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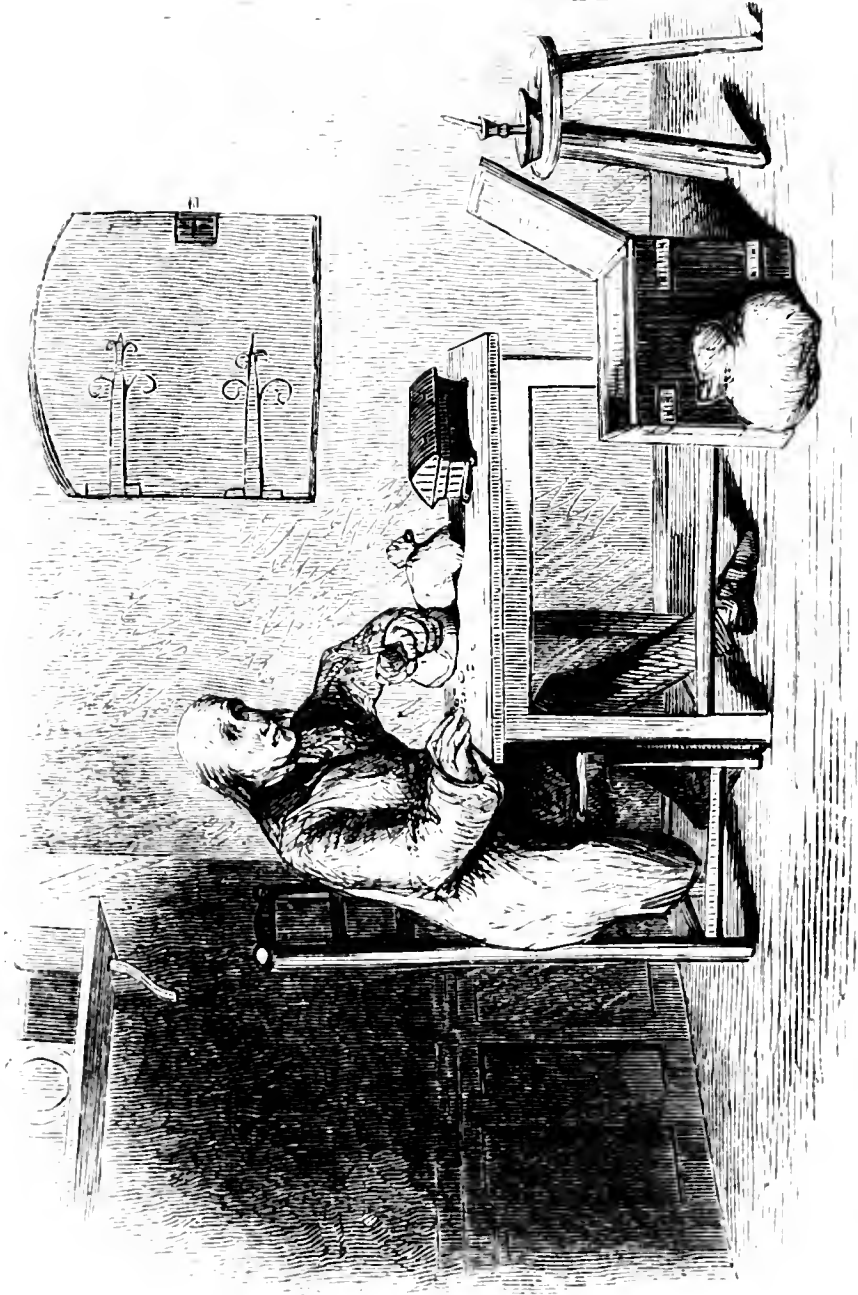




ZIL

Comedy

Talks with boys and girls.—Frontispiece.



“You can see gold—you can handle it.”



# TALKS

WITH

# BOYS AND GIRLS;

OR,

# WISDOM BETTER THAN GOLD.

BY A LAYMAN.

*Benjamin Fortis Homagys*

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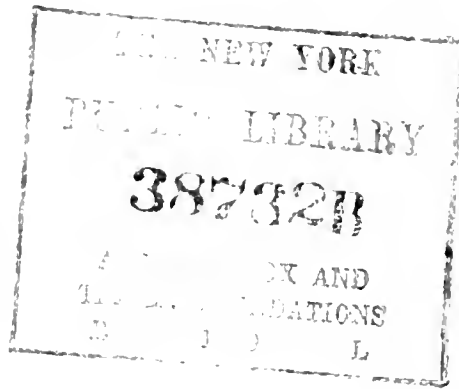
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# PREFACE.

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THESE addresses have all been delivered to large congregations of young people between the ages of ten and eighteen years. One who has not tried it can hardly understand how difficult it is to say things which shall interest alike minds so near the beginning and the end of school-life. The simple stories which arrest and keep the attention of young children are unsuited to those on the verge of maturity, and didactic statements, however logical in arrangement and clear in expression, addressed to the more cultivated, go quite over the heads of the others.

The writer of these papers has aimed at the age which is midway between these extremes, but admits that his deflections from this line have been below rather than above it. In the main, his purpose has been to unfold a passage of Scripture, illustrate it in a natural, easy manner, and then apply its obvious teachings as directly and personally as he was able.

Many volumes of sermons to young people are so large, or so theological, or so dry, or so full of anecdotes old and new, as not to answer the purpose very well of reading aloud to Sunday-schools or other companies of young people. If these little sermons shall prove to have avoided the infelicities suggested, the writer will be more than abundantly rewarded.

PHILADELPHIA, April, 1878.

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## WISDOM BETTER THAN GOLD.



PROV. XVI. 16.

How much better is it to get wisdom than gold!

THIS is not a question, though it seems like one, and if it were a question there is no answer to it in the verse. It is an exclamation rather than a question. It is as if one of the things mentioned were so much more valuable than the other that there is hardly any comparison between them. If you meet a friend who has been very sick you do not say, "You look very well," or "You look better;" but you say, "Why, how *well* you look!" As if you meant, "Why you look almost as well, or quite as well, as if you had not been sick."

So this passage of Scripture declares a great truth. But it does not say, "Wisdom is better than gold." It breaks out with an intense exclamation, "How *much better* is wisdom than gold!"

If this is a great truth, you will naturally inquire, "Who said it? Who wrote these words?" They were spoken or written by a king, one of the wisest and greatest kings that ever lived. He was also one of the richest kings that ever lived in his own country or any other country. He was so rich that in one of his palaces all the drinking-vessels were of gold, and pure gold, too; none were of silver. In our day rich men have silver plate, and only rich men have it, but king Solomon's plate was all gold. Silver was nothing

accounted of; by a figure of speech it was said to be as abundant in Jerusalem as the very stones.

Now when such a man talks about gold, he knows what he is talking about.

But what did he know about wisdom? He was the son of a great king, and he succeeded to the throne. The kingdom was vast, stretching from Egypt on the south to Syria on the north, from the river Euphrates on the east to the great sea, the Mediterranean, on the west. Shortly after he came to the throne he went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices and worship God. He was attended by a great company of his officers and people, and they sacrificed a thousand animals on the altar. In the night God appeared to him in a vision (what it was exactly, or how it was, we do not know), and gave the young king what you many a time have thought you would like to have: his choice of all good things. "Ask what I shall give thee," said God in the vision.

Now what was his wish? Did he ask for riches? No. Did he ask for long life? No. Did he ask for victory over his enemies? No. Did he ask that his dominions might be enlarged? No. What was it?

He remembered his father David and how kind God had been to him; he remembered his own youth and weakness; he remembered the vastness of the charge laid upon him so young, and he said, "I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in; this is a great people which cannot be numbered or counted for multitude: give thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad."

And God gave him his wish. He awoke from his dream, but his dream was fulfilled, and he became the wisest man that ever lived. Now when such a man talks about wisdom and compares it with gold, he knows what he is talking about.

But let us see if we know what we are talking about.

1. What is gold? It is money. We call it a precious metal; gold and silver, the precious metals, because they are so scarce, scarce even after the hundreds of millions of gold that have been brought from California and Australia in the last twenty-five years. With gold you can travel all over the world, and with gold you can buy everything that this world can produce. In fact you can buy everything but health and character and religion. Everybody knows how valuable it is and everybody wants it. Here in the United States we get along pretty well with paper money; but gold is better. It goes everywhere.

2. What is wisdom? Ah, this is not so easy to answer. You can see gold—you can handle it,—you can feel it in your hand, or in your pocket; you can measure it; you can count it; you can buy things with it. But you can't see wisdom; you can't measure it, or weigh it, or count it, or give it away, or spend it. What, then, is wisdom? As applied to things of this world, it means the right use of knowledge, not only to know things, but what use to make of the knowledge, quick to understand a thing, quick to know what is the best use of things. It means soundness of mind, good, true judgment, in knowing the right from the wrong.

Wisdom, when applied to religious things, as in the text of this sermon, means true religion, the knowledge and the fear and the love of God; sincere and continual obedience to his commands.

Now is this better than gold? The Bible says: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Now does fear of the Lord mean dread of the Lord, afraid to go near him, afraid to speak to him, afraid to have him come near to you? By no means. It rather means, afraid to sin against him, afraid to displease him by living away from him. God is our Father:

we ought to love him, and live near to him, and commune with him. The fear of the Lord means or includes repentance. Now what is repentance? We have all sinned against God and we ought to repent. Repentance is sorrow for sin: not for any particular sin, but for all sin; and not sorrow for sin merely, but a determination to turn away from it, to give it up, to keep clear of it hereafter. When you find a boy or a girl who is really sorry for the wrong he or she has done and determines not to do so any more, you know a boy or a girl who has found true wisdom.

Repentance leads to faith. Faith is belief, trust, confidence. I meet you in a dark night, when you have lost your way, and are wet and cold, and hungry and crying. I say to you, "Go with me: I will lead you safely home." You believe me, you trust me, you have confidence in me, and you go home with me holding my hand. This is faith.

Have any of these boys or girls lost their way in the world? Do you want to go back to your Father's house?

So, Jesus Christ meets sinners in this dark world, who are lost, and sad and weary, and offers to take them by the hand and lead them to a blessed home where all is light and peace. And if you know a boy or a girl who has found out that he is lost, and has reached up and taken the Saviour's hand and is following him in the way to heaven, that boy or girl has found true wisdom.

I take it for granted that everybody is trying to get something. Among all your acquaintances there is no man or woman, no boy or girl, that is not trying to get something that is at present beyond his reach. And it is right too; it ought to be so; everybody ought to have some aim in life, some purpose always before him.

Here is the politician. He wants office for himself or others. He wants influence with other men, he wants the



power to give places to other men ; he wants to be looked up to by others ; he wants to make money by office ; he wants to be popular ; he wants to see his name in the newspapers. And he will do a good deal to get all this. He will go among people lower than himself ; he will go into grog-shops and form habits of drinking, so that he may be popular with people who vote. And some of the most brilliant people in our land will stoop to do this low and dirty work, so that they may accomplish their purpose.

Here is the scholar, the student. He wants learning, knowledge of books and science. He wants to read all the books that are worth reading. He wants to know everything that is worth knowing. He will sit up all night over his books ; he will deny himself sleep, and recreation, and the pleasures of society ; he will strain his eyes until he loses their sight and becomes blind in continual study. He has a high aim, and he pursues it with all earnestness.

The traveller wants to see strange lands, strange people, strange things. He will undergo any privation or fatigue or trials ; he will bear any expense. He will give up his home, leave his friends behind him, absent himself for years, brave the dangers of sea and land ; go into the heart of Africa among savages, or far north among the icebergs, where he is in danger of perishing with cold, if he may come back and tell of all the strange things he has seen, the people he has met, the dangers he has escaped. See what Dr. Kane did years ago, what Dr. Hall did more recently in the icy regions of the North, looking for a northwest passage to India ; and both of them giving their lives to the search. Their object probably was fame, and see what a price they paid for it.

The mechanic labors for the support of his family. He, too, works early and late. In the short days of winter he goes out before it is full day and returns after sunset. In the

long days of summer he exposes himself to the fierce rays of the burning sun, never sparing himself, if he may earn a generous support for his wife and children. His is a high, a noble aim, and nobly does he strive for it.

So with the boy or the girl who goes to school or works in a factory, or in the shop, or in the field, or helps the parents at home ; all have an aim, an object in life ; all look forward, all are striving to accomplish some purpose.

But more people are trying to get money than anything else. Whether it be enough to support oneself or one's own family, or others who are dependent, or whether it be to pile up a great fortune, and be rich and great and powerful, almost everybody is trying to get money. Look out over the world, and you will see that the great race is for riches and who shall win. Almost everybody reverses the scripture, and says : " How much better is gold than wisdom ! "

Now which is right, the world or the Bible ? God, in the Bible, says it is better to get wisdom ; men say it is better to get gold : which is true ? Both can't be true.

1. If you had this house full of gold, it could not get you a good night's sleep ! You might have the softest and smoothest bed, the coolest and softest pillow, you might have silken hangings, and velvet coverings, and the most beautiful room, and the costliest furniture, and the most splendid mirrors and paintings, and the richest carpets, and servants to fan you, and perfumes of flowers to breathe, and a house hushed to quietness ; but all these will not bring sleep, when you are feverish and restless, and excited and anxious.

2. If you had this house full of gold, it could not cure you if you are sick. You may have the most able and skilful physicians, and two or three or a dozen of them ; you may have the rarest and most expensive medicines, the most careful and faithful nurses, the most delicate food, the costliest

fruits, the kindest friends, and all these would not make you well when you are sick, if the blessing of God be wanting.

3. If you had this house full of gold, it could not relieve a burdened conscience. If you feel that you have sinned against an earthly friend, and especially against God, the burden of that sin lies upon your conscience, and all the gold in the world will not take that burden off. You may have the best books to read, and the kindest and most experienced Christian friend or Christian minister to talk with you, and pray with you, but these, without the blessing of God, will not take off the burden and the curse of sin from your heart and conscience.

4. If you had this house full of gold, it could not put off for an hour the time of your death. "The rich man also died and was buried," says the parable. If that evil day could be put off by money, many persons, I had almost said all, would give everything they have in the world for it. It is said that when Queen Elizabeth of England was dying, she offered large sums to her physicians, if they could prolong her life a few hours; but it was not possible, and the dying queen realized what I am now saying to you, that gold cannot put off for one moment the hour of death.

5. If you had this house full of gold, it could not open the gates of heaven! "How hardly," says the Saviour, "how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven!" "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy wine and milk without money, and without price." You do not need money to find your way to heaven. The streets are pure gold there—the gates are pearl: each gate is a single pearl! And our Heavenly Father does not need our paltry money, for "the silver and the gold are his, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." "The gates of that city shall not be shut

at all by day, and there shall in nowise enter into it anything that defileth; neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

If, then, gold, even if you had a house full, could not give you a good night's sleep; nor make you well when you are sick; nor relieve your conscience; nor keep off the hour of death; nor open the gates of heaven—I ask you, *is* gold better than wisdom?

Why, then, is it better to get wisdom than gold?

1. *You are sure to get it if you try.* The politician puts forth all his energies and spends his money, and degrades and demoralizes himself and his friends, and after all he fails; he is disappointed, he is ruined. Some of the ablest men our country has ever had, Clay, Webster, Calhoun, Douglas, all aimed to be President of the United States, but they failed and died disappointed. But he who sets his heart on getting wisdom is sure to find it.

The general is not sure of victory. The fortunes of war are not always easily secured. The best laid plans are subject to defeat. The enemy may have greater numbers, or better troops, or the advantage of the ground, or a hundred other things which, combined, disappoint the best plan of battle ever arranged.

The scholar breaks down in health; or loses his eyesight; or breaks up in fortune; or changes his plans; or loses his reason; or is utterly discouraged, and so fails and ends his days in disappointment.

The traveller is shipwrecked, or falls by the hand of assassins or robbers, or perishes for want of food. The mechanic loses his situation, is thrown out of employment, or breaks down in health, and goes to the almshouse; and the whole purpose of his life is defeated. None of all these is sure to get what they want.

2. It is better to get wisdom than gold, because *it is worth more than it costs*. It can be had for the asking. The poorest man or woman or child that you ever knew can have all the riches of heaven simply by asking for them!

3. It is better to get wisdom than gold, because *you can keep it*. Property, money, may be lost; they are lost every day, and the people who lose their money sometimes lose their reason too, and go to asylums for the insane; health declines, dangerous sickness comes on, friends die, or move away, or turn against you; but true wisdom never fails. Nobody can rob you of that, nobody can cheat you out of it.

4. Wisdom is better than gold, because, *if you don't get wisdom, you lose everything*. For what is fame worth, or high position, or victory to the general, or learning to the scholar, or knowledge to the traveller, or success to the mechanic, or wealth to him who seeks it; even if these people could get all these things (and there is no certainty that they could), what are all these worth, without wisdom, without true religion? For, in a few years at most, all these things will pass away. We go from this world to another; and then, if we are unprepared, what is all, that this world can give, worth?

5. The last and the best reason is, that *God says so*. The Bible says that wisdom is better than gold. The Bible is God's word to us. What it says you may believe fully with all your heart.

Now I say to you all, boys and girls, *try it*. Take God at his word. Seek wisdom. Seek it in the Bible, and by prayer. Ask God, for the sake of Jesus Christ, his Son, to give you wisdom, true religion; to give you a heart to love him, to serve him, to love your fellows, your companions, and to live to do good, and he will hear, and answer, and save.

## BOYS AND GIRLS.



### ZECH. VIII. 5.

And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.

TOWARD the close of their long captivity in Babylon—a captivity which lasted seventy years—the Jews, who had been observing seasons of fasting and prayer on account of the destruction of their holy city, and who knew that it was being rebuilt and that their glorious temple was to be restored again,—the Jews in Babylon, I say, sent messengers to the priests in Jerusalem to ask whether it was necessary to continue these sad seasons, or whether now, as the time approached when the nation was to be brought back again, they might not let a little light into their gloom and a little joy into their sadness.

The words of the text are a part of the answer which the prophet gives to the messengers. He tells them that it is far more important for them to observe the weightier matters of the law, judgment, and mercy, than mere ceremonials, and intimates that, unless they make a proper use of the discipline which they have endured, God may visit upon them the same calamities which had befallen their fathers, adding that if they are obedient they may look for a continuance of God's protection and may hope for days of prosperity; for "Thus saith the Lord of hosts: There shall yet old men and old



Talks with Boys and Girls.



Boys and girls playing.



women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof."

What is the meaning of this figurative language? What did the people to whom it was addressed understand by it?

We must remember that the city had been overthrown and in ruins for many years. The inhabitants were scattered: many were carried into captivity; others were dispersed over their own land. Families were broken up; children could no longer play in the streets in safety, and public affairs were in the greatest disorder and peril.

These words, then, "streets full of boys and girls playing," meant that peace and prosperity would come again; that order would be restored; that the exiled people would return to their city and their homes; that families would be reunited; that children would be multiplied; and that the public safety would be so completely restored that the city, "the streets of the city, would be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof." And all this means the complete restoration of the highest prosperity. For what is a city with no boys and girls in the streets? What would our city of Philadelphia be with no children, no school-houses, no playgrounds?

Two or three days ago a gentleman, a citizen of Savannah, Georgia, told me that in the summer of 1876, when the yellow fever prevailed so fatally in that city, one of the features of life and society there was that no children were to be seen in the streets. They had disappeared, most of them removed from the city to more healthy places.

Some time ago I was travelling with an excursion-party over a railroad just opened. It was the first train of passenger-cars that had passed over the road. It was a very large company of men, representing all the professions, all trades, and all kinds of business. The road lay through a part of

the country heretofore remote from railroads. It was for the most part through a rolling country, with beautiful valleys and wooded slopes and pretty streams; substantial farm-houses with the usual outbuildings were to be seen on every hand. It was in the early spring, the last week in April, and the grass and wheat and spring grains, under the bright sun, made a most beautiful picture.

There was very much to interest one like myself, who for many months had not had a single holiday, and I was quite ready to enjoy to the full the break in the monotony of my daily work. All along the road the people had gathered by the side of the road and at the stations, which we rushed past without stopping, waving their handkerchiefs, their flags, and their hats at the flying train. It seemed as if the whole population was keeping holiday in commemoration of the event.

But there was one thing I saw which interested me more than all besides—more than the broad rivers and the splendid bridges; more than the well-laid road or the new cars or the beautiful stations; more than the comfortable farm-houses and the great barns and barn-yards; more than the flocks of sheep and the herds of cattle; more than the great city of New York; more than the great coal-yards or the ocean-steamers—and it was this:

At one point on the line the new road passed close by a country school-house, and the teacher, probably as much interested as the scholars, had given a recess, and the boys and girls came rushing out of the door of the school-house, and climbing up on the rail fence stood with open mouths and straining eyes, waving their hats and shawls and books at the train as it swept by. It was but a moment; but I saw their eager faces, their earnestness, their longing, and I remembered that once I attended just such a country school and had just

such curiosity to see anything unusual that passed by our school-house. But I never saw such a sight as that, and I knew that those boys and girls all had a future before them; that they would not long remain school-boys and school-girls; that they would soon grow up; that some of them would find the way to a great city like this, seeking their fortune; that they would come here and struggle for a living—for life itself. And then I thought, Some of them will fall into bad company; they will make mistakes; they will strive in a race in which not all are successful, not all winners; that in this struggle and battle the waves will overwhelm some of them and they will be thrown as wrecks on the shore. These thoughts, I say, filled my mind as we rushed past that country school-house, and for a time drove out all other thoughts.

A little while ago I was at the house of correction attending a service in the chapel. The room was filled with people. There must have been nearly two thousand present. They were very quiet and respectful and attentive. Just before the address one of the inmates, the son of a clergyman, committed there for intemperance, rose, took his place on the platform in front of the audience, and sang the "Ninety and Nine." I had often heard it sung, and sung by better voices than his, but I had never heard it sung under more interesting circumstances than the present. He sang the first stanza with a very distinct enunciation and with good expression; the vast audience sat as still as death. When he ceased, there was a swell or murmur, as if every one drew a long breath. Then he sang with more feeling another stanza; and the audience were again so still that it seemed that you could almost hear the beating of their hearts. And so on, through all the piece, the suppression of sounds while he sang and the breathing between the stanzas were like the swelling and sobbing of the waves on the shore of the ocean. I never

knew anything more impressive; and when I rose to make the address, the first words I could speak were that I thought the sermon had already been preached in the touching and beautiful appeal which had been made to them in the hymn which had just been sung.

But the *singer*! Alas! he had once been a boy, light-hearted and thoughtless, the joy, the pride, of his parents, "playing" with other boys "in the streets of the city."

From a large round window high up in the arch of the roof, facing the south, the sun poured a shaft of the strongest light on the heads of the persons on the front seats. On the head of a young woman of light auburn hair the light fell in almost golden splendor; but the face, which was in shadow, was, alas! the coarse face of an inebriate: and she was a girl whom I had known in a public school.

As the sun moved toward the west the great shaft of light glided slowly over and across the aisle and fell upon the heads of the men. Many of these were gray, and the faces, turned away from the light, were seamed and scarred by long years of dissipation. And these were all men who once had been "boys" "playing in the streets of the city!"

The good time foretold by the prophet has not come yet. Our streets, or rather the streets of all the cities, are not "full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof." They may be "full of boys and girls," but they are not always "playing." Some time ago I saw in a public street in Edinburgh a policeman with a boy and girl, one in each hand, leading them away to prison. They were followed by a crowd of other children, to see what would be done to them. I don't know what the offence was; but if I had been at home there, I would have followed that officer to see if I could not rescue the poor little things from the prison, for it made my heart ache to see children so young, who ought have been

playing innocently in the streets of the city, doing such things that a policeman must come and take them up.

So have I seen boys and girls of a very tender age in the streets of London going to the ale-houses and gin-shops with their mugs and pitchers, to carry the drink home to the fathers and mothers, who thus train their children in the ways of drunkenness. Alas! there is no innocent play for such children. The streets may be full of such, but they are not the boys and girls that the prophet speaks of in our text.

A boy was brought before me who had been locked up in his room alone for continued misconduct. The question was, Should he be released and allowed to rejoin his companions in the school and at play? He was a cripple, lame in both feet, and partly paralyzed in one side. He was the slave to his temper. As far back as he could remember he had been lame, and during all these years (he was now about fifteen years old) he had been the butt of his family. Even his father, with surprising cruelty, had ridiculed his poor clump feet, and his brothers and sisters, with such an example, naturally fell into the same awful sin. All this at home, with the added persecution of his schoolmates and companions, so utterly destroyed the boy's temper that he became the pest and curse of the household. Things reached such a pass that it became necessary to send him from home, and his mother, when she brought him to an institution with which I am connected, said she believed she was the only living creature that loved this poor deformed and wretched boy.

After repeated violent outbreaks the superintendent felt obliged to confine him to his room. In a few days he was quite subdued, and begged to be released. I was on duty when his case came up. He came limping into the room and stood before us. The superintendent told the story, the boy listening and watching his countenance all the time, and

then the boy told his own story, saying how he had tried to control his temper, and had been provoked over and over again by his companions. I observed him carefully during all this, and thought I saw in his pale face and eager, questioning eyes, that were full of light, traces of a nature that, however abused, had still capabilities of better things. So I took his hand and drew him toward me, and felt his poor thin arms and looked kindly in his face, and said, "My boy, I believe there is good in you. You have had a hard time battling with ugly feelings and bad passions. Suppose I become your surety to the superintendent, and ask him to forgive you this time and give you another chance; will you do your best to behave yourself?" "Yes, sir, I will," said he, and the superintendent being willing to take me as surety the poor little fellow was released and joined the other boys.

Here was a wreck indeed! A vicious, passionate spirit in a poor paralytic, crippled body, and he a boy of fifteen years! Who is to blame for all this? His own belief was that his bodily affliction came on him at three years of age, but for aught we knew he might have been born so. No matter which. Think of the condition of the family where a helpless child could be so cruelly treated! Think of the father who could make sport of the afflictions of his own son! Think of the brutality of a family which could make such a wreck of a human nature!

I feel that the little attention I showed him has helped him to control his temper and behave himself. He is not one of those who will ever play much in the streets of the city, because he is lame; but I hope that hereafter his feet, no longer lame, will walk the golden streets of the heavenly city.

What use can we make of this passage of Scripture? What is its application to us?

Our city has never been destroyed. For a hundred years

no hostile foot has trodden these streets. We need no wall around it to protect us from enemies or wild beasts. We have no enemies except evil-disposed persons of our own population. Our streets are full of boys and girls, but they are not all playing the sports of childhood. It ought to be so. But there are some who are driven from their homes by drunken, vicious parents to make their own living—poor, shivering, barefooted boys and girls, hanging about the back entrances to hotels and other houses, begging for the crumbs which fall from the rich man's table. There is no light in their eyes, no joy in their hearts.

There are others who go out early in the morning to do a long day's work in the factory or in the mill, toiling through the weary hours, going home after night to a cheerless home, having no time for play, no time for anything but hard, hard work. Poor children! my heart aches for them.

We must make things better for them. You who listen to me to-day are all in childhood or in early youth. You will soon be men, holding, many of you, places of trust and responsibility here and in other cities. You will be surrounded by children, your own and others'; you will be school-directors, school-teachers, workers in Sunday-schools. Always be on the side of children; take their part when it is right to do so; stand by them in times of trial; never shut your ears against their complaints, their silent, mute appeals; make their lives bright and happy; and remember that a condition of the highest prosperity is that when "the streets of the city are full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof."

Meanwhile, enjoy to the utmost all your own sports and games. A true boyhood is that where boys rush from the school-room to the play-ground with shouts and laughter. Do not repress your feelings; give vent to them in shouts: it is good for your lungs. Play is good for the body and the

mind. There is nothing inconsistent in the first scholar in his class being the first in the games. The brain works best in a sound, vigorous body, and a boy can't have a sound and vigorous body without active exercise in play.

Neither is it inconsistent in a *Christian* boy to be among the foremost in play. Religion is not seclusion: that was the old idea. The world is older and wiser now. I would hope there are Christian boys here—boys who are not afraid nor ashamed to have it known that they mean to serve God in the world. Let me say to such, “Don't think for a moment that this should keep you from the play-ground and from the fullest enjoyment of play. Be among the foremost, the most noisy if you will, only don't do anything mean or unmanly; don't play an unhandsome trick on another; don't deceive another except in the stratagems of play; don't impose on another, especially on a younger boy; don't be engaged in any scheme to defraud anybody of anything; be open and free-hearted and free-spoken; and remember that all healthful, innocent play is quite consistent with the most devout and conscientious service of God your heavenly Father, whose will it is to have the streets of the city ‘full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.’”



## THE BIBLE.

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NEARLY half a century ago, in the southern part of Scotland, a man distinguished above most men was dying. His life had been one of unusual mental toil, and his busy, overworked brain had yielded to the extraordinary pressure at the comparatively early age of sixty-one. In the hope that a sea-voyage and a visit to the lands of the Mediterranean might check the disease, his royal master the king of England had placed at the service of Sir Walter Scott a national vessel.

But there was no relief to the overtaxed brain, and after a few months of vain experiment the great author was slowly carried back to his home at Abbotsford.

It was a splendid house, built by himself, perhaps one of the finest creations of his splendid genius. He was hardly conscious when they lifted him from the carriage to his dining-room, where they had made his bed; shortly after, in an easy-chair, they wheeled him about the grand entrance-hall, through his beautiful study and into his great library. Presently they rolled the chair up to the great central bay-window, which commanded a view of the lawn, the terrace, the beautiful meadow and the river Tweed, whose ripples over its stony bottom could be distinctly heard through the open window. No one who has seen that view can ever forget it. The bright sun of a September day was sending its warm beams through the great window, and the sick man, wearied with the gentle exercise, lay quiet and helpless, surrounded by his family. His life had been spent in making books;

more than one hundred volumes were the creations of his own genius. Twenty thousand volumes, many of them most rare and curious, the productions of the finest minds the world has ever seen, crowded the shelves which lined the noble apartment. He requested his son-in-law, Mr Lockhart, to read to him. The question was asked, "What book?" "Need you ask?" said he. "There is but one."

The world is full of books. If the author of Ecclesiastes could say twenty-eight hundred years ago, "Of making many books there is no end," what could he say in our day with the accumulations of all these centuries? The multiplication of books within a few years is truly marvellous. When I was a boy there were few books except in the libraries of colleges, the libraries of lawyers, doctors, and ministers.

The books that were within the reach of children could be read in less than a week; and they were not all of the best character.

*Now* every Sunday-school has a library, and almost every boy and girl (except the very poorest) who cares for books at all has his or her own little collection of books.

A few years ago the best, the most acceptable present that could be given to a young person was a book, and it was quite the fashion in families and in Sunday-schools to give books as Christmas presents. *Now* a great many other things are thought of instead of books, because books are so plenty and so cheap that we do not value them highly.

It is less than five hundred years since the art of printing from types\* was discovered, though the Chinese are said

\* The first complete printed book from cut metal type was the Mazarine (Latin Vulgate) Bible, A. D. 1450 to 1455 (without date), printed by Gutenberg. A copy of this, on paper, was sold at the Henry Perkins' sale in London, 1873, for £3000. A copy of a later impression on vellum, probably about 1458 (without date), printed by Fust and Schoeffer, at the same sale brought £2800: about \$29,000 for two Bibles!

to have printed books from blocks a thousand years before that time.

When you take your seat in a railway car on a steam road for a journey of a hundred miles or so, the newsboys pass through the train with their arms full of books, which they offer to the passengers for sale. Thus books are forced upon you almost, and thousands of volumes (not all the best books) are scattered over the land. So sure are the boys of sales, and prompt sales too, that generally it is not until they have offered all their books that they pass through the cars offering candies and fruit.

What did Sir Walter Scott mean when he said there was "but one *book*"? Did he mean that it was the best book in the world? Why, anybody will admit that. And if he meant nothing more than that, it is an expression which has been uttered by many a person besides him, and would hardly be worth quoting and handing down from that day to this. I think he meant more. I think what he said was the expression of his sense of the infinite value of the book—that it was not only the best book, but that, compared with all other books, it was as if there were no other book at all!—that the world could better do without all other books than it could do without the Bible.

In the remarks which I shall make I shall assume what none of you will dispute, that the Bible is the best book. Let me give you some reasons for this:

1. *It is God's Book.* I do not mean by this that God wrote the Bible with pen and ink or with pencil, as I wrote this lecture, or as *he* wrote the ten commandments on two tables of stone with his own finger. But I mean that the men who wrote the different parts of the Bible wrote what God told them to write. That he, by the Holy Ghost, filled their minds with the truth which he wished to make known, so

that holy men spake and wrote as they were moved by the Spirit of God. This is what we mean by inspiration—the inspiration of the Scriptures. This is why I say the Bible is *God's book*; and this being so, it is of course the best book in the world.

2. *The Bible is Man's Book.* It was made for man, as the Sabbath was. Before the art of writing was discovered or revealed, God spoke to men sometimes with an audible voice, as I am now speaking to you—sometimes in visions and in dreams when men were asleep. These sayings, these communications of God to man, were made known by one man to another by conversation and discourse, and were handed down from father to son, and from family to family, and from tribe to tribe, and from nation to nation. This we call tradition. But when Moses was born and educated in Egypt and in all the learning of the Egyptians, at that time the most learned people in the world, it is supposed that God directed Moses to write that part of the Bible which we call *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, and perhaps the book of *Job*. These five or six books and all the others in the Old and New Testament were written for us for our learning—for man—and, as God directed the book to be written for man, man's book, it must be the best book in the world.

I shall tell you some other things about the Bible, though not all of them can fairly be called arguments to prove that it is the best: this I hope you believe already:

1. It is the *oldest* book. So far as our history goes, we have no book so old as the Bible. The Chinese say that their government was established when Abraham was a boy. If that is so, they may have had at that early day a language and a literature and books. I don't know, but I find it difficult to believe it. But in what we call civilized nations cer-

Talks with Boys and Girls.



“The Bible is man’s book.”

p. 26.



tainly the oldest of all books is the Bible. It gives the history of the creation of the world, of our first parents, of the garden in which the Lord God placed them, of the first sin, of their being driven out of that garden, of the first murder, of the punishment of the murderer Cain, of the multiplication of the race, of its awful wickedness, of the flood, of the ark, of Noah and his family saved, of the scattering of mankind at Babel when they had again multiplied and grown wicked—events none of which we could know but for the Bible.

2. The Bible is the *hardest* book in the world to understand. It was not written in our English language. The Old Testament was written almost entirely in Hebrew—a language which though spoken at one time by millions and millions of people, would be lost to us now but for the Scriptures. The chief books in the Hebrew language that have come down to our time are the Jerusalem Talmud and the Babylonian Talmud. The Talmuds are sacred books of the Jews, full of the most minute and particular directions for all the duties and transactions of life from the cradle to the grave. They contain traditions which the Scribes and Pharisees in our Saviour's time insisted on binding as heavy burdens on the hearts and lives of the people—"a yoke," as it was said, which "neither our fathers nor we were able to bear."

The Old Testament is the composition of about twenty-five different authors, while the New Testament, written all in Greek, excepting the Gospel by Matthew, which was in the Hebrew or Syro-Chaldaic, was written by eight or nine authors, and from the date when the first book was written to the last was many hundreds of years. You can see, therefore, how a book written by so many different men, and these men living so far apart in point of time, should be so hard to understand.

There have been more volumes written to explain the Scriptures than have been written and printed on any other book whatever. And more men have been engaged in studying the Bible, and have spent more years in studying it, than have been engaged in the study of any other book in the world.

And then the order of the books as we have them in our Bibles is not as they were written; and I have a Bible where the various books are placed in the order in which they were supposed to be written—in chronological order, as we say; in parts also. Then the books are broken up into chapters and verses; and the writers did not so write them. It is very convenient indeed to have these divisions, and I don't know that we could get along without them for references. Of course I am speaking now of man's part in making the book—the bringing it from Hebrew and Greek into the English language and making it into chapters and verses.

3. But the Bible is also the *easiest* book to understand. How can this be? How can it be the *hardest* and the *easiest*? It is the easiest because all that is necessary to learn from it as to the way of salvation may be learned by the plainest and most uncultivated mind. No learning beyond the simple ability to *read* is necessary to enable one to understand the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the Sermon on the Mount. The parables of the Saviour, though volumes of profound learning have been written to unfold their meaning, are so plain, in their application at least, that he that runs may read. The poor black man in his log cabin with only one of the Gospels, which he spells out by the aid of his pine torch; the sailor in his forecabin by the dim light of his swinging lamp, with the Bible in his hand; the little child just learning to read the parables,—may all understand enough to point them to “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.”



The apostle Paul in writing his Second Epistle to Timothy reminds him that from a "child" he had known the holy Scriptures. It is very evident from this that not only is it our duty to teach the Scriptures to children, but that they are able to learn them. And this, I take it, means not only the committing of the verses of the Scriptures to memory—a custom somewhat out of fashion now—not merely telling the beautiful stories of the Bible to children, but explaining the Scriptures to those who are quite young.

