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THE GARDEN
OF NUTS



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THE GARDEN OF NUTS

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THE
GARDEN OF NUTS

Mystical Expositions with an Essay on
Christian Mysticism

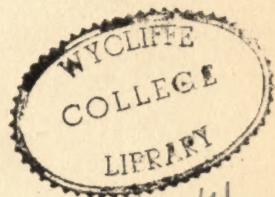
BY THE REV.

W. ROBERTSON NICOLL, M.A., LL.D.

*Editor of "The Expositor," "The Expositor's Bible,"
"The Expositor's Greek Testament," etc.*



*I went down into the garden of nuts.—CANT. vi. 11
I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.—2 COR. xiii. 1*



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TO THE REVERED MEMORIES
OF
JOHN MASON NEALE
AND
CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON

PREFATORY NOTE

OF the two parts of this little volume, the first was delivered as a lecture at the Glasgow Summer School of Theology in 1905. The expositions which follow are reprinted from the *British Weekly*.

Throughout I am constantly indebted to the works of Dr. Neale and Mr. Spurgeon, and especially to the writings of Mr. Arthur Edward Waite. Mr. Waite has been good enough to help me with many valuable suggestions.

The original translation of the poem by St. John of the Cross has been contributed by my friend and colleague, Miss Jane T. Stoddart.

I have in preparation a history of Behmenism in England. In this I hope to supply a bibliography as full as I can make it of English works on Mysticism.

HAMPSTEAD,

October, 1905.

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THE SONG OF THE OBSCURE
NIGHT

BY ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

*With translations by Jane T. Stoddart and
David Lewis*

THE SONG OF THE OBSCURE
NIGHT

BY ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

EN una noche oscura
Con ansias en amores inflamada,
Oh dichosa ventura!
Sali sin ser notada,
Estando ya mi casa sosegada.

A oscuras, y segura
Por la secreta escala disfrazada,
Oh dichosa ventura!
A oscuras, en celada,
Estando ya mi casa sosegada.

En la Noche dichosa,
En secreto, que nadie me veía
Ni yo miraba cosa,
Sin otra luz, ni guía
Sino la que en el corazón ardía.

Aquesta me guiaba
Mas cierto que la luz de medio día,
Adonde me esperaba,
Quien yo bien me sabía,
En parte, donde nadie parecía.

Oh Noche, que guiaste!
Oh Noche amable mas que el alborada!
Oh Noche, que juntaste
Amado con amada!
Amada en el Amado transformada.

En mi pecho florido,
Que entero para él solo se guardaba,

The Song of the Obscure Night 5

Alli quedó dormido
Y yo le regalaba
Y el ventalle de cedros aire daba.

El aire de el almena,
Cuando ya sus cabellos esparcía
Con su mano serena
En mi cuello hería,
Y todos mis sentidos suspendía.

Quedéme y olvidéme,
El rostro recliné sobre el Amado,
Cesó todo, y dejéme,
Dejando mi cuidado,
Entre las azucenas olvidado.

TRANSLATION

BY JANE T. STODDART

I WENT forth on a dark night,
My heart aflame with love's anxiety.
(O blesséd that chance for me !)

No eye saw my way,
For over all my house a stillness lay.

Safe went I through the dark night,
In disguise and by the secret stairway.
(O blesséd that chance for me !)

None saw my hidden way,
For over all my house a stillness lay.

In that night of blessing,
When nothing to my vision did appear,—

The Song of the Obscure Night 7

In secret, my presence none guessing,—
No light or guide was near,
Save that which in my heart was burning
clear.

But that light was guiding
More surely than the light of noontday sun,
To the place of my Love's abiding,
In which my rest was won.
And in that place was earthly presence none.

O Night, that leads the rover !
O Night more lovely than the dawn of day !
O Night, that joins the Lover
And loved in unity !
And she, transformed, with Him is one alway.

In the sure holy keeping
Of the soul's garden, where my love is
growing,

8 The Garden of Nuts

He rested and lay sleeping,
Refreshment to me owing,
The cedar-fans above us gently going.

Airs from the turret height
Played softly with the hair upon His brow.
Beneath His hand of might
My neck did meekly bow,
And all my earthly sense was fading now.

On the bosom of my Lover
I remained, and could naught else recall.
All the struggle, all the toil was over.
From me my cares did fall ;
Among the lilies I forgot them all.

When St. John of the Cross was dying in 1591, and the physician told him that the end was near, he replied, in the words of the Psalmist: "I was glad when they said unto me, We will go into the House of the

The Song of the Obscure Night 9

Lord," and added, "Since you have told me that good news, I have felt no pain whatever."

The only other English translation known to me is that which follows, by David Lewis. There are two French translations, one in prose and one in verse. They differ at two or three points from Mr. Lewis and from each other. Mr. Lewis's translation is at one or two places more literal than Miss Stoddart's but does not attempt to reproduce either the metre or the rhymes of the original. His lines hardly ever scan with the Spanish.

W. R. N.

TRANSLATION

BY DAVID LEWIS

IN an obscure night !
With anxious love inflamed,
 O happy lot !
Forth unobserved I went,
My house being now at rest.

In darkness and obscurity,
By the secret ladder disguised,
 O happy lot !
In darkness and concealment,
My house being now at rest.

In that happy night,
In secret, seen of none,
 Seeing nought myself,

The Song of the Obscure Night 11

Without other light or guide,
Save that which in my heart was burning.

That light guided me,
More surely than the noonday sun,
 To the place where He was waiting for me,
Whom I knew well,
And where none but He appeared.

O guiding night !
O night more lovely than the dawn !
 O night, that hast united
The Lover with His beloved !
And changed her into her Love.

On my flowery bosom,
Kept whole for Him alone,
 He reposed and slept.
I kept Him, and the wooing
Of the cedars fanned Him.

Then His hair floated in the breeze
That blew from the turret.
He struck me on the neck
With His gentle hand,
And all sensation left me.

I continued in oblivion lost.
My head was resting on my Love.
I fainted, and was abandoned,
And, amid the lilies forgotten,
Threw all my cares away.

BOOKS OF REFERENCE

The Works of St. John of the Cross, in two volumes, translated by David Lewis, M.A., with a preface by Cardinal Wiseman (Longmans, 1864).

Life of St. John of the Cross, by David Lewis (Thomas Baker, Soho Square, 1897). One volume.

Good French translations of the Saint's writings are *La Montée du Carmel*, translated from the Seville edition of 1702 by Alfred Gilly, 1866, and another by Père Charles-Marie du Sacré Cœur (Toulouse, 1876).

The most convenient Spanish edition of the *Obras Espirituales* is that published in two volumes at Madrid in 1872, with an introduction by D. Juan Manuel Orti y Lara.

AN ESSAY ON CHRISTIAN
MYSTICISM

AN ESSAY ON CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM *

WHEN John Tauler began his ministry, he preached oftentimes in a certain city, and the people loved to hear him, and his teachings were the talk of the country for many leagues round. This came to the ears of a layman who was rich in God's grace, and he came to that city, and heard the master preach five times. Then God gave this layman to perceive that the master was a very loving, gentle, kind-hearted man by nature,

* Lecture delivered to the Summer School of Theology, Glasgow, in Park Parish Church, June 23rd, 1905.

and had a good understanding of the Holy Scripture, but was dark as to the light of grace. Tauler ultimately submitted to the justice of the layman's judgment, and to the discipline enjoined by his reprover, including a two-years' silence. During that period, he passed through intense agonies, in which his soul was unmade and remade. When he came forth to preach again, tears flowed forth instead of words, but when his speech returned at last, it was known as the word of a man who had actually visited the world of darkness and the world of light. Thus runs a long-accepted story, recently questioned in some quarters, but effective as pointing out one great practical use of mysticism.

It is not so difficult to define mysticism in Scotland. The Christian mystic is "far ben." Christian mysticism, as Frederick

Maurice has noted, springs from the words of Christ in St. John's Gospel: "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." Probably there was an hour in the life of Eckart when this passage started out of the page full armed, and mastered his whole being. "Friends of God" was the designation of the Christian mystics of the fourteenth century, members of different orders, clergy and laymen, being included under it.

The experience of Tauler has been often repeated. There are many eloquent preachers who are well skilled in knowledge, and have a care for the things of God. But to exercised believers it is plain that they are strangers to the depths and heights of Christianity.

As Edward Irving said in his great days: "To my certain knowledge, the atmosphere of theology hath been so long clear and cloudless that there hath been neither mist nor rain these many years, and even to talk of a mystery is out of date. But *thou* must preach Christ in a mystery." The chief practical use of mysticism is to help Christian preachers to deepen their teaching—to preach Christ in a mystery. I shall endeavour very briefly (1) to describe the inward way and its stages as apprehended by the mystics in language as little technical as may be; (2) to show how mysticism affects dogmatic theology and theological controversy; (3) to deal with the relation of mysticism to action; and (4) to explain the mystical doctrine of the Holy Assembly, the esoteric Church. In doing so, I shall make no attempt to point out the many shortcomings and dangers of

mysticism. That has been done sufficiently. We study the mystics for the most part with a desire to learn from them. It need not be disguised that there are great difficulties in the way. In the first place, the mystics are the most individual of writers. Though there have been many more or less secret associations of mystics, the great teachers have worked without concert. John Wesley, who was deeply imbued with mysticism, though in his later life a keen critic of its weaknesses, says of them that they do not give a clear, a steady, or a uniform light. He quotes Professor Franck's saying: "They do not describe our common Christianity, but every one has a language of his own." Wesley adds: "It is very true, so that if you study the mystic writers you will find as many religions as books, and for this plain reason, each of them makes his own

experience the standard of religion." This is an extravagant over-statement, but it is the exaggeration of a truth.

Then the literature of mysticism is not easy of access. The English histories are avowedly very imperfect. The well-known book by Robert Alfred Vaughan, *Hours with the Mystics*, is an extraordinary achievement for its time, but it is entirely unsympathetic, if not positively hostile, and many passages will shock the lover of mysticism. In Vaughan's mind there was not a rudiment of true mystical feeling. His position may be judged by his definition of mysticism: "Mysticism is that form of error which mistakes for a divine manifestation the operations of a merely human faculty." The Bampton Lectures by Dr. Inge are less unfriendly, but the tone is vigilantly critical throughout. They are the work of an able

theologian, who is fully satisfied with his ecclesiastical and dogmatic position. They leave out vast tracts of the subject. We have no treatise on the history of English mysticism, although such a book might be instructive and interesting in the highest degree. Even such influential mystics as Peter Sterry and Mrs. Lead are unnamed by English historians. On Behmenism in England, only two or three scattered essays exist. I am deeply conscious of the great imperfection of my own equipment. If it had not been for the profound and fruitful works of Mr. Arthur Edward Waite, by far the deepest and most accomplished writer on mysticism among us, I should not have ventured to make an attempt. In what follows I must not be held as agreeing at every point with the mystics, and it has always to be remembered that we are at best

but approximating when we seek to reduce the great experience of the depths and heights into the terminology of our humbler daily walk.

(1) The inward way and its stages make up the central doctrine of mysticism. All Christian mysticism rests on the primordial facts that we came out of the great centre, and that our duty and rest are in that centre. Mysticism is accordingly counsel to the exiled. It assumes that God is to be found and that therefore there is and can be only one great work in life, that work being to accomplish an individual reversion to the fountal source of souls. The motto of the mystic is the motto of the dying Monica, "Life in God and union there!" The sense of the necessity of the Divine union, the realisation of Christ on earth, the true, certain, and absolute knowledge of God the

Supreme is the heart of mysticism. This knowledge and union are only to be acquired hardly, but they may be obtained by those who are willing to sell all for the pearl of great price. Deep in the hearts of all men is the hunger for the *Mysterium Magnum*, said Jacob Böhme, but few indeed will pass through the needful suspensions, and privations, and derelictions till they reach it. Yet those in whose heart eternity has been set, will go on. As Saint Martin says, a secret thread holds God and the seeker's soul together, even when the way is loneliest and most perilous. He compared himself to a man fallen into the sea, but with a rope bound round his wrist and connecting him with the vessel. "Eternity, be thou my refuge"—the inscription on the grave of Senancour—is the mystical aspiration. It is not necessary, according to mystical teaching, for the soul

to leave the body in order to see God, though an earthly end of exile is granted only to those who have longed eagerly, and longed early, and suffered patiently. The path is stony and steep, but faithfully pursued it brings to a point at last from which is visible the whole glory of the western heavens, and one golden moment redeems the decades of weary years.

(2) According to mystical teaching, God is to be found in the inward way. Here it is necessary to say something of the relation of mysticism and occult science, and at the present day the occult sciences have again come into prominence. Under the name psychical research, the phenomena of spiritualism, clairvoyance, hypnotism, mesmerism, and the like have been examined anew. Many mystics are not unfriendly to these researches. There are even some who

think there is proof that outside the visible world there are other intellectual orders, and that the dead of earth are there. They incline to suppose that some connection has been established with the occult forces of nature and the invisible hierarchies of being. But were this proved much more clearly than it is, the mystic, and perhaps I may say the Christian, would gain nothing. For spiritualism is almost exclusively concerned with the special department of experience in the phenomenal world. It may be that the phenomena are transcendent, but nothing in the phenomenal world, transcendent or normal; can bring permanent peace or beatitude, or help on the way to God. At most, spiritualism and its associates make up a transcendental science, and between transcendental science and transcendental religion (which is mysticism) there is a great

gulf fixed. We must transcend the phenomenal and the physical in order to know God, and it is not possible that facts in science, however extraordinary they may be, should constitute religious truth. In fact it can be proved that the greater mystics avoided rather than pursued such investigations. They distrusted and they even feared thaumaturgic experiments. All such experiments conducted in the astral region are accompanied with perils of the obscure night. The astral region is the home of illusion, a threshold which is full of strange dwellers, and our precautions can never be too great, nor our intercourse too rigorously guarded with these. The interior mystics have occasionally gone far into occultism, but their testimony has been : " I have received by the inward way truths and joys a thousand times higher than I have received from without."

Even if all that spiritualists claim were made good, Christianity would not be strengthened, and it may even be reasonably asked whether the establishment of spiritualistic experiences would not injure Christianity. Has any one been converted to an earnest Christianity by spiritualism? The cry still rings out from men like Myers, "Who shall go over the sea for us?" But the answer of Christianity is, "The Word is nigh thee." The true end of all Christian mysticism is union with God, accomplished in the knowledge of God, and effected by the love of God. In comparison with this, all other objects are vain and unprofitable. This union is attained by a sequence of experiences difficult to translate into language—more or less sealed and secret for those who have never gone through them.

