



MAY 23









G. A. Miller  
1882

WORKS

OF THE LATE

REV. JAMES HAMILTON, D.D. F.R.S.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

VOL. V.

LONDON:

JAMES NISBET & CO., BERNERS STREET.

1882.

G. Andersen Miler



# CONTENTS.

---

## MOSES THE MAN OF GOD.

	PAGE
I.—THE ARK OF BULRUSHES, . . . . .	1
II.—THE FATHER OF CHIVALRY, . . . . .	18
III.—THE MOMENTOUS CHOICE, . . . . .	36
IV.—THE FATHER OF HISTORY, . . . . .	54
V.—THE CALL, . . . . .	70
VI.—THE BURNING BUSH, . . . . .	85
VII.—MOSES AND MESSIAH, . . . . .	99
VIII.—SIGNS AND WONDERS: THE PLAGUES, . . . . .	112
IX.—THE PASSOVER, . . . . .	130
X.—THE PASSOVER--( <i>continued</i> ), . . . . .	144
XI.—THE FIERY-CLOUDY PILLAR, . . . . .	154
XII.—THE RED SEA, . . . . .	166
XIII.—MARA, . . . . .	177
XIV.—MURMURS, . . . . .	191
XV.—THE DECALOGUE, . . . . .	199
XVI.—THE LAW AND ITS FULFILLER, . . . . .	215
XVII.—THE THEOCRATIC KING AND THE OATH OF ALLEGIANCE. . . . .	229

	PAGE
XVIII.—THE TABERNACLE, . . . . .	241
XIX.—THE DIVINE GLORY, . . . . .	252
XX.—THE LAWGIVER, . . . . .	263
XXI.—THE WATER OF MERIBAH, . . . . .	270
XXII.—THE HERMIT NATION, . . . . .	281
XXIII.—THE HERMIT NATION—( <i>continued</i> ), . . . . .	292
XXIV.—“A PRAYER OF MOSES, THE MAN OF GOD,” . . . . .	303
XXV.—DEATH OF MOSES, . . . . .	313

## THE GOLDEN SERIES.

### LECTURES ON 2 PETER I.

I.—THE GOLDEN SERIES, . . . . .	329
II.—FAITH AND FORTITUDE, . . . . .	341
III.—KNOWLEDGE, . . . . .	352
IV.—TEMPERANCE, . . . . .	361
V.—PATIENCE, . . . . .	374
VI.—GODLINESS, . . . . .	387
VII.—BROTHERLY KINDNESS AND CHARITY, . . . . .	394
VIII.—THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION, . . . . .	401

## PHILOSOPHY AND CHRISTIANITY.

I.—THE STOIC, . . . . .	15
II.—THE EPICUREAN, . . . . .	429
III.—PLATO, . . . . .	441
IV.—PHILOSOPHY AND CHRISTIANITY, . . . . .	453

# CONTENTS.

v

## THE ETHICS OF THE GOSPEL.

### LECTURES ON PHIL. IV. 8.

	PAGE
I.—TRUTH, . . . . .	467
II.—NOBLENESSE, . . . . .	477
III.—NOBLENESSE—( <i>continued</i> ), . . . . .	487
IV.—JUSTICE, . . . . .	498
V.—PURITY, . . . . .	509
VI.—LOVEABLENESS, . . . . .	519
VII.—THINGS REPUTABLE, . . . . .	530
VIII.—THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER, . . . . .	541



MOSES, THE MAN OF GOD.



## I

### THE ARK OF BULRUSHES.

“She took for him an ark of bulrushes, . . . and put the child therein.”—Ex. II. 3.

IN this climate of ours there are some plants which need no culture. The thistle takes care of itself. It requires no husbandman to break up the ground and scatter the seed and drive away the fowls of heaven; but wherever there is a breeze it finds a carrier, and wherever it finds a sod it makes a home. Here are downs which have not felt the plough since the days of Alfred or Caractacus, and thistles grow on them still—the descendants of those prickly sires which were crimsoned by the blood of battling Danes or Britons in the far far distant times of old.

But if you sow any kind of corn you must take a great deal of trouble. You must cleave open and crumble the mould; you must cover it in; you must uproot the weeds that would choke it, and you must drive away the beasts that seek to devour it. And the crop of this season, if left to itself, will insure no successor. A few straggling ears may survive for an autumn or two, but presently there is no more trace of the golden grain on your neglected meadow than there would be on the sands of the shore.