This explaining of the Scriptures is the principal object of all Sunday-schools—or it ought to be so—and of preaching too. But, unfortunately (as I think), now-a-days some other things are allowed to come in and push aside the great purpose. Singing, addresses, missionary speeches and collections, festivals, anniversaries, even the library, are all (or ought to be) subordinate to the great object, that of teaching the Scriptures.

Suppose we should awake some morning and find that the Bible had disappeared in the night—that when you opened your own Bible that lay on the table in your bed-room, instead of the well-known printed page, the pages were all white, and that instead of hundreds of pages of printed matter, it should be only a blank book! And suppose that every one in the house should have the same experience, and that every one you meet should tell you the same story, and that all the Bibles in schools, in churches, in libraries, in bookstores, in families—in fact all the Bibles in the world—should prove to be only *blank* books—splendidly bound, many of them, in gold and velvet and silk, and lettered on the back "Holy Bible"—but all simply blank books!

And suppose that in looking into other books it should be found that every quotation from the Bible was obliterated, and that only a blank space represented the place where the Scripture quotation was only yesterday! How utterly dark

the world would be! What would people do? How many thousand volumes besides the Bible would be utterly ruined! What would a great library be worth with no Bible in it, and with blank sentences and pages that had been filled with extracts from the Scriptures? It would be worse, infinitely worse, than the surprise, the horror, the amazement which filled the land of Egypt when at midnight the destroying angel struck dead the eldest born in every family in all that land except the Jews. And then suppose that, in addition to all this, every passage of Scripture which we now treasure up in our memories and our hearts were forgotten and could not be recalled, so that the Bible could not be reconstructed; and suppose, further, that there should come a voice which should say that God would give no other revelation—that there would be no more inspiration, no more Bible for ever! *What would men do? What would you do?* Ah me! is there any other book than the Bible?

There was once a poor blind girl that had learned to read by her fingers from raised letters in books that are printed especially for the blind. Subsequently she lost the sense of touch in the ends of her fingers, and she could no longer read her Bible.

Ah, what an affliction was this! What should she do?

As she gathered up her precious Bible in her arms, holding it by her wrists to her mouth to kiss it “Farewell,” she found that her lips could feel the words. So she learned to read the Bible with her *lips* through kissing it, and all the rest of her life she read it through her lips.

God forbid that any of you should ever be reduced to this expedient! But remember that there is a blindness far worse than that of the eyes. Our Saviour speaks of those who, “having eyes, see not.” Mark viii. 18. Let us pray especially against blindness of heart.

## THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN.



EX. ii. 6 :

She saw the child, and behold the babe wept.

ON the margin of a mighty river many thousands of miles from here, and several thousands of years ago, a poor woman, a slave and the wife of a slave, put down her little boy, a babe only three months old, trembling and praying before she could bring herself to commit him to the broad and deep river. She had made a little basket or boat out of the rushes that grow in marshy places. She had made it water-tight; she had guarded it in every way against the dangers of the water and the crocodiles; she knew that certain death awaited the child if she kept him at home; she had no other home and no other country to send him to; and so she felt that it was safer and better to float him out on the river and trust in God to take care of the child, as she, the mother, could do so no longer.

For the king of Egypt, who greatly feared the rapidly increasing numbers of his Hebrew slaves, made laws to keep them down in number and influence. And one of these laws, and a most effectual one, was, that all the male infants that should be born to the Hebrews should be put to death!

When this mother's child was born—a boy, and a beautiful boy—she determined to save him if possible, and instead of

doing what else she would most gladly have done, and what every mother would have done—show him with all fondness and pride to all her friends—she hid him.

How she could do this in her little mud cabin, surrounded by other families, I cannot tell you, but I know that when he came to be three months old she could conceal him no longer, and then, as a last chance for his life, she prepared this little basket, like a boat, to set him adrift on the river, with no food, no sails, no pilot, nothing but her prayers to follow the little voyager on the great deep.

You have seen the mother put her infant to rest on her lap, and when it was fast and sound asleep you have seen her put it softly down in the cradle, tuck in the clothes all around, and then turn away to do her household work, knowing that the child was perfectly safe, because it was well and in its own mother's house and the mother's eye was every few moments turned toward it.

With a tenderness and care exceeding all this must the mother of Moses have soothed his cries and given him his natural food, and when he was fast and sound asleep laid him gently down in his little boat-cradle, and then tucked in the clothes on every side, and then placed the little ark in the water; and then she must have taken one last fond kiss, so gentle as not to awaken him, and then left him alone. No, not alone, for the great God whom she worshipped, and whom you and I worship, looked down on that helpless infant, and he was in perfect safety. I am not sure that the mother had full faith that God would save her child. I hope she had. But with a true mother's instinct she told her daughter to stay near the river and see what would happen.

Presently the king's daughter came down to the river to wash, and when she saw the ark among the flags she sent one of her maidens to fetch it. And when the ark was

brought to her, she uncovered it, and the babe, awaking from its sleep and seeing strange faces bending over it, broke out into the frightened cry of a young infant: "And behold the babe wept, and she had compassion on him." She at once comprehended the matter. She knew the law; she knew that some poor Hebrew mother had chosen the risks of the great river, rather than see her boy murdered before her eyes.

Just at this moment the child's sister steps up, and seeing the embarrassment of the princess as to what she should do with so young an infant, she asks if she may be allowed to go and call a nurse. And not merely a nurse, but, having heard the princess say, "This is one of the Hebrew's children," she says, "Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee? And the maid went and called the child's mother." I do not think she had far to go; I think the mother must have lingered near the spot—perhaps not so near the river as the daughter—to see what would befall the child.

At any rate, the mother was not slow to come. And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, "Take this child away and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And the woman took the child and nursed it."

I wonder if the princess knew that the nurse was the child's mother? I rather think not, else she would not have spoken of wages.

I do not think the mother cared for wages. The recovery of the child from what might have been a watery grave, the right to have it again in her arms, to nurse it, to love it, to care for it and train it, was as much as she desired—was everything to her. "And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son."

You have all seen pictures, more or less graphic, of the finding of Moses. Indeed, in all ages from that day to this, whether in the rude frescoes and hieroglyphics of Egypt or in the glowing tints of more modern painting, the artists have struggled for the highest conceptions of that scene. The most simple and natural and beautiful illustration that I have ever seen was in the annex to the Memorial Hall at the Centennial grounds. I saw it first at the Academy of the Fine Arts in the city of Milan in Italy, and I am glad to know that it has been bought by one of our citizens and will remain in Philadelphia. It is a group in marble consisting of two figures. One is that of the attendant of the princess, "her maiden," a young woman of grace and beauty in the Egyptian dress, who has just lifted from his little basket of rushes the infant Moses. The little boy is lying in her arms, and she is apparently just about to raise him to the princess, her countenance expressing all the tenderness and sympathy which may be supposed to fill her woman's heart at the sight of the weeping, helpless babe. The princess herself is not represented in the group, but the spectator feels that she is there and that the maiden sees her.

The other figure is that of an infant of three months, of surpassing beauty, with a look of appealing, touching pitifulness that goes at once to your heart. The sculptor, following the thought of the old masters of the chisel and the brush, has made two little horns of marble to spring from the infant's brow, for so did they, in the old times, illustrate their conception of power.

I read these lines which follow because they are very simple and beautiful, and may interest the younger boys. They do not follow with accuracy the Scripture story. They were written by Mrs. Sigourney, an American poetess, more than forty years ago:

## MOSES.

There was a king of Egypt ; and he made  
A cruel law, that every infant son  
Born to the Hebrew race throughout his realm  
Should be destroyed. Think what a wicked law,  
That those sweet, sinless infants should be slain !  
— But one fond mother hid her babe away,  
So that they could not find it ; and she went  
Silent and gave it food, and when it cried  
She softly hushed it, lest its voice might guide  
The murderers to their prey. So it became  
Exceeding fair, and health upon its cheek  
Gleamed with a rosy tint.

Three months passed by,  
And its glad eye grew brighter when it heard  
The mother's footstep, though it did not know  
Why she would lay her finger on its lip  
To still its joyous mirth. With bitter pang  
She gazed upon the beauty of its smile,  
And shuddering heard its laughter ; for she knew  
She could no longer hide him. So one morn  
She wrapped him closely in a cradle-ark,  
And with a hurried footstep laid him down  
Among the rushes by the river's brink.  
Strangely the wild eye of the wondering boy  
Gazed on her from the water, and his arms,  
Stretched from their reedy prison, sought in vain  
To twine about her neck.

She turned away,  
And broken-hearted sought unto her God,  
And poured that prayer which none but mothers pray  
For their endangered babes.

It was the Nile  
On which she laid her son in his slight ark  
Of woven rushes. She remembered well  
The gaunt and wily crocodile who loves  
To haunt these turbid waters. But she knew  
That *He* who made the crocodile could stay  
His ravening jaws, and in his mighty arm  
She put her trust.

Close by the river's brink  
 Her little mournful daughter stayed to see  
 What would befall the babe, and her sweet voice  
 Did faintly struggle with her grief to sing  
 The hymn that soothed her brother.

Then there came  
 Proud Egypt's princess with her flowing robes,  
 Walking that way. And when she saw the ark  
 Among the flags, she bade her maidens haste  
 And bring it to her.

Lo! the infant wept.  
 And gazing on its polished brow so pale,  
 And wet with tears, pity and love sprang up  
 In her kind bosom, and she took the child  
 To her own palace-home. But still he wept  
 Like a disheartened stranger. So she bade  
 To call a nurse, and *lo the mother came!*  
 She who had sown in tears did reap in joy;  
 And when she pressed her dear one to her breast,  
 And fondly lulled him to a gentle sleep,  
 Know ye how warm the thrill of praise rose up  
 Unto the God of Israel? So this babe  
 Of the poor Hebrew in the royal dome  
 Of Egypt's monarch grew, in all the lore  
 Of that wise realm instructed. He became  
 A prophet mighty both in word and deed.  
 And when you learn, my children, how he broke  
 The yoke of bondage from his people's neck,  
 And smote with his strong rod the parting sea,  
 And brought pure water from the rock, and stood  
 On Sinai with his Maker face to face,  
 You will bethink you of the simple tale—  
*The ark of rushes and the mother's prayer.*

“And behold the babe wept. And she had compassion on him.” Who shall say how much the infant's *tears* had to do with the compassion of the princess? If, when the ark or basket was opened, the child had slept on undisturbed, unawakened, beautiful as it was, the king's daughter might



have been content to hand it over to her maidens or make some other disposition of it; but when the babe *wept*, sobbing and crying, as we may suppose, her woman's heart was touched, and she at once adopted it. "Take this child and nurse it for me" was the command she gave to the woman who came and offered herself as a nurse.

It is impossible, unless one has a heart utterly hardened—it is impossible to be indifferent to the weeping of a little child, more especially if that child is an orphan; and all children who are deprived by any cause of the love and care of their parents are orphans.

It is this appeal from suffering, helpless childhood which leads to the founding of hospitals for sick children, and any one who goes through the wards of such a hospital and sees the long rows of clean white beds, and the poor little sick children lying all helpless and suffering there, and yet with the best skill of the physician and the kindest attention from the officers and visiting friends,—any one may see that it all comes from the same appeal of the helpless child which induced a royal princess to adopt the child of a slave.

Even writers of fiction have used their art to produce these effects. Who can tell how much the story of "Tiny Tim," Bob Cratchet's little lame boy, has done to soften many a heart at Christmas-time and brighten many an otherwise dull home?

Who can tell how the story of poor little "Paul Dombey," the motherless boy, surrounded with all the appliances of wealth, and yet neglected and famishing for all that is bright and good in home,—who can tell how many hearts have been softened and touched and melted by this sad story, all imaginary though it be, and led to do something to help and cheer unhappy children?

One of the most gifted of all the daughters of England,

Mrs. Browning, has in those inexpressibly sad lines which she calls "The Cry of the Children" made such an appeal for the wretched children of her country, who toil in the mills and mines, that no heart can fail to be impressed :

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,  
 And their looks are sad to see,  
 For the *man's* hoary anguish draws and presses  
 Down the cheeks of infancy.  
 "Your old earth," they say, "is very dreary ;  
 Our young feet," they say, "are very weak ;  
 Few paces have we taken, yet are weary,  
 Our grave-rest is very far to seek.  
 Ask the *aged* why *they* weep, and not the *children*,  
 For the outside earth is cold ;  
 And we young ones stand without, in our bewildering,  
 And the graves are for the old.

"True," say the children, "it may happen  
 That we die before our time.  
 Little Alice died last year—her grave is shapen  
 Like a snowball in the rime.  
 We looked into the pit prepared to take her.  
 Was no room for any work in the close clay !  
 From the sleep wherein she lieth, none shall wake her,  
 Crying 'Get up, little Alice ! it is day.'  
 If you listen by that grave in sun and shower,  
 With your ear down, little Alice never cries ;  
 Could we see her face, be sure we should not know her,  
 For the *smile* has time for *growing* in her eyes.  
 And merry go her moments, lulled and stilled in  
 The shroud by the kirk-chime !  
 It is good when it happens," say the children,  
 "That we die before our time."

Alas ! alas ! the children, they are seeking  
 Death in life as best to have ;  
 They are binding up their hearts away from breaking  
 With the cerements from the grave.  
 Go out, children, from the mine and from the city ;  
 Sing out, children, as the little thrushes do.



have never known anything better ; we were born so, and our parents have made us so. But you can help us to rise if you will. Do not turn away from us, then you that are strong and good.”

To the credit of our common humanity, be it said that that cry is never entirely unheeded. Not always the *wisest* things or the *best* things are done for their relief, but more is done now than ever before, and sympathy for the poor young children is widening and deepening every day.

Who could have thought that the little foundling, the waif, taken from the water where he would soon have perished, the little slave-boy, the son of a despised and degraded race,—who could have thought that one so deserted, so poor, so helpless, would ever come to anything? Thousands of children must have perished under that bloody law; why save this one?

The answer comes that it was part of the plan of God that this boy should be rescued from the degraded condition in which he was born, that he should be educated, that he should be trained in all useful knowledge, that he should be in sympathy with his people even while living in the palace as the adopted son of the princess, and that, when the proper time should come, he would be prepared for that wonderful work of delivering a whole people from bondage. .

Or who shall say to what heights of influence and usefulness some of you boys may attain? The world is before you; there is no limit to your progress in all that is good and true if you will only see to it that you make the best use of your advantages here; if you will only see to it that your character is right in the sight of God; if you will only see to it that you depend on the infinite Redeemer as your best friend in this life and your everlasting portion in the endless life.

## ABSALOM.



I SPEAK to you to-day of a young man who had everything that this world can give to make him happy, but who lived wickedly and died miserably.

Absalom was the son of a king, and his mother was a king's daughter, so he was of royal descent on both sides. He had all the advantages of high birth and a liberal education. He was rich and cultivated ; he was young and handsome ; in fact, remarkable for his personal beauty. There is nothing within the scope of a young man's wishes that he did not possess. Although not the eldest son, there was really only one life between him and the throne. His father had established the kingdom, was a man of God himself, and there was every prospect that his sons would come to the throne.

Absalom had killed his half-brother Amnon ; he had not killed him in the heat of passion when his blood was up, but had waited two years, until Amnon might suppose that the offence he had committed was forgotten, and then Absalom invited the king his father and all the family to go to his farm in the country to a sheep-shearing, which seems to have been a high festival.

The servants of Absalom were instructed to watch their opportunity, and when they found Amnon full of wine and off his guard they were to fall upon him and put him to death with the sword. They did so ; they assassinated the king's son, his oldest son, the heir to the throne. You may

imagine the consternation ; every man rushed for his mule (kings' sons had mules instead of horses) and hurried back to Jerusalem.

The king was overwhelmed with distress and horror, for the first word brought was that *all* his sons were slain ; and even when the truth reached him, “and when the first bitter pang was over, he put on mourning for Amnon, and wore it a whole year,” and mourned for him every day.

Absalom himself escaped and sought shelter with his mother's father, who was a petty king in a neighboring country.

But Absalom grew weary of his exile, and after three years he longed to get back again to Jerusalem. David, too, as time passed, and when he had ceased to mourn for Amnon,—David, too, grieved much for Absalom. Wicked as he was, he was still his son, and he wanted him home again. His general or prime minister, Joab, discovered this, and with an artful policy so common in those days, and not unknown now in our time, he conceived and carried out a trick (which I have not time now to describe) by which David's consent was obtained for Absalom's return. He might return to the country, but not to the court ; he could not see the king's face.

But this did not suit Absalom—this was not what he wanted ; he wanted *complete restoration* ; he wanted to be as he was before he murdered his brother ; and as he was now the heir-apparent to the throne, it seemed to him very hard that the old king his father would not reinstate him.

It is very probable that he was surrounded by flatterers, young men of his own age, who would encourage him in all kinds of ambitious schemes. He was exceedingly handsome in face and figure, tall and commanding in appearance—just the man, they would say, for a king (you remember what a grand

looking man Saul, the first king, was); and although no right-minded man had anything to complain of in David's government, still the king was growing old, and must after a while pass away.

So, after bearing this coldness from his father, he determined to bring about a better state of things. He sent for Joab, who was his friend, to ask his good offices in reconciling his father to him; but Joab did not respond—perhaps he was afraid to venture again on such dangerous ground—and he sent a second time. Still Joab paid no attention to his message. Now mark a piece of villainy of the basest kind!

He called his servants and said, "See, Joab's field is near mine, and he hath barley there; go set it on fire. And Absalom's servants set the field on fire."

They did so, and sure enough Joab came. I do not know what conversation occurred between these two men. I do not know how Absalom could look Joab in the face after so base an act; but the result was, Joab again lent his good offices, an interview was effected, Absalom was brought before David; he fell down on his face before him, the king raised him up, kissed him, and all the old estrangement was over and forgiven!

Now, would you not think Absalom would behave himself? Would you not think that a son who had been so wicked, who had assassinated his brother, and who was now fully forgiven and reinstated,—would you not think he would try to do right?

But he was altogether wrong; there seems to have been nothing right or good in him. He at once sets himself to work mischief; he begins to live in greater state than ever; he has a chariot and horses and fifty runners; he lives like a monarch himself; and this is the way in which he strove to make himself popular with the subjects of his father:

“And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was so, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city art thou? And he said, Thy servant is of one of the tribes of Israel.

“And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee.

“Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!

“And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him.

“And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.” 2 Sam. xv. 2-6.

You see now how all this would affect the people. Remember, he was the probable heir to the throne, and the people whom he treated thus might reasonably hope that when he came to be king he would remember them and do them favors. Politicians do just so now.

Absalom carried on this thing for some four years, and then, getting tired of waiting for David to die, he determined to overthrow him. He made up a story to this effect: that he had, when in exile, vowed that when restored to his father he would go down to Hebron and hold a festival there.

It was all a lie, but David believed him and gave his consent to go. Absalom took with him two hundred men as guests, he said, for the feast, but really as the nucleus of an army of insurrection. Then he sent out messengers over the land for all disaffected people to meet him at Hebron. They came in great numbers. Absalom put himself at their head, and they proclaimed him king.



The news soon reached Jerusalem ; David lost heart at once, and gave up without a struggle. I pass over for want of time the details of his flight from Jerusalem, his going up the Mount of Olives barefooted, weeping, heart-broken ; the forced flight up and down the stony paths toward the Jordan ; the pursuit of Absalom and his army ; the night-passage of the river, and the escape to the walled city of Mahanaim on the east of the Jordan.

It would seem that Absalom's army pursued David and shut him up in the fortified city of Mahanaim, and laid siege to the city. How long it continued we do not know, but the garrison was well supplied with provisions and not likely to yield soon. Something, we know not what—perhaps an unsuccessful attack—compelled the army to raise the siege, and the troops of Absalom were withdrawn.

Now was David's time to attack. His army, whether well supplied with weapons or not, was well officered (and you know how important that is), for it was divided into three corps under Joab the commander-in-chief, and Abishai and Ittai. They numbered probably twenty thousand men. David wanted to place himself at the head, for a reason which will appear, but his chief captains would not permit him, for they said his life was worth ten thousand of theirs, and besides (this was a stronger reason than the other) in the event of a reverse he, the king, would be at hand with reserves.

The old warrior-king was therefore compelled to see his army go to battle without him.

As the troops filed past him through the city gates he must have been struck with their appearance, their numbers, and their discipline ; and no ruler can look on such a sight without the profoundest emotions.

Shall it be victory and the restoration of the kingdom to David, or defeat and destruction ? Shall those brave, hardy

men, so full of courage and patriotism, ever come back alive? Shall Absalom fill the cup of his iniquity and slay his aged father?

Some such questions, we might suppose, would arise in the mind of the aged king and fill him with distress, and many would be the cautions he would give his chief captains as they passed him.

But no, not a word of the probable issue of the coming battle, so far as it concerned himself or the nation; but, in the hearing of the troops he charged his three generals, "Deal gently, for my sake, with the young man Absalom." He knew that his son had forfeited his life, and would not be likely to receive mercy on his *own* account, but he said, "Deal gently with the boy for his father's sake."

So the troops all passed out and on their way to the battle, and David the old king remained in his stronghold awaiting the result. It must have been a time of great anxiety; the army of Absalom was much larger than David's. There would be desperate fighting. There was no artillery to carry destruction and death at long range; there were no bursting shells filling the air with their horrid explosions and scattering fragments of human bodies in every direction; "with sword and spear and such other weapons as came to hand men fought with each other in personal deadly conflict;" there were no telegraphs, no messengers on swift horses, to carry back to head-quarters tidings of the progress of the battle; there was nothing to do but wait in silence and in terror for the final issue. The hours must have seemed very long to David, left alone in the city-gate to watch and wait for the end.

The historian tells us that the army of Absalom was utterly routed; that a panic seems to have seized them; that their loss was fearful; a number equal to the whole of

David's army perished on the field ; and in the flight through the marshes and thickets of the forest near which the battle was fought many must have been lost.

Absalom himself perished miserably ; trying to escape on his mule, overwhelmed with terror, he somehow was caught by his head, for he was very tall, or by his long hair, in the low, hanging branches of a forest tree, and the mule rushing from under him, he was left helpless, hanging, an easy prey to his enemies, deserted utterly by his followers.

Joab, being told of this, came up and despatched him by driving three spears through his body, and immediately after his wretched death they threw his body into a pit or ravine and covered it deep with stones.

Thus ended the battle. Now who shall carry the news to David? Joab, who well knew that the king's command had been disobeyed, was in no hurry to send word to the king. In those days, as now in the East, swift runners were used to convey important intelligence. Ahimaaz, the priest's son, a famous runner, was anxious to distinguish himself on this occasion, but Joab would not allow him to be the bearer of sad tidings to the king ; he was too good a man for such a purpose ; but Cush, of whom we know little else, and who probably was of foreign descent, was allowed to run and tell the king the result of the battle and what he had seen.

So Cush started out to run, but almost immediately Ahimaaz came back to Joab and insisted on being allowed to go also. Joab remonstrated with him, trying to persuade him against it, but finally yielded and told him to run.

David sat between the gates, the outer and the inner gate, waiting to hear the result of the battle. He had sent a watchman up to the chamber in the tower over the gate, to be on the lookout for any messenger from the field. The watchman saw afar off a man running alone and with all his

might from the direction of the battle toward the city. And he called out to the porter who kept the gate, and the porter told the king. And the king said, "If he be alone there is tidings in his mouth;" that is, it is not a flight from the field of battle, else there would be many more running; if he be alone, he is a messenger.

Soon the watchman saw another man running, and he called down again to the porter, and again the porter told the king, and the king said, "He also bringeth tidings."

And the watchman said, "Methinketh the running of the foremost is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok." And the king said, "He is a good man, and cometh with good tidings." And he eagerly awaited his approach. Presently the panting messenger "called, and said unto the king, All is well." And he fell down to the earth upon his face before the king. And then, without waiting for David's eager questions, he broke out in congratulations to the king on the signal victory which the Lord had granted to the king's arms, and the utter overthrow of the enemy.

He thought this would fill David's heart with gladness, but David hardly listened to the story, but, almost interrupting the account, he says, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" Ah, now comes the trial. What shall Ahimaaz reply? He sees the heart of David is not with the victors, but with the vanquished. Shall he tell him the truth? Can he crush the old father's heart by telling him that his son is slain? No, he can't do that; so he said, "When Joab sent the king's servant, and me thy servant, I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what it was."

Disappointed, and perhaps doubting the statement, the king said unto him, "Turn aside and stand here."

Then came the other runner, Cush, who, although the first to start, had been outstripped in the race.

He rushed in with the same message: "Tidings, my lord the king; for the Lord hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee." And he met the same response, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" Ah, now comes the sad reply—no evasion, no softening of the dreadful news, no delicacy of thought or expression, but out come the thrilling words, "The enemies of my Lord the king and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is."

It was not necessary to say more. The words, although not as direct as we should use in our day, were in the usual form of Eastern rhetoric. The king understood them too well. He asked no further questions, but turned away all in the bitterness of a broken and crushed spirit to seek a place of retirement.

"The king was much moved," but with the instinctive dread of the exposure of his grief, he went up the flight of stairs to the chamber over the gate. But he could not restrain his grief. And as he went up, step by step, his burdened heart broke out with irrepressible grief, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

It is impossible to keep back our sympathy from the heart-broken father. We know not how long he walked up and down the floor with bowed head and streaming eyes, or whether he lay prostrate on his face. We *do* know that he gave himself up to his uncontrollable grief, and that when Joab saw that the king's sorrow had saddened the whole army, so that instead of coming back to the city in triumph, rejoicing in a victory which had utterly destroyed the rebellion, they crept in by stealth and ashamed,—when Joab saw this, and forced his way into the king's presence to remonstrate with him on his unmanly and unkingly conduct, he found him with his face still covered, and crying over and

over again with a loud voice, "O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!"

I do not know anything in all literature more sad and touching than this. To us it would seem that it was extravagant emotion, and that it was unmanly in a king to give way to grief over a son so abandoned, so rebellious. Joab thought so, and said so; but the *king* was also a *father*, and the father could not forget that the young man was his son. When he charged the captains in the hearing of the troops to deal gently with him, he spoke of him as "the young man," thus appealing to their forbearance, their pity; but when he mourns him dead, it is "O Absalom, my son, my son!"

I draw two lessons only from this sad story. One is, that high birth and a fine personal appearance and great wealth and strong friends and every earthly good will not certainly bring happiness. Here was a young man who had all these; he must have been a gay, dashing, splendid young fellow, the admiration, the envy, of all his young companions. He was a king's son; he might possibly in the course of nature and by inheritance have become king himself; but he was vain, proud, ambitious, mean, ungrateful, deceitful, rebellious, corrupt, and wicked generally in an extraordinary degree. There is hardly a sin of which he was not guilty; he lived a base, abominable life, and died a miserable, deplorable death. Who would want to be such a man?

The other lesson is, that notwithstanding all this the king his father *loved* him.

It is probable that many of you are *fatherless*. Although you were very young when you met this loss, it is greater than you now can appreciate; you can never go to a father and ask advice when you need it; you will never know how it gladdens, how it rejoices, a father's heart to know that you are doing well, that you are successful in life.

I well remember how my own good and kind father sympathized with me and encouraged me in my early struggles for a foothold in this great city; and when success came by the good providence of God, how it grieved me that I could not receive *his* congratulations, for he had died before this occurred.

But, my young friends, I point you to your heavenly Father. He is infinitely stronger, kinder, more loving than David was to *his* son. When you do well, you are sure of his approving smile; when you are unsuccessful and disheartened, you are sure of his encouragements; when you do wrong, you are sure of his pity; when you repent, you are sure of his love and forgiveness.

Will you not go to him, then? And no matter how sinful you have been, if you will only repent, if you will only ask his forgiveness for the sake of Jesus Christ, he will hear you and save you, for he loves you more than David loved his lost son Absalom.

## THE LEPER HEALED.

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2 KINGS 5: 13.

And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?

NEARLY three thousand years ago, a large caravan left the ancient and beautiful city of Damascus, and took its course in a southerly direction towards the land of Israel. It was a great company, with chariots and horses and mules, and servants and tents, and silver and gold. There were all the conveniences necessary for a journey of many days, to a man who lived luxuriously, and soldiers in numbers sufficient to secure uninterrupted progress through a foreign country.

At the head of this great caravan and directing its movements, was the second officer in the kingdom of Syria, the monarch's great captain, the successful soldier. He had every earthly blessing but one, *health*. He was sick. A loathsome, horrid disease had fastened on him, and embittered his life. He was a *leper*. All the skill of the most famous physicians had been spent on him in vain; all the alleviations that wealth could procure were supplied without effect; his malady was incurable, he was doomed. He could look forward to nothing but wretchedness and wasting and death, and finally an un-honored grave.



In the family of this great but afflicted man was a little slave-girl, a captive from the land of Israel, brought away during one of the raids so common between unfriendly nations lying side by side, with no natural division or boundary. The heart of the poor slave was affected at her master's sufferings, and she told her mistress of a prophet in her far-off native land who could cure her lord of his disease. Strange as it may seem, her words were believed,—possibly because despair catches at the least ray of hope,—and the king his master determined to send his great captain with a letter to the king of Israel, that he might be healed. So when the most costly presents were prepared, and the letter written, and the caravan made up, the company set out. The incidents of that journey we shall never know. The travel was slow and tedious. Choosing the upland ridges that they might escape in part the intense heat, and pitching their tents at night near some water-spring, with the snowy peaks of Lebanon on their right hand, they made their way to the land where the great healer dispensed his wonderful cures.

How much of faith, or how little, there was in the mind of Naaman, we do not know; but we know that the blessing of the God of Israel on the journey and its object, was not asked at the setting and the rising of the sun, when the company worshipped that great luminary. No prayer followed this sick man, unless it was offered by the little maid that waited on Naaman's wife, and of whom so little was thought, that we have no reason to believe they even took her back to her home.

When the caravan reached the capital of Samaria, and Naaman presented his letter to the king, the whole court was thrown into commotion. The king rent his clothes, and broke out into the most violent expressions of grief and rage. "Am I God," said he, "to kill and to make alive, that this man

doth send unto *me* to recover a man of his leprosy? Wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me!" Nothing was thought of except the danger of a war, long, cruel, and desolating, of which this letter, with its unreasonable demands, was regarded as simply a pretext.

Tidings of the excitement and distress at the court reached the prophet Elisha. He sent to the king, rebuking him for his want of faith and forgetfulness of the great works God had done by the prophets, and directing him to send the Syrian to *him*, that Naaman might know that there was a prophet in Israel. It would seem that the king lost no time in complying with the instructions. Greatly relieved he must have felt at the withdrawal of his unwelcome guest, and the removal of the responsibility of the cure from his shoulders. So the great captain, apparently willing to go anywhere if he might have hope of recovery, set out anew to find the prophet of whom the little maid in Damascus had spoken. He went with his horses, and his chariot, and all his retinue of servants and soldiers and treasure, a great cavalcade, and stood before the door at Elisha's house. It was not the palace of a monarch, nor the residence of a favorite of the king, but probably an humble dwelling,—and even *that*, it may be, not his own house,—where he dwelt with one servant.

Surely with such an imposing array drawn up before his door, the prophet will be profoundly impressed! Surely he will come out and show his respect to the representative of so great a monarch as the king of Syria, and himself, the great captain of the age! But no! the man of God, not even coming to his door to see the stranger, sends him a message by his servant directing him to go and wash in the river Jordan seven times, promising that he shall be thoroughly cured of his disease.

This was too much for Naaman's faith or his patience. He had already made a long and weary journey (and painful one to him, for he was sick) from Damascus to Samaria : to be expected to continue his journey at the direction of a man who would not do him the small courtesy to come down to his door to see him, was too much, and he turned and went away, furiously angry, saying, "Behold, I thought he will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?" So he turned and went away in a rage.

If you are inclined to criticise severely the conduct of Naaman, remember that he was a great man in a great kingdom ; that, except the monarch himself, there was not a man in all that kingdom who did not bow down to him ; that his relations to his master were so intimate that the king leaned on him when he went to worship his god ; that he had undertaken a long journey on the word of a Jewish girl, his wife's servant ; that he had tried many remedies before, and in vain ; had exhausted all the medical skill of the great city of Damascus ; and had doubtless appealed to his own gods without any relief ; that he was sick and weary, wasted, discouraged, and without faith.

Naaman's servants, however, seem to have had more faith than their master ; or, at least, to have been more inclined to try experiments. Possibly they had listened with attention to the little maid's stories of the great prophet, and had heard more of his great works than Naaman had. However that may be, we know that they were grieved at the impression made on their master's mind by the prophet's message ; and that they came near and said in the familiar address which the custom of the Oriental households permitted, "My father,

if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?"

The suggestion was reasonable, and the affection which prompted it so real, that the great man put aside his angry feelings and complied with the prophet's direction. The result you all know: he went to the Jordan, several miles off, dipped himself in the river seven times; "according to the saying of the man of God, his flesh came again like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean;" and the turbid stream of the Jordan became better to him than the rushing crystal waters of his own Damascus rivers.

My object in thus setting before you the story of Naaman and of his wonderful cure, is to lead your minds to consider the gospel and the simplicity of its terms. Like Naaman, we are all of us afflicted with a loathsome and fatal disease; not a disease of the body, but of the soul. It is not necessary that I should stop to prove this assertion, either from the Scriptures or from human experience. You all believe that we are sinners; that from our first parents we have inherited propensities to sin which invariably and universally lead us to forget God and to break his commandments; that we are utterly helpless to recover ourselves; that no human skill can deliver us; that no human remedy has been found to relieve us; and that in Jesus Christ alone can we be saved.

But while we believe these statements, we are sometimes perplexed to know what we *shall do* to be saved. The soul in its darkness looks up and asks, as the rich young man did, who demanded, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" The disease of sin is so awful when the conscience is awakened, and the deliverance from it is necessarily so great, that the soul naturally feels that some great work must be done by itself, some great service rendered

to God, to secure his pardon and peace. When the soul is thus aroused and quickened by the Spirit of God, it is apparently willing to do anything to secure peace; but it wants to do some great thing. When the simple message came to the Syrian general, it seemed to him that the prophet was trifling with him, that he either did not understand his case,—how important a personage he was,—or that he was indifferent. It could not be that one who was so great a sufferer could be cured by means so simple. In the abundant and life-giving rivers of Abana and Pharpar, flowing through Damascus and making a paradise of what had else been a desert, so diverted that they watered the gardens and orchards and gushed up through the fountains of hundreds of houses,—in those clear and rapid streams he had bathed many a time, but with no healing. Was it worth his while to try another river and repeated bathings? No, this was not what he expected; this was no remedy. Why did not the prophet come down and accept his rich presents, and thus let him pay for his recovery? Why did he not come out to him, and, in the presence of all that company, go through certain solemn forms and ceremonies, and call on the name of God, and make a great exhibition of the means of cure? Why did not the prophet, if he must needs send him farther on, send him to the holy city, Jerusalem, that he might offer a great sacrifice to the God of Israel, and leave his rich and splendid gifts upon the altar? Doubtless he would have been willing to go. If it had been a condition that he should have made a pilgrimage up and down Judea on foot instead of in his chariot, he would have undertaken it. His servants said that he would have done some great thing; but the very simplicity of Elisha's directions filled him with scorn and contempt.

You, too, want to do some great thing. If God should declare now, that, in order to be saved, the sinner must make

a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, to the city of Jerusalem, should kneel and kiss the earth, and weep and pray in the garden of Gethsemane, there are not ships enough on the ocean to carry us to that far-off land. The crowds that would throng all that region would in time obliterate all traces of the sacred spot. If it should be revealed that at certain seasons of the year, we should, in order to be saved, spend whole nights on our knees praying in churches, the sanctuaries would be crowded as we have never seen them. If we believed that we must reduce our physical strength to the verge of emaciation, and could be saved in no other way, we should not hesitate. All this is because we are unwilling to take God at his word; we want to make some great sacrifice, —to do some great thing.

The terms of salvation, as made known in the gospel, are so simple that the youngest, the most ignorant, can understand them. Believe, and be saved. Repent, and be baptized. Believe what is true; do what is right.

When the jailer at Philippi, aroused from sleep at midnight by an earthquake which threatened to overthrow the walls of the prison, and under the influence of divine truth and the Divine Spirit which even in those awful circumstances had reached his heart,—when he tremblingly asked his bruised and helpless prisoners what he must do to be saved, Paul preached the same gospel which Christian men and women have been preaching ever since: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” And he *did* believe; he did accept; he was saved. He and all his straightway were baptized. He sought for light, and he acted on it.

There is no other gospel, there are no other terms. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. The law of God, which men have violated and trampled upon since the days of Adam, Jesus fulfilled. The penalty which was justly due

from men he paid. The satisfaction which we could not render, he made; the smoking sacrifices of a thousand years were all completed in him, the Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world. There are no longer any mysteries in religious duty; the veil of the temple which separated the altar of sacrifice from the holy of holies is rent in twain from top to bottom; the glorious shechinah, the living flame that hung over the mercy-seat, has for ever departed, and the Divine Spirit now dwells in the hearts of his own people. What more would you have? What more could God have done for his vineyard that he has not done?