THE STAGES OF THE INWARD
WAY

THE STAGES OF THE INWARD WAY

THE process for the return into God has one great principle. There must be the cutting of correspondence with inferior things and the creating of a new correspondence with things above.

(1) This correspondence often begins with a changed attitude to the material universe. To the mystic all the universe is an omen and a sign. Everything that exists is an outward expression of an inward thought of God. The action of the moon on the water may be explained scientifically, but the moon in the nightly heavens silently flooding the sleeping earth with splendour is a portent from a world revealed in a luminous mist

of mystery. God is the great symbolic teacher, and He teaches by signs which He writes on the veil, the veil which hangs between us and His Face, but which is thin and penetrable, and mysteriously inscribed on the side shown to us. It is this that is meant by those who insist, like the author of *John Inglesant*, that all nature is sacramental. Nature is a sacrament because it is an exterior index of an inner grace and virtue. This is the beginning of mysticism, and has taken hold of many who have not advanced far within the shrine. Thus Charles Kingsley says: "The great mysticism is the belief which is becoming every day stronger with me, that all symmetrical, natural objects are types of some spiritual truth or existence. When I walk the fields, I am oppressed now and then with an innate feeling that everything I see

has a meaning if I could but understand it, and this feeling of being surrounded with truths, which I cannot grasp, amounts to indescribable awe sometimes. Everything seems to be full of God's reflex, if we could but see it. Oh, how I have prayed to have this mystery unfolded at least hereafter! To see if but for a moment the whole harmony of the great system, and hear once more the music which the whole universe makes as it performs His bidding!" When Christ came He taught in parables and allegories. Without a parable He spake not unto them. Further, He established symbolical ceremonies. I need hardly speak of the mysticism of Wordsworth and of Tennyson.

Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but *if* I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.

Says St. John of the Cross: "Lonely valleys are quiet, pleasant, cool, shady, full of sweet waters. With their many trees and the song of birds they give great refreshment and delight to our spirit, and there is coolness and rest in their solitude and silence. Such a valley is my Beloved to me." The seeker for God then finds himself at the beginning in a world of tender and luminous parable.

(2) The second stage in the advance is that of detachment. To apprehend the sacramental nature of our surroundings is something, but God is not to be discovered in the consolations and felicities of external nature, nor other than dimly in its symbols. The true light is to be sought within. The avenues of interior contemplation, of the withdrawn state, of the hidden life, are the way to God. There must be detachment from the things of the earth, contempt of

riches, and the love of the Deity. This detachment is our guide ; it is devoid of pride and jealousy ; it seeks to rob humanity of nothing that belongs to it. It is an exercise of humility carried on under an abiding sense of unworthiness. To the truly detached, penitence is not only the safest road, but the sweetest and the most fruitful. Here comes in the question of the place of sacrifice. On this the Christian mystics have greatly differed, and it would be easy to give cases of mischievous extravagance. Sacrifice there is in the pursuit of detachment, but it may be difficult to draw a rigid line. The true mystic is not affected by the tribulation of the ambitious, and the agonies of the covetous. St. Teresa tells of a saintly person "who by obedience had been for fifteen years so engaged in his duties and offices, that during all this period he did not

remember having had *one day* for himself, although he endeavoured, as far as he could, to devote some spare time in the day to prayer, and the purifying of his conscience. Our Lord has liberally rewarded him, for without his knowing how, he enjoys that liberty of soul which the perfect possess, and in which consists all the happiness that can be hoped for in this life; for desiring nothing, he possesses all things. Such souls neither fear nor covet anything on earth; afflictions do not disturb them, nor pleasures elate them; nothing can rob them of their peace, since it depends on God alone." Whatever of pain and surrender is necessary comes by a kind of Divine inevitableness, and in a desisting from the pursuit of that which has ceased to matter. Then before he enters on the path, the world and the seeker find themselves mutually out of accord, and thus

in many cases the overt act of renunciation is not needed. Assuming the interior detachment indispensable to the mystic, and assuming that the zeal of God's House has sufficiently eaten up the heart to make sin more or less impossible, enforced partings may not be needful for the sons and daughters of desire. If they are, the children will be passed through the familiar furnaces. If they are not, the outward accessories that hinder entire obedience and faithful following will be as sweetly and insensibly removed as the great stone at the grave of Christ.

(3) The next step is attachment, the creation of an attitude of perfect correspondence with Christ. This may be defined as conversion, as the gradual satisfaction of the hunger and thirst after righteousness that is wakened in the soul. Now to the mystic, Christ is the Repairer of the fall,

and His work is to reunite us to the living act of the Divine principle. It must be allowed that the mystic tends to say little of the work of Christ for us, outside of us. His thought is that the individual Christian must live through the experience of Christ in a union so close that each step of the redemptive process, the life, the death, and the resurrection, are repeated in the believer. Says one mystic, we must "immerse ourselves continually in His living waters, approach the furnace of His fire, direct our own word to that central and interior word." This identification with Christ means touching nothing, thinking nothing, doing nothing which does not make for God. Christ is all and in all. As Christ passed into Gethsemane to accept the chalice of expiation, we must enter into the work and sacrifice of the Repairer and apply them to our particular

work and sacrifice. We shall be greatly aided in this by prayer. It is by the strengthening of the bond with God, and by earnest supplication that the den of thieves within us is at last changed into the house of prayer. When that is done, the mystic, by the fact of his conviction, is sure of his life entering more and more into the world where petition is ever fulfilling itself. Answers to prayer stand continually round him, and that much more closely than the hills around Jerusalem.

At this stage we might pause in describing the ordinary Christian. It is at this point that the vast majority rest content. They are often very happy. They have often that joy and peace in believing which is the consequence of the harmonious correspondence with the experimental standard which is called the will of God. Christians of

this type often drink deeply of Christ's rest, amid the daily burdens of monotonous life, the dull, commonplace, painful, and even desolating experiences which the days bring with them. It is for them mainly that the books of devotion are written, and they have much comfort of the Scriptures, reading them by simple faith. Excellent as their experience is, they inhabit the cloisters on the threshold of the temple. They are not called to go beyond them to secret holy places. Often they have the assurance of mysteries beyond, but on the whole their experience is one of content. It is at this point that the mystic leaves them, and presses forward to the great experiences of rapture and dereliction.

(4) The next stage, then, is what is known in mystical theology as the night of the obscure illumination. It is, as all Christian

literature testifies, the time of aridity, weariness, temptation, desolation, and darkness. It is the eye of the mind turned on itself before it has received the full illumination of the light within. It is the time when the heart is weary with the phenomenal, when the joy of earth has become arid, and there is a strong yearning for the full joy of heaven. It is often the time when the soul under sanctification bemoans its sin and doubts its interest in Christ. It is sorely dissatisfied with its own rate of Christian living. It does not partake of the permanent peace of God. But this is a Divine discontent, and it is a stage in advance of those satisfied with lower attainment. There are those who, like Cornelius Agrippa, never get out of it. They die under the cloud; but God does not leave them nor forsake them, and they die towards Jerusalem and enter through

the gate into the city. It is at this period that there is often in Christians a tendency to experiment in spiritualism, and to assure themselves by physical tokens of the continued life of the dead.

(5) But there succeeds to this experience a time when the garden of the soul is irrigated, when the dew falls from the Everlasting Rose, when the will of God is accomplished in love, joy, and peace. This has been called the higher Quietism, and it has also been called the time of ecstasy and vision. These words may be too strong, but it is in this stage of the spiritual progress, a stage which often comes at an advanced period of life, that spiritual and physical happiness seem best to agree. It is the sabbath of the spirit. It is the joy of the Holy Ghost.

St. Teresa mentions four ways in which

the spiritual garden may be watered, taking her examples from the methods of irrigation practised in the droughty Castilian provinces. We may draw the water from a well, or use the noria or water-wheel, or we may take from a river or brook, or, best of all, the rain from heaven may fall upon the garden. Those who enter on the path of mysticism must practise the first methods, which call for toil and effort. Sometimes even the well is dry, "but when His Majesty knows that we are doing what we can, as good gardeners, He sustains the flowers without water and makes virtues grow."

What, she asks, shall the gardener do when spiritual drought afflicts him, when he dips his pitcher often into the well and draws out no water? "Let him give thanks and take comfort, and hold it as a high grace that he works in the garden of so great an

Emperor. He knows, too, that he is pleasing his Lord in this, and his purpose must not be to please himself, but his Lord. . . . Let him resolve that even if this dryness lasts all his life, he will not fail to carry the cross with Christ. The time will come when he shall be paid in full measure; there is no fear that his labour will be lost, for he serves a good master. . . . Those labours are so well rewarded that I who endured them for many years can testify that when I drew but one drop of water from that blessed well, I felt that God was showing me His mercy. I know that the toil is great, and it seems to me that more courage is needed for it than for any other labours in the world, but I have seen clearly that God does not leave us without great reward, even in this life. The soul which has a lively hope in God, is so lifted above the world

and so free from its snares, that not only is it incapable of taking hold of the world, but cannot even reach it with its vision."

(6) Beyond that is the experience of union which comes but to few on earth, the consummation of the true interior existence which is the end of union, when the soul like Elias, is caught up into God. This is the time of raptures and derelictions. As there are raptures, so there must be derelictions in the flesh, for the soul that knows the joy of union is plunged in night when they are withdrawn. But of these things we must read in St. John of the Cross, and most of all in Ruysbroek. Those who pass into this experience know that the soul has an infinite capacity for joy and an infinite possibility for sorrow. From that there is the passage to the open and untroubled and everlasting vision.

MYSTICISM IN THEOLOGY AND
PRACTICE

MYSTICISM IN THEOLOGY AND PRACTICE

I COME next to speak briefly on the effect of mysticism on Christian theology. The effect is to soften hard outlines and mathematical definitions. Truth is many chambered. The theologian is prone to take up house in one chamber, and deny that there is any door outwards into another. In consequence, there is as much bigotry among the rationalists as among the orthodox. The rationalist ensconces himself in the simplest, most obvious, most superficial interpretation of a doctrine. He has right on his side so far. There is truth in the aspect that has appealed to his mind. But he is only too ready to assert

that this is all the truth, and that beyond it there is nothing. He angrily repudiates the possibility of advance into a deeper and yet deeper conception of the mystery. The orthodox theologian, as a rule, gets nearer the heart of the truth, but stops short of the very heart. He, too, though later, finds a chamber where he asserts that rest is to be found without possible advance into further sanctities of wisdom. But the mystic knows better. He knows that every Christian doctrine is profounder than it seems, that the mystery grows as the light grows, and that only in the heart and vision of God is there ultimate repose. When the element of mysticism is in the mind of the theologian, he will avoid dialectical victories, and the attempt to stone his antagonists to death with texts. Take, for example, the doctrine of the Atonement. In a book not untouched

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by the spirit of mysticism, Brooke's *Fool of Quality*, a man ventures to speak of the doctrine of the Atonement. The Christian replies with admirable promptitude, "You are a villain, a thief, and a liar." The man supports his argument by throwing a bottle at the hero's head. The hero, upsetting everybody who tries to hold him, rushes at his antagonist and prostrates him by a single blow on the temple. He then calmly sits down, sends for a surgeon, and justifies with admirable logic the rather strong language which he had used. The theological controversies on the Atonement have often been carried on in this spirit. It may be hoped that a change has come, that we shall not any longer argue with those who say that the Atonement is exemplary or governmental or piacular. We shall say on the contrary that it is all three and much more. True

mysticism is a leading on from one disclosure to another. No theorists have exhausted the mystery of the Atonement, and those theorists have done best who have frankly admitted it. There are few books on the Atonement which have more life than Macleod Campbell's, and its life is in its mysticism. The great modern teacher of substitution, the apostle Spurgeon, in his sermon on the *Miraculous Darkness*, says that darkness tells us all that the Passion is a great mystery into which we cannot pry. "I try to explain it as a substitution, and I feel that where the language of Scripture is explicit, I may and must be explicit too. But yet I feel that the idea of substitution does not cover the whole of the matter, and that no human conception can completely grasp the whole of the dread mystery. It was wrought in darkness,

because the full, far-reaching meaning and result cannot be beheld of finite mind. Tell me the death of the Lord Jesus was a grand example of self-sacrifice—I can see that and much more. Tell me it was the bearing of what ought to have been borne by myriads of sinners of the human race, as the chastisement of their sin—I can see that and found my best hope upon it. But do not tell me that this is all that is in the Cross.” Eckartshausen tells us that the Atonement is the great event of the grand and holy Assemblies which are leading the Churches. It is all men have said it is, but there is much more; and the more we behold, we realise the more keenly that wisdom lingers—the wisdom of the sanctuaries.

So particularly in the doctrine of Holy Scripture which is now so much in dispute. The higher critic is in these days apparently

victorious, but there are drawbacks to his triumph. For one thing, the kind of evidence on which he grounds himself cannot be understood without considerable study and reflection. It is a kind of study to which the average mind lends itself very unwillingly. The conclusiveness of its results depends on an accumulation of details, and the impatient mind of the general reader is not apt to take the trouble necessary for comprehending the weight of the arguments. It will for ever appear incredible to the uninitiated that a critic should be able to assign different authors to one verse of the Pentateuch. Besides, many Christians approach the higher criticism with presuppositions which are fatal to its very existence. They hold virtually that the application of the principles of historical criticism to Holy Scripture is in its nature blasphemous.

