prayer. The beauty of the old man's life, fragrant with devotion and adorned with numberless acts of charity, softened the hearts of the officers; and he was simply asked to say "the emperor, our lord," and to offer a sacrifice to the imperial deity. When he quietly refused, they became angry; and when the proconsul besought him to regard his own gray hairs and to spare himself the humiliation and pains of martyrdom by cursing Christ, the brave old man replied in language which the Church has not been willing to let die: "Six and eighty years have I served him, and he has done me nothing but good; and how could I curse him, my Lord and Saviour?" Then they hurried him to the

stake and heaped fagots around him and kindled the fire while Polycarp prayed aloud: "Lord, Almighty God, Father of thy beloved Son Jesus Christ, through whom we have received from thee the knowledge of thyself, God of angels and of the whole creation, of the human race and of the just that live in thy presence, I praise thee that thou hast judged me worthy of this day and of this hour to take part in the number of thy witnesses in the cup of thy Christ." Could anything be more eloquent? Could the Gospel secure a more persuasive appeal? Here was an old man of blameless life enduring insults and intense sufferings for the sake of the Redeemer who had been true to him for six and eighty years. "What appeared the greatest thing to the Church," writes the historian, "was not the martyr's death of Polycarp in itself, but the Christian manner in which it was suffered. They expressed it as their conviction that all had been so ordered that he might exhibit what was the essential character of evangelical martyrdom."

The stake and the rack and the exile are of the past; but the testimony of God's aged servants is of the present. We shall always need it, and it will always be at hand. No child can give it as the aged can; for childhood lacks experience. Experience alone can test and approve the grace of God. Experience, the Apostle Paul assures us, worketh hope; but this is true only of Christian experience. The experience of the world worketh disappointment and misanthropy and despair. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," is the common testimony of men like Lord Chesterfield, who know the world, and yet know nothing else. "But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." "It shall come to pass that at evening time it shall be light." Then the aged servant of God speaks of the divine uprightness as he exhibits the adaptation of grace to the many joys and sorrows of his life. He can say, "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound." Poverty has been a companion, and then affluence has

been a friend. There have been days of sickness and nights of pain. More than once the dwelling has been darkened, and more than once the open grave has claimed the beloved dead. The experiences of life have presented their demands, and in every instance the grace of God has met them. Can this be said of any of our numerous philosophies? Is it true that infidelity touches life, in every emergency, with strength and comfort? Do not the emergencies of life silence the infidel? I have somewhere read of an infidel orator in the North of England who was accustomed to invite discussion at the close of his lectures. One evening, to his surprise, the challenge was accepted by a plain, aged woman, who arose and said: "I have only a question to put to you." "Well, my good woman," was the confident response of the orator, "speak out; let us hear it." "Ten years ago, sir," said the humble servant of God, "I was left a widow with eight children utterly unprovided for, and nothing to call my own but this Bible. By its direction and by look-

ing to its God for help, I have been enabled to feed myself and family. I am now tottering to the grave; but I am perfectly happy, because I look forward to a life of blessedness with Jesus in heaven. That's what my religion has done for *me*. What has your way of thinking done for *you*?" Ah! my friends, that personal argument is irresistible. The infidel orator tried in vain to meet it. The aged saint held him to the question, "What has your way of thinking done for *you*?" and he was presently speechless. The Gospel, however, never shrinks from its logical consequences. It is safe to press it to its last results. You would cry out against me and rebuke me to my face if I should, here and now, say to you that there is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink and be merry, that the future life is a dream, that there will be no judgment-day, no heaven, no hell, that the worldly old man who has spent his years in the pursuit of pleasure is just as well off as the godly old man who has lived in obedience to the revealed

will of our Lord Jesus Christ. Every one knows that such statements are false. Yet alas! how many of us contradict our knowledge by living for self and the world for many, many years of this mortal life! Poor old wrecks of humanity, how sadly they drift to and fro! It is too late now to correct the mistakes of a lifetime. Youth will not return for the wishing. The irresistible pressure of time means the awful coldness of the grave, and that, too, *soon*. Poor, pitiable old men, "having no hope, and without God in the world," ye seem like beacons shedding a warning light to keep the mariners on life's stormy sea from the rocks and the quicksands of your present wretchedness. But it is not so with the righteous. They are convoys, rather than beacons; and as they light the way across the trackless ocean, many a young sailor steers his little bark in safety towards the "desired haven."