Do not turn away from the gospel because it is so plain and simple. Do not, as Naaman did, allow scorn and contempt to fill your mind, because the terms are not such as you would have made, or such as you would now prefer. If you feel in any degree the burden of sin, remember that the awful agony that Jesus endured in the garden of Gethsemane was because of our sins; that the overwhelming burden which crushed him to the earth, and in that cold night air forced the *sweat* from him, as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground, was the burden of our sins. And if you feel in any degree sorrow for your own personal sins, go to Jesus and confess them; tell him you are grieved and repentant; tell him you believe in him, in his divine character, in his power to save, and in his willingness to save; that you are willing to be anything, or do anything, however humble; that you accept his terms, however simple; that you want to be his disciple; you want to follow him wherever he leads, holding his hand, and clinging to him as a little child clings to the hand of his elder brother. And as the word of God is true, the blessed Saviour will reveal himself to you, will take your hand, will give you a new heart, will put his Spirit within you, and will save you now and everlastingly in heaven.

Will you do this?

## EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.



Thou shalt not steal.

THE most common definition of the words “to steal” is, “the taking secretly something which belongs to another which he is unwilling that you should take.” This, I say, is the simplest, the most common, meaning we give to the words.

But the “commandment is exceeding broad,” and takes hold of many acts which we thoughtlessly do, and many others which are done because people do not wish to think about them in the light which wholesome reflection throws upon them.

I choose the subject because, while not much in danger now of falling into this sin, you are all in a condition of training for the world, some of you very soon to enter it—a world which abounds in fraud and villainy and wrong in ten thousand forms.

Never in the history of our country have there been so many instances brought to light of wrong-doing with regard to property, especially among public men, as are being disclosed in these times.

Whether this is the result of luxurious living, which is far more widely diffused than ever before, or, as far as this country is concerned, one of the sad consequences of the widespread demoralization of our civil war, I do not know, but



it is certain that wrong-doing in relation to property was never so common as now.

As I said, all of you will some time be thrown into the world in the great race for riches, and some of you very soon; and I want to give you some counsels that may help you in that struggle which will begin when your education is completed and many of you turn your back on your homes.

I believe that my own position in life has given me large opportunities for observation in this direction: for nearly thirty years I have been connected with many men of all ages in life in places of trust and responsibility.

The sermon which I preach to you to-day I have had occasion often to preach to myself. I never hear of the fall of a man that I do not wonder how it was. I want to know what led him to take the first wrong step, and then the next, and so on, until the steps were all wrong, altogether gone astray.

It has been said that no man becomes a villain at one leap—that it is a process of growth and development, until the moral sense is all gone, and the crime which startles the community hardly moves him who commits the crime.

Property is anything which belongs to one's self—anything of which one has the ownership. A man has a house, a farm, a pocket of money. They belong to *him* and to nobody else. A boy has a watch, a pocket-knife, a gold pencil. They belong to *him* and to nobody else.

Property is acquired in several ways—by gift; by inheritance; by labor or skill; by discovery, conquest.

When God created man he gave him dominion over the earth and all creatures, whether on the land, in the water, or in the air. This is the foundation of the right of property. While there were but two persons, Adam and Eve, husband and wife, they had a common right to all things; but as the race multi-

plied and other men and women grew up, it became necessary to have regulations as to the ownership of property, and protection in enjoyment of it; so laws were made, at first very simple and few and easily understood, until, coming down to our time, it requires whole libraries of law-books and a large class of trained men to explain them, and learned judges to decide what is the right way to understand them.

During the Middle Ages, which history calls the Dark Ages, property was defended not so much by laws as by force of arms. Noblemen gathered troops about them, and made arrangements with the common people, the peasants, the workers, by which the noblemen and their soldiers were to be supported in idleness, they promising to defend the peasants from foreign enemies while they were tilling the soil. In continental Europe, especially on the Rhine, we see the ruins of the castles of the lords in the mountains, with dependent villages at the foot.

Now-a-days, however, we depend upon government to protect us in the enjoyment of our property, and to do this laws are passed, with penalties for law-breakers.

There is a difference between thieves, robbers, burglars, but it is hardly necessary to dwell upon the distinctions. They are all against the laws of God and the laws of man. They all deserve punishment, and I believe at some time or other will be punished.

The direct punishments which human laws inflict are generally imprisonment and fines, though in some communities public flogging is added to these.

Thieves are feared and abhorred by all good people. They are found in greatest numbers in cities, for it is much easier to steal and much easier to hide in large cities than in country places.

It is thought by some children that it is not wrong to steal

from their parents, and so they begin by taking and hiding any little sum of money that may be left exposed in the house; but it is really more wicked than to steal from strangers, for, besides the theft, there is the great sin of ingratitude and the abuse of confidence, for the parent naturally and lovingly *trusts* the child—his own child, *her* own child!

I know a family where there is hardly a closet or a desk or a bureau locked, because the children are all honest, and the servants are trustworthy.

I know another family where every door and drawer almost in the house is kept locked, because one of the sons of that family cannot be trusted (he is a thief).

It is a very improper thing to leave money lying about, no matter how small the sums; it is temptation to others, and the prayer our Lord taught us is, "Lead us not into temptation." Many a boy and girl has been ruined by the careless leaving of small sums of money in exposed places. The tempted and sinning one is none the less to blame because there was a tempter. Let me come to details.

Any advantage taken of another by deception or by failure in doing what is right is dishonest.

A boy is asked in the country to ride a horse to water. He does so, and then without the owner's knowledge rides the horse for half an hour more for his pleasure. This is dishonest, for it is taking the use of the horse by stealth.

On certain turnpike or plank roads there is a charge for passing over them and through the gates. A man rides up while others are engaged in paying their tolls, and not being observed passes through without paying.

In a crowded street-car the conductor does not ask you for your ticket and you do not offer it. These are both instances of dishonesty. You are stealing a ride or stealing from the company.

You hire a horse and carriage at a livery-stable for two hours to go five miles, but you put in four persons to go ten miles. This is not so gross a wrong as it would be to steal that horse and wagon, but it is not honest. The commandment is, "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise." It is the Golden Rule, the rule laid down by our Saviour.

I have said that you will be sorely tempted when out in the world to take other people's money. These temptations will come in many ways—some probably that will be entirely new and you cannot foresee; some will surprise you by their novelty, their illusions.

Some young men have taken their employers' money because they felt that their employers were not paying them enough for their services. This is one of the most dangerous forms of temptation; there *seems* to be a measure of justice in taking what you think is only just pay. But beware! A bargain's a bargain; stick to the contract. If it is too hard on you, say so, and either bear it and make the best of it or give up the situation and go elsewhere. Don't pay yourself from your employers' money.

Some time or other you may find money, and think it belongs to you; don't wait for advertisement; lose no time and spare no pains to find the owner. The money is not yours; it belongs to somebody else; and if you cannot by any means find the owner, use the money as a *trustee*—that is, use it as the property of another, sacred and never to be considered as absolutely your own. If the owner is ever found, remember it must be given up. If he never appears, you can apply it to some charitable purpose.

A person loses a watch, a diamond, or something else very valuable, and offers a reward for its recovery; you find it.

Don't claim the reward ; refuse it if pressed upon you. It will be better for you afterward.

Habits of extravagance are sources of temptation to young men, and many fall into the sin of dishonesty. Any young man who lives beyond his means—*i. e.* who spends more than he makes or receives from others—is in danger of dishonesty.

I hope you will bear with me for saying so many things that are disagreeable. Many of you boys will hereafter find employment in stores, in offices, in counting-houses, in factories, and other places. In all these you will meet temptations to take that which does not belong to you. I implore you to be on your guard against the very first temptation. I have seen so many fall into ruin that I tremble for any young man thrown upon his own resources who has not the grace of God in his heart.

See how many public men are objects of suspicion of their integrity ; many people in high places are yielding to temptation and sacrificing character, domestic peace, the well-being of their children, the respect of good men—selling everything truly valuable for money !

All deception is wrong ; it is all a violation of the command, "*Thou shalt not steal.*" Be honest, be true in *word* and in *deed*.

God is a being of infinite truth ; he never deceives ; you cannot deceive him. He says, "The heart is deceitful above all things ;" and all our experience proves it.

God says, "Those that seek me early shall find me." You say, "Not now ; after a while, when I get older ; when I have seen more of the world ; when I have had more pleasure ; when I get sick : then I'll seek him ; it will be easier then."

Ah, you are cheating yourself ; you are robbing your future of all that is bright and true and good.

## DOING EVIL, DOING WELL.

—♦—  
ISA. i. 16, 17:

Cease to do evil; learn to do well.

IT is sometimes said that the Bible is a hard book to understand, and therefore not interesting. But surely you can't say that this text is a difficult one, that this is hard to understand. I am sure the youngest child here to-day can fully understand the meaning of the eight words which I have taken as a text.

It is a double text; it is made up of two parts—two equal parts of two verses. There are just as many words in the first part, "Cease to do evil" (*i. e.* four), as there are in the second part, "learn to do well" (four).

It is a double text, and both parts contain a command; and if this is so, you naturally want to know who gave the command; and whether he had a right to give it; and to whom the command was given; and whether it was necessary to give such a command; and then when all these questions are answered satisfactorily, there comes up another one, and that is, "What have we to do with the subject? what is our interest in it? how does it apply to us?"

As to *who* gave these commands, I answer, The prophet Isaiah, from whose book my text is taken. And as to whether he had a right to give them, I answer that he spoke and wrote as he was moved by the Spirit of God; not his own words

merely, nor his own thoughts, but the message of the great God to his people, Israel. "Hear the word of the Lord," he says. As to *whom* the commands were given, I have just said that they were given to God's chosen people; as to whether it was *necessary* to give such commands, I answer that when the message was given the Jews were sunk in sin and misery to such a degree that it was said of them, "The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint; from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores." As to *what* the prophet meant by these words, I answer, he intended to show them that they must give up all wicked ways. If they had been bringing offerings to God, such as the sacrifice of animals, bullocks, lambs, and goats on his altars; if they kept the feast-days, the new moons, and the Sabbaths; if they had offered incense and attended the solemn meeting, and yet had no heart in it; if they had spread out their hands in prayer, and those hands were bloody with crime,—they should cease doing these things, for they were all evil; they should wash their bloody hands and make them clean; they should put away the evil of their doings; they should "cease to do evil and learn to do well."

As to the question what have *we* to do with the subject? what is *our* interest in it? how does it apply to *us*?—I answer it concerns us just as much as it did the ancient Jews; our interest in it is the same precisely; and although no prophet is here to speak these words in our ears, they are just as really the message of God to us as if we could hear Isaiah utter them.

For we have been doing evil; it is common to all. Not one in this company can say that he or she is not a sinner in the sight of God. We have sinned against him; we are guilty. Do you not remember many a time when you did things

which you knew were wrong? Do you not remember many a time when you said things which were wrong? Do you not remember many and many a time when you had thoughts (and *indulged* them too) which you knew were wrong—which would cause you to blush even to tears if they were written on a black-board so that we all could read them?

It is so easy to fall into habits of evil! And in this respect “no days are more important than school-days; then the strongest habits are fixed.” Then we form acquaintances which become firm friendships. Then we copy the vices of others much more readily than their virtues. You are surrounded by companions, some of whom are ready to help you in good ways—many of whom are just as ready to help in all manner of evil ways. Naturally, you are inclined to evil. If left to yourselves, with none to advise and warn and instruct you, you will certainly go astray and go on and on doing evil, and only evil, and that continually.

We want to save you. They who instruct you in your week-day schools, they who speak to you from time to time, want to save you. We want to reach out our hands to yours and help you over the hard places in life. You will find plenty of hard places; you will meet many trials and temptations, and you will need—whether you know it or not, you will need—advice, counsel, and help. We offer it to you now while you are all young and unexperienced in the ways of the world and in the ways of your own hearts.

“Cease,” then—“cease to do evil.” I leave it to your own consciences to tell you what evil you have been doing. I cannot read the heart as God does; but you know, each one of you, what are the evil ways into which you have fallen, the evil habits you have already formed. If they have been evil deeds or evil words or evil *thoughts*, give them all up; “cease” from them, put them away.



The second command is *learn to do well*. This command comes from the same authority as the other, and is just as much within our ability as the other. For you can "cease to do evil;" you can "learn to do well."

What is it to do well? It is to do good. If you want to please your heavenly Father, you must come to him renouncing all sin, resolving to put away everything that God hates, however dear it may be to the heart. Some sins you love dearly. I do not know what they are; I cannot describe them; I only want to tell you that if you are willing to give them up, God is willing to pardon them. And then I must tell you that when you *do* resolve to give them up, they will return again and again and try to regain possession of your hearts. There are temptations—temptations which assail you in every conceivable shape—and you must fight them. An evil thought tempts you: don't yield and say, "Well, if I have the evil thought, I am just as guilty as if I had done the deed." It is not so; cast out the thought. If you have a struggle over it, and are partly defeated, don't give it up, don't consider it as bad as a complete overthrow; fight every inch of ground. An evil thought, bad as it is, is not as bad as an evil deed. An evil thought distresses *yourself* only; an evil *deed* distresses and injures others as well as yourself.

Begin again and again. Life is a series of fresh beginnings. How often are we told to turn over a new leaf! Remember that God is always ready to forgive all the past; no matter how evil it has been, he will forgive it and blot it out for the sake of Christ if we repent of it. Do not, then, be discouraged by the fact that our sins are known to others, to our companions; let us bury the past. We wish we could wipe out the memory of our sins from others, but no matter if God remembers them no more for ever; we need not

fear man. Let not the heart sink, let not the shame that sin leaves behind it lead us into the company of those who are living in sin, without any desire to reform, without any wish to do well.

We need to fight battle after battle, with no burden of the past hanging like a weight about our necks. If we truly repent of our sins, God will forgive and blot them all out. He will remember them no more for ever.

I grow more earnest as I proceed with this subject. I look over this congregation; you are all young people; I am thinking of your earlier years, of the influences which were about your earliest childhood; I wonder how many of you have Christian mothers who taught you to pray and say, "Our Father who art in heaven"? I wonder whether any of you have ever wept when you have read or heard of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane and on the cross? I look into your faces as they are turned up with so much interest and so much respect as I speak so plainly to you—I look into your faces and I wonder, "Has the Holy Spirit of God ever moved any of these young hearts?" Have any of you ever had such a thought as this: "I ought to be a Christian; I ought to repent of my sins and lead a new life; I know I am a sinner in the sight of God; however fair I may seem to others in my outward life, God, who looks into my heart and knows all my thoughts—God knows that I am a sinner, and that I deserve to be punished"? Have none of you ever had such thoughts? Is there one present to-day who has ever had such thoughts? Is there one here who has such thoughts now? Then, if there is one, let me say, "My young friend, cease to do evil; learn to do well. Turn away from whatever is wrong, both in outward action and inward thought, and try to do good, your duty toward God and toward your fellows."

I do not, I cannot, know what were the circumstances which were about you in your early childhood ; I do not, I cannot, know what are the secret thoughts of your hearts now ; but I look forward. In a few years many of you will be in the world mingling among men and women, striving, as all are striving, for a place and a name, a home and a support.

What will be your course then ? Will you remember the earnest, solemn words that are said to you so often now in your early youth ? Will you seek the society, the companionship of the good, the virtuous, the true ? Will you follow the advice which sympathizing Christian people give you here, and “cease to do evil” ? Or will you, in the first enjoyment of that freedom from restraint which some of you so long for, plunge into the vices and follies of a sinful life.

I look further into the future. These boys have grown to be men, these girls have grown to be women—not only, but men and women far on in life. They are no longer young. The bloom, the freshness of youth are long since passed away. Many of you, I hope and believe, will be in honest, virtuous households, living useful lives, doing the work of good men and good women in society. Remembering the trials of your own youth, you will be trying in all proper ways to help the young who will then be about you, showing them by kind and sympathizing words what an evil and bitter thing it is to sin against God. And thus you will be the means in the hands of God of saving some souls—it may be, “plucking them as brands from the burning.”

But what shall I say of others ? There may be those here who are tired of these exhortations and who wish me to close this service. You may have made up your minds that you will do as you please in this great matter—that you will have your own way, no matter where that way leads you. You will some day be your own master or mistress and do as you

please. And so you can ! And no human hand can restrain you ; unless you violate the law, you can have your own way in all sinful indulgences.

So entirely is this whole subject in your own hands that I almost wish it were not so. If I could, I would probably force you to "cease to do evil and learn to do well." But I can't ; no human being can. God can ; why don't he ? Because, if God forced you to do what you are unwilling to do, you would no longer be a free moral agent. It would degrade you into a mere machine. You have all seen a locomotive-engine. It is a powerful machine, and can pull or push a hundred cars. But look at it as it stands on the track, with no fire in its furnace, no water in its boiler. It is nothing but a piece of beautiful mechanism. A half dozen strong men can hardly push it on its smooth rails. Put wood and coal in the fire-box and light a fire there, and put water in the boiler, and when the water boils and the steam rises there is a sort of life created within the ponderous machine, and it puffs and breathes as if it wanted to start. But it is nothing without an engineer. When *he* takes his place and lets on the steam, the great rod moves, the wheels turn round, and the engine starts off on its track, full of life and energy, ready to pull its long train of cars over a hundred miles. But it has no choice ; it cannot move itself ; it cannot go forward or backward, or fast or slow ; it is nothing but a piece of machinery.

Suppose, now, it could be made alive, and could have a mind such as yours, and could act freely and intelligently, and could go hither and thither as it pleased ; how immeasurably more valuable it would be ! It would be worth a thousand ordinary engines, and would be a world's wonder. All men would respect so powerful a machine that could *do as it pleased*.

God has made you free to do as you please. He might

have made you otherwise, but he did not. Both these commands in the text you can obey or you can refuse to obey. You *can* cease to do evil, you *can* learn to do well. But you must do them of your own choice. And it is not enough to “learn to do well” *only*; you must “cease to do evil.” I once knew a man who had grown rich by making whiskey. He had become one of the richest men in the city where he lived; had built himself a splendid house, and filled it with costly furniture, and pictures and statuary and other works of art, and flowers, and had his horses and carriages, and men-servants and women-servants, and everything that money could buy. With all this he was charitable and gave large sums to benevolent objects and to help the poor; and he said once to a friend that he knew he had made his money in a way that many people thought was wrong, and he was somewhat afraid *was* wrong, and he would like, therefore, to do some good with his money.

“Ah, but,” said a gentleman to whom this story was told, “why don’t he give up that business of making whiskey by which so many hundreds of thousands of persons and families have been ruined?—why don’t he give it up? It is not enough *to do good*. This is not the *first* thing. He ought first to *cease to do evil*; he ought to close up his distilleries, put out his fires, and then learn to do well.” And *you* think so too, don’t you?

It is said that when a man becomes an habitual drunkard, drinking to excess whenever he can obtain spirits until he has reached the condition of delirium tremens or mania potu, the coatings of the stomach become nearly destroyed, and the system so nearly ruined that the greatest care and skill are required to save the patient; and that when the person is to be cured doses of spirits must be given every day, each day a less and less quantity, until after a time the daily quantity,

which was a full quart at first, is reduced to a few drops, and finally to nothing, when the habit of drink is broken and the drunkard is cured. I do not know how this may be, for I am no medical man, but I do know that this course of treatment will not do for *sin*. You can't break off *that* habit day by day by reducing the quantity. You can't be cured of sin by doing less and less of sinful things day after day. You must break off *altogether* and *at once*. You must cease to do evil *now*; you can't parley with it; you can't reason about it; you can't treat it tenderly; you must break away from it as you would escape from a burning house whose walls threaten to fall in and overwhelm you.

How can you do this? Who will help you to do this great work? Jesus Christ, who came into the world to save sinners, came to save *you* from sin, and he will save you if you look to him and to him alone. Will you do it?



Talks with Boys and Girls.



On wheels.



## ON WHEELS.



PROV. xxv. 11.

*A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.*

I WAS spending part of a summer holiday at the little village of Underhill, in Vermont. The place was well-named *Underhill*, for it seemed to lie almost under the shadow of Mount Mansfield. It *seemed* to lie, I said, for the mountain was really miles away; but it threw up its mighty form so high into the air, and filled so large a part of the landscape, that it looked as if all objects within the vision were drawn up close to it, even our little straggling village. Especially was this so when the atmosphere was purified by storms, for then it was so clear that the great mountain came down almost to our door. When Sunday came (the brightest, when it is bright, of all the days of the week), the villagers and the guests of the little hotel walked out in the wide street and under the rows of elm trees, trooping along to the village church. As I passed along with my companions, a little kitten—one of the prettiest of little kittens—joined us in our walk. It had probably been some household pet, but cast off or deserted, or in some other way got rid of; and it followed us, attracted and led along by a kind word. It kept close behind us, though sometimes frisking along in front of our party in all playfulness (for what is so playful as a

kitten?) until we reached the door of the church, where we supposed it would leave us; but, no; it followed us into the church, and even into the pew which we, as strangers, were shown to.

Here was a trouble! Suppose the kitten should not be quiet! Suppose it should get frightened at the organ or the singers! What if it should set up a scream, or a spitting, or tear out of the church like mad! What would the quiet country people think of us? What would they say of city folks who cared so little for the house of God as to bring a cat there?

The kitten, like a well-behaved and well-bred little cat as it was, did not like to sit on the floor. Why? One reason might have been that it could not see! For, if I must say it, some people go to church to see who are there, and how they are dressed, and how they behave, and all that; but this person (I mean this kitten) did not like the floor, probably because she could not see the friends she came with. So she soon jumped up on the seat, and we made room for her between us. Now this little cat did not stare around the house, and look up into the choir, and laugh at any mistake the singers made, and make faces at others and try to provoke them to laugh; but she sat just as quietly, just as demurely as any boy or girl, I was about to say; no, but as quietly as any grown person. She did not wriggle and twist, and turn this way and that, and put her elbows over the back of the pew, nor throw out her feet and make a noise with scraping her shoes, nor drop her hymn book, nor read a paper, nor, in fact, did she do anything of the kind, though she might have seen plenty of other people doing some of those things; but she sat up very straight, purring just a little in a quiet, musical sort of a way (you have often heard them?) until the minister began to preach. Then, not being able to

understand him (he was a college man, very learned in theology, and his text was from one of the hardest books in all the Bible to understand)—not being able, as I said, to make out what he was preaching about, or how it could do a poor little kitten the least bit of good to listen to a sermon which she could not understand, she gave it up, and, quietly curling herself up on the seat and folding her long gray tail very smoothly and nicely under her, she—now, what do you think she did?—why, she went fast and sound to sleep!

And I don't wonder at it, nor do I feel inclined to blame the poor little thing.

But then, you are ready to ask, What all this means? Why do I tell this story? Do I mean to show from this that people ought to behave well in church? That is a good thing and a right thing to do, but that is not the only reason that I tell it. Do I want to teach, that when young people can't understand sermons, they ought to go to sleep? No. What do I mean, then, and what has all this to do with "a word fitly spoken" being "like apples of gold in pictures of silver?"

Why, as I sat there listening to the sermon and trying to get some good out of it (and I don't know that it did me much more good than it did the kitten), as I sat there, this passage from the Scriptures came to my mind, "*a word fitly spoken*," and I tried to make out what it meant. Then I remembered that in the margins of some Bibles, such as have notes and references, opposite this text were the words, "a word SPOKEN ON WHEELS." And this puzzled me a little. For how can a word have wheels? And how can a word be *spoken on wheels*? We know that carriages and wagons have wheels, and that railway cars have wheels, but how can WORDS have wheels?

This is the explanation: The Bible was not written in the

English language, as we now have it and read it. The Old Testament was almost all of it written in Hebrew, and the New Testament was written in Greek. But when the Bible was taken into other countries where the people did not speak Hebrew and Greek, it was necessary to translate it into the language of the country. So in Italy it was translated into Latin, for that was the language of that country then; in France it was translated into the French language, and so on. Wherever it was taken and wherever the Christian religion went, the Bible was made into the language of that country. What could we do here—we, who all speak the English language—what could we do with a Bible in Greek and Hebrew?

So, two hundred and fifty years ago, in England, learned men, who knew the Hebrew and Greek languages, were set apart to make our English Bible; and here it is, so that every one may read it.

But sometimes these men came to a word which they were in doubt how to translate. They came across this word, "FITLY," which they said ought to be "*wheels*;" but they paused and asked each other the questions which I just now asked: How can a word be spoken ON WHEELS? How can a word be on wheels? How could people understand? So they agreed, after a good deal of talk, to write and print the word "FITLY," though some said, "Well, let us put the words 'on wheels' in the margin." And so they settled it. But I think the words "*on wheels*" would be better than "*fitly*," and I shall try to tell you why.

I ought to say something, however, about the "*apples of gold and pictures of silver*." The language is figurative, and the allusion is to carved work, a fruit picture, golden apples in a silver basket, or painted golden apples on a white silver background or framework. In other words, something very

beautiful. Then, a word fitly spoken is a *good word*, a *beautiful word*, or a word *spoken on wheels*, or a word *set on its wheels*; as a boy would make a little wagon out of a box and set it on wheels so that it will move and run, so is a *good word* a *beautiful word*.

Now, what is the use of setting a word *on its wheels*? You write words with a pen and ink, or with a pencil, on paper. They are fixed; they do not move. They may be printed in books or in newspapers; but there they are, they are fixed; they do not move.

One day a boy was tormenting a kitten, when his little sister said to him, with tears in her eyes, "Oh, Philip, don't do that; it is God's kitten." The word of the little girl was not lost; it was *set on wheels*. Philip quit worrying the kitten, but he had many serious thoughts about the creatures that he had before regarded as his own property. "God's kitten!"—"God's creature, for he made it." It was a new idea. He had never thought of it before. The next day, on his way to school, he met one of his companions who was beating most unmercifully a poor, starved-looking dog.

Philip ran up to him, and, without thinking, used his sister's words, saying, "Don't, don't; it is God's creature." The boy looked ashamed, and said that the dog had stolen his breakfast. "Never mind," said Philip, "I will give you mine, which I have in my basket;" and, sitting down together, the little boy's anger was soon forgotten. Again had a word been set on wheels.

Two people passing by heard Philip's words—one a young man doing a good business in the next town, the other a dirty, ragged being, who, because he was drunken and worthless, had that very morning been discharged by his employer, and was now going home, sullen and despairing.

“God’s creature,” said the poor, forlorn one, and it was a new idea to him also; “if I, too, belong to God, *He* will take care of me, though no one else will.” Just then he came to a tavern where he had been in the habit of drowning his miseries (as he thought), and then staggering home to inflict new miseries on his wife and children. He stopped; the temptation was strong, but the new idea was stronger; the word set on wheels was running, “*I am God’s creature,*” and he passed on. His wife was astonished to see him sober, and still more astonished when he burst into tears and declared that he was a ruined man, but that he was determined to give up drinking, and trust in God. Just then a knock was heard at the door, and the young man who was doing a good business in the next town came in. He, too, had been rebuked by Philip’s words for the scorn and loathing he had felt to the miserable man before him. The word spoken on wheels had run into his heart. “God’s creature,” thought he, “therefore entitled to help and pity.” So he gave the poor, wretched man words of hope and comfort. He gave him employment; he helped him in his struggles with the love of drink; he stood by the poor man because he was God’s creature, and in a short time lifted up the poor fellow’s head and made him one of God’s thankful and joyful creatures!

Now you see what a word *spoken* or *set on its wheels* means.

A good many years ago, one Wednesday night, a young man whom I knew well went to the evening lecture in a certain church. He was a gay, thoughtless young man, a clerk in a store, whose life up to that time had been mainly spent in worldly pleasure, without much thought of anything beyond this world. He had lately joined the Sunday-school as a teacher; but he was very ignorant of the duties of a Sun-

day-school teacher, and indeed very ignorant of the Bible; in fact, very unfit to be a Sunday-school teacher at all. I wonder why he should have placed himself in such a position; but it was probably more to gratify his friends, who were religious, than for any good either to himself or his class. The text that evening was the words, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" The preacher was thoroughly in earnest, and in the plainest and the most solemn manner he set before his audience all the advantages of success in the affairs of this world—its wealth, its honors, everything that the world can give—to those who seek these things, but who, however, have no assurance that they shall obtain them all; for the passage reads, "What shall it profit a man IF he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

He then set forth in fearfully solemn words (*I* heard the sermon) the soul in its nature as a part of God's nature—not eternal, but immortal; never to die, but to live somewhere forever and ever. He spoke of the capacity of the soul for enjoyment; that God had made it so that its means and capabilities for happiness would go on increasing forever, and could never be exhausted. He spoke of the endless life of the soul; of the soul of every human being, man and woman, boy and girl; that it was a life which would never end; that the soul whose life was begun here in this world would go on living in happiness or misery forever and ever; that ages and ages hence, after this world had passed away, the soul would be living on and on, and be no nearer the end of its life than it was at the beginning. He went on to speak of the soul's capacity for suffering also; that while we all know what suffering is here in this world, it was nothing to the suffering, the misery, the wretchedness of the soul in the future world, that shall be shut out from the presence of God and from the glory

of his power. And then, at the close, he begged his hearers to put the question to themselves, each one, What would it profit him—what use it would be to him—if he could gain the world and all that is in it (if he could get it all), what would it profit him—what would it be worth to him—if he should lose his own soul?

It was a very solemn meeting. Whatever others may have felt, the young man of whom I speak was deeply moved. He left the meeting—he walked towards his home—he hardly knew how he got home; he took no account of his way; but he went immediately to his own room, and there, under deep emotion and with tears rolling down his cheeks, he tried to pray to God. The words of the preacher had been spoken ON WHEELS, and they were rolling on through the young man's heart and conscience, stirring up his past life, making him see how sinful he had been and how much in danger he was of losing his soul forever!

I have seen much of that man since, and I know that whatever other things he may have heard and forgotten, he has never forgotten that night, nor that preacher, nor that text, for the words were spoken on wheels.

My great desire is to say something that you will remember, and that will do you good. I wish I could set some good words on wheels, on never-stopping wheels, which would roll on and on in the pathway to eternity.

There are so many things which keep you from remembering the things that are said to you here! Sometimes you listen with very little attention. You sit and look up respectfully in the face of the speaker as you are now looking at me, and yet your thoughts may be elsewhere. Have you never found sometimes, in reading a book, that your eyes follow the lines sentence after sentence, and page after page, it may be; and yet you have not been reading at all? Your eyes



have seen all the words, and you have pronounced them mentally, but you have received no ideas, no thoughts at all. This is not reading! And it may be that sometimes your eyes are fixed on the speaker, and every word he utters falls on your ears, and you see every movement of his features, but you get no thought, no ideas—in fact, you are not listening at all! You hear nothing but words, very distinctly, it may be, but you get no meaning from them.

Why? Your thoughts are elsewhere. They are not engaged; the mind is full of something else—it is dreaming!

Sometimes the speaker is dull. He may not be very much interested himself in the subject he is talking about, and he fails to interest you. Or he may be speaking his thoughts in language which is commonplace or lifeless, or which is above your comprehension, or dry, and you try to follow him and cannot; and then off go your thoughts to some other subject that does interest you, though it may be something that ought not to be thought about at all, and least of all on the Sabbath day.

Or you may be tired or have a headache, or be otherwise unwell, or the weather may be so warm that you can't fix your thoughts on the speaker or his subject, and so the hour passes.

These are some of the causes which come between the truth of God and your own soul, and prevent your getting any good from these chapel services. And so the seasons pass; so the long, bright Sundays come and go, and the words spoken are not *set on wheels*, and you seem to be none the better for what you hear.

But it is not good words only that are set on wheels. Bad words are spoken, which sink down deep into the heart, and pollute and defile it. And the influence of bad words goes on and on into the far distant future, until the heart becomes a

nest of unclean birds, and nothing can cleanse it but the grace of God and the blood of Christ.

I cannot forbear a few words on a vice which is so common among boys, that I am sure you are not all free from it. I mean profanity—taking the name of God on your lips in vain. We easily get used to these words as they are spoken by older persons, for these, alas! are words spoken on wheels. Our minds soon become accustomed to profane expressions. At first we are shocked, then simply uncomfortable, then indifferent. Next, we think these words in our own minds, then the next step is to speak them out on the first provocation. Very soon we begin to think that when we are angry, if anybody has abused us, or hurt us in any way, or lied about us, we are justified in swearing. Then the habit is formed and fixed, and very soon we can hardly get excited, either pleasantly or otherwise, without breaking out into oaths.

Underneath it all is the belief, whether we admit it or not, that it is manly to swear. And young boys, in their anxiety to seem like men and grow to be men, copy the vices of men, and especially this one.

It is not manly to swear. It is unmanly. It is childish, foolish, wicked. It is indifference or contempt of God.

Would you call that boy manly who would calmly let his father's or his mother's name be abused, and who should himself fall into the habit of abusing the names he loves so much?

As I look over this company I wonder whether these young minds have been already made familiar with these bad words, whether these young hearts have been already defiled and polluted by the bad words spoken on wheels? If it be so, if the tempter has already been busy with his corrupting influences, if the evil one, speaking through the lips of your

companions, has already soiled your minds, if the worm is already crawling there, leaving its slimy mark wherever it has touched you, I beseech you, my young friends, turn away from such companions, and listen no more to vile words. Do not read them in papers or in books. Break away from such evil influences, and listen to them no more.

But this is not enough. You need cleansing; the filth must be washed out, the pollution must be cleansed, the heart must be renewed, the tastes must be changed, the impure must become pure, the bad words spoken on wheels must be stopped! How can this be? I answer there is but one way, and that is through the pardoning, cleansing blood of Jesus Christ. There is no other way, and if you remember nothing else in this sermon, take this away with you: "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin."

Let **THESE** be the words that are spoken on wheels.

## CHRIST.



MATT. XXII. 42.

What think ye of Christ ?

THE Pharisees were very fond of asking our Lord questions. And not always for information. At one time they ask him upon what grounds or for what cause a man might seek to be divorced from his wife. At another time they ask him why his disciples do not observe the rules of the elders about washing their hands every time they eat bread. At another they come and ask him whether it is lawful to pay taxes to the Roman government. At another they ask which is the greatest of the commandments. At another they inquire, with as much apparent earnestness as if they cared, when the kingdom of God should come. Now, in all these questions, and in many others, they are not asking for information, but they are seeking opportunities to catch him in an unguarded answer, "to entangle him in his talk." How well he bore all this, with what patience, what humility, and how wisely he answered them, you who read your Bible carefully know very well. They never succeeded in entangling him; the officers returned so deeply impressed with his infinite wisdom that they said, "Never man spake like this man."

Sometimes he answered their questions by questions to them; and some of the profoundest lessons he taught were in the form of questions. And once, when the Pharisees were

gathered together, plotting probably for his overthrow, he turned upon them rather suddenly with the question of my text—What think ye of Christ? whose son is he?

The question was not what they thought of *him*, Jesus of Nazareth, but what did they think of *the Christ*, the Messiah. As if he had said, “You say you are expecting the Messiah, the long-promised and long-delayed anointed one, the Redeemer, who is to deliver this people from the Roman yoke; now, what will he be like when he comes? When will he come? How will he come? Whose son will he be? And where will he set up his standard that the people may flock to it?” They answered that he must be the son of David; and then, by two or three other questions, most skilfully put, he so completely overwhelms them “that no man after that durst ask him any questions.”

The discussion which occurred on that occasion would not be appropriate nor interesting here. And I use the question of the text, therefore, with reference to Jesus of Nazareth—Jesus the Christ; and I propose to make the question as personal and practical as I can.

“What think ye of Christ?”

All of you, except the youngest, have tolerably well defined views on most subjects that come within your notice. I doubt not that the older ones among you, in the unrestrained freedom of friendly conversation, have discussed, over and over again, the course and the methods of your studies, and very probably also, the qualifications and character of your teachers.

And so I doubt not you have your own settled and more or less clearly defined views of the two great political parties in our country, and all of you are on one side or the other in these great divisions, and can give reasons quite satisfactory to yourselves why you are on this side or that. And on all

the great questions of the day—the war in the East, and which nation will conquer; the Chinese question on our Pacific coast, and what shall be done with the Chinese; the telephone, and what uses it may be put to; the tapping of currents of electricity in the upper air, and thus holding communication between distant parts of the world without the connecting wire; all these and many other questions of this day of science and politics and history, are matters of daily conversation among the more advanced here, and you have your own opinions about them.

There are difficulties I know in speaking here on the subject which I have chosen. How can I hope to interest the youngest on the front seats (who would rather, I think, listen to stories than anything else), and the older and more advanced in this audience?

But the subject itself is not difficult, not obscure, at least as I propose to treat it; and it is pertinent, appropriate, practical. It is very important also, for so much depends on proper views of this truth; in fact our happiness, our usefulness in the world depends very much on the views we hold of this subject.

More books have been written about Christ than about any other man who has ever lived in the world. They have been written by his friends and by his enemies; and some on both sides by the profoundest, the most accomplished scholars. More sermons have been preached about him than have ever been preached about any other man. Dr. Farrar's *Life* is probably the most interesting and most popular life that has ever been written; and very recently a new life has been published, in two portly quarto volumes, by Dr. Geikie. But the subject is inexhaustible, because it is infinite.