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They hold that problems of authorship, age, and truth to facts are settled beforehand. It must be admitted also that on the general principles which underlie the whole discussion there is as yet only a partial agreement among literary critics. How far the assumptions on which much criticism is based are verified in literary history, is still debatable. For example, it is often argued that a certain piece cannot be by a certain author because it falls far below the average of his style. To this it may be replied that hardly any great author has escaped without sinking far below himself in some or many of his performances. But the mystic as such is not profoundly concerned in the quarrel, and he can wait with calmness the far-off day of decision. The Christian pulpit can never be strong so far as it depends on nervous and inaccurate estimates of the present trend

of German theological thought, measured in most instances by summaries of periodical articles. The mystic knows very well that the time for decision on many questions has not yet arrived, and that it may never arrive. To assume that the particular conclusions which are favoured by the majority of scholars at the beginning of the twentieth century will be equally in favour at the beginning of the twenty-first, is to be blind to all the lessons of experience. Criticism has changed, and will change, but to the mystic the Word of God remains. In so far as the higher criticism is dangerous he meets it with the highest criticism. He is certainly not hostile to historical criticism, but to him historical criticism must ever be of secondary importance. That the revelation of God must be full of signs and wonders he is well

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assured. That the sense intended by the particular writer is of solitary importance he can never believe. A literary critic so little touched by transcendentalism as Lowell has admirably explained that the meaning of great works is not necessarily that which was present to the mind of the writers. He says: "Whether I have fancied anything into *Hamlet* which the author never dreamed of putting there, I do not greatly concern myself to inquire. Poets are always entitled to a royalty on whatever we find in their works; for these fine creations as truly build themselves up in the brain as they are built up with deliberate forethought. Praise art as we will, that which the artist did not mean to put into his work, but which found itself there by some generous process of Nature of which he was as unaware as the blue river is of its rhyme with the blue

sky, has somewhat in it that snatches us into sympathy with higher things than those which come by plot and observation. Goethe wrote his *Faust* in its earliest form without a thought of the deeper meaning which the exposition of an age of criticism was to find in it; without foremeaning it, he had impersonated in Mephistopheles the genius of his century. Shall this subtract from the debt we owe him? Not at all. If originality were conscious of itself, it would have lost its right to be original." In the view of the mystic, great Divine words are not the prize of the toiling intellect of mortality; they are the gift of the Eternal Love. What concerns him is not what the human authors who were the organs of the revelation more or less dimly conceive to be its meaning. He goes behind all that to the intention of the Holy Spirit. This

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the reader may find more truly than the original writer. This idea is most familiar in the literature of mysticism. Thus Saint Martin came to see that there were greater depths in his *Ecce Homo* than he was aware of until he was acquainted with the writings of Jacob Boehme. The author of *John Inglesant*, a good mystic of the second order, read a sermon preached on the meaning of one of his minor works. He wrote to the preacher that his meaning was different, but he afterwards wrote that he now saw that the preacher's meaning was the true meaning. All mystics believe that beyond the obvious sense of the Scripture there is often a second sense. Passages that seemed to be history are now properly read as parable and allegory. Some mystics, like Pope Gregory the Great, hold that the parable and allegory rest on the historical facts of the Bible, and that

the given accounts are the more, not the less, true literally that they have a meaning mystical. Above all, the mystic finds Christ in the Old Testament as the Risen Christ found Himself when, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. What was the unknown writer of the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah thinking of when he wrote his prophecy? Did he think of a person or of collective Israel? It does not matter. The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah refers to Christ. Nothing is settled by the intention of the writer, even if that could be ascertained.

Do men dare to call Thy Scripture—
Mystic forest, unillumined nook?
If it be so, O my spirit!
Then let Christ arise on Thee, and look.
With the long lane of His sunlight
Shall be out the forest of His Book.

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In the frank acceptance of this position I am persuaded that the Church will find peace during the long distress of criticism, and it is in this way only that the interest in the Old Testament will be revived. It is not possible that the ordinary mind should be able to follow the patient and intricate processes of historical criticism—these processes which, when understood, cast so strong a light on the progressiveness of Divine revelation. These have a place of their own, and are full of precious instruction. But in speaking to the people the preacher must take the Old Testament as it stands or leave it alone. If an unbelieving Christian disparages the Holy Scripture, the mystic protests. For him, the Scripture has its imperfections, so to speak, as the human body of the Incarnate Word had its imperfections. Beyond that he will not go. He

believes intensely that more and more light is ever breaking from the Word. He believes that it should never be opened save by hands that tremble with reverence. He receives it into his arms as the aged Simeon received the Holy Child. He goes on to study it wistfully, hopefully, till death or the Lamb of God looses the seals of the Book.

It is perhaps hardly worth while to refute the criticism that the mystics are not practical. As Dr. Inge has pointed out, Plotinus was often in request as a guardian and trustee ; St. Bernard showed great gifts as an organiser ; St. Teresa as a founder of convents and an administrator gave evidence of extraordinary practical ability ; even St. John of the Cross displayed the same qualities ; John Smith was an excellent bursar of his college ; Fenelon ruled his diocese extremely well ;

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and Madame Guyon surprised those who had dealings with her by her great aptitude for affairs. We have heard much of late about the practical mystic, and the mystic is great and powerful in practical affairs for various reasons, and not least for this, that he never stakes his all. Whatever be the momentary issue of the strife, the mystic is not too much discomposed. His heart is with his treasure, and his treasure is with Christ. He is brave to resume the fight, or patient in retreat when the fight is plainly ended so far as he is concerned. But the mystic is probably not a man prominent in public action. He is a practical man because he is doing the one thing that is worth doing, getting back whence he came. Those who on this earth attain to the union are perhaps doing the work of their brethren, and bearing their burdens most perfectly. He is not

useless who is part of the activity of God. It is not necessary that all mystics should devote themselves directly to the service of man, but they must be tinged and transmuted by a vital quality of real benevolence, by the illumination of altruistic human love. Who is to divide the honours? Was it Jacob Boehme or John Wesley who did the most work for the world? Who can answer? But even that is not the true way to put the question. What work could Jacob Boehme have done for the world if he had attempted the work of John Wesley?

THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY
ASSEMBLY

THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY ASSEMBLY

I COME in conclusion to the doctrine of the Holy Assembly, a doctrine sorely needed in these days of fierce and bitter sectarianism. The doctrine of the Holy Assembly is a testimony catholic to all mysticism. It is concerned with a withdrawn brotherhood in whose hands the experimental knowledge of God has remained and has increased. It is the doctrine of the esoteric Church of the Illuminated.

As for the outward Church, mysticism believes in it. It is the duty of every Christian to connect himself with the outward organised community. In selecting a

community he must, of course, follow his own conscience and preference, but certainly, according to mystical doctrine, every one should remain in the Church in which he was born, unless driven out by the gravest necessity. While respecting all other societies, says one, we shall do well if we are led by our angel to remain in our own Christian society, and enter into the sanctuary of the spirit through the door that is nearest to our hands. "Sparta is your country, do your best for Sparta." Mystics have often taken a vehement part in the support and the defence of their Churches, and they have loyally followed in the footsteps of their fathers, and in the track of their early associations and discoveries. It is true that their aid has often been lightly valued. The whole history of mysticism shows that mystics have often fallen out of favour with

their Churches. Sometimes they have been expelled, more often they have been dis-trusted and kept in the background. But so long as they were allowed to remain they have been obedient and uncomplaining. They have recognised that the Church visible is a stage on the way to the esoteric Church, the Holy Assembly that has hoped and worked through the ages. They have seen that it is through the visible Church that we enter into the company of the initiates and the secret hope of the world. Exoteric Christianity is true, though it is incomplete. The outer Church, whatever its shortcomings may be, is never to be removed from the world. Its institutions have their abiding place and use. There are mystics who prefer the simplest and most austere form of Christian worship, looking forward to the day when love shall supersede the

Sacraments, and anticipating it. There are also many Christian mystics who lay great stress on the Sacraments, and advise that the Eucharist should be frequently resorted to as a means of grace. For those who are helped by such things there may be ornate buildings and ceremonial worship. It is rarely the part of a true mystic to direct attacks on received dogmas or existing institutions.

Only, however faithful, however zealous a man may be in devotion to the outward society in which he was born, in which he first repented and trusted, he will find as he goes on that there are deep affinities, and perhaps the deepest between him and others who belong to other fellowships, and are called by other names. He will find himself inwardly tied to those from whom he is outwardly divided. The teachers

who speak to him most commandingly will often be of a seemingly alien company. Is he then to renounce them or disown them? Far otherwise. He is to recognise that besides his fellowship in the outward Church, which may mean more or less, he has a still more precious communion in the Holy Assembly. The door of that Assembly is never closed. Through it there pass continually men of all sects and denominations—those wise and enlightened spirits who know that they have not reached finality and keep passing on through stage after stage in search of the Absolute, the Ultimate, the Everlasting. Whatever is external will pass. It may serve as an organ, but it belongs essentially to the order of accidents. But the Holy Assembly will never pass. The Holy Assembly where the Spirit of Christ dwells must endure with Christ.

Where the Spirit of Christ is absent "there is no church, but only skulls and stones." It is one of the mysteries of Christian life that there are not only separations between outward societies, but often fierce and bitter controversies, controversies in which men fight against one another, who, if they only knew, are at one in heart. It is one of the chief alleviations of the sorrow of earthly disunion that we may ever and anon come to the surprised and joyful consciousness that the brother who is bearing another name and is fighting in another army is in reality at one with us in the Mystical Holy Church. Those who seem spectral and far off, if not positively alien and hostile, are discerned as the true brothers of our hearts. Wherefore it is the wont of mystics to claim this fellowship, and to exact recognition "in all houses, temples, and

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tarrying places of the fraternity." In the fellowship of the Holy Assembly is peace. There we escape the boundless weariness of the spirit of the world. There we may win and wear that Rose which is the symbol of the joy of the two Jerusalems. There much that to those outside seems to matter is as a whirl of dust to a wayfarer on a high road. If our fellowship there is sure, we can bear it, though we are cast out of all historical and visible societies. We can bear it if we are in communion with Christ Himself, and if we may live and die in the peace of Israel and the grace of the Holy Assembly.

I conclude with the prayer of a great mystic : "If there be in Thy Eternity before Thee, some One Body, or kingdom of Thy children, not a division, not a tribe, not a party, but one that includes all, one that

by principles and sympathies in common with all, offers sacrifices of thanksgiving for all, and communicates blessings to all, then I pray, if it seem good in Thy sight, that I may be associated with that Body.

“Or, if there be a people made up of the innocent and the redeemed of all planets, systems, and their heavens, who being neither shut up in the limit of self-love, nor in the individuality of any one heaven, but who, heartily loving the whole outborn variety of Thy Love and Fulness, desire to include the utmost diversity of genius and character in their unity, then I desire and pray in submission to Thy Holy Will, that I may be qualified for admission amongst that central, all-related, all-embracing people.

“Or, if it be rather for Thy glory, and for the good of all, that I be kept watching daily at the gates, and waiting at the posts

of the doors of the least and outermost mansion of Thy Eternal House, then my only prayer is, Father, Thy will be my heaven. Amen."

THE GARDEN OF NUTS

THE GARDEN OF NUTS

I went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished and the pomegranates budded.

CANT. vi. 11.

THE mystical interpreters expounded the phrase "the garden of nuts" as pointing to the prophecies, allegories, parables, and poetry of the Old Testament. We use the words as a convenient title for a brief series of articles on what we believe to be an old, true, precious, and divinely sanctioned method of interpretation. It is not our object to revive the purely mystical and allegorical reading of the Bible. To this it has been justly objected that the history is made a dead history, useless in teaching

faith. Whatever disparages or sets aside the historical record of redemption, whatever turns the Bible into a set of fantastic puzzles, dishonours it, and makes it of none effect. Nevertheless we are certain that the Church of Christ is in danger of losing the key to the wonderful and mysterious world of Scripture. The references to the Bible in sermons, so far as we hear and read them, are surprisingly small. Yet nothing is more sure than that the Church can, as a whole, have no commentary on Scripture but Scripture itself. The illustration of the New Testament by the Old, of the Old Testament by the New, is the nourishment of faithful souls. In this respect the preaching of the present day has fallen far below the level of the past. We do not exclude criticism, for by the symbolical definition of all Protestant Churches that the inter-

pretation of Scripture must be drawn from Scripture itself, it is meant that the interpretation must derive from the genius of the original languages, the due consideration of the circumstances, the comparison of like and unlike passages.

The work of the critics, so far as it is sound, must be good. They can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. So long as they are engaged in mere processes of destruction and dissection, there can be nothing but trial, but the trial patiently and bravely borne will in the end be for the confirmation of faith. Perhaps our blindness, our laziness, need to be punished so. It was expedient, doubtless, that the written word, like the Living Word, should be wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. But at present for many there has been no true resurrection of the Bible,

and they are bewildered. Vast tracts of Scripture, and especially of the Old Testament, which were luminous and very comfortable to our fathers, are bare desert to the younger generation of preachers. Criticism has its work to do, and it serves us especially in demonstrating that the religion of the Bible is supernatural. There must also come great good from understanding the historical position of the first hearers, and this especially in the study of the Prophets. Believing critics have recovered from the Prophets certain deep ideas which will sink into the consciousness of the Church at last, and bring forth much fruit. The true preacher, however, is, like the Word of God itself, independent of criticism. Some men of genius are able to expound the historical circumstances under which they think a prophecy was delivered, and in the

explanation to feed the springs of life, but we doubt whether this kind of teaching will ever come to much. The preaching that for real effect should be delivered with a map behind the preacher, is necessarily of no use. The audience does not understand, becomes impatient and irritated, or understands just as the sermon ends, and fails to profit by the lesson. The great passages in the Word of God are timeless. Take the unspeakably tender and gracious words, "The Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God. For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." The preacher may refer to the

circumstances, and explain the original reference to the city as the bride, and the Semitic ideas of marriage, and so forth, without confusing or vexing his hearers. But these words, and many like them, are in reality timeless. They were spoken before the foundation of the world. Any fixing of them down to a date and a set of circumstances can do little or nothing to interpret them. Mrs. Beecher Stowe, in her *Old Town Folks*, tells us of a poor, ill-used, forsaken, forgotten creature who lay trembling on the verge of life, and heard these words spoken to her sinking and desolate soul. They raised the burden from her crushed spirit, for indeed they are enchanted with a Divine and living power which strikes the nerve of individual consciousness in every lonely, agonising spirit, and are as the voice of God to that individual. Surely

if God ever spoke to man He spoke in these assurances that "rolled over her mind like bright waves from the ocean of eternal peace." But it must be understood that the method of interpretation we seek to expound moves in a region which criticism does not touch. It is above and beyond criticism, and when criticism has accomplished all its work amid the complete unanimity of the experts, it will be as much in place as ever. We shall advance step by step, illustrating by the way.