In their calm and happy anticipation of the future, God's aged servants bear their testimony to the fidelity of the Lord. God has promised that we shall have "a good

hope through grace." "But if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." It is true that our bodies become enfeebled by age. They wear out; the vital powers are exhausted. Nature expends her resources. And so the aged cease to live among us, and their faces and forms are sadly missed around the table or the hearth. Yet we have no hopeless sorrow concerning them; we would not keep them longer from the welcome and the crown if we had the power so to do. Already they have sent on the better part of their lives to await their coming; and now they themselves have gone. Faith has found its perfect consummation. Birth into this world anticipates the strength and beauty of mature years. The puny form of the babe is prophetic of vigor and usefulness. The prophecy may be defeated by sickness, or by casualty, and the babe may never reach the promised stature. But in the new birth, whose prophecies take hold upon the life immortal, there are no such disappointments. He who has "begun a good work in you

will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." God's aged servants are familiar with their Bibles. They know their Saviour too, and are acquainted with his grace. And so they are very calm and hopeful as they say with Paul, "The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." We observe their composure, and are grateful that we have new evidence of "the power of an endless life." Yes, God is faithful; our aged friends are with us, still bringing forth fruit in old age, "to shew that the Lord is upright." Beautiful to look upon, like the palm-tree laden with its precious dates, like the cedar of Lebanon prepared for the adornment of kings' palaces, God's aged servants are the benediction of the household, of the village, and of the sanctuary. Happy are the children who listen meekly to their wisdom and who are greeted by their smiles! Happy are the strong men and women who can extend an arm for support and

comfort, who can carry, in the tenderness of filial love, to the confines of the world which has no feebleness, no trials, no old age, the dear parents who received them in infancy, and carried them so gently until they had learned to walk alone!

The Psalmist sings of the righteous, and describes the beauty of their old age. That beauty is not an accident, it is the expression of righteousness which has been carefully nurtured. The Psalmist is at pains to locate the righteous. "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God." First righteousness, — consecration of life to God through the mediation of his Son our Saviour; and then nurture, — the planting and the training in the Church which God himself established. The divine method is approved. Think not to disregard it. Your old age will be beautiful and useful and happy and hopeful if you give yourself to God in early life and accept the culture which is found in the teaching of the Christian Church.

Our literature has no more beautiful sketch of an old man's life than that which Thackeray has given in his story of "The Newcomes." Refined and purified by the discipline of suffering, with wealth stripped from him, and the friends of a lifetime in their graves, the patient hero seeks the quiet of Grey Friars Hospital as his last home on this earth. There, in the uniform of the Order, he accepts a charity which he had aforesaid been wont to dispense. With prayer and psalm he spends the days of his waiting upon God's call, still bringing forth fruit in old age. Then, as he becomes too feeble to rise from his couch, he listens to the summons of the chapel-bell, that he may unite in the daily devotions, until the end of life is reached. He is ready for his departure. "At the usual evening hour," says Thackeray, "the chapel-bell began to toll, and Thomas Newcome's hands outside the bed feebly beat time. And just as the last bell struck, a peculiar sweet smile shone over his face, and he lifted up his head a little, and quickly said '*Adsum!*' and fell back.

It was the word we used at school when names were called; and lo! he whose heart was as that of a little child, had answered to his name, and stood in the presence of The Master."

THE AGED PILGRIM.

Thy mercy heard my infant prayer ;
Thy love, with kind, paternal care,
 Sustained my childish days ;
Thy goodness watched my ripening youth,
And formed my heart to love thy truth,
 And filled my lips with praise.

And now, in age and grief, thy name
Doth still my languid heart inflame,
 And bow my faltering knee ;
Oh, yet this bosom feels the fire,
This trembling hand and drooping lyre
 Have yet a strain for thee !

Yes ; broken, tuneless, still, O Lord !
This voice, transported, shall record
 Thy goodness, tried so long ;
Till sinking low, with calm decay,
Its feeble murmurs melt away
 Into a seraph's song.

SIR ROBERT GRANT.

THE END.

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