Let us look at it a little closer.

Think of the birth of Christ at Bethlehem. A little city

among the hills of Judea, with one long narrow street, on the crest of the ridge, with small accommodations for travellers, was the city foretold by the prophet as the place where Christ should be born. Most men had forgotten the prophecy; and with no purpose of their own in its fulfilment did Joseph and Mary toil wearily up that steep and narrow street on the night that Jesus was to be born. But the angels had not forgotten it, and that night, as the shepherds out on the hills were watching their flocks, the angels filled the heavens with their songs as they announced to the shepherds, and through them to all mankind, that Christ was born in Bethlehem. Did the birth of any other infant ever cause such a commotion in the heavenly world?

Think of him as a little child at Nazareth. A little boy of a year old, creeping and learning to walk across the floor of his mother's cottage. Then a little older, holding his mother's hand and trotting along by her side as she went to the spring to get water for the daily wants of the household. Then, as he grew older, going alone with the jar to bring water to his mother. Think of the boys of his own age who would join him in the errand. Think of the conversation they would hold, the plays they would engage in. Think of a boy as never saying a bad word to other boys; nor thinking a bad thought about them. Think of him as going to school, not, like Saul of Tarsus, led along by the hand of a servant, for his reputed father was a carpenter and in humble life. What must his teachers have thought of him—a boy who never failed in his lessons, who never gave offence to his teacher!

Think of him as he goes up with his parents to Jerusalem when he was twelve years old. It was his first visit to the great city. You boys and girls who were born in the city and have been familiar with these sights and sounds from

your infancy, you do not know the longings a country boy has to see a large city. It is very interesting even to imagine the preparations his parents made before leaving home for an absence of a week or two—the arrangements for travelling, their companions, the road they would take, and all the other incidents of that journey.

When they got beyond the village, where everything was so familiar, and passed over the valley and began to ascend the hills which looked so high in the distance, but not nearly so high when they reached them, how every new view must have interested the boy! Many a time he looked back to catch the last glimpse of the little mountain village he had left. And then looking forward and straining his eyes to catch through the gaps in the hills the first glimpse of that city that was dearer to a Jew than any spot on the face of the whole earth. He was not too young to enjoy all this and to be full of expectation of the strange things he would see in the grand old city. Think of him as attending the temple services in all that passover week, the daily sacrifices on the temple altar, the hills around Jerusalem covered with flocks gathered there to be offered as sacrifices in their daily service. And then, this holy week having passed, the people from the country began to prepare to return. The families from Nazareth began to collect their things and gathered their children to see that none were missing. Then they started, and so sure were they that the caravan was complete, that everybody was there, that they journeyed on peacefully until nightfall, and then they discovered that the child Jesus was not with them. They thought he had been with other boys of his age playing along on the outskirts of the caravan, gathering wild flowers and plucking fruits as boys would now, going over that road. But they could not find him; he was lost!



What must have been their consternation! He had been seen in the morning at starting, and no one remembered to have seen him since. What could have become of him? How the mother's heart must have been torn with anxiety lest she should never see him again! It is now night, and the road is so steep and narrow and rocky that nothing can be done till the morning. What a night that must have been to the poor mother! I don't believe she slept for sorrow. As soon as it was light enough to see, they must have started back, Joseph and Mary, in search of the missing boy. And they found him at last, after a long search; found him in the temple, not looking on the bleeding and smoking sacrifices, but with a group of venerable men gathered round him, of whom he was asking many questions, and to whom he was listening most intently. Strange occupation for a boy of his age! I wonder what the questions were which he was asking of these doctors of the law?

Could it have been that he had asked them the question of my text—What think ye of Christ? I think it more than probable; and if so, how eagerly he must have listened to their answers! And how profoundly impressed his mother must have been, if she, as she came up, caught any part of this conversation!

You know the few recorded words that followed; how that, with something like a rebuke from his mother, for *she* was only human, in which she asked him how he could deal thus with her, and his reply, which she did not then understand, but which she laid up in her heart, "that he must be about his Father's business," he turned away from the temple and went home with them to Nazareth, "and was subject unto them"—to Mary his mother and Joseph.

This glimpse into the youthful life of Jesus is all that the Scriptures say of him in his youth. In all the time between

his return from Egypt, a mere infant, until "he began to be about thirty years of age," we have no certain record of what he was doing. He must have gone to school as you all do; he must have helped his mother about the house, doing many little acts and errands for her, as many of you have done, and it is almost certain that, as Joseph was a carpenter, he worked in the carpenter's shop. A modern English artist (Holman Hunt) has given us an interior of a carpenter-shop of the present day at Nazareth. The walls are covered with the various tools of that craft, hung up each in its place—saws, planes, hammers, hatchets, etc.; and the floor is littered with shavings and bits of wood, such as are usually found in these busy places. Doubtless modern inventions have multiplied the tools of the carpenter, as of all other workers with the hands, but in scenes substantially like this the young man Jesus must have passed the days of his youth and early manhood. How amazing it is to think of these things!

Think of the wonderful works he did when he began his public ministry. Think of the wedding he went to, where he turned the water into wine. Think of the healing of the centurion's sick servant; of the feeding of the 5,000 people with only five barley loaves and two small fishes; of the raising of the young maiden only twelve years old to life again; and of the widow's son at Nain on his way to burial; of the giving of sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and strength to the lame, and the bringing up of Lazarus from the grave, where he had lain four days. What think ye of Christ? of a being who could do such wonderful works?

What think ye of a young man who could go from the workshop of a carpenter, where he had learned the trade as other young men of his age learned it, and preach the gospel of the kingdom to the multitudes who followed him and hung on his lips? We know how his fellow-townsmen of

Talks with Boys and Girls.



The raising of the young maiden.



Nazareth regarded him ; how they sneered at him and called him names, and even attempted to take his life by throwing him over a precipice, to all of which he only replied that “a prophet has no honor in his own country.” But what think *ye* of him, you boys and girls?

His teachings are the grandest, the purest that have ever fallen from the lips of mortal man. The sermons that he preached, even in the brief and meagre reports that we have of them, have moved the world from that day to this, are moving the world now. They have come down to us through all the centuries in the written parchments preserved by the monks in their monasteries, until the invention of printing from types, and now they are multiplied as the leaves of the forest. All that is grand and good, and high and pure, and tender and loving in the world comes from Christ, through his life and teachings and death.

Think of his short ministry, only about three years ; of his chosen companions, almost all of them common, rough men, of whom “one betrayed, another denied, and all forsook him.” Think of his wanderings up and down Judea, of his homelessness, of his privations, of his persecutions, of the contempt thrown upon him ; think of the price set upon his head, of his arrest, of the mock trial, of the weak and vacillating character of the Roman governor, who should have protected him at whatever cost, for he knew Christ was innocent ; think of the angry mob thirsting for his blood, the sentence to death, the scourging, the crown of thorns and the purple robe, the mockings, the buffetings, the spittings in his face ; then of the weary procession to Calvary, he bearing his cross, the weeping women in that sad procession, the harsh soldiers, the arrival at Calvary, the form of Jesus extended on the cross as it lay on the ground ; the nails, the hammer, the uplifted cross, the sudden plunge into the hole prepared for it ; the whole

weight of the body hanging on the nails through the hands and feet; the excruciating agony, the darkness, the earthquake, the cry from the cross in that awful darkness; and yet the love for his mother not forgotten in that dreadful hour, but commending her to John; and finally the giving up of the ghost. The thief who hung at his side understood him, and asked his mercy; the centurion who put him to death said, "Surely this man must be the Son of God;" but—what think *ye* of Christ?

Shall I tell you what *I* think of him?

I believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, the Son of God. I believe that he was conceived by the Holy Ghost, that he was born of the Virgin Mary. I believe that he was crucified, dead and buried. I believe that the third day he rose from the dead, that he ascended into heaven, and that he sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty, from whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

This is the creed of the Christian Church, a part of the so-called Apostles' Creed, which some erroneously ascribe to the apostles themselves, but which is found in its present shape in the works of Ambrose, of the third century.

But I say further: I believe that Christ is the light of the world; that what the sun is to the solar system, Christ is to the moral world—he is light and warmth and blessedness and peace. I believe that he is the Saviour of the world. In an old ruined church, which I used to go to see as a little boy, there were three embroidered gold letters on the tattered hangings of the pulpit. They were I. H. S., the initial letters of three Latin words—*Jesu Hominum Salvator*—which only for the younger boys and girls I need to translate, "Jesus the Saviour of the world." It was a most impressive lesson to me at that early day. I have never forgotten it. I have seen those most significant letters emblazoned on altar cloths

of the grandest cathedrals in Europe. I have seen them painted in tawdry colors on shrines by the roadside in Switzerland, and carved in rudest letters in the rock, and on the tombstones in the churchyard in the mountain village; and everywhere they mean the same thing—that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world.

I believe it most heartily. That portion of the creed which I recited says he was crucified, but does not say why. I believe that he died to save sinners, that he died for me, for you, for all; so that, however it may be explained, all who will, may, in consequence of his death, be saved.

I believe that he still lives, not only “sitting at the right hand of God the Father Almighty,” but here in our world. I believe that he lives in the hearts of his people. I believe that he will come and live in the heart of any boy, any girl in this chapel, if he is asked to come. I believe that he is with you every day in your schools, at your work, at your play. I believe that he looks upon you when you do not think him near; that he stands ready to reach out his hand and take yours, and lead you and help you; that you have only to say the word, and he will take you into his special care and love you with infinite love; and that, if you will only say that word to him, your heart will be full of peace and joy. I believe that the hardest lessons will seem easier, that the most difficult tasks will grow lighter, that your lives will become brighter and happier, if you will only look up and speak that word to him.

I believe that his work in the world is going on; that notwithstanding his bitter enemies, and his indiscreet and cowardly and false friends, his spirit is more and more getting control over the minds and hearts of men, and that the day is not far off when his truth, his character will be better understood than now, and when boys and young men and

young women will not be ashamed, as many of you now are, to have it known that you are his disciples.

I believe, I do most fully and heartily believe, in the personal presence of Christ, that he stands on this platform with me, that he has heard every word I have spoken, that he has seen and known every thought in your hearts as I say these plain things to you, that he even now waits to see what response you will make.

My young friends, these are most serious words which I speak. I am not speaking them to children only. I speak them especially to you older ones. I know you have cultivated minds. I know you can reflect, can pause, can reason, can form resolutions, and, with Divine help, can keep them.

So, having in this imperfect manner set before you some aspects of the life and character of Jesus of Nazareth, I close, as I began, with the question—

*What think ye of Christ?*



## O B E D I E N C E .



LUKE ii. 51 :

And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.

AND this is all we know of the childhood and youth of our blessed Lord. This incident of the journey to Jerusalem, the service at the temple, the return toward Nazareth, the lost boy, the search for him, the finding him after three days in the temple sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions,—this is the only glimpse we get of that wonderful life from the day when, as an infant, he was brought to the temple and offered to the Lord, with a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons, to the day when he appeared before the people seeking baptism from John and being about thirty years of age. We know, indeed, that to escape the cruelty of King Herod he was taken down into Egypt while a young infant, but we do not know how long he remained there.

During all this time, then, from his birth to his thirtieth year, except this incident when he was twelve years old, his life is hid from us.

It would be very interesting to know how he spent those years. Did he go to school as other boys did, or was he taught by his mother at home? Was he dressed as other children of his age? What was his conduct? Did he engage

in the plays of childhood with other children? Did he run and jump and shout with other boys? Did he wait on his mother and do her errands? Did he go to the fountain with the household jar and bring water for his mother? Did he ever, by his waywardness, give his mother pain? Did he ever answer back rudely or impudently?

Many more questions might be asked on this subject, and very few of them answered with much satisfaction. Dr. Farrar, in his graphic book of the *Life of Christ*, has helped us to form some conceptions of our Saviour's youthful life in his mother's home :

“He who has seen the children of Nazareth in their red caftans and bright tunics of silk or cloth, girded with a many-colored sash, and sometimes covered with a loose outer jacket of white or blue—he who has watched their games and heard their ringing laughter as they wander about the hills of their little native valley or play in groups on the hillside beside their sweet and abundant fountain, may perhaps form some conception of how *Jesus* looked and played when he too was a child. And the traveller who has followed any of those children, as I have done, to their simple homes, and seen the scanty furniture, the plain but sweet and wholesome food, the uneventful, happy, patriarchal life, may form a vivid conception of the manner in which *Jesus* lived. Nothing can be plainer than those houses, with the doves sunning themselves on the white roofs and the vines wreathing about them. The mats or carpets are laid loose along the walls; shoes and sandals are taken off at the threshold; from the centre hangs a lamp which forms the only ornament to the room; in some recess in the wall is placed the wooden chest, painted with bright colors, which contains the books or other possessions of the family; on a ledge that runs round the wall within easy reach are neatly rolled up the gay-col-

ored quilts which serve as beds, and on the same ledge are ranged the earthen vessels for daily use ; near the door stand the large common water-jars of red clay, with few twigs of green leaves, often of aromatic shrubs, thrust in to keep the water cool. At meal-time a painted wooden stool is placed in the centre of the apartment ; a large tray is put upon it, and in the middle of the tray stands the dish of rice and meat or stewed fruits from which all help themselves in common. Both before and after the meal the servant or the youngest member of the family pours water over the hands from a brass pitcher into a brass bowl. So quiet, so simple, so humble, so uneventful was the outward life of the family of Nazareth."

Such, I have no doubt, is a truthful picture of the life our blessed Lord led in that little city among the hills. But my purpose in all this description is to bring before you one character, one life, and that the most important life ever lived in this world, and that character the most wonderful, the most perfect, ever developed.

The text says, "He went down to Nazareth, and was subject unto them." Unto whom? Unto his parents. For we read in the forty-first verse, "Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover."

Who were his parents? I need not say, for you all know that the Virgin Mary was his mother, and that Joseph, the husband of Mary, was his reputed father. He had no father after the flesh ; *God was his father!* And yet Joseph and Mary are called his parents ; and Jesus, the child Jesus, the boy of twelve years, was subject unto them—not to Mary only, else it would have said, "subject unto her," but he was subject unto *them* ; and all this after the wonderful scene in the temple, where he sat among the doctors listening to them and asking them questions, and astonishing them, those grave and learned and wise men—astonishing them with his understand-

ing and his answers. After all this, I say, he went down to his home in Nazareth, and became again the boy of twelve years, subject to his parents as any other boy was, and doubtless continued in this condition of submission and obedience until the time came when his divine character was to be disclosed.

What submission or obedience means I think you all know. The child Jesus learned it in his home in Nazareth. In the great parchment roll of the Hebrew Bible in his mother's house or in the synagogue in his town he read and he heard others read these words: "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee;" and he knew, as you know, that this means that we are to *obey* our parents. And although he was the Son of God, although he was himself divine, he was also the son of Mary; he was human; he had a human soul, "conceived by the Holy Ghost;" he had a human body, "born of the Virgin Mary;" and he owed to his parents the same love and obedience that you owe to yours. And he did honor and obey his parents; in all the thirty years of his home in Nazareth never once did he neglect any duty; no rebellious or impudent words to his mother ever passed his lips; no cloud ever came over her face because of his waywardness or folly; no tear ever came to her eye at any want of love from him. Anxiety she must have had on his account—not concerning his duty to her, but the wonderful circumstances attending his birth—the visit to her of the angel Gabriel; the birth at Bethlehem; the visit of the shepherds; the Eastern Magi and the star in the east; the flight into Egypt; the scene in the temple,—all these things awed and impressed her. She remembered that the aged Simeon when he took the child Jesus in his arms in the temple, and under the influence of the Holy Spirit broke out in the *Nunc Dimittis*, which has been sung by the Church

in all ages since : “ Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace,” etc.,—she remembered that while he said, “ This *child* is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel,” he had added those strange and impressive words, “ Yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also ;” and she kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. But there was never any want of confidence in his judgment or his actions ; and her assurance was so perfect that at the marriage in Cana she said to the servants, apparently foreseeing that he would do some extraordinary thing, “ Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.”

This perfect human life, and the *only* perfect human life, I set before you for your imitation. What can you do to be like him ?

I answer, You must learn to be obedient. What is obedience ? It is easier to show you what it is by instances or illustrations than it is to define it in words. Yet I will try it first in words : Obedience consists of two things. It is—(1) To do something that is commanded, because he who commands has a right to command ; and (2) It is to refrain from doing what is forbidden, because he who forbids has a right to forbid. In other words, we must do or not do what they who are set over us command.

Our first duty is to God, and this is the foundation of all obedience and the foundation of all government.

After the long search for the child Jesus his mother found him in the temple, and with something like reproach in her words, she said, “ Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us ? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing ;” and he said unto them, “ How is it that ye sought me ? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business ?” That is, “ You need not have been uneasy about me ; you might have known that I was doing what my heavenly Father required.”

They did not fully understand what he meant, but they knew he was right, for he never told them a falsehood; he never deceived them.

God is *our* heavenly Father, as he was Christ's heavenly Father; he is not here within our reach or before our eyes, but he has the right to command us to do whatever he pleases. How does he have this right? Because he is our Creator; he made us. Our first parents were Adam and Eve, whom God made and placed in the garden of Eden; so we read in the first chapters in the Bible, and so we learn that all the families of the earth have come down from those two.

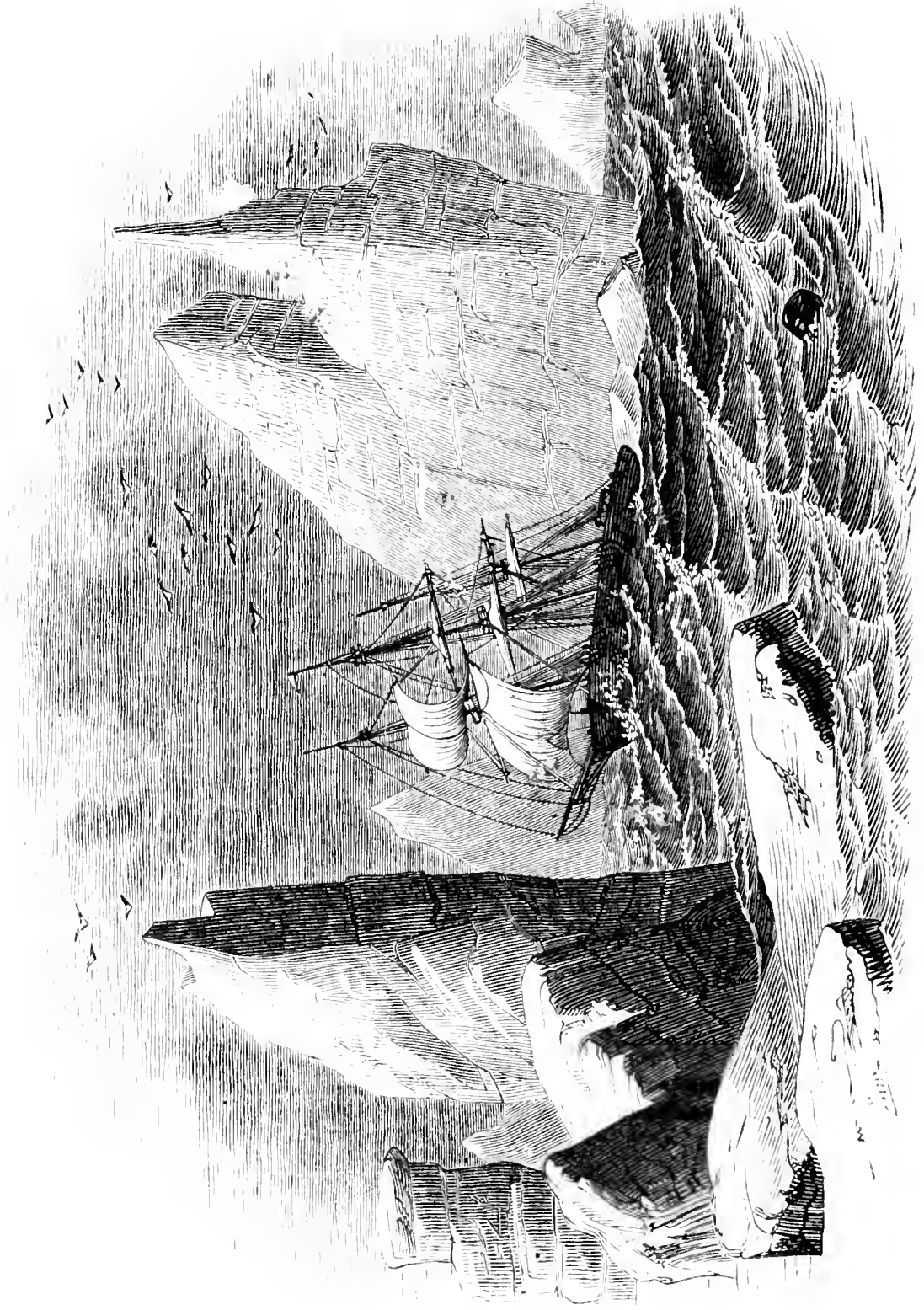
How are we to know what God requires of us, or where do we find his commands? In his word, in the Bible. He no longer speaks as he did in the days of the prophets; he no longer appears in the form of angels, as he did in those far-off times; he does not come in visions of the night, as he did in the days of the patriarchs; but he speaks through his word, and in the plainest terms tells us what we must do and what we must not do. You have all read and heard, over and over again, the ten commandments; are they not plain enough? Can anybody say he can't understand them?—Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not worship images. Thou shalt not take the name of God in vain. Thou shalt keep the Sabbath holy. Thou shalt honor thy father and mother. Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness. Thou shalt not covet.—These are the commands of God—so plain, so simple, that young children can understand them.

True obedience is prompt and cheerful and faithful.

1. *Prompt.* I mean by this that the command, whatever it is, must be obeyed immediately. If a boy is playing with a toy or reading a book, and the time comes to retire to his bed,



Talks with Boys and Girls.



“If a sailor is commanded to take in sail,”



and his mother should say, "It is bedtime; shut up your book," the boy should not read on to the end of the chapter, nor even to the bottom of the page, no matter how interesting the story, but he should close the book at once and rise to obey. If he is in the midst of a game with his toy or his play, he must not wait till the game is finished, but must break off at once.

If a sailor is commanded to take in sail, he must obey his officer at once. It will not do to say, nor to think, "Yes, presently, when I have finished my dinner or smoked my pipe," or finished anything else whatever; no, he must take in sail at once, immediately. The most perfect obedience probably is that of the soldier—military discipline. Many of you know what that means. The soldier must never move until the word "Forward! march!" No matter what may be the danger of standing still; he may be in the front ranks, and the shot and shell of the enemy may be pouring fire and death all around him; he must not move until the word comes. And when that word does come he must move, no matter what is before him; even as the famous charge of the six hundred "into the jaws of death;" and he must keep on moving as long as he is under an officer or until he has accomplished the object of the march, or until he hears the word "Halt!"

2. Obedience must be *cheerful*. He who sets about obeying the commands of God with an unwilling or sullen temper is only half obedient. Very many of the things we have to do are disagreeable. A boy who is reading a book which he finds "thrillingly interesting" is told by his mother to go somewhere and do an errand for her; he rises slowly, after two or three calls, with a frown; keeps his eyes on his book as long as he possibly can without actually defying the command; then flings it aside and turns with ill-nature written

plainly on his face, and drags himself reluctantly to the duty. There is no brightness, no cheerfulness in his obedience; and in fact it can hardly be called *obedience* at all; it is slavish service, with no heart in it. If that boy would only reflect, he would understand that his parents have had many painful and wearisome and long-continued anxieties and labors on his account, and he would be ashamed to show or to feel the least degree of reluctance or want of cheerfulness in complying with any demands that they may make of him.

3. Obedience must be *faithful*. I mean by this that it must be conscientious—from the heart. When any duty is required of a boy or girl, it ought to be done as faithfully when they are not watched as when they are. An hour at a certain time in the day is given for the study of a lesson, and the boy or girl is shut up in a room out of the way of interruptions or distractions for the purpose of study. Now, if that hour is spent in reverie or castle-building instead of study, or if a story-book is drawn from a secret place and read, don't you see this is not obedience? The hour is spent in the room, but there is no study, no obedience, even if the lesson is so well learned that no marks of demerit follow the recitation.

So if a boy in a shop has a task assigned him, and works diligently at it while the master or overseer is at hand, and then when alone either neglects or slights his work, he is not a faithful boy and is not giving faithful obedience.

Nothing will make up for want of obedience. No amount of love from a child to its parent will make up for want of obedience. No services of any other kind will make up for it. In that long catalogue of crimes mentioned by the apostle Paul in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans not the least conspicuous is that of *disobedience to parents*. I sometimes fear that it is one of the most common of all sins, and

is the foundation of almost all sin, for it takes its root in a defiance of the law of God.

In the days of Saul, the first king of Israel, he received a message from God, through the lips of Samuel, to go and smite the Amalekites, "and utterly destroy all that they have." But when the time came Saul spared the king and the best of the sheep and of the oxen and the fatlings and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them. And when Samuel came Saul told him, "I have obeyed the commands of the Lord." "What meaneth, then," said Samuel, "this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?"

Saul replied that the people spared "the best of the sheep and of the oxen to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God." And Samuel said, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice:" the simple teaching of which is, that it is better to obey with sincere and prompt obedience than to try to make up for our disobedience in some other way. And for this act of disobedience the kingdom was taken from Saul and given to David.

You can never escape the law, the commands of God. They will be binding upon you for ever—now, in the days of your childhood and youth; afterward, when you have the responsibilities of adult life. Now, you may not meet with all the sympathy you expect, and may not always be treated with the kindness you so much long for. The mistakes you make, your forgetfulness (your carelessness, shall I say?) are not always treated with forbearance, and it may be that you may be treated roughly and even harshly; it may be so, but if so bear it all patiently, submissively, calmly, and you may hope it will be better. No child can for ever fail of winning the confidence and kindness of others if he or she will go on in duty day after day, determining to do right, no matter

whether well treated or not. And then remember that God is near; he knows your trials, your sorrows, and in his own time and his own way will bring relief and deliverance.

But I look beyond the present and the immediate future. Years pass; you are grown men and women, twenty, twenty-five, thirty years of age. You are in families of your own; children will gather round you and call you father and mother. Will they love you and honor you, and obey you and bring gladness into your house and your heart, or will they be disobedient and rebellious and wicked, defying your commands and breaking the laws of society, and breaking your hearts and rendering your lives wretched and bitter by their shameful conduct? You can answer these questions better than I can, for *you can make the answer*. It will depend very much on the manner in which you conduct yourself here whether those who gather round you in after life shall bring curses or blessings into your souls.

But I must not weary you. I want to see you happy, and therefore I urge you to obedience. A boy who breaks laws, who does what he pleases, without restraint, without fear of punishment, cannot be happy. I want you to obey laws, because it is right in itself. If all would do right, there would soon be no police-officers, no criminal courts, no prisons, no condemnation to death; I might almost say, no almshouses and few hospitals. I say nothing of suffering, though I want you to understand that wrong-doing will meet with suffering surely here or hereafter. You can't break any law without suffering.

## THE WEDDING.



JOHN ii. 5 :

Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.

THIS text introduces us to a wedding—a wedding which was celebrated more than eighteen hundred years ago at a little town far away from here, in Galilee. It was probably the most important wedding ever celebrated in that country or in any country, and yet we know very little about it. We do not know the name of the bride, nor of the bridegroom, nor the names of the parents of either. We do not know whether there were any bridesmaids or groomsmen, nor do we know who performed the ceremony. We know nothing of the many little details which we are quite sure to know of any weddings now-a-days to which we are invited. Whether the newly-married couple were young or in middle life, whether they were in humble circumstances or well off in the world, are matters of inference, rather than statement, and, I must say, not at all important.

The names of a few only of the guests are known to us ; in fact, only three names can certainly be mentioned ; and the whole value of the occasion to us turns not upon the wedding itself, important as it was to those most immediately interested, but upon the persons who were at the wedding as guests. We know that Jesus himself was at that wedding, and some

of his disciples (John at least); and we know that the mother of Jesus was there.

There is not much to be said about the town where the wedding took place. It was little more than a village that the modern traveller would not care to inquire about, except that it was the birthplace of Nathanael, one of our Lord's disciples, and especially because it was the place where Jesus performed his first miracle. This has given to that mountain-village a fame which will go down in history to the end of time.

It would seem that in that early day it was usual to have wine at their weddings, for in that country wine was the common table-drink of the people, as tea and coffee are with us. Every hillside was covered with grapes, and from these the people made their wine. On this occasion, whether from want of liberal foresight or an unexpectedly large company of guests, or because the feast was unusually prolonged, the supply of wine was exhausted. The mother of Jesus, who perhaps was on intimate terms with the family, learned this fact, and she said to him, "They have no wine."

We do not certainly know whether she said this in the expectation that her son would supply this need or not. Although this is the first miracle Jesus wrought, there must have been in the thirty years of his life in that humble home in Nazareth—there must have been very much that was truly wonderful in the character and sayings of Jesus; so that the mother, in her natural anxiety that nothing should occur to disturb the wedding-feast, turned to her son and exclaimed, "They have no wine."

I shall not stop to explain the response that Jesus made to the remark. The words, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come,"—the words certainly seem abrupt, if not stern. Many pages have been written to explain

them, and by one branch of the Church great pains have been taken to show that the Saviour could not have meant anything like a *rebuke* to one who was not only his mother, but who had been declared by Divine Authority to be “highly favored and blessed among women.”

It does not appear that our Saviour explained to his mother what he meant by the words, “Mine hour is not yet come;” but if no further words passed at the moment she must have seen in his looks or by his manner that something would follow; for she turned to the servants and said to them, as one who had a right to advise or even command in that house, and in the expectation that he would do something, “Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.”

Then followed the filling of the empty water-jars with water at the command of Jesus, and then in a moment, with no recorded word or action, the brimming vessels were filled with wine. We do not know how this miracle was performed, but we know that it was real wine, and that it was not only good wine, but better than any they had had before at that wedding-feast.

I have dwelt thus on this simple and beautiful story that I may interest you in it, and then lead you to think a little more on the words which I have taken as a text—the words that Mary the mother of Jesus spoke to the servants: “Whatever he saith unto you, do it.”

Few as these words are and short as is this sentence, I will break it up into still smaller portions, and say something on each one of the words.

1. “*Whatsoever* he saith unto you, do it.” You see I make the first word emphatic; and I do it because I want you to see the full force of it, and I want you to feel a personal interest in the words.

*Whatsoever* is a very strong word, a very comprehensive

word, for it includes everything that you can possibly think Jesus would say.

No matter, then, how difficult his words may seem to you, "whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." He would not command it if it were impossible; his commands are never unreasonable; they may seem so at first, but if you will pause and think, you will see that they are most reasonable and natural.

No matter what it may cost you in time, in effort, in means, *do it* if you are sure the Lord commands. Sometimes his commands seem very hard. To the servants who waited on the guests at that marriage-feast it was only to bring water from the well or spring, and fill six empty jars or firkins, they knew not what for. To *you* the words of Christ may seem much harder than this, and you may not be able to understand the reason of the commands, any more than these servants did, but still you must do them.

You may be ready to ask how you are to know that Jesus speaks, and that he speaks to *you*. How does he speak?

Not with an audible voice, such as you hear now from me, but through the Bible, which is his word; through his providences, which are the events happening all around you; through his Holy Spirit, speaking in the still, small voice of conscience to your heart.

When you open your Bible and read, "My son, give me thine heart," understand that this is the voice of God to *you*. When you read, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," these are the words of Christ to *you*. Now do this, and do it at once. When you read in the eighteenth chapter of Luke, "He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint," *do it*; if you have never prayed before, begin now. When you read, "Cease to do evil, learn to do well,"



try to feel that these words are meant for *you*, and at once set about doing them. And when you read in the Epistle to the Galatians, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ," apply such words to yourself, and see if you can't help some person who is weary or sad or sinful—help them to look up hopefully and try to do right.

Sometimes God speaks through his providence. You are taken sick and become very ill, and are obliged to lie day after day and night after night on your bed. This may be the voice of God to you. Perhaps while in full health and strength you would not listen to him; you thought yourself strong, and turned away from the voice of infinite love; and now he takes away your strength and prostrates you by sickness and pain, and shuts you up and away from all your companions and from all your pleasures, and speaks to you in tenderness and earnestness, and urges you to repent of your sins and give yourself to his service. Now, listen to that voice; you may never hear it again in just such circumstances; hear it, believe it, obey it.

There are times when God comes especially near by his Holy Spirit: the heart is tender, the conscience is roused and the way seems prepared; others are moved, melted, converted, and it seems easier now to listen and believe than ever before. You can almost hear a voice saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it; now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." If this should ever be so in your experience, do not let the time pass unimproved; do not neglect so precious an opportunity, for you may never have such another.

Is there any boy or girl here to-day whose heart is tender, who feels that he or she ought to be a Christian, but who is not; who lies awake sometimes in the night and wonders whether life here on earth is to be a life of faithfulness to God and usefulness to others and happiness to the doer of

good, or whether it is to be a life without God and without hope here ; a wasted life ; blessing none, and finally passing away, only to be shut out from the kingdom of God for ever ? This is the voice of Jesus through his Holy Spirit ! Oh listen ! obey ! do it ! be a Christian !

2. "Whatsoever he saith unto you, *do it.*" *He* is Christ, the Saviour of the world. He is the wisest and the best being who ever lived. He knows what is best for us ; he knows what we need. Others may give good advice, good instruction, but you are not always sure that what they say is the best for you. Parents, with all their love for their children, sometimes make serious mistakes ; their commands are not always just and good ; and if we obey them, it may sometimes be to our hurt.

Once there was an English nobleman who had an only daughter whom he loved devotedly. He indulged her in every possible way ; he spared no expense that would gratify the least or the greatest wish she expressed. He endeavored to anticipate her wishes, and did everything a fond and indulgent father could think of for an only daughter. And the daughter returned his love with all the tenderness of which her nature was capable. But there was another love, stronger and deeper than that she felt toward her father. Once, when attending religious services in another church and away from home, the Spirit of God reached her heart and she was converted. Her father was deeply grieved at this, for he was a worldly man and cared nothing for religion. He tried to dissuade her from her new love, and remonstrated with her on the folly of throwing away all her prospects of a life of fashion and pleasure. But her resolution was formed, her stand was taken ; she had put her hand to the plough and was not to look back. Her father took her away from her religious associates and travelled with her, visiting foreign countries and gay cities, and went more and

more into fashionable life, in the hope that his daughter would forget her religion and go back again to the world. She accompanied him into scenes of gayety, but she took no part in them. She was affectionate and respectful to her father, but she was not weaned from her religious hopes. He then threatened her with his lasting displeasure, but she was unmoved. At last he returned home and tried another plan. He sent out cards for an entertainment at his own house ; he invited the gay and the fashionable, and filled his house with people of the most worldly character. At a certain time in the evening, when the company were enjoying their gayety in the very highest degree, and when one after another of his guests had complied with his wish that they would sing songs, he suddenly turned on his daughter and asked her to sing a song. She was a skilled musician and had a very fine voice, and her songs were the delight of all her friends. Her father well knew that she would not dare to slight the guests by declining to sing—that the courtesies of hospitality would forbid such a refusal—and he was not disappointed. The young lady hesitated only one moment, and then rose and took her seat at the piano. The father was filled with joy ; he thought if she would sing a love-song for the gratification of a worldly company, he might reasonably hope for a change in her seriousness. The company, some of whom were informed of the father's plan, looked on with high expectation.

The young lady sat down at the piano, ran her fingers over the keys, and after a very brief prelude sang these words to a plaintive and expressive tune :

No room for mirth or trifling here,  
For worldly hope or worldly fear,  
    If life so soon be gone,  
If now the Judge is at the door,  
And all mankind must stand before  
    The inexorable throne.

No matter which my thoughts employ—  
 A moment's misery or joy ;  
     But oh, when time shall end,  
 Where shall I find my destined place?  
 Shall I my everlasting days  
     With fiends or angels spend?

Nothing is worth a thought beneath,  
 But how I may escape the death  
     That never, never dies—  
 How make my own election sure ;  
 And when I fail on earth, secure  
     A mansion in the skies.

Jesus, vouchsafe a pitying ray ;  
 Be thou my guide, be thou my way,  
     To glorious happiness.  
 Oh write the pardon on my heart,  
 And whensoever I hence depart,  
     Let me depart in peace.

As she finished the song the company looked at each other and looked at her in silence. Many an eye was filled with tears. Her father quietly left the room ; the company separated and went home, and never again did that father say a word to dissuade his daughter from her determination to lead a life of devotion to her Saviour.

She remembered his command, the command of Jesus, to *follow* him ; she remembered his promise to stand by her in times of trial, and she clung to him all the more closely in all her life. Therefore, whatsoever *he* saith to you, do it. Again, whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.

Some things are charged upon him or attributed to him erroneously. The Jews tried to catch him in his speech ; they set spies upon him, who, supposing he was a mere man, tried to provoke him to say things which they might use against him.