All we claim for the present is that even as we illustrate the New Testament from the highest literature, so, to put it at its lowest, we may illustrate the New Testament from the Old, and the Old from the New. Every one will agree that both the Old Testament and the New, whatever their other relations are, remain as the supreme

triumphs of religious literature. We may rightly claim that much more is true, that there is a divinely intended harmony between the Old Testament and the New, that Christ our Lord is the end of history, of law, and of prophecy. But let us be content for the present with the claim that as one book of genius may be illustrated from another, so may the Testaments. In Keble's *Lectures on Poetry*, one of the most suggestive of critical treatises, he argues that poetry is as fully directed by a superintending Providence, has its regular sequences, and runs out its appointed harmonies as much as history or philosophy or the world itself. He illustrates this proposition by many fine illustrations, tracing the diviner doctrine through the classical poets. We have space for but one or two of his illustrations. He gives a new inter-

pretation of the famous Aeschylean chorus. After quoting the lines on the omen of the hare devoured by the pair of eagles, and Diana's compassion for them, he proceeds :

The poet herein touches on a subject than which few can be more gravely important, or more full of holy religion and tender feeling, the idea, namely, that there is a wonderful agreement and connection uniting gods and men with the race of birds, beasts, and other irrational animals ; so that their very notes, gestures, and motions should almost of necessity raise or depress the minds of the superior beings. Accordingly it has always been popularly believed that dogs and horses divine, by a sort of presentiment, the coming misfortunes of the family, nay, give warning, as far as they can, by tokens sufficiently intelligible.

If we use this illustration—and who would shrink from it?—why should we not illustrate the text, “ The whole creation groaneth and

travaileth in pain together till now," from the words of the prophet?

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb,
And the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
And the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling,
And a little child shall lead them.

Keble argues that the better religion of the Pagan world is the first indistinct vision and obscure contemplation of truths afterwards declared, the impassioned expression of an earnest gaze looking for the first dawn of approaching light. Thus it is not merely poetically interesting, but gravely instructive.

What seemed an idol-hymn now breathes of Thee,
Tuned by faith's ear to some celestial melody.

We may recall in this connection Wordsworth's lines upon what happened after the gift of Christianity to men:

Arts which before had drawn a soft'ning grace
From shadowy fountains of the Infinite,
Communed with that Idea face to face.

If we may illustrate the New Testament from classical literature and religion, why not from Hebrew literature and religion?

There are three specific points which may be illustrated afterwards.

(1) A chief distinction of the New Testament is that it contains a detailed picture of the Ideal Man. The character is followed into the details of life. It is only when we study the higher literature that we understand the real significance of the achievement. There is no picture of the Ideal Man in our literature, not even in Shakespeare. The Ideal Man must be at once tender and strong. Where the attempt is made at portraiture, there is always some great defect. We have on the one hand helplessness, on the other hand imperiousness. Of the great masculine characters in fiction, as

of the great characters in history, it may be said :

Down the pale cheek long lines of shadow slope,
Which years and curious thought and suffering give.

It might have been added that the deepest lines are those left by sin. Now the Old Testament is continually picturing the Ideal. Admit everything, if you please, that the most advanced criticism can claim. Say, if you like, that there is no direct reference to Christ in the Old Testament. Even if that be so it is incontestable that the Old Testament abounds with delineations of the Perfect and Only Fair, Whose face was more marred than any man's, but had in it no indentation of sin. By what principle can we be forbidden to use the descriptions of the Righteous One in the Old Testament to illustrate the history of Christ, if we may

refer to those who remotely suggest Him in literature? Yet a young preacher in our day will not shrink from speaking of Christ as "one entire and perfect chrysolite," but he will be afraid to say that Christ is "the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely."

(2) Our literature at its highest is made up largely of tender, profound passages in the intercourse between God and man, and in the intercourse between human souls. When feeling goes to the deepest it has a speech of its own. Souls in agony or in ecstasy understand one another. There is no falsity, no exaggeration, no tawdriness in their speech. The Old Testament is full of such records, records of everlasting things, and shall they not be accounted by the preacher as jewels of the Kingdom of God?

(3) Is it not permissible to read into

the words of the Old Testament the New Testament meaning? Let it be clearly realised that the speaker was conscious only of the Old Testament meaning, but let it be realised also that his words are strangely prepared to hold the glory of the New. The intense utterances on death and life scattered over the Old Testament have another meaning to those who have heard the Lord saying, "*He that believeth on Me shall never die,*" who have seen death die in the immediate presence of the Word of Life. The temporary deliverances on which Psalmists and Prophets burst into song are typical and illustrative of the true deliverance—the great redemption which Christ accomplished when He suffered without the gate of Jerusalem.

We propose to illustrate these points by some detailed expositions in the Old Testament.

THE FACE OF DEATH IN THE
SUN OF LIFE

(PSALM cxviii)

THE FACE OF DEATH IN THE SUN OF LIFE

(PSALM cxviii)

I shall not die, but live.

Ver. 17.

ACCORDING to the latest criticism, the 118th Psalm is a thanksgiving offered on the return of the Jewish army from a victorious campaign, Israel being the speaker, at least in various parts, and the text being here and there unintelligible and corrupt. However this may be, the words signalise a great deliverance. That deliverance seems to be a prolongation of life won from a well-nigh desperate sickness. The New

Covenant tells us of a greater deliverance than that, and the words of the psalm fit that true deliverance well, the deliverance from death to the life and triumph beyond death—Christ's victory and transfiguration. The mediæval Church ordained that when the other prayers at a deathbed had been said, if the soul was yet waiting, the 118th Psalm should be read. One of the martyrs sang this psalm on the scaffold. It is supposed that Jesus sang it as His hymn when He rose from the table to go to the Garden of Gethsemane. At least we know that He stood by the right hand of God and hearkened as one of His martyrs sang it.

We propose to read some of its verses in the light which Christ has thrown over the mysteries of pain and grief and death.

Ver. 15. *The voice of rejoicing and salva-*

tion is in the tabernacles of the righteous ; the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly.

Ver. 16. *The right hand of the Lord is exalted ; the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly.*

The picture is that of a home under the shadow of death. It does not matter whether the home is high or low. We know what nature tells us about death, its advancing horror, the details so sordid, so unforgettable, so charged with one terrible meaning. We know the rough incredible suddenness with which death comes on, whatever the preparation may have been. As the pale grey shadow creeps over the patient face, the watchers think of the precipice before them, and the long and dreary moorland that spreads beneath it. Their hearts are seething and rending, burst and torn in the struggle. What can Christ

do for His believers at this time of sharpest trial? Is His arm shortened that it cannot save? No, for oftentimes the Eternal Love takes voice through the fragile body and the fading breath. The victory of faith over sense, of the spirit over the flesh, is realised. A strange peace descends, a peace through which promises and cheer pulse in, though every nerve is conscious of pain, and must thrill with that consciousness for many days and nights. Though it seems for the time as if the whole story of life, embroider and adorn it as we may, is love, loss, and grief, yet at the deathbed there is oftentimes a "wind-warm" space of love, during which the soul knows that things are not what they seem, and that though bond after bond is apparently being broken, the ties of the everlasting union are tested and hold. Words of love spring up from

the deep and secret wells of the spirit. Christ is made known to His people, and they confess that His right hand, through which the great nails went, doeth valiantly, and is exalted in the waste and wreck of death. Precious in the Lord's sight is the death of His saints, and He is there to succour and to save the soul He bought with His blood.

Ver. 17. *I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.*

This is the voice of the dying. The dying at least can sing this psalm of deliverance. The voice of rejoicing and salvation is heard from them. They will not die. They are about to live. They go to the land of the living, the country that was purchased by the Cross and the Sepulchre. Spiritual writers have told us about the joy experienced by certain believers in the

near approach of death, of the joy that rises to ecstasy amid the fires of pain.

And still as we swept through storm and night
My heart beat lighter and more light.

A novelist of the day has told us how a poor girl died in a little white-washed, ruined cottage, where help was impossible, where life was blank, blind, and dull as the brown clay in the sodden November fields. But the Light of the World had shone into the dreary room. The care of father, mother, and sister was perfect in its tenderness and self-forgetfulness, but a mightier love warmed the air. The sufferer lay on a stump bedstead, and to protect her from the draughts, an old piece of carpet had been nailed on a kind of rough frame, and placed between her and the door. When she saw her friend a smile came over her face like the sunshine, and she asked that the last three chapters

of St. Matthew should be read. She heard the story of the conflict, and when she came to the resurrection, she felt that this was the truth of death. So it was. She died, and lay with her pale face unutterably peaceful and serious, bound up with a white neckerchief. Her body was laid in the grave of the Meeting House among her kindred, and a little mound was raised over her. Her father tended it while he lived, but he died, and her mother had to go into the workhouse, and her grave became like all the others—scarcely distinguishable in the tall rank herbage. But she did not die. The soul of the poor servant girl had passed away—only a servant girl, and yet there was something in that soul greater and higher than the sun whose rays poured through the window. What had become of her?

Ver. 19. *Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the Lord:*

Ver. 20. *This gate of the Lord, into which the righteous shall enter.*

Earth returns to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, forgotten, it may be, by all but Christ. But the soul has sped on. For the spirit, the everlasting doors have rolled back upon their hinges. "Open to me the gates of righteousness"—that is the claim of those who have cleansed their robes, and therefore have a right to the tree of life. It is uttered with a holy boldness. "This gate of the Lord, into which the righteous shall enter." We may call the gate what we will. It may be called the gate of death, if we remember that it is the gate of the Lord, and that by that gate the Righteous Himself entered. There is a Mahomedan legend that the

bridge from this world to the next hangs over an abyss of fire, that it is so long and so narrow that none can hope to pass it. But for the faithful there is an angel on this side and on that, and they hold the soul up between them till they enter into Paradise. It is in Christ's company that the soul valiantly enters the Paradise which He regained, righteous in His righteousness, strong in His strength.

Ver. 21. *I will praise Thee: for Thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation.*

Ver. 22. *The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.*

Ver. 23. *This is the Lord's doing: it is marvellous in our eyes.*

The threshold has been crossed, the soul that has entered into the city is beholding the Wonder of its wonders. The Stone

which the builders refused is become the Head Stone of the corner. "I will praise Thee, for Thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation." The spirit catches at broken reeds no more. It sees the lilies that flower above them. It lets the world go and takes love. It sees Christ where Christ should stand, the Head Stone of the corner.

Then did the Form expand, expand,
I knew Him through the dread disguise
As the whole God. Then His eyes
Embraced me.

Ver. 24. *This is the day which the Lord hath made: we will rejoice and be glad in it.*

When earth breaks up and heaven expands—
How will the change strike you and me
In the House not made with hands?

We shall see Christ and His Sabbath. He said in the days of His flesh, "I will give

you rest," and He kept His word amidst the tumults of time. We had all the rest from Him that we would receive. Now there is for us the unveiled Christ, and the hushed and holy Sabbath-keeping that remaineth for the people of God, when the tabernacles of faith and hope fall amid the music of eternity, and the temple of love is entered, and all our business is the restful work of the Eternal Kingdom. This is what comes after the storm, the agony, the shaking, the bewilderment of death. Further we dare not penetrate. Here let the curtain drop.

CHRIST IN THE FIRST PSALM

CHRIST IN THE FIRST PSALM

And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season, his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

PSALM i. 3.

WE have argued that every delineation of the righteous is in the end a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of Him alone. God has somewhat against all His saints, against their own righteousness. None of them is righteous completely except in the righteousness of the Redeemer. The application of this principle gives a new life and power and message to the book of the Psalms. We take for an example the first Psalm. It is true in its integrity of one soul at least, and of none but one. Multitudes through

grace have come near it. It blessedly recalls them, but for its full meaning we must look at the flame that burns behind the porcelain sheath, and see Jesus and Jesus only.

(1) In Christ there was no scorn, no contempt, no insolence, no taunting. One poet speaks of

Those eyes,
Which, though they turn away sometimes,
They never can despise.

And another has written :

For He's not a man that He should judge by the
 seeing of His eyes,
He's not the son of man that He should anyone
 despise ;
He's God Himself, and far too kind for that, and far
 too wise.

He did not despise our world. This earth of ours is the Valley of the Humiliation of the Son of God. He did not despise our nature, for He took it on Himself, and has

Christ in the First Psalm 113

carried it to the Eternal Throne. He did not despise the meanest of His creatures. Aristotle's "magnanimous man" used irony with the common herd. Christ cared for the individual. He never saw men as in a herd. In His days at Nazareth He bathed in the fountain of youth, and was wise in the lore hid from a world grown old. Did a golden dawn entrance sea and shore for Him in that small and homely world—a world of few ideas and little knowledge? Doubtless He did not miss the morning glory. But He was never deceived, and in every step of His pilgrimage till He ascended the high and hard bed where His work was accomplished, He was still the same, full of grace and truth. To Him the single life was of infinite pathos and importance. The mystery and immensity of the universe did not perplex Him. He

had come from Sion. Nor did He despair of any human soul. To despair of a soul, however sunken, is to scorn that soul, but the seat of the scorner was not for Him. He drew near to the fallen, made Himself familiar with their misery, understood all their wild, weary wish for the mercy of the grave, saw how they were ground down without help or horizon, and declared to them a gospel of boundless hope. He suffered them to lay their abased heads at His Feet that He might lift them up for ever. This was more than justice. True, He was dyed to the depths in justice, but He was full of pity, full of reverence, full of love. This was the attitude of the Redeemer towards our lost humanity, and this was the attitude which befitted the world's "Expectancy and Rose." He came that the lost and erring might return and

know the great warmth of the Divine welcome.

(2) His life was nourished on the law. His delight was in the law of the Lord, and in His law did He meditate day and night. This is the secret of peace and labour for all saints. In the law is the knowledge that does not pass away. The work of the intellect searching for the truth is devoted to the transient, and attains to forms of thought and conceptions of truth which are more or less perishable in their very nature. It is when we know the Divine law and revelation that peace comes to us. Then we are not confused. We know our way and our work. It is when we love the law, when we delight in it with the pure and noble joy which exempts from constraint and rises from the love of the law-giver, that we are able to send the current of a

high spiritual feeling through the cares and toils of our days. It is then that we realise the eagerness of pursuit, the impossibility of sloth, the inventiveness and hopefulness of gladsome work. The stimulations of heaven rise up within us like a well of life, and the most trivial round of duty ceases to be commonplace and monotonous. It has lying upon it the glory of knowledge and of love. It is so in this manner that we can put from us all that hinders, and use every atom of strength in the doing of God's will. No great and victorious Christian life has been lived apart from the loving and constant study of the Bible, and it is only as we study it and obey it that our days draw after the heavenly tune.