At the first God gave to mankind many great truths and lessons: the knowledge of Himself as the Father of spirits, holy, beneficent, forgiving; the great rules of piety and virtue; and above all, the promise, so gracious and animating, of a coming Deliverer from sin and from sorrow—a promise which, as a blessed element of hope and elasticity, should keep man's face still upward, and his heart still strong for his toils and trials. All these God gave, and at the first He flung them broadcast. They were public property, and at the first were intrusted to the general memory. But this was enough to show that for saving truths the mind of man has ceased to be the proper soil; for knowledge heaven-descended earth is no longer a congenial clime. "Thistles grow instead of wheat." Ambition, revenge, cruelty, falsehood, rapine, float through all the atmosphere, and these can spring up anywhere: not so integrity, truth, chastity, respect for the rights of others, brotherly-kindness: and midway betwixt the Creation and the Advent the world had sunk into such a depth of idolatry and immorality as to make it perfectly plain that on the self propagating principle those precious seeds which had been carried away from Eden would soon disappear altogether. For the bread of life there was too little appetite to intrust its preservation any longer to the careless and promiscuous multitude,—the sin-loving, God-forsaking, demon-adoring nations of mankind.

Accordingly, at this period the Most High, in His wisdom, took means for the conservation of the priceless blessing. Instead of dealing any longer with the mil-



lions of the race—instead of emptying garner of truth over fens and swamps which engulfed the seed and yielded no return—He took in “a little piece of holy ground.” He laid hold of one family, and selected it as the recipient and custodier of Divine Revelation. By a very remarkable process He fenced in and secluded that family, making it a peculiar people, dwelling alone, and not reckoned among the nations; and when the great purpose was answered, and the wall of separation was broken down, it was on the hills of Palestine that the handful of corn was found which now waves on our English fields, and will yet make all the mountains of the earth like Lebanon.

When trying to Christianize a deeply sunken community—Fijians or Savage Islanders—it is sometimes a good plan to get hold of one or two of the natives, and bring them to an adjacent mission-settlement, where they may be taught and trained, and then, with the help of these native pioneers, the missionaries find their work exceedingly facilitated. So in His great process of reclaiming a sunken *world*, the Lord laid hold of one particular *family*. He raised up the righteous man from the East, and called him to His feet. From the surrounding grossness and superstition He snatched away that family, and after a dreary probation in the desert—after a long discipline in the Reformatory of that great wilderness,—He promoted it to the pleasant school of Palestine. “The mill of God grinds slowly,” and it took a thousand years before the pupil nation was ready to give its lesson to mankind. But at last, thoroughly weaned from idolatry,

with the unity and the spirituality of the Godhead engraven on its inmost conviction, with that essence of all ethics—the Ten Commands—familiar as the alphabet, by daily usages inured to those expiatory and mediatorial ideas which lie at the root of God's method with mankind, and by accumulating and converging prophecies not only taught to expect the Saviour, but looking for His arrival with nervous excitement,—above all, with a text-book in its hands infinitely holier and wiser than itself,—the old scholar was now ready to act the part of teacher and evangelist, and go forth as God's own missionary, in the person of its more enlightened members able to tell to Greeks and Romans even such unheard-of wonders as Jesus and the Resurrection.

A few years ago we gave a course of lectures on the Father of the Hebrew Family. We now purpose to accompany in his career the Founder of the Hebrew Nationality—that great Liberator and Lawgiver who fulfilled a more important function than any other man in the ages before Messiah.

Abraham and his immediate descendants were shepherds, and they were that kind of shepherds whom we call *nomads*. It was no object of theirs to cultivate land or build houses, or in any way improve the country where they sojourned. They drove their flocks to any spot where grass and water could be found, and as soon as the herbage of that region was consumed, they packed up their canvas village, and moved on till pastures green invited them to halt once more. But with their migratory habits they had no inducement to sow fields and

plant vineyards, nor did it suit their purpose to rear dwellings of stone or temples for worship. They wanted portable houses which could accompany their cattle; and, if they were rich, they invested their wealth not in handsome buildings and spacious gardens and bulky furniture, but in jewels and costly robes, which were not cumbersome to carry. But for this roving unresting people the Lord had selected a land which pre-eminently needed settled habits and the arts of mechanic industry. To treat Palestine as a mere sheep-walk would be to throw it utterly away. It was "a land for wheat and barley; for vines and fig-trees and pomegranates; a land of oil, olive, and honey; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills brass might be dug." But Jacob and his sons were incapable of turning to account such a land. They were neither horticulturists nor farmers nor metallurgists, and in order to do justice to their goodly heritage it was needful that the shepherds should learn to be farmers and workers in stone and in wood, in clay and in metal. Accordingly, He who had provided the land for His people took means to prepare the people for the land,—means wonderfully marked by His own foreknowledge and wisdom. After giving the favoured family a glimpse of their promised and predestined home, the Lord removed them to a land where they might be trained and qualified so as to make the most of Palestine when once they should obtain final possession. Egypt was then the most advanced and enlightened of all lands,—its exhaustless soil waving with crops and over-canopied by palms and pomegranates, and its cities stupendous with colossal