But we know what he says to us. The four Gospels are

full of his gracious words, his divine commands ; and we can say in a higher and a better sense than the Jews did, who came back from their vain attempts to catch him in hasty words, "Never man spake like this man."

Again, "Whatsoever he saith unto *you*, do it." When you read about the commands the Lord gave to his ancient people the Jews about their temple service, their washings, their sacrifices, etc., it is all very interesting, and very appropriate and good for those people thousands of years ago, but it is not intended for *you*. What he said to Joshua and Samuel and David and Solomon are not for you except in unusual and peculiar circumstances ; but when you read the Sermon on the Mount and other words of Christ, you know that this is for *you*—just as much as if you were the only person in the world. Then, whatsoever he saith unto *you*, do it. Make the commands of Christ apply to yourself—be faithful in self-application.

Finally, when you are sure that *Jesus* has spoken, when you are sure that he has spoken to *you*, when you are sure he has laid some commands upon you, and that these commands can be obeyed, do not hesitate, do not falter, do not delay, but *do it*, whatever it may be.

In the early days of the Church it cost something to obey the words of Christ. Many a man and woman, many a boy and girl, has been burnt in the fires of persecution because they would not deny their Master. The sands in the Coliseum at Rome have been reddened with the blood of young boys and girls who were given to the wild beasts because they would not offer sacrifice to the gods of the heathen. They remembered the words of their Lord, and whatsoever he said unto them, *they did it*.

The days of martyrdom in this sense are past. There are no more fires of persecution ; no burnings at the stake nor

destruction by wild beasts in the presence of thousands of brutalized spectators. To do what Christ commands does not require you to go on long and costly pilgrimages, nor deny yourselves the society of your family and friends; nor to hide yourselves from your fellow-men in dens and caves of the earth, as the early Christians did in the Catacombs at Rome; but it does mean that you should love him and walk in his ways, and love his word and his people; and it means that you must deny yourselves everything that is wrong, and shut up your hearts against all improper and impure thoughts, and shut up your lips against all improper and impure words; it means that you must be kind to all about you, as *he* was kind; that you must bear each other's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ; that you must "cease to do evil," that you must "learn to do well;" it means that you must be manly and true, and do right, and never be ashamed to have it known that you will do right, because Jesus Christ wants you to be manly and true and do right.

It means that you must pray to God; that when no eye but his is upon you you must kneel and commune with him; that you must tell him your sorrows and ask him for sympathy and love; and, in short, that you must walk with God and feel that he is near you all the time, and that he is your best friend.

Now I ask you, boys and girls, is this a *hard* service? No. His yoke is *easy*, his burden is *light*; *take it! bear it! do it!*

## THE STORM ON THE LAKE.



MATT. viii. 23-27 ; MARK iv. 35-41 ;

LUKE viii. 22-25.

HERE are three accounts or descriptions of a violent storm which came down on the Sea of Galilee and threatened to overwhelm the vessel. And it is most interesting to notice that these three accounts agree with each other, though they were written by different persons. Two of the writers, I doubt not, were in the boat, and thus eye-witnesses, while the third must have received his information from the statements of others.

It is quite probable that the vessel was the ordinary fisherman's boat of the larger size. Very likely, it was twenty or thirty feet long and ten to twelve feet wide, rigged with the single mast and the lateen sail so common then as now in the Mediterranean Sea and all waters in the vicinity.

Let us look a little into the circumstances of this most interesting incident in the life of our Lord.

It was probably in the early part of the month of March and in the first year of our Lord's public ministry. In that climate, even at that early season of the year, the weather is sometimes intensely hot. One traveller tells us that he never suffered more from the heat than on one April day on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. It had been a very busy day for our Saviour. He had stood on the western shore of the Sea

of Galilee, on those green and grassy slopes, with the springing corn reaching almost to the margin of the water, and taught the people. It is thought by some that this was the day when he first taught by parables; and some of these parables, it may be, he spoke from a boat, while the multitude stood on the shore listening. On this day probably he told them the parable of the Sower; and if so, it was suggested by the ripening grain, rather than by the sower then visible scattering the seed. The bare places, the footpaths of those who walked up and down that region away from the shore, had no grain; the rocky surfaces had no depth of soil to nourish the growth; the thorny brambles choked the seed in other places; but between these the abundant grain gave promise of a luxuriant harvest. All this teaching seems very plain to us now, but his disciples did not take it in so readily.

What other truths he taught that day we do not know, though it is highly probable that we have preserved to us only a small part of his teachings, and through the long afternoon he patiently worked with the people, who waited on him, as one of the evangelists expressed it—"waited on him to hear the word of God." As the evening approached it became necessary to withdraw for repose. But the multitude "pressed upon" him. Part of the time he had probably spent on the boat from which he spoke, and part on the shore. He must now have begun to feel the sense of weariness and to long for repose. He would not be likely to find rest while within reach of the multitude. They would follow him and throng him if he continued among them or went to any of their cities, so he determined to leave the crowded western shore of the lake and cross over to the eastern.

Mark says (iv. 36) that the disciples "took him even as he was in the ship," no time being left for preparation or refreshment—even *as he was*, wearied, exhausted with exces-



sive toil—"took him as he was" in the ship. He said, "Let us pass over unto the other side of the lake." Even then they were unwilling to be separated from him, and as his boat pushed off from the shore other little boats set out to go with his boat.

Soon, however, the heavy yard was swung up to the mast-head, and the boat made her way gently and smoothly through the blue sea. We can fancy we hear the ripples of the little waves as they broke against the side of the boat while under the slight pressure of the evening breeze she made her way from the sandy beach.

How far they had gone into the lake we do not know. The little boats had no doubt returned to the shore. Worn out with the toils of the day, our Lord had lain down on the stern of the boat and had gone to sleep. Do you wonder that he needed sleep? Does it seem strange that the Lord of life and glory should have needed rest? Ah, remember, he had a human body and a human soul, and although divine he hungered, he thirsted, he was wearied, even as we. Tired one, with frail aching body, bearing burdens which threaten to crush you to the earth, look up and remember Him who when on earth was weary and sad and suffering, and who knows what your trials and burdens are, and can and will help you to bear them.

But even the Saviour's rest was disturbed. Suddenly there arose a tremendous storm. Mountain-lakes like that of Tiberias are peculiarly liable to sudden and violent storms.

One bright and beautiful afternoon last summer I was out on Lake George in a sail-boat with a party of friends. This lake is more than twice as long as the Sea of Galilee, but not much more than half as wide; our boat was probably about the same size as that which held our Saviour and his disciples. We had a party of nine, and two persons to manage the boat.

There was a light breeze as we left the shore and stretched across the lake, there about three miles wide. When we reached the eastern shore (for we were going from the west to the east, as our Saviour's boat was)—when we reached the eastern shore, the breeze had freshened, as the sailors say, and the captain proposed to take in a reef—that is, reduce the quantity of the sail, so that there would not be so much risk of accident. Then we started out again, and had a pleasant sail clear across to the western side, but quite away from our place of starting. Here the wind lulled, and the captain asked me,

“Shall I shake out that reef?”

“No,” said I. “We have come out for pleasure; do not let us spoil it by any apprehension of danger.”

It was hardly ten minutes after this when in the middle of that beautiful afternoon, with the sun shining upon us, a squall struck our little boat. The first intimation I had of danger was the dashing of a wave over the forward part of the boat, and the wetting of two of our young people. Then we all gathered in the middle of the boat, and felt that we depended under Providence on the skill of our captain. He turned the bow of the boat away from the wind, which increased every moment in violence, and we tore along before it at great speed; the water rushed and roared about us, and the waves behind us threatened to pour over our stern. We were in no great danger, probably—at least we did not know it—and we enjoyed the excitement. But I said to my companions, “It was something like this probably in that storm on the Sea of Galilee; only that was a more violent storm, and it was in the night.” And I looked toward the stern of the boat and said, “There where you sit on those cushions our Saviour lay sleeping when the terrified disciples awoke him with the cry, ‘Master, carest thou not that we perish?’”

We ran before the wind, as I said, with tremendous speed,

until we reached the nearest and safest island ; and under the lee of that island our captain took in another reef, and while he was doing this we passengers went ashore, and going to the windward side of the island we watched the waves as they broke in foam and with almost ocean-like force on the rocks. We waited a while for the wind to abate, and then made our way under double-reefed sails back to our friends, who stood on the shore waiting our return with great anxiety.

But in that storm on the Sea of Galilee there were no islands under which the boat could take shelter ; there was no sun to shine on them and cheer them. It was night, deep and dark, and a storm which terrified even men who were born and lived near and on this sea. The surface of the Sea of Galilee is six hundred feet below the Mediterranean, and it lies deep in the bosom of the hills which surround it. In the north are the mountains of Lebanon, whose peaks are for ever covered with snow, and down from those icy regions the winds sweep in angry gusts which rush through the gorges and break upon that inland sea in storms which are the terror of all sailors.

It was one of these storms which broke upon the vessel which contained our Lord and his disciples in that eventful night. I borrow the language of another (*Farrar*):

“The danger was extreme ; the boat was again and again buried amid the foam of the breakers which burst over it ; yet, though they must have covered him with their dashing spray as he lay on the open deck at the stern, he was calmly sleeping on, undisturbed (so deep was his fatigue)—undisturbed by the tempestuous darkness, and yet no one ventured to awake him. But now the billows were actually breaking over the boat itself, which was beginning to be filled and to sink ; then with sudden and vehement cries of excitement and terror, the disciples awoke him : ‘Master, carest thou not that we perish?’

Such were the wild sounds which, mingled with the howling of the winds and the dash of the mastering waves, broke confusedly on his half-awakened ear. It is such crises as these—crises of sudden, unexpected terror, met without a moment of preparation—which test a man what spirit he is of, which show not only his nerve, but the grandeur and purity of his whole nature. The hurricane which shook the tried courage and baffled the utmost skill of the hardy fishermen did not ruffle for one instant the deep inward serenity of the Son of man. Then rising up, standing in all the calm of a natural majesty on the lofty stern, while the hurricane tossed for a moment only his fluttering garments and streaming hair, he gazed forth into the darkness, and his voice was heard amid the roaring of the troubled elements, saying, ‘Peace! be still.’ And instantly the wind dropped and there was a great calm. And as they watched the starlight reflected on the now untroubled water, not the *disciples only*, but even the sailors, whispered to one another, ‘What manner of man is this?’”

The only lesson which I draw from this incident is this: *The presence of Christ is safety.* And I wish I could impress this lesson so deeply on your minds and hearts that you would never forget it.

But for the presence of Christ in that boat on that stormy night in the Sea of Galilee the disciples, the crew, would probably have perished. The disciples certainly thought they were likely to perish, or they would not have awakened the Saviour with that cry of distress, “Master! master! we perish!” And they were fishermen themselves, most of them, and accustomed all their lives to the handling of boats in all kinds of rough weather. The storm must have been of unusual violence; the force of the gale was tremendous; the boat was nearly or quite full of water; they had done all that human skill and human courage could devise; and then, when the

Talks with Boys and Girls.



"Peace! be still."

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disciples probably saw despair settle on the face of the sailors, they cried out to Jesus, “Lord, save us! we perish.” It was the cry of agony which men and women and children send up to God when they stand unexpectedly in the presence of some great and fatal calamity.

Many years after this incident of the midnight storm the apostle Paul went to Jerusalem (and for the last time) to take alms for the poor saints there, and offerings. While worshipping in the temple he was set upon by the Jews, who rushed upon him and dragged him away from the Holy Place, and threw themselves upon him, and were about to kill him, when tidings came to the commander of the garrison that overlooked the temple-courts, who ran down the steep stairs with some soldiers and rescued Paul from the hands of the people, but with so much difficulty that the soldiers had almost to carry him in their arms. The next day he was brought before the Jewish council to be tried for inciting to insurrection or for any other false and ridiculous charge that might be set up. The council itself broke up in a riot or mob, and the military commander, fearing that Paul would be torn in pieces, sent his soldiers in among them, who took the apostle from their hands and placed him in prison. Everything looked dark now for the apostle. The Jews would have torn him in pieces, and the Roman prison and the Roman soldiers shielded him from the rage of his own people. But that night the Lord—the Lord Jesus Christ—stood by him in that dreary prison and spoke words of comfort. Did he come in bodily form? We do not know. Did he speak in the audible voice of a man? We do not know. All that we *do* know is that the Lord stood by him, and said, “Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.” Acts xxiii. 11. There was no fear after this. The words which Jesus

spoke the apostle never forgot, and though the very next day a most diabolical conspiracy was formed to destroy him, and more than forty Jews had bound themselves under a great curse that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul, the Lord, who had stood by him the night before and promised him deliverance—the Lord Jesus—sent Paul's sister's son to tell him of the conspiracy, and thus it was exposed and the apostle saved.

Is it not true, then, that *the presence of Christ is safety?* We are not told whether the forty conspirators kept their vow and starved themselves, but we imagine that they went on eating and drinking as usual. But this is not the only instance in the life of this apostle when the Lord comforted him in the midst of danger and assured him of protection.

More than two years after this Paul was on his voyage to Rome. He had been tried and persecuted, and finally, on his own appeal, sent to Rome. It was determined by the authorities to send him by sea. It was in autumn, the season of the year when the shortening days and the prevalence of storms made sea-voyages more than usually dangerous. The ship sailed along the coast of Asia Minor against head-winds until they reached a port where it was necessary to transfer the passengers to another vessel sailing more directly to Italy. While in this ship, and while crossing from Asia Minor over the Mediterranean Sea to Italy, a storm broke on the ship so suddenly that they were entirely unprepared for it—sailing along before a gentle south wind, and with so little sense of danger that they were towing their little boat at the stern—a storm which caught her so that she was hurled from her course, and driven before the wind with such speed that it seemed she might founder among the quicksands of Africa.

Meanwhile the tempest increased in violence. The sailors



under-girded the ship—which was passing great ropes under her bow and securing them about the middle of the vessel—to prevent the widening of seams and thus the filling and sinking of the ship (even now-a-days, with our great iron ships, they are sometimes broken in two and sink). They lowered the sails; they were exceedingly tossed with the tempest; they lightened the ship, first by throwing overboard all the heavy spars and lumber about the deck, and then, as the storm still increased, by throwing overboard part of their precious cargo, the Egyptian wheat which they were carrying to Rome. But this could not save them; the storm continued. Day after day the dark, heavy clouds shut out all sunshine, and night after night the heavens were blacker than ever; and no star in all these terrible nights appeared for a moment to relieve the intense anxiety and to show them in which direction their ship was driven.

The sailors were in utter despair. The autumn storm, which raged for fourteen days and nights with uninterrupted violence, had worn them out, and all hope that they should be saved was then taken away. There was nothing before them but inevitable death by shipwreck.

But when their peril was the greatest the angel of God went down to that ship struggling in the waves, which must have beat over her with relentless fury, and standing unseen in the darkness while the wind was blowing a hurricane and the sea roaring like a wild beast for its prey, and standing by the side of the apostle, said, “Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cæsar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.” And though the ship afterward went to pieces, all the passengers and crew, every one, were saved. Is it not true that *the presence of Christ is safety?*

It may be that none of you will ever be exposed to a midnight storm on the Sea of Galilee or any other sea. You may, how-

ever, be exposed elsewhere, and be in as great danger as the disciples were in their little boat, or as Paul was while the Jews were howling for his blood in Jerusalem, or when he was on that foundering ship in the great Mediterranean. There may come a time in your history when you may be separated from your nearest friends, and be entirely among strangers who do not sympathize with you or care for you in the least.

You may be in great danger from evil-disposed persons who will not hesitate to sacrifice you if they can save themselves. You may be sick and given over to death, and there may be none near you to stretch out a hand or say a word to cheer you in the last great struggle. Or you may be exposed to temptations to do wrong, to commit sins which will blast and ruin your character in this life, if not for ever. You may have acquaintances (I cannot call them friends) who will persuade you to say the word or do the act which will plunge you into an abyss of sin and misery.

Oh remember in all these, and in any circumstances, the *presence of Christ is security*. He was asleep in the stern of the boat on the Sea of Galilee, but he heard the cry of his disciples and saved them. He is just as near to you now and all the time as he was near to the disciples in the boat, and he can and will hear you just as soon.

## LOAVES AND FISHES.



JOHN vi. 9 :

There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves and two small fishes : but what are they among so many ?

IT was a day in the early spring. Our Lord had been doing some of those wonderful things which we call "miracles." Many sick persons he had cured ; many blind he had made to see ; many lame persons had been made strong and well ; and the people were filled with amazement, and they followed him in crowds to see what else he would do. Like all other crowds, they were not thinking how far they were going from home, nor what would become of them. As they passed on their numbers grew larger and larger, swelled, it may be, by caravans on their way to Jerusalem to the passover, until they were measured by thousands.

By this time they had passed round to the eastern shores of the Lake or Sea of Galilee, and on one of those hills or mountains Jesus paused to rest. Then, as he looked down the slope of the hill and saw the thronging multitudes, he remembered that they were without food, hungry and faint with travel. Turning to Philip, he asked, "Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?" ("What shall be done to feed this great company?")

Our Lord had not intended to *buy* food, but he asked this question of Philip, who seemed to need special instruction

sometimes, "to prove him" or to teach him a lesson of faith.

The opportunity was lost upon Philip; he did not see the point of the question, and he replied, "Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little"—that is, if we had two hundred pennyworth of bread (a very large quantity) it would not go round, even to give each one a very small piece.

Then another disciple, Andrew, Peter's brother, said, "There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?"

I do not know why Andrew should have made this remark. The question was not asked of *him*, and he does not *answer* it either. He has noticed what may be seen on the skirts of every great crowd of people—a young fellow with a basket of things, probably for sale. You may see it any day in our city now. And as this was all the food of every kind that Andrew had seen, perhaps he made the remark merely to show how utterly useless it would be to try to feed such a multitude of people.

The five barley loaves were the thin, dry, hard cakes made of barley which the common people lived upon as bread. They were never cut, but always broken. The upper classes and the rich used the wheat flour made into cakes like these. The two small fishes were such as were caught in that lake, and which, with the barley bread and common red wine, formed the food and drink of the common people. The fish were probably either salted or cooked, and the boy, as I suppose, was a hanger-on of large companies of people with his little basket or tray, selling what he could to support himself.

It seems not to have entered into the mind of Andrew that there was any possible means of feeding this multitude. If

he had reflected, he might have supposed that the power which could open the eyes of a blind man and unstop the ears of a deaf man could also feed thousands of hungry men; but, in common with the other disciples, he was slow to learn and quick to forget.

He must have been startled, then, to hear the command given to cause the multitude to sit down on the grass. It was a mountain-slope in a country famous for its rich grass and herds of cattle, and very soon the hill-side was covered with ranks of men, women, and children reclining on the green sward.

Then Jesus took in his own hands the thin, hard cakes, and looking up to heaven for a blessing (an example we ought always to follow), he brake them and handed them to the disciples for distribution among the people; and then the two small fishes also, breaking them into parts for the same purpose; when, lo! either in the breaking or in the distributing (we shall never in this world know which) the cakes grew, the fishes were multiplied, until not only all the people were satisfied, but there was more left over than there was at the beginning.

Thus were five barley loaves and two small fishes *in the hands of Christ* multiplied into a quantity sufficient to satisfy five thousand hungry men.

Does this seem very strange? Does it cause our faith to stagger? It certainly would if we knew nothing of the character of Christ and of his great power. Had the disciples forgotten, and do we forget, that once before this at a wedding, when either from an unexpectedly large number of guests or because the feast was prolonged beyond the usual time, the wine gave out, and Jesus, without a word, changed six water-pots into brimming vessels of wine? This was divine power—no chemical transformation, no achievement of science, but

the power that made the world and made all worlds, and keeps them in their places.

An unthinking disciple might have said *then*, "These empty firkins may be filled to overflowing with water, but how can this supply the want of wine?" But under the power of Christ the water became wine, and the wedding-festival went on.

Many hundred years before this time a lad had been sent by his father to see his elder brothers in the army. He was a country boy, brought up among the hills of Judah. His father was a farmer or grazier, and the business of this young man was to tend his father's sheep. Out among the hills and under the blue sky he grew ruddy and strong, as only boys do who live much in the open air. He was very skilful in playing on the harp.

Now the Lord had chosen David to be king; and when Saul said unto his servants, "Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring him to me," one of the servants recommended "a son of Jesse," whom he had seen. "Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, which is with the sheep. And Jesse took an ass laden with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a kid, and sent them by David his son unto Saul. And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly; and he became his armor-bearer." 1 Sam. xvi. 19-21.

On a second visit, when he came again to see how his three brothers, who were in the army, were doing, and brought them good things from home again—parched corn and loaves of bread, and cheeses to their commanding officers—he found the whole army in mortal fear of a famous giant, a Philistine, who threatened and worried the king's troops every day, so that they could not stand before him. And David said,

“Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?”

But his eldest brother, struck with the young David's bold and daring question, turned on him angrily, and sneeringly said, “Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness?”

David was not abashed, though he felt the sting of the reproach. You boys know that few things are harder to bear from your companions or from anybody than ridicule and sneering. Hardly anything will aggravate and provoke a boy more than this.

David, however, was manly enough to overlook or ignore the insult. He went to the king and proposed to fight the giant. The king said, “Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.”

But David said modestly, “Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. David said moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the Lord be with thee.” 1 Sam. xvii. 34–37.

When the king found that the lad was determined to go and fight the Philistine, he had him arrayed in his own armor—a brass helmet, a coat of mail, and his great sword. But all this was too much for the country boy. The armor was too large, too heavy for him; he said, “I cannot go with

these." So he took his staff and his shepherd's pouch, in which he carried his noonday meal when he tended the sheep, and as he crossed the brook in the valley between the two armies he chose five smooth stones and put them in his pouch, and his sling in his hand, and he marched boldly toward the much-dreaded warrior.

These boys all know why he chose *smooth* stones—so that he might throw with accuracy, that he might hit his mark.

On he went, with his sling swinging in one hand and his staff in the other, as calmly, as confidently, as if he were following his flock over the pastures of Bethlehem; and on came the great giant Goliath, his armor-bearer carrying his shield before him.

As he approached David he affected not to see him. "He looked about," as if it was hardly worth while for him to allow his eye to rest upon a mere boy with his shepherd's staff. And when he became aware of his presence he looked down on him from the side of the hill, and with the utmost disdain said, "Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves?" And then he cursed David by his gods, and said, "Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air and to the beasts of the field."

But his boasting and his sneering did not disturb David. He modestly replied, "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied."

Now, if any one—one of David's brothers, for instance—had said, "*There* is a trained soldier clad in complete armor, cursing, swearing, and defying the armies of Israel, and *here* is a lad with five smooth pebbles and a sling; what can *he* do?" it would have been only what Andrew said about the five barley loaves and two small fishes.



You know the result of that duel; you know that David put his hand in his bag and took one of the round, smooth stones and put it in his sling, and, just as boys do now, turned it two or three times round his head to gather force, and then slung it at the giant, and with unerring aim struck him in the forehead (his helmet was not on or the visor was up), and it crashed in, burying itself in his thick skull; and he fell forward with his face to the ground. David then drew Goliath's own sword and cut off his head, and the victory was complete.

So God wrought this wonderful deliverance to the army of Israel by a youth with no weapon but a leather sling and a smooth stone.

What is there in these Bible stories to interest us? What is there in *your* condition which makes these incidents appropriate topics of instruction? You are all young. To all of you life is in the future; it is before you. Whilst under the care of your friends you are shielded from dangers which will beset you on every hand when you shall enter the world. You now have no care, no anxiety about the means of education and support, but when you are thrown upon your own resources, when the real struggle for life begins, you will feel that it is hard work to strive in that race which all about you are running, and that many lose. As you look about you in the outset, and see the real difficulties of the situation, and observe how much is required to ensure success, and when you see the bright, active, well-equipped, and often unscrupulous competitors, you may in a moment of discouragement say, "What can I do among so many?" And more than this. While here you are protected from temptations which will beset many of you when you go away. The dangers of evil companionships and bad literature, from which you may not be entirely safe even at home, will be greatly increased out in

the world. This great city is always fruitful of these evils, and now overflows with their seductions ; and our great Centennial, with all the good it brings us in the forms of instruction and culture, brings also amusements and entertainments more than questionable in character ; and the legacy we shall inherit in this respect will be a harvest of ruin, especially of young lives.

And such of you as may find occupation and homes in our city will find your paths much more beset with the dangers that I describe. And then, if with some self-apprehension you should look about you and get a glimpse only of these perils, and then should look in upon your own hearts and see their natural proneness to evil, you may say, "I am only a child, weak when depending on my own strength, and the temptations of life are very many and very strong ; what am I ? what can I do among so many ?"

The five barley loaves and the two small fishes of the boy on the hill-side of the Sea of Galilee under the blessing of Christ were made to feed abundantly more than five thousand men ; the six water-jars at the marriage of Cana by the power of Christ were converted into the best wine, brim full ; a single round, smooth stone in the lad David's sling smote a giant so that he fell to the earth on his face ; and you, as you take your places in life, surrounded by temptations which threaten to overwhelm you, may look to the same God and Saviour to protect you and bless you, now in this world and everlastingly in heaven.

## EXCUSES.



LUKE xiv. 18 :

And they all began with one consent to make excuse.

THIS is a very striking and interesting story, and if you were now hearing it for the first time your attention would be fastened on it. But it is very old and very familiar. It is the story of a man who spread a great feast in his own house and invited a large company of people.

But, strangely enough, the invited guests did not come. Now-a-days there is not much trouble in gathering a large party. Any gentleman who will make a supper and provide plenty of good things to eat and drink, will have all the guests he wants to come to his party. It was not so in this case, however. The invited guests did not come. They could not afford to ignore the invitation—that is, treat it with indifference or contempt—but, not being willing to go to the party, or having what they supposed good reasons for not going, “they all with one consent began to make excuse.”

Then follow the excuses or reasons or apologies, or whatever you may call them, which certain persons gave for not accepting the invitation.

One man, who seems to have been a thrifty, prosperous person, intent on adding to his possessions, said, “I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee

have me excused." In other words, the man was such a business-man—so occupied, so absorbed, with buying and selling and getting gain—that he could not afford the time to cultivate social relations with this hospitable man, who had gone to the expense and taken the trouble of preparing a handsome entertainment for his friends.

Another of these invited guests, who was apparently a farmer, and who had just added to his working-force and the machinery of his husbandry by the purchase of five yoke of oxen, gave as his excuse that he must go and prove his oxen—*i. e.* he must go and examine them to see whether they were sound and in good condition, and whether they were well matched and well broken, for if they were not all these they would be of little use to him, either to draw his plough or his carts, and it would not do for him to part with his money and find that he had been deceived. So, like a prudent, thoughtful man, as he claimed to be, and one not easily overreached, he must go and look after them. It does not seem to have occurred to him that he can do all this next day or at some other time, but he must do it at once: "I pray thee," said he, "have me excused."

Now comes the third and last man; his case is different: it is peculiar. He does not plead the cares of business, the necessity of adding to his real estate, as the first man did; nor the duties of his farm and the care of his cattle, as the second man did; but he has a better excuse than either—he is too happy! He is just married, therefore he *cannot come*. He does not ask to be excused, as the others did; his position is different; he forgets the politeness to which the receipt of an invitation is entitled, and with strange want of courtesy he says, somewhat peremptorily, certainly very decidedly, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come."

The invitations were all verbal. They were not written or

engraved on cards, as is the fashion now-a-days, but they were sent by a servant.

I don't know how—*i. e.* in what tones or in what words—the invitations were given, neither do I know how the regrets or uncivil replies were conveyed back to the master of the feast, but something in the matter or the manner must have been excessively irritating to him, for he became “angry ;” and then he sent out the servant again with invitations to a very different class of persons indeed—a class not usually sought on such occasions, poor, maimed, halt, blind, etc.—and after repeated efforts he finally filled his house with guests.

When God placed our first parents, Adam and Eve, in the garden of Eden, and told them they might eat of every tree and fruit in that garden except one, and *that* they must not eat, the exception was soon forgotten. The serpent came; he approached the woman; she yielded, and then gave to her husband, and he ate also. Then God called the man, Adam, to account: “Where art thou?”

Now, why did he not at once and frankly say, “I have sinned; I have forgotten thy law; I have done what thou didst forbid”?

No, but making an excuse, he said, “The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat.”

Then the Lord turned to the woman and said, “What is this that thou hast done?” And the woman, also with an excuse, said, “The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.” And so from that day to this people who do wrong “all with one consent make excuse.”

The excuses which we hear from time to time and from all quarters, and which we ourselves make, are of two kinds—viz. : either (1) *For doing what is wrong* ; or (2) *For not doing what is right*.

I. *Excuses for doing what is wrong.*

A boy has fallen into the habit of profane swearing. He has heard men swear when in a passion; he has heard other boys older than himself swear on very slight provocation; and he very naturally and very rapidly forms the habit. Such words come as easily to his lips as if he had been carefully trained in their use. They defile his conversation when with his companions; they slip out even when under the restraint of the presence of older and better people. He is reasoned with on the folly, the wickedness, of such talk; he is rebuked; he is punished; and his excuse is that some great men swear! And if men can be distinguished, and even great, while they have the habit of profanity, why should not *he* swear?

A little boy struggles with the sickness which learning to smoke cigars or chew tobacco brings at the first attempt or lesson in this direction. How he will puff at his poor, common cigar with his pale face and his nausea, until he is fairly overcome and has to go to bed!

Why? He sees men smoke and chew, or older boys than himself smoke and chew, and he thinks it is *manly* to do so. Not only so; he thinks it unmanly, effeminate, *not* to do so: and so with this for his excuse, he will often in early childhood contract habits unclean and expensive, not knowing, not being able to know at his tender age, the strength of the chains which will bind him. To all boys I would say, Wait a while—wait until you are a man, and can earn money for yourself, and can understand better the nature of these habits; then if you wish to adopt them, do so. And I think very few of you will.

Then there is the habit of drinking. How easy to fall into this! how hard to get out of it! It is not for the exhilarating effect of spirits that young people *begin* to drink, but it is because they see men drink, and they think it is *manly*.

There is no other excuse at first ; but when the habit is formed, the taste cultivated, and the chains are fastened firmly, *then* the excuse is, " I can't help it ; I have no control over myself ; I am gone." *This* is the excuse, and, alas ! it is so true and real that we can only stand by and look and shudder at the awful picture. There are other habits and vices, such as the reading of immoral literature, impure and filthy conversation, and others still which I dare not name, but which you will understand me to mean ; for doing which, if charged and convicted, you can have no excuse to give to others, but for which you *may* have an excuse to give yourselves. Oh what excuse can be given for habits, even if only of thought, and which are not acted out—habits which corrupt and weaken and destroy the soul ?

A lad is employed as clerk in a store or in a lawyer's office or in some public institution. His pay is small, miserably small, contemptibly small, and he knows that those who employ him can well afford to pay him proper wages, and ought to do so. But they don't, and he is under an agreement to serve his master or employer for the sum agreed upon. Some day the thought comes up in his mind, or some evil-disposed person tells him, that he is not half paid, and that it is only fair that he should get more ; and the next thought is, unless the first is stamped out, that it is no more than just that he should receive more, and so he takes it without the knowledge of his employer : he steals it, and he is gone ! Now go and ask him what could have induced him to do so wicked a thing, and unless he is overwhelmed with shame, he will tell you that he only took what ought to have been given to him. What an excuse is this !

## II. *Excuses for not doing what is right.*

A boy at school has lessons to study. They are hard ; he must *work* to get them. He is not in the mood for hard

work : a fit of idleness, of listlessness, is upon him ; he can't fix his attention ; outward sounds disturb him ; he is homesick ; he is thinking of his mother or of the family at home ; or he is a dreamer, a builder of castles in the air and in his brain ; he looks out of the window ; he watches the clouds as they float ; he pictures all sorts of shapes among them ; he sees battlements and turrets of a castle in those shifting forms ; he fancies that those distant clouds which the western sun has made as white as snow are snow-capped mountains ; he remembers the lines—

“Mid yon rich clouds' voluptuous pile  
Methinks some spirit of the air  
Might pause to gaze below a while,  
Then turn to bathe and revel there ;”

and he forgets his lesson ; the time passes imperceptibly ; the hour for recitation comes ; he stands up with his class, but he fails ; he stammers, blushes, hangs his head, and when asked why he is not ready with his lesson he pleads a headache or some other equally vain—shall it be said equally untruthful?—excuse, and hopes for indulgence.

Why not, like a brave, manly boy, say, “ I, teacher, I am to blame ; I have been idle, thoughtless, foolish ; I am without excuse : pray forgive me ” ?

What shall be said of the want of progress of some of these boys ? I am under the embarrassment of not knowing anything of your attainments or scholarship in your classes. But I know something of boy-life and of school-boy life, and I take for granted that in so large a company there must be some who do not keep up with the best, or even with the average—who are counted slow and dull.

Now, why should this be so ? I know that all cannot be first. God has not given us all the same natural mental power. But I know that after making all proper allowances



in this direction there need not be so many who are far behind, below the average. I know that all can strive to be first, and, though all cannot succeed, the average will be vastly improved. If I were a college student I would take this for a motto, or something like it: "*The best always.*" And I would strive for this continually.

Now, it is very likely that those who are behind in their classes can give plenty of reasons for it; but are they not—most of them, at least—mere "excuses," insufficient, unsatisfactory? And is this not another illustration of my text, "they all with one consent," etc.?

The graduate of a college who goes out with small honors, or with no honors, cannot, unless he has been in feeble health, have any good excuse for his want of success. It must be because he has wasted his time, has neglected his opportunities—that he has been without a true ambition; and he can hope for nothing in the future but failure and disappointment in whatever kind of business he is employed at.

Ah! the truth is we are always excusing ourselves for not doing our duty. We excuse ourselves to ourselves first, and then we excuse ourselves to others—to those to whom we are accountable.

The teaching of the story or parable is this: The man who made the great supper is God; the supper is the provision God has made for our salvation; the guests who were invited are all who are living in the world, and not living for God; the excuses which the invited guests made are such as many are making all the time for not following Christ.

Now, I want to make the subject practical in a personal and serious manner. It is the will of God that all of you should believe in him, obey him, love him. But the fact is, you do not, and when I ask you why, you all with one consent, almost as if you had agreed together—you all begin to make

excuses. You do not make them outwardly and audibly, but you *think* them ; and to you they are just as real as if you spoke them out.

I do not know exactly what they are, I cannot follow you in your ingenuity in framing these excuses, but I know you are making them, for I too have made them.

Under the influence of the truth, whether presented from the pulpit or from the printed page of the Bible or some other printed forms of truth ; or the voice of God's providence, stirring the depths of the soul and developing the seeds formerly sown there, rousing the conscience and making the sinner tremble in view of his awful guilt and ingratitude ; or from a word fitly spoken, dropped in conversation by a Christian friend ; or from a glimpse of eternity coming up through the gloom of the grave ;—no matter how that truth reaches the heart, under its influence the sinner resists, struggles, tries to break away and seek relief by drowning the divine voice.

But the heavenly messenger continues to plead. All the considerations that are adapted to move the heart are presented, the arguments that ought to convince the judgment are set forth ; but it is not the intellect that needs to be set right ; it is the heart that is wrong and will not be set right.

Reasons, excuses, spring up in great number and variety. They meet every phase of the great question, such as these :

“I am too busy ; I have not time now ; I shall have more time after a while.”

“I am too fond of pleasure ; if I turn to God I shall have to give up so much that I like.”

“I will do so some day, but there is time enough ; I am still quite young, and I am just as likely to live long as other people.”

“It is not my fault that I am not a Christian ; I read the

Bible often—sometimes I read it every day ; I say my prayers every night and morning, though often not very much in earnest ; and I go to church regularly. What more can I do ?”

“What better should I be if I became a Christian? There is Mr. A or Mrs. B or Miss C ; they are members of the church, they go to the communion-table, and look very serious, and the next day they seem no better than other people. What’s the use of becoming a Christian ?”

“I am afraid, if I should repent and become a Christian and join the Church, I should not hold out. So many start out with great zeal and promise so well for a time, and then grow worldly just as they were before, that I am afraid my experience will be like theirs ; and rather than be a backslider, I would not be a Christian at all.”

“I am ashamed to come out boldly and take such a stand. It requires more courage than I can summon, so I will be a Christian in secret and do good works ; and it may be that I can do as much good in a quiet, modest way as other people in their public, pharisaical way.”

Does any one of these excuses fit the case of any one person in this chapel to-day? As I have mentioned them one by one, has any one of you said, “That is *my* case ; that is the reason I don’t come right out and declare myself on the Lord’s side”?

Turn your eyes inward on your heart ; what do you see? A strife, a struggle, a conflict—two forces, spiritual ; one is your own spirit framing excuses for not giving up to God ; the other, the Holy Spirit showing the folly, the madness of such excuses, urging you to give them up, constraining you to push them aside, for they bar the door against infinite Love, entreating you to let the heavenly messenger into that heart which has been so long and so closely barred against him.