But who of the saints delighted in the law of the Lord as did the Saint of Saints? It was of Him alone that it could be said

that He was utterly obedient. Moment by moment, day and night, His soul stood by its arms. He slept, but his heart wakened. He looked into the Old Testament and saw His own image as the stars might see theirs in a glassy lake. We know how His life was controlled at His moment of crisis and agony by the law of the Lord, by the Scriptures which He came to fulfil. That night in which He was betrayed He refused to speak the summons to His angel legions. If He had spoken it the Scripture would have been broken, and that could never be. It was that law which He meditated in the miraculous darkness when, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, He said, "I thirst." His was not the high fervour that lets itself go soon and easily. His was the love that holds fast by the reality of the better desire.

(3) This life, the life of the righteous, was beautiful and fruitful. "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." He was planted by the river of water, this Tree of God's right-hand planting, this green Tree on which men did such things, this Tree which was hewn for our redemption, this Tree which grows in the midst of the paradise of God. By the rivers of water, by the eternal springs, He lived that life of true peace, which is not fugitive but everlasting—that life of true peace which is not eager to catch the happiness of every moment as it flies, which does not fear to touch the radiance lest it fade away, which is undisturbed by the sense of transitoriness and hazard. The tree was planted by the rivers of water, and brought

forth its fruit in its season ; its leaf did not wither, and it prospered even on Calvary, where He dropped His Blood of love. His was a life of fruit. Every righteous life must end in fruit. The greenness and the beauty are but a form of promise. The inexorable condition on which life is given is that it should reach forward to fruit-bearing. He bore His fruit—in due season God fixed, and He still fixes, the season. The long tarrying in Nazareth, the brief ministry, the early and cruel death, the short sleep in the grave—all of them were timed and planned by the Eternal Wisdom and Love. We are impatient many times that the fruit does not come quicker. We sigh for the promised hour of His return. He will bring forth fruit in due season. He will return when the Father brings Him. But, as one said, "God loveth adverbs. It mattereth less to

Him that the thing should be good than that it be well," and Jesus Himself testified, "My time is not yet come, but your time is always ready." Through all His earthly life we discern a calmness and an order and a gentle taking up of events. How should it be other in His heavenly life with God?

But the leaf does not wither. The beauty is there with the fruit. The loveliness that transcends all that is fair in morality, that is His besides, and will be His for ever. His years are to be filled from end to end with the colours of the morning.

THE OPENED SCRIPTURES AND
THE BURNING HEART

THE OPENED SCRIPTURES AND THE BURNING HEART

Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the scriptures ?

LUKE xxiv. 32.

THE disciples whom Christ joined on their way to Emmaus did not know Him, neither did they know the Bible. They were walking forlorn and bewildered from the Jerusalem under the curse, the Jerusalem where their Prophet had been slain. Walking in darkness, and having no light, they little dreamed of what had befallen them when the Stranger spoke. Sometimes the heart sinks so low that we imagine it will never stir and waken any more. We are almost glad that it is

so, almost glad to think that the power of feeling has been dulled by hard experiences, and that disappointment, failure, bereavement will never be to us again what they were once. But we know not what is before us, we know not when we may live again. As for them, the Shepherd they were distrusting sought out His sheep to deliver them in all places where they had been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. But they did not recognise Him at first. He had laid aside the grave clothes dipped in blood, and had put on the raiment of immortality. Further, their eyes were holden, and looked earthward, and He seemed no more to them than a man among men. Coming as Moses came, veiled from the mountain, so Christ coming from the grave wore a veiled face. But as He went on speaking to them, beginning at Moses and

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all the prophets, He expounded to them the things concerning Himself. Trouble and travail and the setting sun were forgotten, and the cold hearts burned as they were wrapped in the flames of Scripture.

If we walk with thoughts and words of Christ, He will join us in our journey. He will open our ears and seal our instruction. It is His manner to join those who walk. It is His manner not to give knowledge to His disciples that they may walk, but to give it as they walk. When Christ reads His word with us the letters are legible only to those who run. In His company, travelling by His side, we know what it is to live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

The veiled Christ and the veiled Scripture—these go together. Over the Incarnate Word and the Written Word alike there

is a veil. When Moses descended from his converse with God, he put a veil on his face. When Christ appeared among men He was discernible only to the eye of faith. Even so it is with the Scripture. A veil lies on the Old Testament, and a veil on the Hope of Israel. In each the human element is recognised, but the Divine is dim. The incarnate Word was born of a woman. He wore the body of our humiliation. There is no reason to think that His was a more than human loveliness. Indeed, the Church, founding on intimations in prophecy, has thought otherwise, and has applied to Him in the days of His flesh the ancient word, "He hath no form or comeliness, and when we shall see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him." If we will but think of it we shall see that there must have been that in His earthly

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condition of which we do not care to speak, that which enforces upon us the fulness of His surrender, the reality of His humiliation. He whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain was bound in swaddling-clothes. He grew in wisdom and in stature. The Tree which fills earth and heaven was once as a grain of mustard seed. Though now He sets at nought the grave-clothes of space and time, yet once He submitted Himself to all the bonds of life, and measured His existence by days and months and years. There was nothing, we repeat, in the flesh of Christ whereby the unilluminated eye could discern His divinity. His judges, His murderers, had their way with the human body. The anatomist could have discovered nothing more in it than was to be discovered in the bodies of the thieves who were crucified with Him. Even so the Written Word is found as

a Book among books. Like the Incarnate Word, it shares the lowliness, the infirmity, the limitation of time. Its weaknesses may be discerned easily enough. The critic may have his way with it. He may dissect it as he would dissect any other book. He may judge it and wound it, and fancy he has put it to death. Yet even as the Incarnate Word was the chosen tabernacle of eternal Truth, even so it is with the Written Word. But just as the flesh of the Incarnate Word was to be glorified, so it is with the spirit of the Written Word. Neither the Incarnate Word nor the Written Word can perish, for in both of them is Divinity, and it is only when we discern the Divinity that we understand them at all.

So when the Incarnate Word expounded the Written Word to the disheartened pilgrims, they gradually came to know both

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it and Him. Knowing it they knew Him. They were not wholly ignorant. The rays of the glory had pierced the veil. Not till the first advent was the Old Testament to be fully understood, nor till the second Advent will the New Testament be fully understood. But we repeat that they were not quite ignorant. Even amid the darkness Love fulfilled the Law, and Hope pondered the Prophets, and Faith rested and prayed in the Psalms. But when Christ appeared, when hearts turned to Him, the Old Testament was explained. The veil fell from the heart of Israel. The Apostle said, Even unto this day when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord the veil shall be taken away. The heart of the disciples was turned towards Christ, and as they turned, the veil that covered Himself and His

Scriptures disappeared. It is Christ alone who can interpret the Scriptures. It is He only who possesses the key to the Scriptures, and the key to human souls. It was under His teaching that the disciples discerned His way and His kingdom in the Old Testament. No man can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Ghost, neither can any man, save by the Holy Ghost, say that the Scripture is the Word of God. Human judgment may discern a rare loveliness in the character of Christ, and the excellency of Scripture in many of its parts appeals to a critical judgment. But the Divinity is otherwise discerned. The disciples at Emmaus knew before all was done that it was the Lion of the tribe of Judah who had prevailed to open the book.

“WHAT ARE THESE WOUNDS IN
THINE HANDS?”

“WHAT ARE THESE WOUNDS IN
THINE HANDS?”

*And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds
in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which
I was wounded in the house of my friends.*

ZECH. xiii. 6.

THERE is nothing in the world so arresting as pain. Its outward tokens challenge a question and provoke an answer. The deep wounds of the soul we can only tell, as a rule, by the marks they leave on the body. Every human being is a secret to all the rest unless for outward inescapable manifestations. We are all islanded. Each harbours that which he never can bear to talk of. There is a flower that will not

live save in the most silent and secret spaces of the heart. Yet the inward has a more or less imperfect expression in the outward. What we see indicates what we cannot see and even explains it. The anguished eyes into which we look drive a path of light into the questioning soul. Time leaves its mark, or rather, perhaps we should say, the chisellings and scourgings that have befallen us in time leave theirs. "He was not exactly old, he said to himself the next morning as he beheld his face in the glass. And he looked considerably younger than he was. But there was history in his face—distinct chapters of it; his brow was not that blank page it once had been. He knew the origin of that line in his forehead; it had been traced in the course of a month or two by past troubles. He remembered the coming of this pale, wiry hair; it had

been brought by the illness in Rome when he had wished each night that he might never wake again. This wrinkled corner, that drawn bit of skin, they had resulted from those months of despondency when all seemed going against his art, his strength, his happiness.”

When life is young and grace is fresh, it seems as if no record were kept of the years. But as by degrees we are tried by unkindness, hurt by injustice, blasted by bereavement, we come to know that our life from the beginning is a dying life, and the signs and prophecies of death make themselves more and more visible. The natural swim is against us. Then especially we are awakened by the outward gravings of sorrow. We seek to pierce the secret. What are these wounds in thy hands? Who inflicted them? Why did they come?

We know that the full answer would reveal life's last mystery. And at last we come to understand that life which to the eye of the flesh is always growing downward, may to the eye of the spirit be as steadily growing upward. As for the lives that are really Christian, it is in pain that they reach their truest and their best.

The appeal of the Cross is the commanding appeal of meek and mute suffering. "Oh, all ye that pass by, behold and see whether there is any sorrow like unto My sorrow." Because a sorrow is supreme, it rivets and fixes the gaze. The sorrow of the Cross is silent, but, as one of the Fathers said, the silence is a clamorous silence, detaining us, refusing to let us go till we have listened. In the lower phases of human passion we have felt the same inexplicable grasp. Sometimes on the street

we have been compelled to pause at the sight of some wrecked figure now part of the driftwood of humanity. What is the story of that ruined beauty which is cursing some nameless transgressor? The question strikes us nearer and with a heavy blow when it concerns our own. The death of parents may be a revelation to their children. They never really saw them till they were lying cold. Then they knew something of the long, unspoken, miserable anxieties that channelled the dead faces in furrows for tears. Then they knew why the back was so bent. It was for them. “Fighting our battles thou wert so marred.” The hour of recognition is the hour of a new birth. So Jesus on His Cross is the Gospel, in His awful anguish, in His meek submission, reviled and reviling not again. To behold Him so is the beginning of faith. Can we

read the parable? What does it all mean? He is a sufferer, that we know. He is an innocent sufferer, that also we know. Why did He suffer? Slowly the answer comes— He died for me, and to know that is to know all. The Gospel is no dogma; the Gospel is Jesus Christ set forth crucified between the thieves. There is a theology of the Atonement, but it can never be taught to profit until the first step is taken, the beholding of the Crucified Redeemer. Beholding Him and taking the vision home as the revelation of His sacrifice for the guilty, the heart gives liberty to the teacher who would guide it further. It says, being broken, "Show me the mystery of His Cross."

When our Lord appeared to His disciples after the Resurrection, He showed them His hands and His side. By this time He was

on the other side of death. From the Resurrection to the Ascension was a short step compared to that between Good Friday and Easter. That step had been taken, and He was revealed as the Conqueror. He had slain the enmity between God and His sinning brethren. That enmity was now a vanquished and broken thing. Henceforth the note of power—the power of His Resurrection—rings loudly through the New Testament. The strength that God set at work in Christ when He raised Him from the dead is the theme of believers from now to the end of time. But that strength was the power of victorious and accepted sorrow. He carried through the grave the strong and full and everlasting indications of His sorrow. His wounds were no more burning, but their record remained, and will remain, in the scars that are the seal of victory.

He came through the grave with the life whole in Him. But what a life was that! Of all the lives that had ever appeared in the world, this was the life that most deserved to be cherished, completed, followed, worshipped. It was the life rejected, purified, persecuted, and slain. He had plucked the victory out of the depth of ignominy and abandonment. It is not enough to say that after the Cross, the suffering, the blood, the patience, there came the life and power. The life and power were there through all the endurance, though they blazed forth in their glory at the Resurrection. Long after, St. Paul spoke of having in himself the answer of death. That is, when he was asked, How is all this going to end? he could only say out of his extreme need, "In death." But Jesus had always within Him the answer of life, as well as the answer of death. He

refused to despair, refused to be wearied and daunted, even when men most vehemently rejected Him. He was always dying through His years in Palestine, but He was always being raised again. And so His Apostle bore about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be seen clear in the same. So Good Friday and Easter are not so far apart as they seem. He carried Good Friday into Easter, and there was Easter in Good Friday. He showed them His hands and His side. It was as much as to say to them, “In this new land, where all is peace and triumph, you are safe with Me. These wounds are fountains of grace, the titles of My glory, and the seals of My power to save. For you the rains will descend a little while, and the winds beat, but I have not forgotten the storm that burst on Me.”

In heaven, where He and His redeemed are together, and at rest for ever, He appears to them as a Lamb as it had been slain. This is what they see in the depths of the eternal sanctities, when the second veil is withdrawn, and they behold the true Ark of the New Testament, and the Cherubim, and the Mercy Seat. They, His people, have the marks of wounds. They have come up out of the great tribulation of earthly life. The angels have never known a wound, but He is a Lamb as it had been slain. Nothing has dishonoured Him or shamed Him. It is not of the suffering that impoverishes, but of the suffering that enriches that He bears the traces. It is the power and the witness of victorious and availing sorrow that are His through the eternal years. He has offered up one sacrifice for sins for ever, and the memory of that sacrifice is green,

and its tokens are never out of the eyes of those it has brought home to God. What “sceming of slaying” that was we can never tell here, but we know that it awakens and reawakens the New Song, that it seals the assurance that in Him all the promises of God are Yea.

Wherefore let us not live among the tombs ; let us be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

“THEY CAME UNTO THE IRON
GATE”

“THEY CAME UNTO THE IRON GATE”

They came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city ; which opened to them of his own accord.

ACTS xii. 10.

THE story of the deliverance of St. Peter from his prison has naturally been very precious to the mystics. One of them, a certain monk, who had given his whole life to the redemption of captives, could never read the words, “They came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city ; which opened to them of his own accord,” without bursting into tears. He came upon it at length on Lammas Day, when the iron door was mentioned in the history of that Feast, and

of a sudden passed through the gate of death and found himself delivered in the City. We may use the words as significant of the general deliverance of believers and of the particular deliverance which they come to need and receive.