temples and palaces in which art emulated the immensity and indestructibility of nature. Proficients in masonry and in the fictile arts, weaving that fine linen which all antiquity regarded as a glory of the loom, and rearing those enormous structures which are still a wonder to the world,—musicians, armourers, jewellers,—there was scarcely an art which its industrious citizens did not practise, and which might not there be learned by any observant visitor who possessed a passport to their favour. With such a passport the Lord provided Jacob and his sons. “He sent a man before them,” and through the popularity and power of Joseph, Egypt, usually so jealous of strangers, gave hearty welcome to its benefactor’s kinsmen. Assigned a region which should be all their own, the length and breadth of the land were before them, and the Aholiabs and Bezaleels who should arise were free to copy each Egyptian craft and mystery.<sup>1</sup>

In the succinct Bible summary, four hundred years are passed over in one breath, and an expression of Stephen (Acts vii. 6) would seem to indicate that during *all* these years the Israelites had been “evil-entreated.” But when we look into it more carefully, we shall find that the evil treatment only began at the close of the period. As long as Joseph was remembered, and as long as the dynasty continued on the throne who had been so deeply Joseph’s debtors, the Hebrews were protected and befriended.

<sup>1</sup> For practising some of their acquisitions,—“labour in the field,”—the forty years in the desert gave small opportunity. But such knowledge is transmitted from sire to son; and in the meanwhile four hundred years of Egypt had gone far to alter early habits and change the shepherds into agriculturists and artificers. The Tabernacle, the Golden Calf, etc., show that handicrafts were practised.

“They were fruitful and increased abundantly, and multiplied and waxed exceeding mighty;” and far from continuing cooped up in their own Goshen, they spread over the country, “and the land was filled with them.” They were so prosperous and so exceedingly numerous that at last a sovereign—most likely of a new race of kings—grew apprehensive of their ascendancy. He said to his people, “Behold, the children of Israel are more and mightier than we;” and for fear that in the event of a war they should make common cause with the invader, he adopted towards them a rigid and repressive policy. Their spirit, and their very lives, he tried to crush out by tremendous toils; and when the brick-kilns and the burning sun were not ridding him fast enough of the dangerous foreigners, he promulgated one of those ordinances which make tyranny so terrible, and commanded that henceforward every male child of Hebrew parentage should perish as soon as born.

There have been many commentaries written on the Book of Exodus; but by far the most interesting and remarkable is one for which we are indebted to Pharaoh himself—that pictorial Bible executed by order of the kings of Egypt, and preserved for three thousand years bright and clear beneath the sands of the Libyan desert. There we learn how Egypt was invaded and for a time conquered and held down by a race of shepherd-kings from Arabia—a disgrace and disaster which made shepherds an abomination to the Egyptians, and which rendered the Egyptians especially nervous at the increase within their borders of a shepherd-race, the kinsmen of

their shepherd conquerors. There we have preserved countless specimens of such bricks as the Hebrews made—bricks sun-dried, with chaff or straw mixed throughout their substance to make them more tenacious. There we have depicted groups of foreign bondmen, measuring out the clay, moulding it into blocks, carrying away on yokes the finished bricks, and piling them under the eye of an Egyptian taskmaster, who, rod in hand, sits at his ease and looks on in leisure. There too we have numberless examples of the arrogance and cruelty of the Egyptians, trampling on the necks of their enemies; and there we read inscriptions on temples and palaces, boasting how in the construction of those gigantic fabrics no native Egyptian had been employed, but that they were all the work of foreigners. And there, “with a pen of iron, written in the rock for ever,” we have the Pagan’s attestation to a thousand minutiae in the Pentateuch—a sculptured panorama at which we shall hereafter have occasion to glance when we wish to know the meaning of many a scriptural allusion, as well as to know the abode in which the hero of our history spent the morning of his days.