How shall the contest be decided? *I* cannot answer the

question. *You can* ; it is entirely within your control, and it is beyond the control of every other human being. He (or she) who sits beside you cannot decide it. Your nearest, you best friend, your parents, your brother, your sister, cannot decide it. It is the most important issue that can ever be presented to the human mind ; it is even now presented to your mind, my young friend, and you must meet it and decide it yourself.

Ah, how sad it is to think that the struggle for this time may be closed by again resisting the divine influence, again turning away from infinite Love, again shutting and barring the doors of your heart against Him who stands and *knocks* and *knocks*, and is refused an entrance !

## THE LOST SON.



LUKE xv. 11-24.

I WANT to speak to you to-day about the young man who is almost always called the "Prodigal Son," but who may be called, with equal truth and more exactly, the "*Lost Son*."

It is a story which has been read probably more frequently than any other part of the Bible, it is so simple, so beautiful, so natural, and therefore so full of personal interest to all. You who are listening to me now are probably more familiar with this story than with any other part of the word of God. I do not speak to you about it in my own language because the language of the Scriptures can be improved—that is impossible; but in the hope that, if other words are used, they may suggest new thoughts to you; the beautiful words of the parable, so familiar, having almost ceased to interest you.

I do not know the name of this youth, for it is not recorded, nor do I know the name of his father, nor of his mother, nor the name of his elder brother; I do not know how he was brought up: whether he was carefully trained at home and kept out of bad company and sent to school, or whether he was allowed to have his own way and do as he pleased; I do not know anything at all of his companions (those of his boyhood), except his elder brother, nor do I know anything of his circumstances except such as I read in the fifteenth chapter of Luke.

I almost wish I did know more about him, because it would be very interesting to look into his history and see what it was that led him to desire to go away from home and leave his father, and fall into the bad ways of life, which proved his ruin, and which justify us in calling him the "*Lost Son.*"

The story is told by our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and we may be sure therefore that every word of it is true. Some stories that we read in books are so extravagant and so exaggerated that we think they are *made up*; but here is one so probable and so natural that some of us think we know at least one young man of whom it is the true history.

The father seems to have been a man of some property, possibly he was rich. He had servants, and had some possessions which he was willing to divide between his children even before his death. The younger son, with an impudence that is not uncommon in our day, and with utter selfishness, appeared before his father and *demande*d an immediate division of his father's property. He was not willing to wait for the death of his father. He must have now *his* share of the estate, so that he may do what he pleased with it.

According to the old Jewish law, where there were only two sons, the elder had two-thirds of the property for his share. In England now, under the law of entail, in the old noble families, the eldest son gets all the real estate.

Whatever may have been the father's views or wishes on the subject, he probably saw that his son was already beyond his control; that it was not worth while to detain him at home after this; that his heart was already estranged; that the son must learn his folly by bitter experience: so he yielded with weak fondness to the demand and divided the property.

And then, a few days after, this young man gathered all together—all his share of the flocks and herds, his share of grain and clothing, and of whatever else the property consisted;

he gathered it all together, turned it into money or valuables that he could carry, and immediately set out on his journey.

If you will think a moment of what was in this young man's heart—of the spirit of independence and selfishness, the dislike of restraint, and of his determination to lay out his life according to his own plans, to have his own way—you will easily understand why he should leave home *immediately* on the division of the property, and turn his back on his father, his mother (if she were still living), on his brother and his home.

The story is very brief; the outlines merely are given. We are told that his property soon vanished—not by misfortune; not by failure in business; not by lending his money to people who could not return it at the proper time, and when he wanted it; not by having it stolen from him; *no! none of these*: but he *wasted it*; wasted it in riotous living. And if you ask me what that means, I answer that *then*, as *now*, riotous living was excessive eating and drinking, carousing and gambling; and then I ask you to look down at the thirtieth verse in this chapter and you will see that it was something worse than any of these—worse than *all* these.

But this could not last long. He took no pains to add to his store, and it was probably soon gone; and when he had spent or wasted all, there came a *famine*. “And he began to be in want”—of what? Of everything, but especially and immediately of food. He was not in want of high living, rich wines and gay clothing, but in want of bread.

Why did he not go home at once? He was not humbled yet. Why did he not beg? Would he be likely to get a living in that way? People soon tire of beggars. What did he do? He went and hired himself to one of the people of that country, who sent him out into the fields to feed swine; in that day, and in that country, one of the lowest kinds of

employment. Was he hungry? Yes; so hungry that he would willingly have eaten the swine's food, if that could have satisfied his hunger; but the rough, coarse fruit of the carob tree, here called "husks," could no more satisfy hunger than the skin of a potato or an orange.

He seems to have reached now a very low state indeed. His companions who had helped him to spend his money were either unable to assist him or they had *deserted* him, which is almost always the case with such people; and while in this utterly degraded and ruined condition, the parable says, "*he came to himself.*" This is a very singular expression. It is the language which we usually apply to an insane person who has been restored to his right mind—who has been recovered from his insanity.

If any one had gone to this young man and said, "You are deranged"—"your mind is diseased"—"you are insane"—it would have been startling language, but it would have been literally true, for the writer of Ecclesiastes says, in speaking of the wicked (ix. 3), "Madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the grave." So foolish, so unreasonable, is a life of sin and folly. And the description is most accurate. For they who live only for pleasure, who eat and drink excessively, who care not for the future, really live like animals, are not what God intended them to be, are *not in their right mind*.

Try to picture his condition now. See him as he sits upon the ground—his elbows on his knees, his face buried in his hands, ragged, filthy, wretched, homesick, deserted.

While he sits there in his helplessness a great revolution is going on in his heart—memory is bringing up the scenes of the past. His thoughts go back to his home, his childhood, his father, his brother, his companions, all that made the home of his childhood bright and happy. He wonders if they



remember *him!* He wonders if his father misses him, if at the close of the day he looks and longs for his return?

And conscience is ready with her remonstrances and reproaches. She tells him he has brought all this on himself; that he had a good home, and would not be contented with it; that he had a kind father, and deserted him; that he grew tired of the wholesome restraints of home, and determined to do for himself; that in spite of all that could be said and done to the contrary, he *would* have his own way, would go off from home and seek his fortune.

And then there came the reflection that all this wretchedness and misery, brought on by himself, was wholly unnecessary; that he need not continue in this deplorable state; that his father might possibly receive him if he would return, and that it was worth the effort at least; and then, under the influence of the good Spirit of God then working upon his heart, and without whom he could never have had such thoughts, then came the resolution: "*I will arise and go to my father!*"

This was the turning-point in his life! This the most important moment in all his experience. And having made this resolution he did not delay. We have a right to believe that he arose at once—that he started home immediately. I don't believe he hesitated a moment.

And it was not merely his physical sufferings that moved him. It was not merely that he had no food and no clothes, and could not get any; not merely that he had lost his place in society, and was shut up to the keeping of swine: no! it was something sadder than these; he felt that he had wronged somebody, that he had sinned, that he had sinned against heaven—against his heavenly Father and his own earthly father; that he had lost his claim to be considered as a son again, and that it would be a favor even to be received as a servant.

I wish we might all learn from this that the best place for us to do our duty, and honor our parents, is *at home*, where God in his providence places us; and that it is a mistake, a delusion, to suppose that under *other* circumstances we could be more faithful, we would do better; and that therefore we shall be justified if we take the law into our own hands, and go where we please and do our duty there. The fact is that we must be *just* and *true* and *right* WHEREVER we are, and God will, when he sees best, remove us to other places.

And I wish we all might learn what a thorough change of heart means. This young man confesses his sin. He does not excuse himself in the least. He does not say, "I am no worse than other young fellows of my age and circumstances. My father was too strict with me. My brother was too hard with me. I wanted to see a little of the world as other young men do. I went a little farther than I ought to have gone; in fact, I went a little too far. I was a little too fast. I was unfortunate. I was unlucky." No, nothing like this at all. But "*I have sinned, I have sinned.*"

I believe he took the most direct way home. I *know* he did not sneak home and into the house in the night, as he might have done if he had been only *half* penitent; for his father saw him while he was yet a *great way off*. Do you ask how his father could know him at such a distance, and he so changed from the gay, bright young fellow who left his home some time ago? Ah, through all that wretchedness, through all that filth, through all those rags, and those pinched and wasted features, the *father* knows his *son*.

He might indeed have been looking for him. He must have missed him very much. Being the younger son, this young man may have been a pet in the family. It is often so. And the old father may have looked and longed for his return with a sure hope that some day he *would* come back.

I wonder whether he had ever heard from him! There were no telegrams in those days, no newspapers, no mails, very few letters. The *elder brother* seems to have heard from him, and *he* knew how he had been living, and with what kind of companions he had wasted his property.

But whatever the father may have known of his son's behavior he loves him still. He sees him a great way off; he does not wait at his house for him; he does not walk quietly and in a dignified way to meet him, but he *runs* to meet him; he falls on his neck, he kisses him, he interrupts his broken confession; he does not wait to hear him say, "Make me as one of thy hired servants;" he remembers not the son's wicked ways; he knows that he is *his own son*; that while he was not his son at first because he was a *good* boy, neither can he *cease* to be his son because he is a *bad* boy, and he forgives him immediately and entirely and without any conditions whatever.

Then looking on the wretched boy as he lay in his arms, he calls the servants to bring forth the best robe and put it on him; and seeing his bare feet, probably torn and bleeding from his long travel, he calls for *shoes* to be put on him, and a ring to adorn his hand; and, in fact, he reinstates him in the family, treats him as if he had never done anything wrong, and then, not satisfied with all this, he orders a feast to be prepared—the fatted calf to be killed, music to be provided; and the whole house is filled with merriment and dancing in celebrating the *recovery of the lost son*.

I do not go to the end of the parable, because I have not time, and because I am not quite sure I understand it. This is enough for my purpose to-day.

Now let us look for a moment at this young man's sin. It did not consist, (1) In his going away from home—many find it necessary to do that: but in the motives which led him

away. Nor (2) In his going so far away : the distance had nothing to do with it. Nor (3) In his going into society : it was his duty to go into society ; but it was the kind of company that he sought.

Look at his misery. What was it? Not in his poverty. Many lose all their property, but sad as it is, it does not always make the loser miserable.

His misery was not in his homesickness. Ah ! some of you know what that means, but distressing as this is, it is not necessarily miserable.

It was not that he had to work. That is the common lot ; that ought not to make any one wretched. It was the fall from virtue to vice, and the degrading character of his occupation and his hopelessness.

Look at his *repentance*. It was no half-way work ; but with sincere sorrow for his wicked courses, with his pride humbled, his spirit crushed and broken, he surrendered himself unconditionally.

He made no bargain—he did not want to make any. He did not say nor *think*, “ Well, if my father will do thus and so, I will go back home and be a good boy, a faithful son.” No ; nothing of the kind. He gave himself up entirely to his father.

Now, the great thought of the parable is that

### GOD IS OUR FATHER.

You see that no matter how low he had fallen, no matter how he had squandered his fortune among bad men and worse *women*, he was still his father’s son ; his father’s blood was in his veins, and he could still call him *Father*.

Am I speaking to some who are *fatherless*? God in his providence has made you orphans. But some of you can remember your father. You can think of the kindness, the

love, with which your father led you along, taking hold of your hand and helping you over the hard places, just as you see children led by the hand every day in the street. I suppose you are too young to realize the greatness of the loss, if your father was a real good man. But as you grow older, and go out in the world to make a name and a place for yourselves, you will miss more and more the counsel and care of a father.

The best ideal of a good man is a good *father*: not merely a fond, indulgent father, but a wise, thoughtful, considerate, gentle, yet firm man, living for his children, toiling early and late for their support, striving for a good position, not so much for himself as for those who are to come after him and to take his place; in short, living for his children, and receiving all his thrills of joy or pain through them—this, I say, is the highest type of man. But the best earthly fathers are only human, and are therefore imperfect. They make mistakes; they are too indulgent or too strict; they are too fond or too severe; their best laid plans come to naught; they fail to make proper provision for their children; they die sadly, and leave their sons and their daughters to the cold charities of the world.

Now the whole purpose of this address is to direct your thoughts to God. He is our heavenly Father, yours and mine. He never makes mistakes. He knows everything. He never fails for lack of means. He can do all things. He says, "the silver and the gold are mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." He can make you rich; he can make you poor. He never grows weary of you. He never forgets you. He never rebukes harshly. He never punishes except when you need it. He can make you sick; he can make you well. He will be your Judge at the last day.

Now he bends from his high heaven; he stoops and looks into your faces; he stretches out his hand; he asks

you to take hold. He says, "Poor sinful one, look up to me. I will be your Father; trust me. I am rich and great and strong and wise; and I want to help you, and all who are like you. Do not be afraid of me; I will not hurt you; I will not make you unhappy. Give me your love; tell me all that is in your heart. I will be more than both father and mother to you. Will you not trust me?"

What do *you* say?

## THE DELIVERANCE OF PETER BY THE ANGEL.



ACTS xii. 1-19.

ONE night many hundreds of years ago, in the early spring, and in a city crowded to overflowing with strangers, a man was lying asleep in a prison. It was strange that he could sleep, for it was, as he supposed and as his friends supposed, his last night on earth, and on the morrow he was doomed to death. He was an innocent man—innocent certainly of any crime which deserved death. The king by whom whom he had been arrested and thrown into prison was a cruel and wicked man, who had inherited from his grandfather a taste for bloody deeds, which stopped at nothing for its gratification. He seemed to have unlimited power, and although not an absolute monarch was accountable only to a government so far away that in those days an appeal for protection was slow to reach the imperial throne, and not always sure of a hearing. This king had already taken the life of one of the friends of the man now in prison, and because the act pleased the unthinking and heartless people, and helped to make *him* popular, he determined to kill Peter also. The only reason for delay in the execution of his plan was an unwillingness to disturb the solemnities of the passover feast. Very likely this season was chosen because the people from all parts of the land and the world were gathered in the great city to celebrate their great

annual feast. If the act was a popular one, the more people who could witness it and hear of it the better.

Peter therefore was arrested for preaching the new religion, and committed to prison. How long he had lain there I do not know, probably only a few days. The prison must have been gloomy and wretched to the last degree. Now-a-days, after eighteen hundred years have passed, and after all the alleviations which Christian charity has invented, and under the best circumstances possible, a prison is a dreadful place ; but in that far-off time and among those people it was horrible. I will not attempt to describe it.

Peter was lying asleep. He was not alone, however ; two men were with him as guards ; they also were asleep. It was not necessary for them to keep awake, for the prisoner was chained, not to the floor nor to a ring or staple in the wall, but chained to his guards, each of his hands secured to an arm of a soldier. And besides this two other soldiers outside of the cell kept the door. Certainly this was enough to ensure the safety of the prisoner, and no one had a doubt of his security. No one questioned the expectation that at the appointed hour on the next day the prisoner would pass through that door to his death.

The night was far spent. The throngs of people that had surged up and down the narrow streets all day had dispersed to their homes, some in the houses of the crowded city, and many out through the city gates to the booths and tents that were spread all over the surrounding country. The deserted streets echoed the footfall of a lingering passenger here and there, and the high walls of the city and its sacred buildings were more impressive than under the bright light of the sun. In the prison all was dark and lonely. No friend of the condemned prisoner, as in our day, was with him in his last hours ; no minister of religion was there to give the consola-



Talks with Boys and Girls.



“A prison is a dreadful place.”

p. 156.



tions of the gospel ; no lamp shed a gleam of light on the sad scene. There lay the victim, stretched at full length on the stone floor, no soft bed for his weary limbs, no gentle hand to smooth his pillow. With his coarse fisherman's coat under him for a bed, Peter lay sleeping in the dark as calmly as if he expected to awake in the morning to a day of peace and hope.

But suddenly the prison was filled with light. Did it come from the bright moon through that grated window? No. Did it come through that bolted door from many lamps? No. Whence, then, came that unearthly light, filling the dark cell with a brilliance exceeding that of the noonday sun?

The light came from heaven ; it came with an angel. How it entered, how the angel entered through those thick stone walls and that barred and bolted door, and past those guards, I cannot tell you, for I do not know. But I know that an angel from the Lord came into that dark cell, bringing the light of heaven with him ; and I know that he stood over Peter as he lay there fast asleep, and smote him on the side and awakened him without awaking his guards—that he spoke to him with a distinct voice, that he raised him from the floor, that the chains fell from Peter's hands, and that he stood on his feet unbound.

I can imagine the surprise of Peter ; it must have been intense. I can understand that even in that exciting moment the light reassured him, for he had seen it before on the Mount of Transfiguration. I fancy I can hear the words of the angel, spoken so that no ear but Peter's heard them : " Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals." I can see the prompt obedience. " Cast thy garment about thee "—his hands were free now—" and follow me ;" and he went out and followed him.

But Peter was filled with amazement. When you are

suddenly aroused from sleep, you know how difficult it is to get fully awake. It was so with Peter. He arose; he heard the voice of the angel; he obeyed it; but it seemed almost like a dream to him; he hardly knew whether he was awake, or whether he was still asleep and dreaming that an angel came to him and delivered him. But he followed the angel and the light, and as they came up to the doors, one after the other, they found nothing to hinder them; and then when they reached the iron gate, the outer gate of all, which led into the city, it opened to them of its own accord—no keys necessary here—and they found themselves out in the open street. Then Peter was aware that he was alone; his guide, the bright angel, was gone.

By this time Peter was entirely himself again; he had recovered from his surprise; he was in full possession of all his faculties. And the sacred narrative tells us, “And when Peter was come to himself he said, Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath sent his angel and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.”

But there he was in the street, alone and at the dead of night. What shall he do? Whose house will be opened to him? What family will thank him for rousing them at so late an hour to take in an escaped prisoner? Would not most of those people, quietly sleeping in their homes, much rather give him up again to the very guards from whom he had escaped?

He stood for a few moments, hesitating, uncertain what to do or where to go. Then he remembered that there was at least one house in the great city that would gladly open its doors to give him shelter. It was the house of Mary, the mother of Mark and sister of Barnabas; he must have known that he would be welcome there. It is probable—indeed al-

most certain—that he was in the habit of going there, and that Mary’s house was a place of resort for shelter and social worship of many a poor Christian.

We do not know in what street Mary lived ; in fact, we know nothing of any street in Jerusalem except that along which our Lord was led from Pilate’s house to Calvary, now called the *Via Dolorosa*, “the sad or sorrowful way.” But we know that it was not a small house, and that it was not probably in an obscure part of the city.

He came up to the door and found it closed. He might have expected this at such an hour, for the persecution of the Christians had already commenced, and they were careful not to expose themselves unnecessarily.

Inside of that house a large company was gathered. I do not know whether Peter was aware of the meeting, or what it was for. He seems to have gone there for shelter or sympathy.

But *we* know what the gathering was for ; it was a meeting for prayer, and it was a large meeting : “many were gathered together.” As we are told in the fifth verse of this chapter that “prayer was made without ceasing, of the Church unto God, for Peter,” we may suppose that the deliverance of Peter from prison and death was one of their chief subjects of prayer this evening. They must have prayed earnestly and continuously, importunately ; they must have prayed as if they expected to be heard and answered.

While they were thus occupied Peter came up “and knocked at the door of the gate.” The large gates which were the entrance to their houses had little doors or openings, sometimes large enough to admit a single person, sometimes only large enough to enable one to look out and see who was there.

As Peter knocked at this door or wicket a young girl came to listen. It is somewhat strange and very interesting that through all this time, these hundreds of years, the name of that

young girl has been preserved and handed down to us; and such a beautiful name, *Rhoda*, which, in Greek, means *a rose*! Why has it been kept so long? The name of the widow who cast the two mites into the treasury has not been preserved. The widow of Nain, whose son our Lord raised from the dead, is nameless, neither do we know the name of her son. The Shunamite woman, whose son the prophet called back to life again, comes to us in the sacred story of the Old Testament without any name. But this young girl, sitting up late at night attending a prayer-meeting, bears a name which will live in history as long as language lives.

We know nothing else, however, but her name; she may have been a servant and tended the door; if so she was a good servant, prudent and faithful. She was a servant that could be depended on; trustworthy; for when she went to the door to answer the knock, instead of opening the door, as a careless, thoughtless one might have done, and thus expose the safety of those within the house, she paused and listened.

I cannot help saying that nothing is better than faithfulness; it takes hold of the least things as well as great duties. If any one can say of you, "He or she is faithful in every duty, and can be trusted as fully when out of my sight as in my presence," nothing better can be said. Do you apply yourself, whether to your school lessons or to other work, as faithfully when you are alone as if a thousand human eyes were upon you? Never mind what other people say; never mind being laughed at for doing right; think how God blesses those who obey him in being faithful in all the duties of life.

I say she paused and listened, and then I doubt not she called out, "Who's there?" The answer came that it was Peter.

Now, here is a little touch of natural truthfulness such as distinguishes the account of a real event. She does not open

the door at once, as you might suppose, but, full of joy and surprise, she runs back to the company and says that Peter is at the gate. This shows that she was a young girl and had little or no presence of mind; for while she was gone back to tell the news Peter was left without in the street and exposed to arrest as an escaped prisoner.

Now, here comes another touch of human nature. We suppose that as they had been praying for Peter's deliverance they would (when Rhoda came rushing in to tell her story) all cry out, "Thank God! our prayers are heard! Peter is safe! he is free!" But no, nothing of the kind; they did not believe her story; they did not believe God had answered their prayers; they said, "Thou art mad." But she insisted that she had heard his voice; she could not be mistaken; it *was* Peter, and nobody else.

Perhaps they said, "No! it can't be; Herod would never give him up; he could not pass the guards; there was no means of escape; he must be dead, and this is his angel or spirit."

But Peter kept on knocking, and then, when they could no longer resist the evidence that some person was there, they went to the door—some of them at least—with Rhoda, and opened the gate; and sure enough there he was; it was Peter himself.

It is said in the story that when they "saw him they were astonished." And this shows us two things: (1) That there was no conspiracy to release Peter; it was clearly God's power that saved him; (2) that though these friends had prayed for Peter, they had not faith to believe that their prayers would be answered.

And this is often so now. We ask God in prayer to do things for us which we hardly dare believe he *will* do, and when he *does* give us the things we ask for, we forget that we

*did* ask ; we do not see that they come as answers to our prayers ; we think “they would have come any how,” as we say, whether we ask for them or not ; and so we fail to give glory to God, as these Christians did in Jerusalem more than eighteen hundred years ago.

Now, if all this is true—and we cannot doubt it—what is the lesson for us ? *It is the power of prayer.*

Do you feel when you pray that you are *speaking to God*—that when you kneel down by the side of your little bed night and morning you are really speaking to God, and that he is in your room and hears you ? Oh do you not often lie down in your bed without any prayer at all ? Or do you not often say the Lord’s Prayer, “Our Father” etc., in such a hurry that you do not mean anything by the solemn words ?

Where is he who prays as he ought ? Where is he who asks God to help him to do right every day ? Where is he who asks God to bless his friends in the world and his friends at home ? Where is he who sets himself to his daily work—praying without ceasing ? Where is he who asks God for Christ’s sake to change his heart and make him a Christian, full of love to all ? Where is he who asks God to come and make all these boys good ? Some of us come here with very sad hearts ; where is he who prays God to make all these boys good and happy ?

Oh, boys, some of you, I hope, are Christians. If you should agree among yourselves to pray for each other, to pray that God would come here and pour out his Spirit—if you should agree to pray that Jesus of Nazareth as he passes by will turn in here (for these doors will open of their own accord to him)—that he will turn in here and put his hand on these young hearts,—he will make them happy, he will open their eyes, he will soften their hearts, he will convert them, he will save them. Will you ?



## THE PRISON AT PHILIPPI.



ACTS XVI. 30.

What must I do to be saved ?

I WANT you to forget that you are seated in this place, and go with me in thought to an ancient city thousands of miles from here, and near the shores of the Mediterranean sea.

Along one of the narrow streets in that old city, Philippi, a mob is hurrying, sweeping along with it two helpless men. They are rushing to the market-place, where the judges sat, dragging the two men whom they had arrested.

You ask who the prisoners were, and what had they done ? I answer, they were Paul and Silas, who, a few days before, had come across the sea, from Asia, to preach the new religion—salvation by Jesus Christ.

But why were they arrested ?

There was a young woman who seems to have been possessed of a spirit or demon, and she said things which it was supposed no mere mortal could say. She was a slave, and she was the property of more than one master ; and by her wild and strange, and perhaps true, sayings, she brought much gain to her masters. As the Christian missionaries went up and down in the streets of the city preaching the new faith, they attracted the attention of this damsel, who, either by her natural sense, or by some supernatural agency which we do not understand, discovered the character of the preachers ;

and she turned from her own ways and followed them day after day, saying, loud enough to be heard by all the people about there, "these men are the servants of the most high God, who show unto us the way of salvation."

The apostle Paul was grieved at this. It seemed to him wrong that any such unholy means should be employed to spread the gospel; and after bearing with the interruption and the notoriety as long as he could, he suddenly turned on the young woman, and said to the spirit that spoke through her lips, "I command thee, in the name of Jesus Christ, to come out of her." And the spirit came out immediately.

The woman was now of no more value to her masters than any other slave. She had lost her power of uttering dark and strange sayings. The hope of further profit from her was gone. "Their game was spoiled; their business was ruined," and her masters were not long in finding out the cause. So they raised a mob; they stirred up the people; they dragged the two strangers before the magistrates; they charged them with being *Jews*, who had come from abroad, and who had exceedingly troubled the city by teaching unlawful customs; in fact, introducing a religion which they, as Romans, could not listen to for a moment.

The multitude that crowded round the magistrates joined in the accusations. The excitement became more and more intense; the shouts and yells were such as only an eastern mob in our day could utter. The magistrates lost all control of themselves; they tore off their clothes, and, without any trial, without hearing a word in defence, they commanded the officers to beat the prisoners. I shall not attempt to describe the scourging, except to say that the clothing was removed from the prisoners, and the terrible military punishment was inflicted with no gentle hands.

What had these two men done that they should be treated

with such indignity and cruelty? Had they come to conquer the city? Why they were only five or six plain men, without arms of any kind. Had they brought any disease or pestilence into the city? No! Had they come to make the people dissatisfied with their condition or their rulers? No. Had they come to steal away their trade? No. Had they come as scouts or spies to see the weak places in their walls and their defences, and then go back and lead a hostile army and overthrow their government and their city? No; none of these things. They had come as missionaries to introduce Christianity; they had come to preach salvation by Jesus Christ—to show the people how to get to heaven.

They had made a few converts. Lydia, a seller of the famous purple dye, or of materials that were dyed in this beautiful purple—Lydia heard. The Lord opened her heart; she believed; she was converted. No harm was done to her. Whatever may have been her religious belief before, and she was a Jewess, she was happy now in her new religion. No harm was done to her household; they were baptized with her, and the strange preachers found a home in her house.

So far no one was injured. But when, after many days, the evil spirit was cast out of the young slave-woman, and she became no longer of any use to her masters, the strange preachers were dragged before the magistrates, as I have told you, and, after being scourged, were cast into prison.

The jailer was charged to keep them safely. What was there to fear from these strangers that such a charge should have been given? They had no powerful friends to attempt a rescue! In their wounded and bleeding condition they were not strong enough to break out of prison. The thick stone walls and the iron-bound gates could not be broken through by their weak hands. Nevertheless, the jailer, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison not only, but

made their feet fast in the stocks, and left them hungering and thirsting there! What did he care? He had no sympathy with these strangers nor with their work. He was a pagan! Wounded and bleeding prisoners were no rare sight to him! He was accustomed to all kinds of suffering. His duty was to keep his prisoners safely, and he did it.

So the evening hours passed; the sentinels walked their rounds, the watchmen examined their wards, the guards were set, the jailer retired to his own apartment and slept, and the prison was left to its suffering, its silence, and its gloom. But at midnight unusual sounds were heard; sounds such as were never before heard in that prison, and not often in any prison. It was the voice of prayer and praise! Paul and Silas, the abused, the suffering prisoners, were praying, doubtless in a loud voice, and singing, probably in still louder voice—singing praises unto God. And the other prisoners were listening. They must have wondered what those strange sounds meant! They were not the sounds of suffering: they were joyful sounds—songs of praise to a being of whom they knew nothing, and of supplication to one who, though not seen, was addressed as if he were present.

What could have been the words of their song of praise? What were the petitions which they presented, the prayers they offered, in that midnight hour, and in that gloomy prison? There was no light to see each other's face! There were no hearts of sympathy in that cold and cheerless dungeon. They were alone, and in the dark, and suffering; and yet their hearts were full of peace not only, but of such joy that it found utterance in songs of praise. And the prisoners were listening, listening eagerly it may be, to catch some words of the songs which gushed from the lips of their suffering fellow-captives.

But while they listened there was a great earthquake!

Suddenly, unexpectedly as a thunderbolt and a flash of lightning in a perfectly clear sky, suddenly there was a great earthquake. The iron bars rattled in the open unglazed windows; the heavy doors shook on their iron hinges and swung wide open; the solid stone walls rocked to their very foundations; the chains fell from the limbs of all the prisoners; the keeper was awakened from his sleep, and finding the prison doors all open, and supposing the prisoners had all escaped, knowing too well what would be his own fate on the morrow when the escape became known, he drew his sword and would have killed himself, when Paul called out from the thick darkness, "Do thyself no harm, for we are all here." Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and took their feet out of the stocks, and brought them out of the inner prison into the outer hall or corridor, and said with all the eagerness and earnestness of a perishing soul, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" What did he want to be saved from? Did he fear that his life was forfeited because the prison was open and the prisoners escaped? No; for the prisoners had not escaped. Paul said they were all there.

And even if he was afraid of such consequences, could Paul and Silas save him from the Roman law? No; they were powerless to help him: they were nothing but prisoners who could not, or did not, save themselves from the cruel scourgings the day before.

Why then did the jailer tremble? For his office? No. For his character? No. For his life? No; for the danger had passed and his prisoners were secure. He was in a paroxysm of excited feeling, trembling all over, unable for the moment to give utterance to his feelings!

He fell down before Paul and Silas. Look at him on his knees or on his face before his prisoners! Not to worship

them : he knew better than that ; but in profound reverence, for he knew that the earthquake and the miracle were on their account. What, then, did the jailer mean when he asked, “ What must I do to be saved ? ”

There must have been a convulsion in his soul equal to the earthquake that shook the prison walls. He was suddenly aroused from his sound sleep by the voice of the earthquake. He had not heard the singing and the praying that the prisoners heard. His first thought is that his prisoners are fled. But the friendly voice of Paul recalls his presence of mind. His thoughts at once take a new direction. He knows that these men claim to be the servants of God, and that they profess to teach the way of salvation. It would not be strange if, during the days the apostle had been at Philippi, the jailer had heard something of the new gospel and what it claimed to do. He might have been at the river side, at some time, or in the market place, and heard the warnings that fell from the lips of Paul, and his calls to the people to repent and lay hold on the mercy of God in Christ.

Or he may have seen and heard the slave girl, as she followed the strangers, crying out, “ These men are the servants of the most high God, that show unto us the way of salvation ; ” or, that show us *how to be saved!* The very form of his question would lead us to think so.

Or, in some mysterious way which we cannot understand, the Spirit of God may have seized upon his mind, convincing him in a moment that the things he had heard were awful realities ; that he had something to do himself, that this was the time to do it, and these were the men to show him how to do it. So he comes trembling before Paul and Silas, and asks them to tell him again more fully what he must do to be saved ; saved from that awful and infinite peril of which the accusing conscience whispers in the secret place of every

human soul; saved from the wretchedness of living without God and dying without hope; saved with that everlasting salvation which is preached by these persecuted prisoners in the name of the most high God.

You know the jailer's question. What was the answer? "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*" What does this mean? What are we to understand by it? It is not merely to believe that there was such a being as Jesus Christ on earth 1800 years ago, that he was born, lived a short life and died in Judea. Not merely that he lived a life of privation and suffering and finally died on the cross. Not merely that he died to make an atonement for sins, and, in some mysterious way which we may not fully understand, make satisfaction to the divine law which man by his sins had broken and despised. Not merely that he paid the price for our redemption, purchased our pardon, bore the penalty of the broken law. Not merely a belief that without this death we could not have been saved.

All these you believe already; they are matters of intellectual conviction, and are probably held and believed by all of you. But these are not *Faith in Jesus Christ*. Faith includes all these and more. To believe in Jesus Christ is to feel the burden of personal sin and misery. It is to be assured by the convictions of the Holy Spirit that you are wretched, helpless, lost; and that salvation—deliverance from this lost condition—is to be secured only by the mercy of Christ; and then, if you will go to him, confessing all this—your sin, and misery, and helplessness—and give yourself up to him, so that he may do with you whatever he will, abandoning all hope and purpose of making yourself good and pure and holy except by his help—this is what I mean by believing in Christ!

“The question of the Philippian jailer is still the question

of the age, of the world, and of every man and woman and child in the world. Not what shall I do to be rich, to be honored, to be free from toil and pain and want; to live the longest, and to be the most successful in the world. But what shall I do to be blessed forever, to have every want of my soul supplied, and every faculty of my being ennobled and glorified for everlasting ages? What shall I do to prepare for the society of angels, for the occupations of heaven, for a home in that city whose builder and maker is God?">\*

The question is the most important that you can ask. Sitting quietly in these seats to-day it may seem strange to you that I should speak so earnestly to you. There is no earthquake here! This is not a dungeon! The walls of this house are not moved or shaken to their foundations! There are no bleeding, suffering prisoners here! It is not midnight! This is the house of God and the Sabbath day. The voice of prayer and praise have been heard, we trust, by the Most High, and his truth has been read and spoken. But there is no terrified, trembling sinner breaking out in that cry of anguish, "What shall I do to be saved?" And is there no interest, therefore, in the subject? Is not the soul as precious now as then? Is it not in just as much danger? Will it not just as certainly be lost unless it cries for mercy?

The answer which the apostle gave to the trembling jailer, is the only answer that can be given to such a question. It was a text and a sermon. It was the whole gospel in one sentence. But this was not all. In that midnight hour, and surrounded by those awfully thrilling circumstances, Paul spake unto him the word of the Lord. The words of that exposition we may never know, but we cannot doubt

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\* Dr. March.



that "Jesus Christ was evidently set forth crucified among them," as he said afterwards had been done to the church in Galatia: that is, the life, and teachings, and sufferings, and especially the death of Jesus, were as vividly set before the jailer and his household as if they had been witnesses of it all.

We almost wish we could have heard that sermon, that we could have looked upon that scene—the two bruised and bleeding prisoners in the midst—"the other prisoners standing silent around, the light thrown on anxious faces and on the dungeon wall," the jailer and his family listening to the strange words of the strange preachers.

The substance of the sermon you know already. You heard the story in your early childhood; you have heard it and read it repeatedly since. It has been the theme of many a sermon and address and conversation. It comes to you again to-day, possibly in a new form, or with new associations, and you are asked to listen once more to the familiar story.

There is no Paul, no Silas here, with apostolic power and fervor to press it home upon you, but it is the same truth, the same doctrine; and if an angel from heaven should come and stand in this place, and you should ask the same question that the jailer asked, he would give you the same answer,

*"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."*

## THE SORCERER.



“And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-jesus: which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man, who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. Then Saul (who is also called Paul), filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him and said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.”—ACTS xiii. 6-12.

THE story which I have read is most interesting and instructive. Two men go out as missionaries; they leave the old city of Antioch in Syria, go down to the sea-coast, go on board one of the ships lying in the port, and set sail for the island of Cyprus. They have a short and prosperous voyage, not long out of sight of land, and soon reach a town on the eastern shore of the island: here they begin their toils. What success they met with we do not know, but as they stayed but a short time we may suppose it was not very great. They then determined to make a land-journey and go through the whole length of the island. The distance was some three or four hundred miles, and as the road lay between the mountains and the sea—along the coast, dotted by fishing villages—they probably stopped at such places and preached. There is



Talks with Boys and Girls.



A sorcerer a false prophet.

no record, however, of their work as they journeyed from east to west until they reached the city of Paphos near the western extremity. This city was the capital, the residence of the Roman governor.

Here the two missionaries, Paul and Barnabas, paused, and here they determined to begin their work in real earnest; they found here a little city, but with all the features of a royal court. Here was the authority of the Romans, at that time masters of the world—the garrison of soldiers and the strong arm of the civil law. Here too was the most corrupt society, frivolous, gay, and fashionable, and the most degrading forms of religion. The Greeks and the Romans, with their two widely different languages, mingling and yet distinct, were both famous for their mythology, and the place was a very stronghold of Satan. The governor, Sergius Paulus, was found to be in the most intimate association with a sorcerer, a false prophet, who was a Jew also. The governor is called a “prudent man,” and the word means that he was intelligent, sensible, and thoughtful on religious subjects.

If it seems strange that such a man should have had anything to do with such a sorcerer, you must remember that in those dark days the most notable men, such as Brutus, Pompey, Cæsar, and others, sought truth from the oracle at Delphi or from Oriental astrology. And indeed in our own day there are men and women who claim to read your fortune by the lines in the palms of your hands, or by the stars, or by the rappings of spirits; and I grieve to say that men and women who ought to know better, who ought to have the fear of God before their eyes, wait on such people until their reason fails under the horrid delusion.