Man's extremity is God's opportunity. St. Peter had been delivered by Herod to four quaternions of soldiers. The king meant after Easter to kill him, as he had killed James the brother of John. No precaution had been omitted; in fact, there was almost an extravagance of precaution. Peter was sleeping between two soldiers bound with two chains, and the keepers before the door kept the prison, and between him and liberty there were the first and the second ward, and the iron gate. Peter had given over praying, and was sleeping between two soldiers, as Christ slept at last on the hard bed of the

Cross between two thieves. He was sleeping not the guilty sleep of Gethsemane, but the innocent sleep of trust. What did he think of his prospect? Did he expect to die the death of James, and feel that this death in a manner made his own death more easy? Did he sleep because he knew that what was before him on the next day would call forth all his strength? Or did he perchance remember that our Lord had said to him, “Thou shalt be old,” and account himself immortal till that word was fulfilled? What we know is that he was sleeping, and that perhaps he was the only Christian in the city asleep that night. He was persuaded—it was no random thought—that Christ would keep that which he had committed unto Him.

“And behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison ;

and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands." Was this the great angel of the Resurrection whose countenance shone as the sun over the Redeemer's grave? No angel wakened Christ. The life which He had folded up like a vesture He took up again when the days were fulfilled. As it is written, "I myself will awake right early." So the Redeemer roused Himself from the profounder trance. But the Apostle was wakened, and the chains fell from him, and he was commanded to gird himself, and he obeyed. Gird thyself—gird thyself once more—not yet has the time come which the Master foretold when another shall gird thee. Peter obeyed, and bound on his sandals and cast his garment about him, and followed the angel. It was all so leisurely, so unfeared, and so complete.

“They came unto the Iron Gate” 151

They passed from the first and second ward and came to the iron gate which led to the city, and the iron gate opened to them of his own accord, and they went out and passed through one street, and forthwith the angel departed from him, for his work was done.

So great deliverances come to believers when hope is almost dead, when the doors are so many and so fast, and the enemies so strong and so wakeful, that it seems as if the way were quite closed. The days when we have been rebuffed in every quarter and know not what further we can do! The time when it seems as if every effort has been foiled and there is none other we can make! The day when we catch at the last chance! When we think of one more succour that may be available, of one heart left in the world that may yet pity—and

try—and fail. The day when no answer comes to the last imploring appeal, or an answer which is a cold and cruel refusal! We are happy if in such an hour we can still trust and wait patiently for the interposition of God.

The deliverance came through prayer. St. Peter had prayed doubtless before he slept, but prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him. This was the prayer of extremity. James was dead. It was the last night; it was midnight; soon the sun would rise and bring the day when Peter was to die. The Church had no weapon against the army, the prison, the mighty power of Herod, save the weapon of all-prayer. But they used that weapon and they prevailed. They went on with their humble tears and pleadings, lamenting perhaps that they could not do anything

besides, and hardly aware that they were wielding the strongest force on earth. If any believer be in prison he has an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous, and they were pleading with the Advocate. There seemed to be almost no hope. Peter had given over praying, and they knew that no man condemned to death had yet been rescued by miracle. There was no promise of such release. Peter might well have died as James had died, and been numbered with the messengers who were stoned and the prophets who were slain. The last little strip of blue sky was almost clouded over, and yet they continued in the agony of their desires. The hammer was lifted to fall upon the bell, and yet they stood face to face with the angel and refused to relax their hold. They knocked till it was opened to them.

The beseeching Church knew not of the descending angel, but he was caused to fly swiftly to their succour. What believer is there who has not proved the mystery?—*Thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.* When they were almost pinned to the ground, when the breath of death was upon their faces, they have been delivered as by miracle. Face to face with the Red Sea they have seen the waters part. So men ought always to pray, and not to faint. This is the true meaning and the true defence of prayer; indeed, the meaning is the defence. The prayer that is an experiment is no more than a mockery. It is impossible to pray if there is no hold upon God, if there is not an inspired urgency as of the Holy Ghost within us that will have an answer. We cannot pray by machinery or in mere words. We pray in

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the true sense when the Holy Spirit pleads within us. Then we cannot give over till the answer comes.

They came to the iron gate. The words express the particular deliverances of the faithful. How often it happens that after manifold experience of relief and emancipation, when it seemed as if the way were clear at last between us and the heavenly Salem, we come to the iron gate. A new difficulty intervenes, so formidable, so strange, so intractable that it seems to turn past experiences of grace into futility. After the deliverance from the soldiers, after the falling of the chains, after we have passed the guards before the door, and the first and the second ward, we come to the iron gate, and feel that we are prisoners still, and that our last state is worse than the first. It looks as if we could never conquer it. It

blocks up all the path. We must go that way to the city, and yet the obstacle is irremediable. What then? Then we must say that God does not mock His people, and that the grace of the past is a pledge for the future. He who has delivered us in six troubles will deliver us in seven. The iron gate is not like an iron wall, and a gate is meant to let us out as well as to let us in. Christians cheat themselves sometimes with the dream that at a certain stage in their pilgrimage trial and conflict will cease. They say, "We have fought our battles: let the younger soldiers fight now." But the Son of Consolation Himself has no other doctrine than this, that we must through much tribulation enter the kingdom of God. If even Christ was troubled in His perfecting, how much more must we be troubled ere sanctification is complete! We may be called

back to the front of the fight when we are old and grey-headed and very glad of rest. It is possible to know the Cross by faith, but it must be known also in experience. This knowledge, which is at first self-despair, and then sometimes very nearly the despair of God, is the judgment of the old nature and the one token that we are on the royal road. Not by visions and transports do we come to the saving knowledge. Chains, prisons, cords, soldiers, guards, wards inner and outer have to be our experience, and then if these are not enough, the iron gate. But if only we follow the angel with the lily who would lead us, the iron gate will open of his own accord.

The iron gate may open on another world, and even in the presence of death and darkness the promise of God will be fulfilled. It was well for James that he died. He

passed earlier to the Heart that opened for him like a door of home. Though Peter had wakened to his execution, still it would have been well. When the believer has done all and endured all and continued to the end instant in prayer, the iron gate of death will open to him of his own accord and he will find himself in the city with Christ, and know of a surety that the Lord hath sent His angel and hath delivered him.

THE LIGHTING OF THE LAMPS

THE LIGHTING OF THE LAMPS

For we walk by faith, not by sight.

2 COR. v. 7.

IN the recollections of Princess Catherine Radziwill, she tells us that she mentioned one day to Cecil Rhodes a book called *The Martyrdom of Man*, by Winwood Reade. She added that it was uncanny, and had caused her some sleepless nights. Rhodes started. "I know the book," he exclaimed. "It is a creepy book. I read it the first year I was in Kimberley, fresh from my father's parsonage, and you may imagine the impression which it produced upon me in such a place as a mining camp." He stopped for a moment, then added in

a way his companion could never forget: "That book has made me what I am." Winwood Reade, we have been told, had first designed to call his book *The Duties and Responsibilities of Creators*. It is in its most impressive part an arraignment of the Divine justice. As such it has few books that stand beside it in English literature. But every student of French will remember George Sand's powerful story *Leilia*. It is the most memorable utterance we know of wild doubt and a keen sense of the mystery of things. Its genuine ardour both in feeling and in expression carries the reader along, and he feels sometimes that others have been sorely tempted to utter themselves in the same way. But for the most part, happily, English writers have refrained from calling God to the tiny bar of their presumption. They take refuge in belief or

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in silence, and they refuse to put on record their half-way rebellion. They may come to faith or they may arrive at thinking that all thought is vanity, but even in the latter case they refrain, and hold their peace.

But even believers are often brought to a stand by the mystery of God's Providence in their own lives, and in the larger life of the Church and of the world. Many sorrows are strangely and swiftly ended by the direct consolation of Eternal Love. "I have felt," said an old Quaker two hundred years ago, describing his experiences of the Kingdom of God, "the healings drop upon my soul from under His wings." For other griefs there comes an explanation, and the sufferers are able, in a measure at least, to see the purpose of their experience. But there are sorrows that remain

sorrows and mysteries also. They are not cured, and they are not explained. The deadening influence of time and the distractions of busy life, and the entrance of new friends, never quite erase them. Even when the grief has begun to slumber, sights and sounds will unaccountably bring back the old pang and the vain, hungry questionings of the time when the nights were even longer than the days. The soul remains unconsoled, untaught. It is no nearer a solution now than then. Even if its personal sorrows have been mastered and silenced, it has suffered cruelly and perhaps irretrievably for the causes it lived for. After long years of labour and sacrifice spent in bringing the triumph nearer, what was fought for seems to lose ground, and the heart is full of painful thoughts and vain regrets over the discomfiture. The agony sometimes rises

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to rebellion, as when Jeremiah tells God that He had deceived him and curses the day of his birth.

What are we to say to these things? How are we to bear ourselves in face of the unsolved and, as it seems, calamitous mysteries of life? It was said by one of old time, "We walk by faith and not by sight," and this was true for the speaker and his friends. Beyond the inward peace and assurance bestowed by Christ, they had little or nothing to point to in proof that God was with them. In the outward life disaster followed disaster, and defeat defeat. With us after two thousand years of Christianity it is not so. We have even in difficult lives our visible encouragements and consolations. The walk of the believer has been described as a journey down a street by night. His path is by a long row of lamps, and if they

are lighted the whole street is bright. It is bright not with the glory of the day, but with light enough to go on by. There are Christian lives so fortunate, so peaceful, that they seem to have the light of the lamp at least for every step of the path. But perhaps there are very few of whom this can be said in its completeness. For nearly all there are lamps that refuse to be lighted, and will not burn. There are experiences which refuse to reveal themselves as sent by God. "With one exception," says a preacher, "I have lived to know that every time God has denied my supplication He was right and I was wrong; that one exception waits; my soul thinks it will puzzle God to find an answer, but we must go back on the past, and by the lamp of the past we must try to throw a light on the gloom of the future. With one exception in my life God has never

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given me pain without it having been sanctified into a high pleasure, and sometimes He says 'Thinkest thou that I am not able to do this?' And then in my present mood I say, 'Lord, Thou art not able.' We have frank interviews; I will not take my hypocrisy into the closet and shut the door upon it, and talk to God in false accents; I will take my sorrow, misery, unbelief, and momentary atheism, and lay it bare before the Divine eyes, and the Divine love. He has done wonders: His mercy endureth for ever. I cannot say that now except by quotation; we must wait; to-morrow brings its own dew and its own dawn." Now it is true that as time goes on it brings the explanation of much that we thought inexplicable. We go back humbly and light the lamp when the answer comes, when we no more stumble over the old dark difficulty. How often we have

repined and rebelled over that which we now see illuminated, burning with God Himself! But this is not a complete account of almost any life, and for the larger part of many it may utterly fail. What then? We cannot light the lamp of sight, but we need not therefore have spots of our life dark in irreligiousness. No, for we may always have the unearthly light of faith; that will not fail us. With nothing but that many have passed in great peace through a long fight of affliction. One Comforter abides with us for ever. The friends who gathered round to console us with warm and eager tenderness at the first moment of our disaster have one by one to go away and leave us with our shattered life. But He abides with us for ever to build up the broken ruin, and trusting Him we shall not walk in darkness.

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By faith we hold to the providence of God even when we cannot trace it. In all things, small and great, minute and magnificent, there is a Divine appointment. Is there never to be an end of any form of evil? How are we to explain the tremendous disarray of events? Why are such things permitted to happen? There is no clue to the maze, but by faith we understand that God will disentangle the skein, that He is the Ruler of our mortal life, and that somehow the turbulence and the chaos are under law to Him. Birth and death and all that happens between are of the Divine ordination. We are to throw our wills and our forces into hearty co-operation with His. We are to fight for victory and to use the means of healing when we suffer, but if we are defeated, and if we are uncured, we must still remain faithful till we hear the words,

“Thy warfare is accomplished.” The sentinel must remain on guard though the night may seem as if it would never end. We are not to be rebels and mutineers in this great universe of God. If we are we shall suffer doubly, for if we will not take up the cross, the cross will take us up, and that is far harder. We must endure, submit, acquiesce, believe, and in the end we shall see and understand and rejoice.

This might not have been possible if Christ had not come and resisted unto blood, striving against sin. Because He saved others, Himself He could not save. God revealed Himself in a man who was crucified on the Cross. The secret of the universe is learned on Calvary. All power in heaven and in earth belongs to and is wielded by love. By these things men live in the only true life. They live by the Cross on which our hopes

are anchored, by the agony which delivers us, by the pierced side which is the hiding-place from the storm, by the head bowed down in death, by the cup that could not be put away. By these things men live the inner life that waxes while the outer wanes. By the weary nights, by the days of solitude, by the gradual decay of the body, by the sight failing for waiting upon God, by the toils, by the defeats, by the frustrations, we grow at last into that life which was lived by Christ, the life of His martyrs and confessors, the life in which death is swallowed up, and every carnal war is at an end. Fearfulness and trembling may come upon us, and a horrible dread overwhelm us, but in the end we are more than conquerors. Our struggle has not been wasted in a hopeless world any more than our Lord's was wasted.

“Shall I then throw up my belief, cast down my sword, take to believing in a devil because God’s ways are not quite clear, and say there is no way everlasting because that way is sometimes slippery, sometimes a mere foot track, and often like the way from Jericho to Jerusalem, beset with thieves?”

BY THE FIRE ON THE BEACH

BY THE FIRE ON THE BEACH

As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. . . . Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise.

JOHN xxi. 9, 13.

“WE men here on the shore of human life, with just a little of its very border appropriated, seem to be like Crusoe on the beach of his unknown island.” We are told in the living story how Crusoe made the best of things, set up his little tent, made a fence so strong that neither man nor beast could get into it or over it, and into this fence or fortress carried all his worldly wealth. As the days and years went on, he increased his comforts. He went out every day to kill

anything fit for food. He kept a reckoning of the days : he made tools and a table and chair. He sowed above an acre of ground, and he managed his fire so well as to make it burn some pots. He even contrived to construct a boat in which he ventured little voyages, and the time came when he found human company. But all the years he had to guard himself so that no wild creature should come in, and though sometimes with his wealth about him he felt very secure, the security was treacherous and disturbed. He comprehended but a little of the land and its mysterious and dangerous foes who might come upon him at any moment.

Nevertheless he was for the most part very thankful. He had the elements at least of what the world can give. Worldly wealth can bring us immunity from but a few things of those that mar the life. It

can fence us against cold and hunger and thirst. It can give us luxuries as well as necessities. Our house by the beach may be not a hut but a palace, well lighted and warmed. If we have reached it after storm and disaster, the sense of peace may be even ecstatic. Through what troubles many pass even to a little quiet! Joseph Conrad has told us with unsurpassed force what the sea may do. The captain may sail his ship in a hundred happy voyages, and the next time he may meet the storm, formidable and swift like the sudden smashing of a vial of wrath. He will know then what it is to be smitten by the strong wind, that disintegrating power which isolates attacks like a personal enemy, and seeks to rout the very spirit out of man. He will know for the first time the sea as a floor of foaming crests, on which he is tossed, flung, and rolled

upon great waters by a senseless and destructive fury. Even when the air quietens a little it is dense and unsafe. The storm is not over. The last star struggles in the colossal depth of blackness round the ship, and goes out. The hurricane maddens the seas. Well if the ship comes in worn and encrusted and grey with salt, broken, torn, and devastated by its journey from the far end of the world. When the shore is won at last there is ecstasy in the sense of relief. There are things, says the captain, you find nothing about in books.

So it is in human life. The beginnings of victory after long and desperate struggle are very sweet. To go on like Crusoe quietly entrenching the position, steadily winning on the land inch by inch, little by little developing solaces and defences, patiently amassing and fiercely cherishing

treasure—this seems a good life for a time after the cruel battle with the monstrous forces of life and death. Such an existence is exalted to its highest point by the comfort of a presence. One beloved turns the earth to Paradise. The companions are dear, not for the great things they do for us or the great words they say to us, but for the mere sound of their voices and the mere sight of their faces. What joy and peace they bring! This life by the fire on the beach is a good life and happy. Would it might never end! But it does end. Neither human contrivances nor human fellowships can do for us more than a little. They cannot fill the heart with peace. Indeed, the loves of life, if this life is all, bring into it such a sense of insecurity that sometimes the heart ignobly questions whether it was wise to love so well. Life is a continual

bereavement, and the best treasures and the best affections go down one by one into the grave. Is that the end of them? Are we never to find them again? Are we always to be at the mercy of the scent of a flower, or the sound of a bell, or a fading picture? True love, as St. Bernard says, very deeply, gathers not strength from hope. But for peace in love there must be hope of a meeting beyond the sea. The storm penetrates the defences, blows in from an unknown region, strikes at the heart of life. The evils that can be kept at bay by any form of worldly position or triumph are not, after all, the worst evils. And then the house and the fire are by the beach. We are within sight of the vast ocean we must sail so soon. However highly and perfectly the earthly existence may be organised, we know that the buying and the selling, the

planning and the building, the marrying and the giving in marriage will shortly come to an end. So that even when we are warmed and filled we are restless and disturbed by wants and doubts and fears. We need a spot of peace beyond the black waste of the gales and out of the swing of the sea.

We turn to the story of the disciples on the beach with Christ. He spoke to them from the shore, and out of the great deep they brought the net full of fishes. Before they had landed their fish, as soon as they had disembarked on land, they saw a fire of coals laid there and fish laid thereon, and they saw bread also. By the fire was the Master. They were by the fire on the beach with Christ. That made all the difference. That is the parable of the spiritual life.

We need not dwell on the inexplicable wonder of the story. Who made the fire upon the shore? Who prepared the meal, and how did He prepare it? Was He already in the new kingdom which He has made for those who love Him from before the foundation of the world? It does not matter whether we can give answer, whether we can fully comprehend the miracle upon miracle, and the mystery upon mystery. What concerns us is that Christ was there, and His Presence changed everything. The Prince of Life was slain, but He had risen again from the dead. They were safe on the beach, for behind the beach was the great Christ, the Lord of all the Land, the Saviour whom they trusted, the Saviour who was able to the uttermost to fulfil that trust. Herein is the secret of peace and strength and happiness. It was gladness

beyond all gladness to see the Lord near them, though they knew not how He came or how He stayed.

Faith does not bring to us more than unfaith so far as things visible and tangible are put into reckoning. But it gives us peace, the peace that comes when the whole nature rests on Christ, the peace which in very truth passes all understanding, and which is not an affair of reasoning, and computation, and survey, and measure, but a simple trusting in the name of the Lord, a simple resting upon God. "I am with you alway," He said, and He keeps His word whoever may come or go. He does not abolish the old foes, but He transfigures them. The old world despised weakness, and feared labour, and shrank from pain. With Christ out of weakness we are made strong, labour we find the pathway to the

blessed and everlasting rest, and we are made perfect by the things which we suffer. Cast down, persecuted, bereaved, we shall often be, but never wholly overthrown, never altogether broken, never quite failing. For having Him with us we have His comfort in the midst of tribulation, His peace in the midst of war.

“You have not the strength to say ‘He is,’ and you are afraid to say ‘He is not.’ My poor boy, for fifty years have I not suffered from the same pain and shall suffer till I die. Do you imagine that I know Him better than you—that I have discovered what you have missed? That is the bitter pain that never ceases. Beside it other tortures are as nothing. People think that they suffer from hunger, from poverty, from thirst: in reality they suffer only from the thought that perhaps He has no existence.”

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But we know that the Son of God is come and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. When the time comes when we must put out to sea again, He will go with us. This is one comfort as we sit with awful expectation on the shore. We know what earthly companionship, frail but indomitable, can do for us ; what thought and resolution and purpose it may inspire. But the dear ones go before or come after in that voyage. No matter if He is there, to care and to cherish and to guide through the rough passage to the final rest.

And so beside the silent sea
I wait the muffled oar :
No harm from Him can come to me
On ocean or on shore.

“I THOUGHT”

“ I THOUGHT ”

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.

2 KINGS v. 11.

THE relations between God and man are more sweet, and vivid, and real than the quietists would make them. To have no choice, and no wish, and no will is to be dead. There are those who maintain that the human will should be slain at God's altar, and burned to ashes at His word, never to revive again. But the truth is that we are to choose His will as soon as we know it. Until we know it, we cannot help having a preference of our own, and He is content to have it so. More than that, the

will of the human child counts with the Divine Father. In other words, prayer is a real force. There are those, even among professedly orthodox preachers, who in dwelling upon the wisdom and the knowledge of the Supreme, turn all prayer into a mere sigh of acquiescence. But it is written that in everything by prayer and supplication we are to make our *requests* known unto God. Request is prayer, and the sphere of request is the whole sphere of life. When the inconceivable difference between God and man is realised to the full, it yet remains true that in prayer we make our requests according to His commandment to the God who walked in Jerusalem, who suffered on Calvary, who died and rose again.

Notwithstanding, even as between the human child and the human father, so, and much more, between the human child and

the Divine Father, there is often a crossing of wills, and the wiser and stronger will must rule. It is in this collision that faith is most strained. We read in the beautiful story of Naaman that Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, “Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.” Naaman was wroth, and said, “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.” God’s thoughts are not our thoughts. There is no such difference as to make the Divine thought utterly and always unlike and inconceivable. If it were so, we should have no God. But as in earthly relations the father is compelled by love to thwart many times his child’s wishes, so God, who knows us and knows all, in

the very exercise of His love has to deny us what we most set our hearts on, what we most passionately desire. He answers us indeed, but He answers us in a manner at variance with our dreams. The lovely mystical use of the story of Naaman may be recalled. How many times has a human soul agonised over the life of the dearest when it was slipping away! How often those who loved life and saw before them a work to do in this world have prayed to be raised again from the bed of sickness! The life was not denied, but it was given in another fashion. "*I thought* that he would strike his hand over the place, and recover the dying." Not so. The True Prophet led the sufferer down to Jordan. In the waters of death the perfect healing was found. This was the true recovery, to wash in Jordan, to climb up the bank, and stand on the eternal

shore in the presence of the Lord Himself. “He asked life of Thee, and Thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever.” The words have been written truly over many an early grave.

Is this mere mockery? It may sometimes seem so. When the whole longing and endeavour of the soul have been foiled, and its priceless treasure has passed out of reach, does it not look sometimes as if there were no hearer of prayer? There have been prayers so vehement that it seems as if they must have pierced the heavens, and moved the Divine Heart and Hand. Have we spoken into empty space? Is the Lord’s ear heavy that it cannot hear? Is His arm shortened that it cannot save? It may take months of struggle before the most faithful heart is able to understand, and yet to those who cling on, there comes the assurance that

the answer was given in peace. We think of all that is, and all that was, and all that might have been. Often it is the faith of the departed that is our mainstay at first. There are those who even in this world attain to that spiritual purity in which all doubts are dissolved—not their own doubts only, but the doubts of those beside them. We have said in our ignorance, "Let us make tabernacles for us here." But it is better that they should be housed from the storms from which we could not shield them. They are satisfied with His likeness and with His will. They are taken to be taught in the higher school of God. They were taken in love, and they are abiding in love. He who has borne the sin of the world, and is bearing its sorrow, leads His people like a flock. The light may dawn slowly, and grow gradually, but there are some who

even by the deathbed are able to say, with a solemn peace: “This is the day which the Lord hath made ; we will rejoice and be glad in it.”

There is no prayer more blessed and more availing than the simple, disinterested prayer for guidance. There are so many turns in the road. Meaning the best, we may so easily go wrong. If we have a right to anything, we have a right to an answer when we plead, “Show me the way.” It is possible so to realise the complexity of life that all prayers pass, for the time at least, into the cry to be led. Is this prayer answered? Yes, assuredly, but often not answered as we thought it might be. There may be those who always understand the reason of God’s dealings with them. There may be those who can turn back and think of every difficulty and every crisis, and assure

themselves that the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire were visible when they sought them. But there are many who think they see, that if at this point and that they had made another choice, they would have had much more sunshine and much more peace. They see this great game and conflict of life go by them, and they are left in a corner unheeded. They have been kept from the soiled and slimy path of the passions, but they are overshadowed by trials and troubles. They wrestle with hardness and poverty, and yet they have done their best. Were they guided? The answer is that often and often the fact of God's guidance does not become plain until years of pain and disappointment have passed away. Suddenly, it may be, a light flashes on the darkness of past and present. We see in a moment that if we had gone down that path we should have missed

the consecration and crown of existence. This road which has been so rough has led us to a summit from which we can look round and know that we do not miss the way—that, darkling, we were led all the while. Often the summit is not one of worldly triumph. It is far better than that. It is a nearer approach to God. We have found in the way of unwelcome duty a true communion with Christ :

And that Thou sayest, “ Go,”

Our hearts are glad ; for he is still Thy friend
 And best beloved of all, whom Thou dost send
 The farthest from Thee ; this Thy servants know ;
 Oh, send by whom Thou wilt, for they are blest
 Who go Thine errands ! Not upon Thy breast
 We learn Thy secrets ! Long beside Thy tomb
 We wept, and lingered in the Garden’s gloom ;
 And oft we sought Thee in Thy House of Prayer
 And in the Desert, yet Thou wast not there ;
 But as we journeyed sadly through a place
 Obscure and mean, we lighted on the trace

Of Thy fresh footprints, and a whisper clear
Fell on our spirits,—Thou Thyself wast near ;
And from Thy servants' hearts Thy name adored
Brake forth in fire ; we said, "It is the Lord."

In all the rich and wonderful story of Christian experience, there are no pages like the records of those who have been driven by the storm to God—by the whirling tempest that swept away all the hopes of their life.

In the advancement of God's Kingdom our thoughts are often strangely crossed. The temptation is to say, "If the methods are right, the results are sure." We are only to do our best and wisest in dependence on the Divine blessing, and that blessing will come. Now, certainly we ought to be wise in our methods. We should refuse to be bound down by tradition and convention. He that winneth souls is wise, and in many cases nothing could be more foolish than the methods of the organised Churches. But if

all our earthly plans were what they ought to be, if our buildings were planned and placed aright, if we found educated and devoted men to preach in them, if we enlisted and organised an army of zealous workers, it does not follow that the Kingdom of God would move forward evenly and successfully like a prosperous business, that the outlying territory would be subdued, province by province, and that in a given time the people would turn to Christ. Perplexing checks and chills will come whatever we do. The issues of our life will depend very much on the manner in which we bear these checks. Nothing is so contagious as despondency, and if we are cast down, many will be cast down with us. In the hour of apparent disaster and defeat the precious seed may be sown. It is because of the hardnesses of God's service, because of the sudden and

fearful overthrowing of Christian plans and hopes, that many hold back. But to make the excuse of loving quietness and seeking peace, and refraining from the strife, is to lose everything. One way or other there comes the recoil of all that. The Lord of the Kingdom, whose name for a while was humbled beneath every name, has taught us the way to victory. He reached the throne by the Cross. This was His thought, not ours. We should have said with His disciple, "Be it far from Thee, Lord; this shall not be unto Thee." But He knew, and amid reviling foes and unbelieving friends, He went on without flinching, without failing, without turning back. "If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross." But He was doing a great work, and could not come down. We serve Him because He first served us, and He calls us to take up His

cross if need be, not for an hour, but for a life. There have been great Christian lives which have gone on and ended in manifest triumph. It has been given to some servants of God to sow and reap in the daytime, and to sit over against Jerusalem in the evening under the palm. It has been given to a few to witness the achievement of the end for which they fought and toiled, but for most there is no such experience. All things seem to fail them but the steadfast Cross and the hearts that clave to it through grief and shame. It is enough.

We came not in with proud,
 Firm martial footstep in a measured tread
 Slow pacing to the crash of music loud ;
 No gorgeous trophies went before, no crowd
 Of captives followed us with drooping head,
 No shining laurel sceptred us, nor crowned,
 Nor with its leaf our glittering lances bound ;
 This looks not like a Triumph, then they said.

With faces darkened in the battle flame,
With banners faded from their early pride,
Through wind, and sun, and showers of bleaching
rain,

Yet red in all our garment, doubly dyed,
With many a wound upon us, many a stain,
We came with steps that faltered. Yet we came!

This is a song which none but the redeemed
can sing.

THE ANIMATION OF OUR LORD'S
SURRENDER

THE ANIMATION OF OUR LORD'S SURRENDER

Wherefore when He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me,) to do Thy will, O God. Above when He said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin Thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; Then said He, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. . . . By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

HEB. x. 5-10.

“I LOOK upon our Lord,” said an Indian theist, “as one whose word was, ‘Thy will be done.’” This thinker spoke better than he knew. He had in his mind what is called resignation; but resignation is a word that

does not describe our Lord's attitude to the Father's will. Our Lord for our redemption made the great surrender; but He put the whole force of His life and activity into every moment of that surrender, from the first to the last. His surrender was not accomplished with a heavy sigh, as of one worn out who says wearily in the hour of exhaustion, "Thy will be done." His was instead the eager and passionate fulfilment of God's will, and into the doing and bearing of that will He put all the richness and all the fervour of His nature, all His tenderness, His sternness, His sympathy, all His capacity for joy and for anguish. He did not merely accept the will of God when it was brought to Him and laid upon Him. Rather He went out to meet that loving will, and fell upon its neck and kissed it. Christ was open at every pore to the holy love and

will of God. His surrender was, in the full sense of the words, an animated surrender.