In such intimate relations Paul found the governor and false prophet. The man was a Jew, a countryman of the apostle, but a renegade from the true faith of the Jews. It

required some courage for the apostle to present the new religion at such a court, but he never hesitated when the path of duty was clear.

The governor heard of the arrival of the two preachers, and he sent for them. It is said he *desired* to hear the word of God—not from mere curiosity, for the word “desired” is emphatic—he *earnestly requested* to hear the word of God.

How many times they had the opportunity of preaching to the governor we are not told, but it is quite certain that very early they made a good impression—so good, indeed, that the sorcerer became alarmed lest his influence should be lost, and he set to work to hinder these good influences and to turn away the governor from the faith.

“Turn away” (“turn away the deputy from the faith”) is a very strong Greek word, sometimes used in the sense of twisting and distorting, but here it means to “*divert attention,*” to “withdraw the mind with *violence* or *great exertion.*”

His intimacy with the deputy gave him opportunities in private of undoing the good effects of Saul’s preaching. You may be sure he made the most of his opportunities. Being a Jew and familiar with that religion, he would not fail to pervert the Scriptures which Paul quoted and give them a false interpretation. And then how easy to ridicule the whole subject! and with that most efficient weapon, which is often more difficult to meet than argument, he would make the governor ashamed to give his trust to a religion which his countrymen scorned and hated.

It would seem that there was danger that this bad man would be successful—that he *would* turn away the deputy from the faith; and Saul, who is here for the first time called Paul, filled with the Holy Ghost, fixed his eyes on him with an intensity of gaze which must have attracted the attention of those who were present, and a gaze which pierced the very soul of the

sorcerer : “ O full of all subtilty and all mischief,” said he, “ thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord ? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season.” And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness, and he went about seeking some one to lead him by the hand.

How fearful this punishment ! and how appropriate ! He who was seeking to keep the true light from entering the hearts of others is himself struck blind. He who blinded others is himself made blind—no *partial* blindness, but total ; he was helpless, and he went about seeking some one to lead him by the hand.

The effect of this was apparent and immediate. When the governor, Sergius Paulus, saw this, he was assured that these strange preachers not only preached the truth, but were sustained by a Power infinitely beyond anything he had ever seen—a power that must be divine ; and so, being “ astonished at the power of the Lord,” and under the influence of the same Holy Ghost who filled Paul’s soul with supernatural light and power, he believed. And by this we understand that he gave himself up to the full conviction that the sorcerer Bar-jesus was an impostor, and that Jesus of Nazareth, whom Paul preached, was the Saviour of the world and the Saviour of his own soul.

I sometimes wonder whether our youthful hearers really understand why these religious services are held. You come every Sunday here ; you sing these hymns and you unite in the prayers which are offered here. You listen quietly and reverently to the reading of the chapters from the Bible, and then come the words of the speaker. You listen respectfully, and sometimes with evident interest, to these plain, simple words.

And what is our object in so coming to talk to you? We come to explain the Scriptures; to try to make the Bible, which is the best of all books, so attractive to you that you will love to read it and study it yourselves, and for its own sake. And more than this: we not only wish to make the Bible plain and attractive; we want to apply its lessons to you directly and personally. It is full of the most beautiful narratives and the grandest poetry, but it is the *rule of life* also, and we want you to look at these rules and see what application they may have for you. For in the coming years you will be often in circumstances where you will need light and truth and counsel (indeed, you need all these now), and I want you to give heed to these lessons and become true Christians. It would be easy to come here and amuse you with stories, but I have a higher purpose than to amuse you; I want to do you good, permanent good, and so I take this incident to-day, and have tried to explain it so as to prepare you for the two practical lessons to which now, very briefly, I ask your attention.

1. *They who would be benefited by the gospel must desire it earnestly.*

There is a passage in one of the old prophets which brings this truth most strikingly before the mind: "Then shall ye seek me and find me when ye shall search for me with all the heart." We have seen in the chapter read to-day that Sergius Paulus desired to hear the word of God, by which was understood the preaching of Barnabas and Saul; it was there explained that the word *desired* was very strong and emphatic, indicating great earnestness. While we are free to *conjecture* the causes which led to this state of mind in the deputy, nothing is certainly known as to his previous history or education, or the circumstances which led him to listen with anything more than curiosity to the preachers of the new religion. All



that we know is that he desired to hear, that he listened, that he *believed*. It is not too much for me to say to you that any of you who will listen attentively and reverently to the preaching of the gospel will be deeply interested in it, and *that very soon* ; and that when you become *interested* the next step will be earnest desire to hear more of it ; and that the next step will be to give yourself up to seeking and searching for God, as the old prophet said, “with all the heart ;” and you need not be told that you shall find God and be safe for ever.

2. *It is a dreadful sin to turn another soul away from the truth.*

There are two sources of temptation : one is from the devil through our own sinful hearts, the other is from our companions. “Temptations from the devil may be evaded, even if they seem irresistible in their direct encounter. They may be foreseen and a means of escape provided. Watchfulness and prayer and a leaning upon God are the safeguards ; and we may learn to avoid the times and places, the occasions, of such temptations. If they come to us through the indulgence of our appetites, the method of escape or avoidance is to deny ourselves, and thus break the habits of indulgence. But it is more difficult to break away from our companions, and if they choose to tempt us there is nothing left us but to bear the temptation as best we may.”

And there are two kinds of temptation from our companions : the one is the temptation to do wrong, the allurements, the enticements to sin ; the other is to turn one away from the truth. Probably the first is the more common form, and multitudes of souls have been dragged down to perdition by direct and personal solicitations to sin. *Has any life ever been lived in this world free from temptation ?* And shall we ever know until the accounts for eternity are made up, and the books are

opened, the fearful destruction that has been wrought upon human souls by temptations to evil?

But if there is any work in the world which peculiarly deserves the name of *the work of the devil* it is that of turning a soul away from the truth. To do this it is not necessary to persecute a believer; the days of persecution—in our country at least—are past. But if you make light of religious truth or religious duty, if you have a sneer or a smile of contempt for one who is trying to seek the Saviour, you may turn one away from the faith. If you try to lead into vain and silly conversation one whose heart is tender on the subject of religion; if you substitute a foolish and trifling book for more serious reading or the study of God's word; if you try to persuade one who is at all inclined to be serious that religion is a gloomy thing, that the service of God is irksome, that it should be put off until another day,—you may fall into the sin of Elymas the sorcerer, and meet even a worse punishment.

And what shall be said of you, young friends, who *turn yourselves* away from the truth? Your soul is as valuable as any other soul; do you desire to be saved? Have you not at some time felt that the time had come for you to obey God's call? You *then* turned away; do you feel so now? There is no Paul to preach here, no miracle to be wrought here, but here is the same gospel and the same Jesus whom Paul preached.

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Talks with Boys and Girls.



Palissy the Potter distributing Bibles. p. 185.

## WORK: WHAT IS IT?



ACTS xx. 34 :

These hands have ministered to my necessities.

A VESSEL with her lateen sails furled, lying a few hundred yards from the shore, swinging by a single anchor, rising and settling on the ground-swell of the calm sea; a little boat with her bow on the pebbly beach of a sheltered bay; a group of plain men near by gathered round a man who is talking earnestly with them, apparently about to leave them and go to the ship,—such is the picture presented in the chapter a part of which has been read to you.

The man in the centre of that group is, next to our Lord Jesus Christ, the most prominent, the most important, character in all the New Testament. It is the apostle Paul. He is on his way in a coasting vessel to Jerusalem. He had a strong desire to hear from the church at Ephesus, where he had spent three years of labor, but was not able to stop there. When the ship touched at Miletus, however, a few miles farther on his way, he sent messengers across the country to Ephesus, asking to see some of the Church.

Mr. Lewin says with great exactness that he sent his message on Thursday, the 20th of April, A. D. 58, and that the elders arrived on the following Sunday, the 23d. However this may be, we know that they came—the elders—a

journey of some thirty-five miles, to meet their pastor, a man now far advanced in life. I do not know how many came, nor the names of any of them. I can readily suppose that they were plain men, accustomed to work with their hands, and yet charged with the oversight of the church in their city. It is quite probable that their persons and apparel bore the marks of their journey over the dusty roads. There they are, gathered around the apostle, either seated on the dry sand of the shore or standing around him, listening with the deepest interest to what they supposed were his last words.

There are few passages in the Bible or in any other book more tender and loving than this. No words are so impressive as "last words," and the apostle felt that he was speaking to his friends for the last time. The foundations of his most affectionate nature are touched and moved, and the words which find utterance through his lips must have been accompanied with tears.

He reminds them of his ministry among them ; of his earnestness ; his self-denial ; his faithfulness in telling them *all* the truth ; the dangers to which he was exposed while doing this ; his humility and his tears ; and then his apprehensions for the future, his fears that after he should leave them grievous wolves would enter in, not sparing the flock ; then of disaffections and falling away among themselves ; charging them to watch and feed the flock over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers. Then, to add force to these counsels, he reminds them that his ministry among them had not been for hire ; he had coveted no man's silver or gold ; but, appealing to their own consciousness, and holding out his hands, hardened and scarred by labor, he says, "Ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me ;" and "I have showed

you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak.”

The subject which I propose now is manual labor, working with the hands. I bring before you a most conspicuous example of a worker for bread, for the means of living. Here is a man who at some time or other learned a trade. And he must have learned it while he went to school—whether at Tarsus, his native city, or at Jerusalem we do not know. In those days, and in that part of the world, it was the invariable rule in good families to have their sons taught trades. In fact, it was a proverb among the Jews that he who did not teach his son a trade taught him to be a thief. The trade which Paul was taught was that of a tent-maker. In the pastoral regions of Asia Minor and Greece and Palestine so many of the inhabitants were shepherds, spending whole seasons away from their homes in the villages, and so entirely was the land-commerce of that day carried on by means of caravans carrying their tents with them, that tent-making was to other trades what the trade of builder or house-carpenter is now.

The goats of Cilicia were of that kind whose hair is long and tough, and was well fitted for the coarse cloth which they called cilicium, just as a certain kind of cloth for men's clothes now made in Scotland is called “tweed.” It was of this coarse, rough cloth that they made their tents or the outward covering of their tents; and this hard material, almost like leather in stiffness, was the stuff which the apostle learned to handle in making tents.

In Corinth there were two Jews—Aquila and his wife Priscilla—banished from Rome, who had set up their trade as tent-makers. It is probable that Paul became acquainted with these persons at the synagogue, or at some other religious meeting. If he had continued a Jew, no doubt he could have

turned his learning to profitable account ; but as a Christian preacher, things were changed.

And they took him into their family, and he worked with them at the same trade. This is, I believe, the first mention that is made of him as a worker with his hands, and we may fairly infer from this that he was in want, and was unwilling to seek aid from his former friends.

In this way, of labor during the week and preaching in the synagogue on the Sabbath, the apostle spent at least a year and a half, and it is quite probable that many a time in the evening, after the day's work was done, tired and worn with labor as he must have been, he explained the Scriptures, teaching that Jesus was the Christ.

And so we find, in the letters he wrote to the churches he had planted, many references to the fact that he was a worker. He wanted them to understand and to remember that his mission to them was entirely without charge to them. "I seek not yours," he said—*i. e.* your goods, your money—"I seek not yours, but you." And when writing his First Epistle to the Corinthians he says (and it was from Ephesus he wrote), "Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place, and labor, working with our own hands." And now in the parting address to the elders from Ephesus, which he and they both supposed were the last words they would ever hear from him, he says, "I have coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me." Not merely, as you see, to support himself, not merely to keep himself from being a burden to the church there, but he labored, he wrought, to support others. Who were they, these others, those who were with him, whose necessities were even as his own? Ah, we do not know. I wish we could



know the names of these Christians whom the apostle loved even as himself. They were, for some reason, not able to support themselves—probably feeble in health, or not able to find employment, or not thrifty and frugal. They were weak, for he adds, “I have showed you” by my own example “how that so laboring, ye ought to support the weak.”

You who hear me to-day are moving on toward the time when the question will be presented for decision, *What am I to do?* To the younger ones among you the matter is so far off that it gives you no concern whatever. But to you who are rapidly approaching the time of your entrance to the world, the question is of immense importance—*What am I to do?*

One of the evils of high civilization, high culture, is the idea that labor is degrading—that while to labor with the mind, the brain, is dignified and elevating, manual labor, labor with the hands, is degrading; and while our high schools are filled with the sons and daughters of parents who work for their daily bread and for the support of their children, their sons and daughters, *when educated*, are generally unwilling to labor with their hands, but seek some other and, as they think, more honorable means of support; and the consequence is that what we call the learned professions—law, medicine, divinity—and all kinds of business requiring clerks rather than laborers with the hands, are crowded with persons seeking a precarious and not always honest living.

We come, then, to the question which each one must ask himself—*What am I to do?* Shall my life be one of manual labor or mental labor? Shall I be a mechanic, a business man, a farmer, or a professional man—that is, a lawyer, a doctor, a clergyman? Shall I be a soldier or a sailor, a miner or a civil engineer?

These questions, I think, must take hold of all the more advanced minds here. You think of mechanics as men who

work ten hours a day in noisy, dirty shops, with grimy hands and sweaty faces, looked down upon by everybody who does not work with his hands ; you think of a farmer as a man who works from sunrise to sunset most laboriously, with no holidays, no alleviations of hard toil. You hear him complain of the weather, either too wet or too dry, or at the poor prices he gets for his grain.

You think of a merchant as sitting in his well-furnished counting-room, reading his newspaper, talking with his visitors, occasionally turning on his pivot-chair to a handsome desk and writing a letter of a single page, and growing as rich as Stephen Girard. You think of a lawyer as sitting in his office with bookcases filled with books, preparing his cases ; knowing all secrets of all families, as Mr. Tulkinghorn in *Bleak House* ; and then as going to court and for hours pouring out his arguments before the judges and his persuasive eloquence to the jury. You think of the doctor as knowing all the mysteries of our human frame, as measuring all science, as a man with whom sooner or later we must all be brought into the most intimate relations, and who in the ripeness of experience and learning sits in the professor's chair and teaches thousands of young men how to preserve life and health. You think of the clergyman as holding vast congregations under the spell of his sacred rhetoric, honored and revered by hundreds and thousands of people, loved and petted by old and young. You think of the life of the soldier as full of adventure and glory ; of that of the sailor as giving such fine opportunities of seeing strange lands and strange people ; of that of the civil engineer as laying out and constructing railroads and bridges, and piercing the earth in search of coal and iron and other common products, or gold and silver.

In so brief an address as this it is impossible to speak of

all the means by which in our free country a young man may make his living. But I am quite sure very many of you have considered with more or less earnestness one or more of the trades or professions to which I have alluded.

As I have said, it is a common feeling here in America and in England that a mechanic is necessarily the inferior of the professional man. If this is true in any sense, it is the fault of the mechanic himself. Was our Lord degraded because he was a carpenter? Was Paul degraded because he was a tent-maker? Was Palissy the Huguenot potter ashamed of his wheel or his furnace? He worked in clay with his hands, producing the most exquisite shapes and colors, so that now men become famous because of the accuracy with which they imitate his splendid works. Was Franklin degraded because he was a printer? or was he ashamed that he once walked the streets of our own city with a loaf of bread under his arm, munching it as he walked? The great philosopher was proud of all this.

Macaulay says in one of his letters, "When Chantrey the great sculptor dined with Rogers the great poet, there was in the room, among other notable things, a noble model in terra cotta by Michael Angelo, from which he afterward made one of his finest statues, that of Lorenzo de Medici, and also a mahogany table on which stood an antique vase. Chantrey was particularly struck with the vase and with the table, and asked Rogers who made the table?" "A common carpenter," said Rogers. "Do you remember the making of it?" said Chantrey. "Certainly," said Rogers, in some surprise; "I was in the room while it was finished, and gave the workman some directions about placing it." "Yes," said Chantrey, "I was the carpenter. I remember the room well, and all the circumstances."

Was Faraday ashamed of his apprenticeship to the book-

binder in London? No name in all the world stood higher in science than that of Michael Faraday.

When you see the tall chimney at Seventeenth and Callow-hill streets, overlooking that great establishment for the manufacture of car-wheels, if you should ask whose are these works, I could answer, "The man who founded that great establishment, now so successfully carried on by his three sons, was once in a blacksmith's shop working under his father—that he used to drive ox-teams into Boston selling charcoal; that he rose from step to step until he became a foundry-man, then a projector and builder of railroads, and finally settled in our city, became rich by his labor and his skill, was president of the Reading Railroad Company in its best days, and died two years or so ago, honored by all, and never ashamed of his early life of toil as a mechanic."

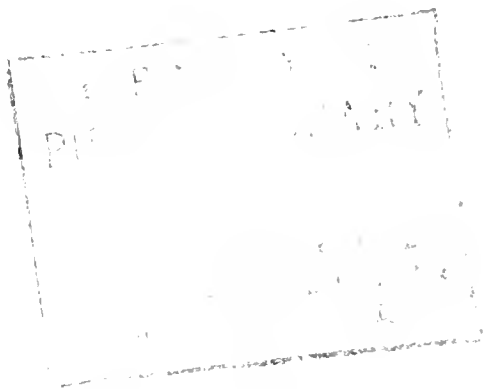
Baldwin, the famous builder of locomotive engines, was a maker of wooden patterns; Joseph Harrison was an apprentice in a blacksmith's shop. But these men have written their names in Philadelphia in lines so deep that they will never be effaced.

John Struthers, grandfather of the young men who now carry on the marble business here, though a real sculptor, modestly called himself a marble-mason. John M. Ogden, who laid out the plan of the streets in the upper part of the city and all around Girard College, and James V. Watson, the honored president of the Consolidation Bank, were both house-carpenters, and neither is ashamed of his trade.

Hugh Miller, the eminent Scotch geologist, was very poor. His father was a seaman, owning a coasting vessel in the east of Scotland, and perished at sea when Hugh was only five years old. The family had friends who would have sent the boy to college, but he resolved to be a stone-mason. He learned the trade; he worked fifteen years as a quarryman,



An apprentice in a blacksmith's shop. p. 186.



was proud of his rough coat and leather apron, and determined to force his way upward by solitary study, labor, and self-denial. How well he succeeded, his life and works, his contributions to science and literature, very well attest.

He was of the opinion "that the training of the mechanic, by the exercise which it gives to his observant faculties from his daily dealings with things actual and practical, and the close experience of life which he acquires, better fits him for picking his way through the journey of life, and is more favorable to his growth as a man, emphatically speaking, than the training afforded by any other condition."

John Gibson, the Scotch painter who died in this city last summer, was an indentured apprentice to a house-painter. He was successful not only in making money, but in attaining a position of which any one may be proud ; and he has made his mark on many a church-window and many a public building and private house in the great beauty of his stained glass.

Albert Barnes, the clergyman (my late friend and neighbor), too modest to be called a doctor of divinity, but who has done more to make the Holy Scriptures understood by plain minds than any man who has ever lived, was a mechanic, a currier, and rose to be one of the most eminent men of his time.

The time would fail me to speak of others whose names would make a vast catalogue—men who were not ashamed to have it known that they were mechanics, handicraftsmen. "Men," says an English writer, "who have raised themselves from an humble calling (or in it) need not be ashamed, but ought rather be proud, of the difficulties they have surmounted. . . . An American President, when asked what was his coat-of-arms, remembering that he had been a hewer of wood in his youth, replied that his coat-of-arms was his shirt-sleeves." Not that I would depreciate the value of good family, of "a

long line of ancestry"—especially if eminent for virtue and usefulness.

These men who rose from humble positions all had brains, but very few, if any, had the advantages which you have. They knew how to acquire education, however. For what is education? Gibbon the historian says, "Every person has two educations—one which he receives from others; and one, more important, which he gives to himself."

These professors and teachers, however accomplished and skilful, can do very little for you unless you aid them with your own application. It is possible to go through a whole college course and be in no condition to make a living for yourself. The education which you receive from others, however valuable, is nothing in comparison to that which you must give yourselves. Unless your minds are quickened and stimulated and roused to personal investigations the teaching of these teachers is of little value.

Three weeks ago (as I read from the *London Times* last night) Professor Huxley delivered a lecture in London on "Technical Education," which he defined "as the teaching of handicrafts." It was before a workingmen's club, and its purpose was to elevate the tone and character of mechanical labor. Among other things, he said that "in contrasting the schools of the present day with those of forty years ago, the comparison was such as to fill one of his age with depression and envy at the immense advantages enjoyed by the youth of the present generation."

Such advantages do you enjoy, my young friends, and every year there go out from institutions of learning classes of graduates who have their way to make in the world. It is very much within your choice what you will do to make your way successful. Some of you will choose civil engineering, and perhaps think that is a sure means of success.

A few days ago a gentleman asked me to help get his son a



place with the contractors who are to build the new railroad in Brazil. The young man had graduated as a civil engineer three years ago, and with the exception of a few months had had no employment since, and is now almost distracted for lack of something to do.

Some of you will want to be merchants, not knowing, as I do, that ninety per cent. of all merchants fail in business.

Some will want to be clerks in public corporations, not knowing, as I do, that very few rise to be upper officers, and that all the rest are mere drudges—as really servants of their superiors as an apprentice is to his master.

Some will desire to be physicians, hoping for large and lucrative practice, and a professor's chair after a while. Some will seek to be lawyers, hoping one day to be on the bench as judges.

How many will desire to be farmers or mechanics? I do not know: but I wish I could get you to believe that you will be more likely to succeed in a country like ours in one or the other of these than in the so-called "learned professions." And I wish I could get you to believe that you will be just as much respected by those whose good opinion is worth anything if you are a mechanic or a farmer as if you are a professional man, provided you are laborious and honest, and cultivate your mind.

I am not sure that my subject to-day is such as you would have preferred, but I trust I have not spoken entirely in vain. I would rather have spoken about Christmas, so near at hand, the best of all the seasons of the year. But this subject was on my hands, and I have felt constrained to give you my thoughts upon it.

Now one word in closing. When the apostle Paul (with whom I commenced this address) found Aquila and Priscilla at Corinth carrying on their trade, "he abode with them and

wrought.” In more common words it means “he stayed and worked.” This is an impressive thought: he did not complain of his hard work or low wages; he did not start a trades union nor foment a riot, nor interfere at all with other people in the labor question; he simply stayed and worked until the Lord led him to another city.

But all the time, while at work and in the intervals of work and on the Sabbath, he preached the gospel. Blessed example! grand and glorious man! Oh that all workers with hand or brain would follow your example!

## THE WALK TO ASSOS.



ACTS xx. 13.

THE apostle Paul was on his way to Jerusalem for the last time. He had passed through Asia Minor and down to Ephesus, where he spent nearly three years teaching the people and preaching the new religion to Jews and Greeks. It was during this stay at Ephesus that he overthrew the magic-workers who tried to do the miracles that Paul wrought. So complete was their discomfiture that they turned away from their wicked works, their black art, and gathering their books and parchments made a huge bonfire of them in the presence of all the people. It was during this visit also that the uproar occurred which was raised by Demetrius, the maker of silver shrines or images of Diana, the goddess of Ephesus—an uproar which was almost a riot. For Demetrius knew that if Christianity should prevail his craft would come to naught; the people would need no more images. So he stirred up the people by appeals to their city pride and their national pride; and undoubtedly there would have been scenes of violence and murder but for the chief officer of the city, who seems to have been a man of nerve and of sense, who came on the scene, and, partly by shaming them and partly by authority, succeeded in quelling and dispersing the mob.

After this the apostle went over into Macedonia and down

into Lower Greece (Achaia), where he spent three months. Then, becoming aware of a conspiracy against his life, he returned with certain companions to Philippi, where he spent the feast of the Passover, having sent his travelling companions on to Troas to await his coming. After an unusually long voyage of five days from Philippi to Troas—from the western to the eastern shore of the Ægean Sea (or archipelago as we now call it)—he landed at Troas. The weather was stormy with head-winds, or there was a long calm; for we know that in pleasant weather and fair winds the sail can be made in a day or two.

At Troas the apostle and his companions spent a week. No mention is made of the incidents of that week until the last day and night, although we may be sure it was not merely a season of rest. Paul's heart was full of his work, and so far as he knew this was the last visit he would ever be able to make to that people.

It was at this time the custom of the Christian disciples to observe for religious meetings the first day of the week instead of the seventh day, as the Jews had done—a custom which has come down to our time. We suppose it to have been the habit of the Christians to meet in small companies, for fear of disturbance, at daybreak, every first day of the week, to commemorate the resurrection of our Lord, and then meet in the evening of the day to celebrate the Lord's Supper. "We see the banquet spread," says Dean Stanley, "in the late evening, after the sun had set behind the blue waves of the Egean. We see the many torches blazing to light up the darkness of the large upper room where, as was their wont, the Christian community assembled. We see the couches laid and the walls hung after the manner of the East, as on the night of the betrayal. We see the sacred loaves; we hear the blessing or thanksgiving on the cup responded to by the thunder of the

joint *Amen* ; we witness the complete realization in outward form of the apostle's words, suggested doubtless by the sight of the meal and the sacrament blended thus together : ' Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.' ”

It was so on this occasion. We read : “ Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow, and continued his speech until midnight.” Acts xx. 7.

This must have been a most extraordinary meeting. It was in an upper room ; it was night—a dark night, for there was no moon ; there were many lamps burning. The preacher was carried away with his feelings ; he dwelt upon each topic that rose in his mind, arguing, admonishing, comforting, and instructing, hardly aware how fast the moments flew. It was the last opportunity, so far as they knew and as he knew, that they would ever have of meeting again.

I do not suppose it was a continuous sermon. It is more probable that it was an animated conversation, with occasional intervals of rest or silence—much like a modern prayer-meeting—with exhortations and prayers, questions and answers, carried far into the night not only, but even toward morning. The lights, the heat, the protracted service, the emotional excitement, made a severe strain on the congregation, physically and mentally. One young man, sitting in an open window, was at last overcome by sleep ; Nature was exhausted, and amid the profound silence of the audience as they listened to the preacher in his farewell discourse he lost all consciousness, fell from the window, and was killed. But Paul went down to the pavement, fell on him and embraced him, as the prophets Elijah and Elisha had done, and having done this, bids them not to be troubled (and here is an evidence of his tenderness of heart), “ for his life is in him.” “ And

they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted.”

Then Paul and the company returned to the upper room, and after breaking bread and eating he talked a long while, even till daybreak, and then departed, not only from the room or the house, but from the city, on his journey.

The companions of Paul here separated from him, they taking a vessel in the port bound to a distant city on the Mediterranean. The vessel was a coasting ship, stopping frequently wherever there was business to do or freight to take in or discharge. She was to touch at Assos, a seaport across the peninsula, and the apostle allowed his friends go on in the vessel round the Cape Lectum, while he walked across the country, twenty miles or so, to Assos to meet the ship.

It is not, I think, straining the Scriptures, nor even using them as the old divines did, “by way of accommodation,” if we suppose that one reason why the apostle Paul took his journey from Troas to Assos on foot and without company was that he might be *alone*, even if he was not attracted by sensibility to natural beauty. Whether the journey was fifteen or twenty miles, it lay over a tract of country exceedingly beautiful. It was the full spring-time, and the sun nowhere shines brighter than on those shores. Leaving Troas, he followed the grand old paved road, which sought the valleys of the water-courses that made their way from the mountains to the sea. The trees were in full foliage—the glades had the full velvet green that makes that land the home of shepherds and herdsmen. As the apostle passed over the swelling undulations he caught glimpses of the blue sea on his right, while the sun, when he had passed the hour of noon, threw his brightness on the wooded slopes of Mount Ida. We do not know what the apostle’s love of the beautiful was, nor whether he allowed himself any play of imagination, but it would not

be strange if one much of whose youth was spent in the study of Greek literature should have had some cultivation of the beautiful in Nature.

That he should have longed for solitude is not strange. For two or three years he had had little rest, and from the time he left Corinth, several weeks before this, he had hardly ever been alone. In the land-journey from Greece up through Attica to Philippi he travelled as one whose steps are watched by an implacable enemy ; in the little ship beating to windward across the North Egean from Philippi to Troas there was no place for solitude ; even in modern ships, with all their accommodations and compartments, it is often difficult to be entirely alone. In the busy week at Troas that infant church, not yet a year old, must have clung to him continually ; and we must not wonder, therefore, if Paul should avail himself of the opportunity of walking over the beautiful hills and valleys that lay between Troas and Assos, and for a part of the time and the way at least enjoy a season of solitude among the beauties of Nature.

“ We think of our Lord himself as of one who loved the quiet of Nature. When he was wearied and outdone he called to his disciples to go away into a desert place to rest a while. When Jerusalem was loud with its noisy throngs of strangers he oftentimes resorted to Gethsemane. When he desired to pray he went alone into the hills. When he felt the transfiguration glory coming upon him he ascended the lofty side of Hermon. When he taught it was by preference by the waves of Galilee, or walking through the corn-fields on the Sabbath, or on the summit of some grassy hill. We know that he had watched the tall lilies arrayed more gloriously than Solomon—that he had marked the reed shaken in the wind, and the tender green of the first shoot of the fig tree. We find his common teaching employed about the vineyard and the wandering

sheep and the whitening grain and the living well, the summer rain and the wintry flood and storm." (*Brooke.*)

We who live in cities have few opportunities, especially in the winter season, of being alone with Nature and enjoying her beauties—though even winter scenes are not without exceeding interest, for the driving clouds, the fluttering snow, and the icy rain enclosing the trees and all foliage in crystal armor, have a grandeur peculiar to themselves—but we cannot take solitary walks and commune with God as Paul did that spring day on the way to Assos.

But there is a place within reach of us all, where, choosing our own time, we can be alone with God—our own chamber, our closet. It may be a garret with a bare floor and no heat, or it may be a luxurious apartment furnished with every comfort and elegance, but God is there to hear you. Even if you are not alone in the occupancy of your chamber, you can close your eyes and shut out all companionship except that of your heavenly Father. Do not shrink from companionship with him; do not be afraid to shut yourself up a part of *every day*, even if it be for only a few moments, and commune with him. Do not think that because your life is so imperfect, or so sinful even, that he will be unwilling to receive you and listen to you and help you. No personal unworthiness ever causes him to turn away from any of his children; it is *unwillingness* only—*your* unwillingness—that shuts the door between God and your soul, and leaves you without, shivering and perishing with the cold and in darkness.

Would you not have liked to take that walk with Paul that day on the way to Assos—more especially if he had invited you to go with him, and if you had been assured that your presence would be no embarrassment to him, and that his communion with God would be with audible expressions, like that between Jesus and the two disciples on the way to Em-



maus? You would have felt it an inestimable privilege to have heard and known that communion with Paul and his Master—what the disciple said to his Master, and what the Master replied to his disciple. But *you* can walk with God—the same God—*any* day and *every* day of your life, if you will. You need not go to the shadow of the mountains nor within sight of the sounding sea. You can find him in your walks to school; in the thronged streets of the great city; in the rush and roar of the great multitudes; in your office, counting-house, or workshop; in your daily family duties; in the books you read; in the society you enter; in the house of God; in its solemn services; in your own bed-room. You can walk with God as Enoch did, with probably infinitely more knowledge of his character and works than the patriarch had.

What companionship! What infinite stores of knowledge and grace ready to be poured into your heart! What infinite power to protect you and bless you and all that are dear to you, now and for ever!

I can tell you nothing grander than this, and I beg you to try before you close your eyes in sleep this night—try to open your hearts to the waiting Saviour who stands and knocks and seeks admission.

## COURAGE.

—◆—  
ACTS xxi. 13 :

“Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”

IF I were searching the Holy Scriptures to find a passage to illustrate a determination to do the will of God under all circumstances, and to bear submissively whatever trials might befall one in such determination, I know not where a more striking passage could be found than in one of the verses of the lesson to-day: “What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”

And this was no idle speech. There was no boasting here. This was no Peter, who just before his denial of his Master could say, “Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.” Neither was it the bold declaration of an ignorant man who anticipates no sharp trials or bitter experiences. Only a little while before he had said, in his parting address to the elders from Ephesus, that he was impelled by an irresistible impulse to go to Jerusalem, not knowing what should befall him there, but fully aware that wherever he went, in “*every city,*” bonds and afflictions waited for him. And so here, when the prophet Agabus in that most significant act, borrowed from the old prophets five hundred years before, took Paul’s girdle and bound his own hands and feet, foreshadowing in that dramatic and impressive symbol the fate

that awaited Paul at Jerusalem, and sustaining it by the solemn declaration that the warning he gave came directly from *God*—that the Holy Ghost had said, “So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles”—he was not diverted from his course; he did not abandon his purpose; he did not even falter or waver, even though the whole church at Cæsarea and his own travelling companions, Luke among the rest, united with imploring tears in the effort to restrain him from the further prosecution of the journey. But turning to them with that most touching remonstrance, all the more tender and pleading because he needed so much their hearty cooperation and sympathy, he said, “What mean ye to weep and break mine heart?” (you see how powerful was the effect of their weeping and remonstrances)—“what mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only” (perhaps pointing to his own girdle round the prophet’s hands and feet), “but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”

I say there is hardly in all the Scriptures a more striking and beautiful illustration of the determination to do the will of God and to submit to all the trials which such obedience may cost.

It is our duty to draw from these beautiful narratives all the lessons which they teach which are appropriate to our life and circumstances. We are not apostles, it is true; none of us have been called and set apart to the work of preaching the gospel here or in foreign lands; the hands of no bishop or presbytery have been laid upon our heads for this purpose. But we are living under the government of God as really as Paul was, and each one of us has distinct and specific duties to perform to all about us in the daily contact of life. We may not fully know what those duties are. We may never have in-

quired as Paul did, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" or we might have been directed as plainly, as unmistakably, as he was. We may be, as some of us I fear are, quite indifferent to the whole subject, but the duty remains, the responsibility can neither be evaded nor thrown off.

I wish you would inquire what your duty is toward God and those around you. I wish you could be moved to inquire whether you are true and right in your relations to your heavenly Father—whether you are loving and serving him as he requires; whether you love to be alone with him, as you do with your earthly parents, and commune with him, pouring out your heart in praise and supplication; whether you are jealous when others treat him coldly or with indifference; and whether you are true and right in your relations to others; whether you sympathize with those who are in any trouble or distress; whether you are bearing each other's burdens, and so fulfilling the law of Christ.

And I ask you to look forward in the journey that lies before you. To some it may be a very short one. You may be just approaching one of the stopping-places in life where you will cease your travel and lie down to arise no more. You may be not far from the place in your career which once reached your journey is done. If so, are you ready to have the account closed? Do you feel that you have fought a good fight and are ready to finish your course, assured that there is laid up for you a crown of righteousness which the Lord will give you at that day?

Or, if your life is to be a long one, are you determined to take up its duties manfully and discharge them one by one as they recur? You know what they are: "*Believe what is true, do what is right.*" The terms are very simple—even the very young can comprehend them and perform them if they will.

The question is not one of knowledge or ability, but inclin-

ation. Will you believe God's truth? Will you do God's will? You will have many trials, sharp and sore—some that will test *your* courage and perseverance as much as Paul's were tested by the bonds and afflictions that waited for him in every city. Your trials will not be like his in kind, but they will be like his in the tests that they will furnish for the sincerity of your character. Are you determined to go on in your duty as far as it may be made plain to you? Are you resolved that no apprehensions of evil, no persuasions of friends, no tears nor remonstrances of those who love you, but who are not in sympathy with you in the great work of your own salvation and that of others,—are you resolved that none of these things shall move you?

And are you willing to bear whatever afflictions may come upon you in the doing of his will? It is very unlikely that such trials as awaited Paul will await you. No bonds wait for *you* in one city and another. No conspiracies, nor false witnesses, nor unjust trials, nor unfeeling judges, nor harsh sentences on account of your religious faith, it is probable, will ever fall to your experience, nor can you foresee any of them as Paul seems to have foreseen them in his case; but it is probable—it is more than probable—that you will have many trials and afflictions, sorrows, bereavements; some, it may be, overwhelming, unlooked for. Will you bear them patiently? Will you say, as Paul said, though not in the same words, "I am ready to bear anything if He will give me strength to bear it"? Will you put yourself entirely in the hands of God, consciously, willingly, and trust him for all the future?

Are you willing to commit yourselves entirely to Christ? You who are already numbered among his followers—if there be such here—and you who are not, are you willing to commit yourselves entirely to him, in the implicit faith that he is infinitely able to take care of you, and infinitely willing to take

care of you, and that he *will* take care of you, and be your friend and brother and infinite Redeemer in this life, and your everlasting portion in the life to come?

Are you willing, I ask once more, to place yourselves in this relation to Christ? In one word, Will you give yourselves *entirely to him*? Oh, if you would! if you would only say "Yes" to these plain questions which I ask you! And if you would only say in all sincerity, as Paul did, that you are ready to be bound and to die for the name of the Lord Jesus, you would go away from this meeting to-day with a brighter light in your hearts than ever beams from the natural sun, and with a sweeter faith than you ever yet have known.