When the First Begotten entered into our world of sense and time and sin, He did not enter it as the rest did. Every other child had resisted the Divine love. But of one human life it is true not only that it did not resist God's will, but that it absorbed it, and was its absolute and perfect embodiment. Of every child born into the world we know that at a certain period, to say the least, it will begin to transgress. Men have striven after the ideal of perfect goodness. They have dreamed of it often with a passionate desire. They have cherished their ideals with a strange fondness and reverence; but their ideal has never become the real. Even of the most victorious we must say that every crown is tarnished and every robe is stained. We know that

vice is a hardy plant, that it needs no tending, no encouragement. Virtue, on the other hand, is delicate and frail. It has to be protected with a jealous care. Fathers and mothers lift up their hearts and plead that their children may be kept from the evil that is in the world, and they hardly dare to hope for the fulfilment of the prayer. But of one Child it was true that goodness was in His nature the strong prevailing element. Even ere they wrapped Him in swaddling-clothes and laid Him in a manger, He was clad, this Child, in the whole armour of God. He in whom the prophecy was fulfilled, "The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider," never knew what it was to forget or neglect or disobey the will of God. The eternal sunshine settled on His young head

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He knew what sin was, He was assailed from the beginning by the tempter. Even for Him there were the beckoning fingers and the mocking tongues and the siren songs that draw youth to its ruin. But they never touched the force of His purity. The Prince of this world came, and had nothing in the Child. He was in His Father's House, and about the things of His Father from the dawn of life. From His first days His Father's hands were busy on His body and His spirit, and they worked their will without hindrance or delay.

Nor was it otherwise as He grew up. The Hand that grasped the robe of Mary, that assisted with childish eagerness in Joseph's workshop, the Hand that was after to be laid on the children's hair and on the leper's sore, the Hand that was to hold the Reed of Scorn, the Hand that was to be

nailed to the Cross, the Hand that was to fall lifeless to the wounded side when the nail was drawn—that Hand was from first to last clean. He passed through the temptations of youth, and the Wicked One touched Him not. Others around Him learned through misery that the secret of misery is independence of God. He did not need to learn this, for He was always depending upon God, always welcoming with an earnest delight the manifestation of God through nature, through providence, through the Word, through the inner communications made to His Spirit. The knowledge of God did not come to Him, as it comes to us, in the valley of humiliation, for in the true sense He was never there. The people that sat in darkness saw through Him the great light of God, but on Him the light shone clear and undisturbed, and there was no

darkness at all. He grew in the household of His Blessed Mother, and He loved as other children love. But it was He who purified the home; the home did not purify Him. "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it," said His Mother, when he was on the threshold of His ministry. He was obedient unto them; but they were obedient unto Him. They were all at the touch of His fingers. He knew of sin and its misery. From Nazareth young men went into the far country, and He heard their story, and pondered it, and told it in the after years. He remembered the pitiful whispers that went round the little town. He heard perhaps broken-hearted fathers and mothers telling the story of their children with hard sobs and white lips. But for Himself, He sat still in the House of God till He went out to seek the wanderers. We see how

His heart went forth to reach and grasp God's will when He sat among the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions ; and all that heard Him saw that He had more understanding than all His teachers, when He went to the Synagogue, as His custom was, when He studied the Scriptures and discerned in them the promise and the law of His own life. So He increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man.

The hour struck at last, the hour of His shewing unto Israel. He took up His task, and thenceforward His life was as a fire that burned fiercely. He healed and preached by day ; and He prayed by night. He gave Himself no respite. So His fervour visibly consumed Him, insomuch that His disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up. "*Tell*

me, I pray Thee, where Thy great strength lieth?" asked one of the saints, and the answer came in the word "Love." It was for love of His Father and for love of His Father's will that He accomplished these things. It was this thought of love that hallowed all difficulty, and made all sorrow sweet. In this eagerness of life He fulfilled His high task, till He was able to say at length, "I have finished the work that Thou gavest Me to do." The world was for Him a wilderness. Foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, but the Son of Man had not where to lay His head. And yet the will of God for Him turned the valley of Baca into a well of living water. We understand on the lower plane of humanity that true and great work is nearly always done for another's sake, for one woman, one child, one friend. The workers

may not know what keeps them cheerful and busy till the soul they serve leaves them. But they know it then with a strange intensity of feeling. A modern preacher tells the story of a ship captain who finds plenteous enjoyment everywhere, revels in the problems of navigation, spends long nights on deck, rules his little crew, and feels the daily joy of difficulties overcome. At last he comes to the haven where he would be, and accomplishes the purpose of his voyage. He sails back with his new cargo after months of work and interest and danger, and returns. And then, what then? He goes up on shore, and finds a house where a little child is living in a nurse's care, and gives all that he has earned into the little hands of that child, who was in reality the single cause of inspiration of his voyage, and is the reason why he rejoices in its success. He has not

seemed to himself to think of her ; but she has been at the bottom of his heart all the long while. The thing is good because she can receive it, and everything would have been worthless if he had found the house empty, and only a little grave for him to lavish his love on. Christ surrendered Himself to the work of God ; but He did not wait for a summons. He did not yield a precisely measured obedience. He ate and drank the will of God. " My meat," He said, " is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." There was the impression everywhere of urgency and speed and willingness. " Seeking me Thy worn feet hasted." Did He labour up to His power ? Yea, and beyond His power.

So it was in His suffering. He gave Himself up with passion to His passion. Resignation is but a poor word even when

used of Christians. It is not a word that can be applied to Christ at all. He did not wait to see the bitter hour creep slowly and surely up. He went out to meet it. He set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem. He went forth with full knowledge, and said to His enemies, "I have told you that I am He." He waited, as it were, with a certain impatience for the last spring of His life, the last month, the last day, and at the hour when He came to the fire and the wood He was the Lamb for the burnt offering. He toiled, as it were, to plan humiliation and suffering for Himself. "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" "The cup that my Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" When the cup was at His lips, He *tasted* death. Experience proved all the bitterness of the bitter draught. The

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Church was wont to say that, if He had but taken flesh, and shed one drop of His Blood, it would have been enough for the world's salvation. But He suffered to the utmost. He suffered the effusion again and again of His most precious Blood. When He was on the Cross He refused the alleviation. They gave Him wine to drink, mingled with myrrh; but He received it not. They urged Him to come down from His Cross that they might see and believe; but He withstood the temptation. He would not be taken down until the evening, and then He bowed His head that it might be seen that His life was yet whole in Him, and dismissed His Spirit. Nothing was spared Him, or, rather, He spared Himself nothing. For a moment He stuck fast for us in the mire where there was no standing. It seemed as if His sight failed Him, as if no

man cared for His soul. He needed the outshining of His Father's face, and it was given Him as His reward, in token that all the labour was done, and all the warfare over, and all the sacrifice complete. And then, with a strong and solemn joy, He saw the morning break on those darkened shores of time.

THE PROPHECY OF THE
BRUISINGS

THE PROPHECY OF THE BRUISINGS

I will put enmity between thee [the serpent] and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

GEN. iii. 15.

THE first Messianic promise in the Bible is in the words, "I will put enmity between thee [the serpent] and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel." There is to be conflict, then, between Christ and Satan, between good and evil—perpetual conflict. In this conflict victory will come to one side, but bruising to both.

Can we have the victory without the

bruising? As we read in his biography, Bishop Creighton in his early years was visited by a dream of this kind. His theory of life, as he then held it, is not very clearly expressed, but perhaps we shall do him no injustice if we say that he was determined to be cheerful and content in all circumstances, to do his own work, to recognise his limitations, and so far as he could to keep himself free of strife. He knew that he could give to the world some valuable literary work if he had leisure in which to prepare it. From the sanguinary conflicts of the world and the Church he shrank. For one thing he had a strong sense of the impotence of man. Man does his best and is foiled. His defeat is not due to the strength of his human foes, but to the sudden interposition of a power above. Against that power it is vain to

fight. Rather let us say that our way may be wrong, or that the end we are seeking will be attained without our fretting and fuming. Leave God to do His own work, and to control the history of His world and His Church. Creighton based himself upon Goethe, but he forgot apparently one of Goethe's deepest words: "Always it is the individual that works for progress, not the age. It was the age that made away with Socrates by poison; it was the age which burned Huss at the stake; the ages have always been the same." Other students have been impressed by the overwhelming interest and significance of the individual in human history. Napoleon had a way of saying, "One must set limits to oneself," but his life was hardly consistent with the axiom. No doubt we may choose to some extent the field of our activity, but the

Christian man sooner or later must fight and be wounded. Even Creighton had to fling aside the foils, and betake himself to deadly earnest. Much as he disliked controversy, and lightly as he took up his burdens, he too lived long enough to share the common lot of the faithful. He did his best to steer his ship away from the sharp rocks of trouble, and he died ere the battle was at its hottest ; but he died like the rest, with wounds and scars of Christ.

But we may have the bruising without the victory. It is possible so to be overborne by the pangs and losses and defeats of the Christian soldier as to lose faith in Divine love and providence. There is an awful possibility of giving over prayer, of coming to think that the Lord's ear is heavy that He cannot hear, and His arm shortened

that He cannot save. There is a terrible significance in this passage, which we quote from a recent book: "Old Mr. Westfield, a preacher of the Independent persuasion in a certain Yorkshire town, was discoursing one Sunday with his utmost eloquence on the power of prayer. He suddenly stopped, passed his hands slowly over his head—a favourite gesture—and said in dazed tones: 'I do not know, my friends, whether you ever tried praying; for my part, I gave it up long ago as a bad job.' The poor old gentleman never preached again. They spoke of the strange seizure that he had in the pulpit and very cheerfully and kindly contributed to the pension which the authorities of the chapel allowed him. I knew him five-and-twenty years ago, a gentle old man addicted to botany, who talked of anything but spiritual experiences. I have

often wondered with what sudden flash of insight he looked into his own soul that day, and saw himself bowing down silent before an empty shrine." Those to whom prayer has been true communion with God, and who have sought and found strength to go on and to trust, are driven to God by calamity, and not from God. But those who pray what may be called merely stress prayers—those who ask God for help in exceptional circumstances of their life, and seek for that help to be manifested outwardly—are not in the real sense of the word believers. And so when defeat or bereavement or irretrievable calamity in any shape comes to them, they conclude that the heavens are brass, and that prayer is a delusion, and they take their way to the grave without seeking the Divine Companion. But even the most faithful have their hours

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of doubt. Things may look for a time so gloomy and desperate as to force even from the believing sufferer bitter cries of misery and despair, such as those that ring in the Psalms and in some pages of Pascal. Zion says sometimes, after all her experience of God's mercy, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.

What then does the promise mean? We follow the beautiful exposition of Phillips Brooks. It means that wherever Christ is there is conflict. That is the token and foundation of hope. Wherever Christ has been preached, the empire of evil is always being challenged. It may be very strong and outwardly victorious; it may have killed the witnesses or imprisoned them; it may press on unhindered to destroy by force the opposition, but as one antagonist is conquered another takes his place. Where

Christ has been, men will never unanimously assent to wrong. They will never settle down to the rest of acquiescent fiend-worship. They will never say to the devil, Thy will be done. Captain and soldier may die with their faces to the foe, but fresh campaigns are undertaken, and the instinct of rebellion never dies. There is a refusal to be content with injustice, and neither by sophistication nor violence will peace be attained. There is enmity between the Son of Man and evil, and that enmity never dies, never even pauses.

But the Son of Man and His legions are bruised in the fighting. There are those who foresee the victory of right, but they foresee it apart from all that must come in between. They dream of a triumph won without pain or pang, but it is a vain dream. We cannot escape: into every life that is

lived obediently and bravely the bruising must come. There must be confrontation and collision and wounds. Never is the victory of right easy or speedy. When the soldiers begin their task in white plumes and unspotted braveries, they may think that all is going to go smoothly, but they soon find that they are in march for a field of blood. Unexpected difficulties present themselves; the strength of the enemy proves formidable; it seems sometimes as if the tide of battle rolled backwards and forwards, and as if there was no decisive advance. Indeed there may often be temporary repulses and defeats. Cavour, under the trees of Sartena, said: "I knew when I advised the king and country to venture on this great enterprise that we should meet with very heavy obstacles, and be sorely tried, but unthis battle with disease

fills me with alarm ; it is an evil complication." The more Christ-like the cause is the harder it may be. With what stress and vehemence of hate did the evil power attack Christ ! The attack bruises the heel, bows the back, wrinkles the face, whitens the hair. Nothing is easy ; things will not go as we fain had hoped. There come mortifying disappointments and checks and desertions, but all these things are only sent to discover our manhood, and we cannot run out of them without being apostates. After a certain stage the combatants have to struggle on with the wounded heel, but if they have strength from their Captain they can continue to fight. This being so there comes a solemn shadow on the temporary triumphs. The highest hopes and the loftiest rejoicings have their touch of pathos when one thinks of what the victories

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have cost, and of the battles that are sure to follow them.

But the victory is sure because the leader is Christ. He did not fight merely as an example to His soldiers. His contest is much more than an addition to the records of heroism that keep the world alive. He breathes His spirit into His soldiers and He is the Conqueror. "When He fought with sin and overcame the world's pain by undergoing it, He merely left all other fighters stronger because He was human and therefore our brother. He left sin weaker because He was Divine and therefore our Master." Sin seemed to have its way with Him. The serpent bruised His heel. He was crucified on Calvary, but dying on the tree He set His wounded heel on the head of the serpent. When His hands closed in agony round the nails, they

crushed the power of evil ; and the victory of the Master may be the victory of the servant. Not the victory that the world will immediately recognise : it is enough for the disciple to be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord. In the evening of the third day, in the end of the life of strenuous and grievous travail, it may seem as if nothing had been accomplished ; and yet the work has been done and the victory of the servants one by one is an earnest of the ultimate triumph of righteousness. The time and the manner we must leave with Him, but He asks us to throw ourselves into the conflict, and He promises us the interpretation of reverse and delay in the world where burdens are unbound and wounds healed and mortality swallowed up of life.