There has been many and many an instance of true courage since the days of the apostle Paul. Not only in the earliest days of the Church in its conflicts with heathenism, but all down through the centuries, and between the different branches of the Church itself, have there been persecutions, sore, bitter, and fatal.

Under these experiences have occurred some of the brightest instances of Christian courage, such as the incident I now relate:

A little less than two hundred years ago, in Scotland, a young girl whose heart had been touched by the Spirit of God suffered martyrdom. It was in the days of Charles II., when it was a crime against the king to worship God in any other way than that appointed by the Established Church. In the little town of Wigton there were two sisters, Margaret Wilson and Annie—Margaret eighteen and Annie fifteen years old.

These two young girls were so beset by wicked men that it became necessary for them to give up their religion or be banished from their home and hunted like wild beasts in the mountains. They determined to hold on to their religion,

and were banished. All through the long, cold winter they wandered without a home, depending upon the help kind people could give them by stealth, for it was made a high crime to help in the smallest way people of this class. At length, hearing that the king was dead, and supposing they might return in safety to their father's house, they set out on the journey. Within a day or two they were arrested by cruel soldiers and committed to prison. They were tried and condemned to death by drowning, for no crime, but because they would not acknowledge King Charles of England as the head of the Church.

The younger sister Annie was given up to her father on his giving heavy bonds for her behavior, but Margaret was not spared.

They drove a stake at low water deep in the Solway sands, and they bound this poor child with cords to it, saying all the time that if she would give up her faith and acknowledge the king she might yet be saved; but she said, "I will not; I am one of Christ's children." And they left her to her fate. In that high northern latitude the rise and fall of the tides are very great, and of course very rapid. The flood tide is so swift in the Solway that salmon fishermen are sometimes overtaken and lost, not being able to escape its overwhelming advance. Those of you who have walked on the sea-shore, or on the banks of rivers near the sea, will understand this.

The end rapidly approached; the surging waves dashed against her shrinking form; higher and higher they came, and only a few moments were left of life here; but she remembered the words of the old prophet: "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee;" and so, singing a part of the twenty-fifth Psalm, "Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me," and re-

peating passages of Scripture until her voice was suffocated in the waves, her spirit passed away, while crowds of men stood on the shore looking on the sad scene.

In the town of Stirling, and almost under the shadow of the grand old castle on the rock, is a memorial of Scotland's Maiden Martyr. It is in the cemetery and under glass, a group in white marble of three figures—two sisters, the younger leaning toward the elder for comfort and support, and both bending over the pages of an open Bible; the third an angel with bright face shielding with his wings the bending girls. It is Margaret Wilson and her sister Annie reading and trusting in the word of God, and protected by his angel—a most sad and touching memorial.

Many of you perhaps will remember the incident in *Tom Brown's School-days* when poor little George Arthur, the new boy, is introduced for the first time to his bed-room and his room-mates. He was a shy boy, and delicate almost to effeminacy. He was an only child, his mother a widow; he had never slept in a room with other boys before; he knew nothing of the rough life at a public school.

The boys began to undress; the talk and clatter were going on. "Two or three of the little boys were already in bed, sitting with their chins on their knees. The light burned clear, the noise went on. It was a trying moment for the little lonely boy, but he dropped on his knees by his bedside, as he had done every day from his childhood, to open his heart to Him who heareth the cry and beareth the sorrows alike of the tender child and of the strong man in agony.

"Tom was sitting at the bottom of his bed unlacing his boots, so that his back was toward Arthur, and he didn't see what had happened, and looked up in wonder at the sudden silence; then two or three boys laughed and sneered, and a big brutal fellow, who was standing in the middle of the room,



picked up a slipper and shied it at the kneeling boy, calling him a snivelling young shaver."

And you remember Tom's indignation and how the next moment the boot he had just pulled off flew straight at the head of the bully, who had just time to throw up his arm and catch it on the elbow; and how Tom said, "If any fellow wants the other boot, he knows how to get it." There were many boys in the room by whom that little scene was taken to heart before they slept, for it was no light act of courage in those days for a little fellow to say his prayers publicly even at Rugby. A few years later, when Dr. Arnold's manly piety had begun to leaven the school, the tables turned.

The effect of this incident on Tom was most happy. "The first and bitterest feeling which was like to break his heart was the sense of his own cowardice. The vice of all others which he loathed was brought in and burned in on his soul. He had lied to his mother, to his conscience, and to his God. How could he bear it? And then the poor little weak boy, whom he had pitied and almost scorned for his weakness, had done that which he, braggart as he was, dared not do. The first dawn of comfort came to him in declaring to himself that he would stand by that boy through thick and thin, and cheer him and help him and bear his burdens for the good deed done that night. Then he resolved to bear his testimony next morning. And next morning several times he faltered, for the devil showed him first all his old friends calling him 'saint' and 'squaretoes' and a dozen hard names, and whispered to him that his motives would be misunderstood, and he would only be left alone with the new boy, whereas it was his duty to keep all means of influence, that he might do good to the largest number. But his good angel prevailed, for after he was up and washed and dressed in the face of the whole room he knelt down to pray. Not five

words could he say ; he was listening to every whisper in the room ; he was ashamed to go on kneeling, ashamed to rise from his knees ; but presently a still small voice from his inmost heart seemed to breathe forth the words of the publican : ‘God be merciful to me, a sinner.’ He repeated them over and over, clinging to them as for his life, and then rose from his knees comforted and humbled, and ready to face the whole world.”

Here was an instance of true courage, moral courage of a high order, the cultivation of which makes the strongest and the best character. And my interest in this book and the character of Tom Brown (which is not merely fiction), and especially my admiration of the life and work of Dr. Arnold, who made that school famous,—these things led me, when in England some years ago, to go to Rugby. I spent a day and a night there. I cannot express to you the pleasure I enjoyed in going through the school-houses, the class-rooms, the little studies and adjoining dormitories with windows and pots of flowers and book-cases and grates for open fires, and the chapel where five hundred boys sat facing each other, and the pulpit from which the great man preached to very much such an audience as I am speaking to to-day (I stood for a moment in that pulpit), and the altar under which his body lay in the grave, and the great memorial window to his memory. So when I walked out in the cricket-ground (seven or eight acres) and under the grand old elm trees, with the school buildings all about, I recalled some of the incidents of this story, and I thought that very probably many, very many, instances of as pure self-denial and true heroism had been witnessed here as have been the occasion of the highest praise on real battle-fields.

The courage of which I am speaking is not that which led two foolish men a little while ago to leave the city of New

York by stealth, and travel to another State, and very solemnly go through the form of measuring a certain distance between them, and then firing at each other with pistols, and then, having expressed themselves "satisfied," slink away and hide themselves like culprits. There is no heroism here, for there is no hero. And the community looks on and ridicules the whole thing as a pitiable farce.

Neither do I call that man brave who, although a courageous soldier on the field of battle, surrounded by all the "pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war," is yet such a coward that when commercial disaster overtakes him—disaster brought on by his own want of integrity—instead of meeting it like a true man, acknowledging his offences, seeking forbearance and forgiveness, and beginning anew, will, with his faculties in full exercise, take leave of his family in the morning, go to his counting-house, and to 'Change, make business transactions, sit down and write letters, and then put a pistol to his head and blow out his brains.

An hour before he himself would have called a man a villain who should desert his wife and children and go to a foreign land, but *he* deserts *his* wife and children, with no provision for their support, and goes to that country from which there is no return.

Call this not *insanity*; it is cowardice of the most detestable, most dastardly kind conceivable.

I cannot find any more fitting words with which to close this address than those which I borrow from a sermon of Dean Stanley, himself a Rugby boy (the brightest mind in the English Church)—a sermon preached only a short time ago in Westminster Abbey:

"Love honest work; love to get knowledge; never be ashamed of saying your prayers morning and evening—it will help you all through the day; always keep your prom-

ises ; do not pick up foolish and dirty stories ; never, never tell a lie ; never strike or hurt or be rude to a woman or a girl, or any one weaker or younger than yourselves ; be ready even to risk your own lives to save a friend, a companion, a brother, or a sister ; be very kind to poor dumb animals ; never put them in pain : *they* are God's creatures as well as *you*, and if you hurt them you will become brutal and base yourselves ; remember always to be gentle and attentive to older people ; listen and do not interrupt when they are talking. Nothing is so good as to grow up truthful, manly, courageous, courteous, unselfish, and religious ; and do not think that any of these things are too much for you.

“ A brave, modest boy, fourteen years old, has distinguished himself by saving at different times no less than four other boys by plunging into the rough sea after them on the coast of Norfolk, England. This is what you can do, not perhaps by plunging into the stormy sea, but by saving a little brother or sister from going wrong. You can do far more for them, perhaps, than any one else, because you are always with them. Stand by them and protect them ; stand by each other, and those who want to mislead you will soon go away.

“ I once knew a very famous man who lived to be eighty-eight years old. He was always the delight of those about him. He always stood up for what was right. And how early do you think he began to do this ? I have an old grammar which belonged to him, all tattered and torn, which he had when a little boy at school. And what do you think I found written in his own hand on the very first page ? Why, these words :

“ Still in thy right hand carry gentle peace to silence vicious tongues ; be just and fear not.' . . . *Be just, be good and fear not.* Let that be your rule, and God and Jesus Christ be with you now and always.”

## TRUTHFULNESS.



WHEN I was a boy I was very fond of fairy-tales, and I should not wonder if some of you boys are just as fond of them as I was. Who has not read the *Arabian Nights* or the *Tales of the Genii*? I do not think it the most wholesome kind of reading, but a little of it may not do harm if the reader will only understand that it is all imaginary, that there is no reality whatever in it, and that life, actual life, will be nothing like this.

Among the stories of this kind that I read when a boy there is one that made a deeper impression upon me than any other. It was one of the *Tales of the Castle*, by Madame de Genlis, and it is called *The Palace of Truth*. In looking over the pages of that story now I find it very dull reading, so extravagant, so unreal, and the point in it which I am wishing to recall is not so vividly set forth as I thought when first I read it.

There was a splendid palace with everything in it and about it which any one could desire. It was large enough to accommodate a great number of people. But there was this strange thing about it, that everybody had to speak the truth. It was not possible to tell a lie. When any of the guests wanted to say pretty things or pleasant things, they could not speak them unless they were true. If one asked another a question, the true answer was sure to come. Very often the true answer would give great offence, and the person who gave

the answer would not know that the answer *was* offensive. The scenes that occurred were sometimes funny, and often very painful. Persons who were really very fond of each other, who would not willingly hurt each other's feelings, would, without knowing what they were saying, speak words that would cut to the very quick.

You can form some idea of the condition of society in that palace if you will only suppose that your own hearts were laid open to the gaze of all whom you meet. Look for a moment only into your hearts and see the thoughts there, and then fancy those thoughts all spoken! Suppose, you that have just been reading the responses in the service without thinking of them—suppose that instead of reading these sacred words you had unconsciously—without knowing it—been making your observations on the day or your dress or that of your companions or the teachers or the speaker in the chapel this morning, or your opinion of the officers, or your feelings toward any other person. What a frightful, what a horrible scene should we have here if every one in this chapel who utters a word should speak not the words he wishes to speak, but words which express the thoughts in his heart!

So it was in this Palace of Truth. The guests who entered it on the best terms with each other would, the moment they began to talk with each other, say such plain things, such unexpectedly sharp and bitter things, that love was sacrificed and friendship turned to hatred, and wretchedness and misery took possession of everybody, so that the only relief there could be found was in shutting themselves up in their rooms alone or keeping absolute silence.

It is well for us that we do not live in the Palace of Truth. We shall, the best of us, all of us, have to be very good—a vast deal better than we are now—before we can afford to have our hearts uncovered and our lips unsealed.

But the fairy story—unreal, extravagant as it is—is not without its lesson. That lesson is *the beauty of truthfulness*. Not merely truthful speech, but truthfulness of heart; and though we can hardly hope in this life to become so nearly perfect as to make it safe to live in the Palace of Truth, we can cultivate more and more such purity and truthfulness as shall make our own lives happier and all our companions better.

I have made this reference to the old fairy-tale because I wish to speak to you about *truthfulness*, especially in speech. It is a subject which most deeply concerns every human being—which has everything to do with our peace and comfort and happiness in this life, and our everlasting condition in the life to come.

I do not propose to speak of religious truth as generally understood—that is, what the Bible teaches us of the nature of God and our relations to him, and of the duty which we owe to him, and of the system of rewards and punishments which we think the Bible teaches; it is not of this, but of the great value of *truthfulness*—candor, sincerity, frankness—in our statements and dealings with our companions and superiors.

I think there is no temptation more common, and none to which we are more likely to yield, than the temptation to say what is not true. It besets us when we are very young—*younger than any child here*; in fact, as early as we can know good from evil. It never leaves us. As long as we have dealings or intercourse with others, even after the character is settled, established, confirmed in well-doing, does this inclination to swerve from the truth cling to us and embarrass and distress us.

Untruthfulness may be shown in other ways than in spoken words.

Sometimes the expression of the face or the glance of the eye may just as clearly express an untruth as a direct falsehood.

You are charged with breaking a rule or some other offence, no matter what. He who makes the charge looks you steadily in the face ; you return his gaze ; you do not utter a word, you do not move your lips ; but you put on a look of surprise, and then you throw the glance of your eye directly upon another boy. You intend to be understood as denying it for yourself, and fixing it upon another ; and don't you see it is just as much a lie as if you had said in words, "I did not do it ; he did" ?

Some day one of the professors or the president may come and say to you, "My boy, some one here has been guilty of a gross wrong or a mean, unmanly trick ; I cannot think it is you ; my suspicions rest on this or that boy ; do you think I am right in my suspicions ?" And you know perfectly well who the guilty one is, and that it is not the one suspected ; now you do not speak a word, you do not move your lips ; you only shrug your shoulders, and you make the impression just as plainly as words can do it that the suspicion is correct.

I will give you now some particulars to show how truth can be violated without telling falsehoods in direct words.

*Exaggeration.*—This means to speak of anything in extravagant terms to mislead or deceive others. Two passengers who have just escaped a serious accident in a railway train, or who have landed from a stormy voyage across the ocean, are describing the incidents of the accident or the storm. One gives a plain simple account, just as it occurred, such as will bear close examination afterward, while the other, who has a lively imagination and is not particularly careful of the truth, will so embellish his statement that the two accounts would seem hardly to describe the same event. One person has a



headache that he calls "splitting;" another has such thirst that he is "famishing," is so hungry that he is "starving." "The weather is hotter than it ever was before," or "It is so cold that I really fear I shall freeze to death."

Now this is hurtful. We get in the habit of expressing the most commonplace thoughts in the most extravagant and intensely exaggerated expressions, so that when we do wish to describe anything really startling we can find no language sufficiently strong to express it.

If a boy should say he had not a *single* cent in his pocket, when in fact he had several other coins there, or if he should say that he had seen a horse without a *single* white hair upon him, while in fact there was a little cluster of white hairs in his forehead, he would be saying what is not literally false, but giving distinctly a false impression. You are asked whether you have seen within an hour So-and-so, one of your classmates. You reply, "No;" while the fact is that person has passed through the room where you were within that time, and spoke to you, and you answered him without raising your eyes from the book you were reading. You have not *seen* him, but you have made the impression that you have not been near him. Now, this is evasion, a violation of truth, though not plain and direct falsehood.

I might go on to speak of the habit of *misrepresentation*, or keeping back part of the truth, and telling what we do say so as to produce an unjust and false impression, or by stating most positively certain things which we are not clearly certain of ourselves; all which is wrong, because it is a violation of strict truthfulness. Why do we tell untruths?

The motives which lead us into untruthfulness are such as these:

1. *To avoid punishment.* In youth this is perhaps the most common motive. We fall into some mistake; we break

some rule ; we forget something which we were charged to remember ; and when we are examined by questions we tell lies to avoid detection and punishment. This is so common ! Who has not fallen at some time or other in this ? But oh how weak and foolish ! and how sure to be discovered !

2. *To be well thought of by others.* You are asked whether you know such and such a person whom it is considered desirable to know on account of his distinction. You reply "Yes," when in fact you were once only introduced to him, but never exchanged a word of conversation with him afterward. Some one asks you whether you have read this or that book. You say "Yes," because you have turned over some of the pages, and you think you make a good impression by saying that you have read it. Some one whom you particularly wish to stand well with asks you whether you like this or that amusement ; and you say "Yes," because you think you will be more popular if you do.

3. Then people tell lies to *obtain advantage* over others in dealing. The gamblers in stocks do this continually. Dealers in horses are thought to be especially exposed to the sin of lying by saying that a horse is sound when he has defects, that he is six years old when the owner knows he is eight or ten. A man has a house to sell, and says most positively he will not take less than a certain price, when he knows in his heart he will take less ; or he will say that there is a well of good water in the yard, when the fact is that though the water is good the well sometimes becomes dry.

4. The last motive I mention is that *lies are told to do harm*. All slander comes under this head. And this is one of the most fruitful causes of evil.

You laugh over the improbable or the extravagant story, for you know it was told to amuse and not deceive, and especially was it not told to injure any one ; but a deliberately plan-

ned falsehood, told to injure the character of another, is one of the basest and wickedest of all sins. It is a stab in the dark when the victim is defenceless; it is the act of the assassin, and deserves the severest punishment.

Under our laws a lie told in a court of justice when a witness is giving evidence under oath is called perjury, and is punished by solitary confinement in the penitentiary. But in all grave and important discourse a man's word or a boy's word ought to be just as true and just as much entitled to credit as if uttered under oath with the hand on the Bible.

There was once an Italian poet named Petrarch. He lived in the family of Cardinal Colonna as one of the household. During his residence there (he was remarkable for his candor and his strict regard for truth) a quarrel arose among the cardinal's people which reached a point that threatened the most serious consequences. At length the cardinal determined to investigate the matter, and in order to be thorough and impartial, he put all the members of his family under oath to tell the exact truth. They all complied with the condition, even to his own brother, who was a bishop. But when, at last, Petrarch came forward to be sworn, the cardinal, remembering his character for truthfulness, closed the book and said, "As for you, Petrarch, your word is sufficient." This was in very bad taste, for, whilst it was complimentary to Petrarch, it was insulting to all the others.

You may have observed that in these remarks I have said little about what the Bible teaches on this subject. I have preferred to draw my illustrations from common life. But it will not be proper to close without saying that God is a Being of infinite truth. Jesus Christ said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life;" and the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, is called the Spirit of truth.

And from the day when the devil, the "father of lies,"

tempted our first parents in the garden of Eden, persuaded them to believe his lie to their shame and fall, down through all Bible history, deception and falsehood are denounced in the severest, the most awful terms: "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord;" "He that speaketh lies shall perish;" "Woe to the bloody city that is full of lies;" "Let the lying lips be put to silence."

And in that awful catalogue of great sinners in the book of the Revelation we read that "the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."

Most of the temptations to swerve from the truth will come to you in the shape of questions. They will come upon you at very unexpected times, and very often when you are quite unprepared.

I do not pretend to be able to show you how you are to meet each particular case, except by the determination always to speak the truth. It may seem that concealment or evasion may save you. It may do so for the time, but depend upon it you will have to pay for it sooner or later, for no wrongdoing or wrong-saying can prosper permanently. A smaller fault, but one carefully to be avoided, is the use of "slang" words and grossly inappropriate expletives: with many persons things are "awful nice," "awful bad," "awful hot," "awful cold," "awful sorry," "awful glad," and "awful jolly."

I say, then, in closing, to you all, Be honest, be truthful, be clear, be transparent in your speech, your character, your life, so that all whom you meet in the walks of business or in society may know that whatever other people may be or may do, you at least are sincere in all things.

## THE RACERS.



1 COR. ix. 24:

So run that ye may obtain.

THE language is figurative, and refers to the ancient Grecian games. You have often heard them described; I can hardly say anything to make them more vivid. If you were standing to-day on the rock in the city of Corinth on which the citadel was built, and should look north, the eye would rest first on "the winding shores of the double sea" which separates Lower from Upper Greece. These two seas were once the great highway of the nations. The travel from the East to the West, from Ephesus to Rome, was through the Ægean and its beautiful islands and the Saronic Gulf to the narrow isthmus, across that and into the Corinthian Gulf, and so into the Adriatic, and thence to Rome. Far off to the east, or north of east, your eye would have caught in ancient times the glittering temples of Athens.

On the narrow isthmus, only five miles wide, were celebrated the national games, called from the locality the Isthmian games. So universal, so intense, was the interest of the people in these games that they became almost a part of their religion. They consisted of wrestling, boxing, foot-racing, chariot-racing, horse-racing, throwing quoits, and others. Some of these, you observe, have come down to our day.

The writings of the apostle Paul are full of allusions to these games. He says to the elders from Ephesus, "Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy." To the Thessalonians he writes, "Pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course." Just before his own death, and when a prisoner in Rome, he writes to Timothy, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course;" which is a double figure—boxing and running.

My text refers especially to the foot-race, the most ancient of the Grecian games: "So run that ye may obtain."

There were two places for these games and amusements, the stadium and the amphitheatre, both open to the sky. The foot-races, I suppose, were held in the stadium. This was an enclosure elliptical in shape as an elongated horseshoe, generally about three hundred feet long, so that a full course was about six hundred feet. On two sides and at the rounded end were seats for spectators, and at the entrance, which was also the goal of the round course, were seats for the judges and people of the highest distinction.

The qualifications for those who were to run in the races were very exacting. The runners must be of pure Greek descent. They were disqualified by the commission of any moral or political offence. They were to take an oath that they had complied with the rules of training; and these regulations, also, were most exacting. They were required to exercise at regular periods and for a certain number of hours; they were to abstain from all luxuries in meat and drink; they were trained as animals to develop the greatest amount of strength and endurance.

Now let us imagine the scene. There is the stadium under the blue sky—the race-course. There is the herald with a blast of trumpets announcing the names of the contending runners. There are the spectators in multitudes looking on,

cheering or discouraging according to their judgment or fancy. There are the straining, panting racers, exerting every nerve as if their lives depended on their success. There are the judges at the end of the course holding out the prize for the victors ; there is the prize, a chaplet of green leaves. There is the reception of the prize, the crowning of the victor, the joy, the exultation.

All this was to obtain a circle or band of fading green leaves from the pine or the olive that grew in the gullies and broken ground of that narrow isthmus—a chaplet to be worn for a few hours, and then hung up or placed away in the house as a memento of the victory.

But the prize was not simply the crown of green leaves. The real reward was the fame, the distinction that the victory gave. The struggle, the straining was as real as if for life ; the reward was public applause.

And it has been so ever since. All down these centuries have men and boys been engaged in some way or other, in some kind of game or other, but with the same object in view—pleasure and applause. And when not pressed to an extreme, when not extravagant, these are proper motives. The proverb is, that a sound mind must have a sound body to dwell in. No human frame can be muscular and healthy without exercise in the open air. The Greeks were a vigorous, an athletic people. Probably there is no more perfect male form in the world than that of the Apollo Belvedere at Rome, and that was brought from Greece, is of Grecian marble and of Grecian sculpture.

In later days, and in Europe when the age of chivalry came on, men prepared the tournament where the upper classes tilted at each other on horseback in the lists. All of you boys who have read Scott's novel of *Ivanhoe*, or *Froissart's Chronicles*, or *King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table*, will call

up at once scenes the most graphic and brilliant. To be crowned victor by the queen of love and beauty was enough to lead a gallant knight to risk his life in the lists; and any of you who will favor me with a call at my home may see some of the armor with which they clad themselves and the weapons with which they fought.

Later still, the cruel bull-fights in Spain and Spanish countries and the beastly prize-fights in England (and borrowed from England by us in America) show the same love for pleasure and applause, but, alas! degraded to the lowest class of human beings.

At the present day the favorite games for boys and young men at school and college in England and at home are boating, cricket, racket, hare-and-hounds, croquet, base-ball, football, and some others,—all which are innocent and heathful when not pushed to excess or to the neglect of study. These games and plays and pleasures are handed down from one generation of boys to another. They are all out-door work, while within doors are billiards, chess, checkers, dominoes, and many others, more or less attractive, more or less innocent. And it seems strange that, with all these means of exercise and amusement, out-doors and in, some of which are within reach of all young men at school and study,—it does seem strange and utterly without excuse that any young men should resort to such cruel, such inhuman sports as within the last week have disgraced the college at Princeton, and caused the faculty of that venerable institution and all her friends to hang their heads in shame. God forbid that any of my hearers should ever be guilty of such cruelty! There is nothing manly in it; it is simply brutal, or worse.

The apostle Paul must often in his youth or later in life have witnessed these foot-races in the stadium. There was



nothing immoral in them. And so when he came to write his letter to the church at Corinth—a church recently planted, whose members were just converted from the world, unstable, ignorant—he could use no stronger figure to stimulate them to Christian zeal and perseverance to attain the crown which awaits all believers from the hands of the Lord Jesus at death than to say, in language which they could not misunderstand, “So run that ye may obtain.”

Life is a race, a struggle, a strife. It is not, however, as some have said, a game of chance, for there is an infinite Power that controls all things. When your school-life is ended you will go out and stand on the shores of the sea—this sea of life on which you are all to embark. The shores of this sea are strewn with wrecks—wrecks that have gone down before storms which they were not strong enough to resist, or cast away on shoals where adverse currents have driven them, or ground to pieces on rocks which they were not skilful enough to avoid. None of them need have been lost, no wreck need have occurred, but for the ignorance or the carelessness or the recklessness of the navigator.

Holding on, however, to my figure, or rather the apostle's figure, of the race—the foot-race—I will give you some plain directions :

1. *Be sure to set out right.*—The runners in the Grecian games threw off all unnecessary clothing, girded up the loins (these little boys know the effect of tying a handkerchief around the waist); they allowed no previous indulgence to weaken them—they were *trained* for the race. So *you*, in the race of life, sit down and count the cost, make your arrangements for a struggle, a contest, which will bring all your forces into action, determined to win.

2. *Do not be diverted by the lookers-on.*—The runners in

the classic games had spectators thronging the bounds of the stadium, who either by their shouting and applause or by their hissing and jeering were likely to divert the racers from their purpose.

The world is all about you in this race. Friends may be injudicious and flatter you, scoffers may ridicule and despise you, others may allure and entice you, but don't be diverted, don't be tempted, don't let your attention be called off from the prize.

3. *Study the directions God gives in the Bible.*—No sailor (navigator) would think of going to sea without understanding the science of navigation, and without his compasses, his quadrants and all other necessary instruments for taking observations. How could he hope to take a ship from the capes of the Delaware to Liverpool but for his instruments, his charts, his knowledge? The driving storms which obscure sometimes for days and nights the heavens, the currents which sweep a vessel from her course, the fogs so thick that you cannot see the bow of the ship from the stern,—all these would render ocean navigation utterly unsafe, if not impossible, without daily observation and calculations. So you have a chart and means to discover your position; you need not be in doubt as to where you are, and what course you are to pursue, if you will consult your chart. But if you neglect this duty you are gone. The directions are very plain: he that runs may read.

4. *Don't carry too much with you.*—As I have said, the racers in the Isthmian games threw off almost everything. They carried as little clothing as possible. So you must give up all burdens, all loads, all weight, and bend to the trial. You may have habits—useless, vain, foolish; drop them all. If you love pleasure, amusements, games so much that they interfere with the race for life, you must abate them. They

will hinder and clog you. I do not ask you to give them up entirely, if they are innocent and pure; but you must loosen your hold upon them lest they cause you to lose.

5. *Don't expect to find the crown of life if you carry a single sin with you.*—You will utterly fail if you do. No matter how dear the sin has been, you must give it up. The very smallest sin, if indulged in without repentance, is heavy enough to sink you under its weight. You may have had it for a companion for years, you may have “rolled it as a sweet morsel under your tongue,” but you must part company with it now and for ever. No matter if a very little one, it must go. No matter if a right eye, out with it; if a right arm, off with it.

6. *Beware of by-paths.*—Sometimes you come within sight of a path that seems as if it would shorten your journey. It looks cool and shady, while you are hot and weary. It is very tempting, but it is not the direct path; it is a by-path. Don't put your foot in that path. You will be ruined if you do. Some people will tell you that you need not follow your chart so closely—that you must not be too strict with yourself. They are tempters; they have not known the way themselves. Don't listen to them. You will miss the prize if you do.

7. *Beware of sluggishness.*—As you begin the race you are young and fresh and vigorous. You feel very strong. The morning is cool, the breeze is fresh and bracing. By and by the sun grows warm and the running tires you. You are fatigued; you want to turn aside under the shade of a tree or by a gushing stream. Don't do it now; it is too early in the day for this yet. But the temptation is strong; you feel that your strength is almost gone, that you will give out. Don't believe it; you have strength enough if you have courage. Hold out a while longer, call up your fainting

strength, summon all your energies; you'll soon be there; you'll soon win the prize.

8. *Remember the promises.*—There is One very near you always who stoops and bends over you and whispers in your ear if you will only listen. Who is he? The Saviour. What does he say? “My grace is sufficient for thee;” “Ask, and ye shall receive;” “In due season ye shall reap if ye faint not,” etc. Do you faint? Hold out your hand; his is reached out to you; catch hold of it, it will hold you up.

9. *Pray daily for light and direction.*—Sometimes when you are very tired and faint in this race tears will come in your eyes and almost blind you, for you fear that after all you may lose the prize. Then pray for light. God will brush away all those tears and cause you to see clearly. You have seen the mist in the early morning so thick and close that the eye cannot penetrate it. The sun rises, the breeze comes and the mist vanishes. So with the soul; God will brush away all mists and clouds, and you will see light in his light. Sometimes your memory will fail—you will forget many things. Pray for directions that you may not go astray, that you may be kept in the right way and be carried safely to the end.

10. *Look at the loss you sustain if you miss the prize.*—If you miss it you lose everything—all your efforts, all your time; all that it has cost you goes for nothing if you fail. What a disappointment that will be! None of us expect it. Of all those before me, probably there is not one who expects to miss the prize. Oh, see to it, boys, that you are not disappointed.

“There is a well-known German picture [I give the elegant language of Dean Stanley] representing a young man playing at chess with the tempter of his soul. He is intent on

his game; his head is leaning on his hand; he sees only the moves of the pieces immediately before him; he thinks that he still has the play in his own grasp. Opposite to him sits the exulting fiend; there is a look of triumph over the easy prey; already piece after piece has been taken; here a good deed is gone; there a prayer has been removed; there an act of faith; there an act of love; there an act of hope. A few more successful moves on the tempter's side and the game is won—the soul is lost.

“But there is yet another figure who gives to the scene at once a deeper pathos and also a ray of hope. Behind the young man, unseen by him, unnoticed by the tempter, stands the guardian angel. The wings are spread for flight; the face is already turning away. It is a face not of anger, not of disappointment, not of despair, not of resistance, but of profound compassion and grief. That picture may represent to us the state of some among ourselves.”

## THE HARVEST PAST.

—◆—  
JER. viii. 20 :

The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.

I HARDLY know a text in all the Bible sadder than this.

There is a tenderness, a pathos, in it which is rarely met with anywhere. I shall not try to explain the circumstances under which it was spoken or written. There is not time, and it is not necessary to my present purpose. I take it as it stands in the Bible, and as you may read it and the chapter in which it is found. I take it as the expression of the deepest regret for opportunities lost, for the passing away of a season full of blessings which have not been enjoyed, for a harvest which was never reaped. It is as if you had had a spring with flowers blooming on every side, and you had not thought it worth your while to pluck them ; as if the summer had come to you with abundant crops of grain, and you had not thought it worth your while to gather them ; as if the autumn had come, bringing its luscious fruits, its rosy apples and teeming bunches of purple grapes, and you had turned away from them untasted, not thinking it worth your while to put out your hand and catch the dropping and delicious fruits.

But it means more than this—at least such is my application of it ; it means that after these ripening and abundant seasons had passed you had come to reflection ; you had begun to realize your improvidence, your folly, and in the first sense of

your great and fatal mistake you had broken out in the sad and painful cry, "The harvest is past," etc.

I do not choose this text because it is sad, for my coming before you is not to make you unhappy, but to *help* you if possible. I would make your lives bright and cheerful; I want to persuade you to take such views of the life that now is as will ensure your complete happiness in the life that is to come.

This is the last Sunday in the year and the last day of the year, and we are met in this chapel for the last time in this year. It seems to be a proper time to look back and see a little of the road over which we have gone. All of you who have travelled much will remember that on some roads the distance is measured by mile-posts. When you look out of the window of the railway car as you are hurrying on, you wonder that you pass these mile-posts so quickly and that they seem to be so close together. And if you are in haste to get to the end of your journey, you watch for the mile-posts eagerly, and are glad when they are all past.

Our life in this world is measured by years and months and weeks and days, and as we pass through them they seem like mile-posts on the great highway of life. In early youth a mile seems very long and a day seems very long, but as we grow older the miles and the days get shorter.

Our lives are often compared to the year. Infancy and early youth are the spring, full-grown maturity is the summer, autumn is the season of riper years, when we reap what we sowed in youth, and winter is life's old age, as it is the old age of the year.

So, as we draw near to the close of the year 1876 we may well be reminded of the close of life. We have had spring with its swelling and bursting buds, summer with its long bright days and fragrant flowers and its Centennial glories,

and we are now in the winter season with its storms and snows.

It is certainly true that we have all had our trials and sufferings during the year. The sun has not always shone brightly, the sky has not always been clear. "The clouds have returned after the rain." No two of us have had exactly the same trials. Our experiences have not been the same; no two faces or characters are alike. Neither have our trials always been known to others, even to those with whom we have been most intimate. The *severest* trials, the *saddest* hours are sometimes the most secret, for "each heart knoweth its own bitterness."

If I had it in my power I would, so far as happiness is concerned, make every day of your lives a Christmas Day. But I can't do that; I can't bring the seasons to you more frequently than they are appointed. But I bring you to-day something better even than Christmas. I bring you Christ himself in his word. You can't see him, you can't touch him, you can't hear his voice, but he is really here. He sees you, he hears your voices, he touches—oh, does he touch?—your hearts.

My young friend, I speak these earnest words to you, because I have little hope that you will make your way in the world, that you will be successful in life, unless you learn while here to love God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. I have seen so many boys and girls, so many young men and young women, make shipwreck of themselves, living utterly wasted lives, bringing wretchedness and ruin on their friends, and then going down into dishonored graves, that I cannot help giving you these earnest words of advice.

Now, you may ask me if I expect you to be sober and solemn and morose, taking no part in the sports and plays of



childhood and youth, and to be all the time engaged in reading the Bible and praying and going to church.

I answer, No—nothing of the kind. This is not the religion which I wish you to have. I want you to love God as your Father, to honor him as your Father, to feel that you are his child. I want you to be afraid to do anything that will grieve him or offend him or cause him to turn his face away from you. I want you to feel that this infinite Being knows you, loves you. I want you to read his word every day, to pray to him every day, to commune with him night and morning at your bedside—not to be afraid of him in a slavish sense, not to be ashamed of him in any sense. I want you to be willing to have it known among your companions, your room-mates, that you intend to be Christian boys and Christian girls.

Now, you can be all this, and yet be as light-hearted, as playful, as happy, as any boy or girl in this house. You can be as full of fun, you can enjoy real pleasantry just as much, as those boys and girls who are living for this world only. The only condition, the only limitation, is that your pleasures, your fun, shall be innocent and pure—that you must have no bad thoughts, and speak no bad words, and do no wrong deeds.

I am persuaded that one reason why a religious life is so distasteful to the young is that the nature of true religion is not understood; and I have tried in these sentences to show you that, as I understand the subject, religion is a very simple thing, not to be dreaded at all. It is only to love God and love all about you, and to remember that if you do so, hereafter your eternal home will be in heaven.

I wish so much that you would believe this! I wish so much (and so do others here) that some of you might be persuaded to-day to love the Redeemer and give him your hearts! I wish so much that you would see the path of duty and happiness, and walk in it!

It makes us thoughtful when we remember that we shall never again be assembled as we are to-day. Before the last Sunday of the next year shall come many changes will occur. Some of you, probably, will die—in so large a number it is more than probable that death will come to some—but if you will give heed to the good words which have been spoken to you in this chapel during the year, you will not have to regret that the harvest is past, the summer ended, and you are not saved.

My dear girls and boys, this short winter day (one of the shortest in all the year) is rapidly drawing to its close. The sun is just about to set, and the darkness which is immediately to come upon us extinguishes for ever the light of the year 1876. You will in a few moments go out of this chapel. These friends will watch you as you pass out; their hearts go with you, their prayers follow you. The chapel service will soon be over; so will the evening hours rapidly pass. The hour for retiring to sleep will soon come. You will be alone, most of you, in your own rooms and in the dark. No eye but God's will see you or know what you are doing. What will you be doing? Will you kneel down by your bedside and ask God your Father, for Christ's sake, to forgive your sins and change your heart? Oh, if you will, and do it earnestly, sincerely, he will hear you and answer you and bless you. You will not be afraid of him, and this last Sabbath of 1876 will prove to be the best day you have ever had in all your lives. May God in his infinite mercy help you to do it!

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