The edict of Pharaoh had not long been issued before it fell in all its bitterness on a family of the house of Levi. In that family there was already a boy three or four years of age, who had the good fortune to be born before the reign of terror; and there was also a little girl twice the age—a clever, dark-eyed maiden, with a fine ear for music, and with her sensible active ways the help and comfort of her mother. But now, when there ought to have been great joy in the house, for another son was

born into it, all was hushed and silent. No neighbour came to congratulate, and it was anything but pride which the poor mother felt as she gazed on her "proper child." Day after day passed on, and every day the babe grew more endearing and more beautiful; but every day made concealment more difficult. It was a wonder that no spy nor informant had yet found out the fatal secret; every foot-fall at the door sent panic through the house; and sometimes it was impossible to hush those infant outcries, which, if overheard, would attract the murderer to the cradle and be the death of every one of them. This anxiety could not last. The babe was three months old, when one day Jochebed took a basket of papyrus, such as might have long been used for household purposes, and began to make it ready. As with pitch she filled the chinks and made it water-tight, as she lined the interior with bitumen, and smoothed and polished it so carefully, the tears ran down, and the little Mary wondered what her mother could intend to do with it. At last all was finished, and in the early morning they set off for the river-side. Jochebed told her daughter what the basket was intended for, and you may be sure it was with a bursting heart that the sister thought of the likely fate of that baby-brother whom she had so often helped to nurse and dandle. But here was a quiet spot on the water's edge, where the reeds grew tall and the current hardly came; and why not here? "By faith her child had been hid three months," notwithstanding "the king's commandment," and the same faith which had kept up the timid mother's heart through many real dangers and

false alarms had moved her to prepare this ark ; and although the shore was desolate and the crocodiles were hungry—though her cheeks were pale and the sword was piercing through her soul,—that true daughter of Abraham still could trust in God, and cherished in her heart some vague hope of which her “prepared ark” was sign and sacrament. And now, the last meal given, and the babe adjusted in his new strange cradle, the last kiss imprinted on his broad untroubled brow, and the last look of maternal agony upturned towards Israel’s God, Miriam took her hidden post of observation and the wife of Amram tore herself away.

But she had not long been home when Miriam burst into the house, too wild and agitated to tell all the happy tale, but bidding her mother haste and come. And there, sure enough, they were—a group of ladies grandly dressed around the weeping boy, and one of them the king’s own daughter, and from amidst her laughing, wondering maidens, turning round to Jochebed, the Princess said, “Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages.” Oh what an evening that would be in Amram’s cottage ! How eagerly they all by turns would embrace and coax the little outcast ! How secure the joy of the happy mother as she clasped her own darling, safe beneath the shadow of the throne ! How often would Miriam tell over the adventures of the morning ; her “frights” with vultures and with what at first seemed crocodiles ; her wonder when the five ladies came at last in sight, walking along the bank, whether they would notice anything, and how she rather thought that they



would have passed on, if just then the baby had not begun to cry; and how she herself had contrived to come up as if by chance at the very moment, and how the Princess looked so good and pitiful, and how she, the sensible and self-possessed little Miriam, had offered to run and get a nurse for the noisy unappeasable foundling! And oh! how heartfelt would be the thanksgiving to the God of Abraham which arose that evening from beneath the roof of that humble Hebrew dwelling, for the lost one had been found; this their son who had been dead was alive again; the ark of bulrushes was transformed into a golden cradle, and, guided by a Hand Divine, had landed its helpless freight in no monster's jaws, but on the very steps of Pharaoh's throne.

Singular preservations like this have marked the infancy of many who afterwards grew memorable. Every one will recall the story of Romulus and Remus, nursed by a wolf, and thus preserved to lay the foundations of Rome and the Roman empire; and the readers of Herodotus will remember how he tells that Astyages ordered his infant grandson to be thrown out into the wilderness, but how a shepherd's wife, whose own babe was dead, adopted the "goodly child,"<sup>1</sup> and so saved from the hyænas that Cyrus who was to create the Medo-Persian monarchy, and fill so large a space in history. And every one is now familiar with the legend of our own king Arthur, revived as it has been by the Laureate:—

"No man knew from whence he came;  
But after tempest, when the long wave broke

<sup>1</sup> Like Moses, τὸ παιδίον μέγα τε καὶ εὐειδές.—HEROD. i. 112. ◊

All down the thundering shores of Bude and Boss,  
 There came a day as still as heaven, and then  
 They found a naked child upon the sands  
 Of wild Dundagil by the Cornish sea ;  
 And that was Arthur ; and they fostered him  
 Till he by miracle was approven king.”<sup>1</sup>

Conceding, however, that these tales are legends,—confused echoes, possibly, from the story now under consideration,—it is well to note how often in their precarious outset precious lives have been preserved from imminent danger, and sometimes by what we deem a trivial circumstance. In the beginning of last century, in the house of a London tradesman, a babe was born who looked so inanimate and insignificant that it was taken for granted he was dead, when afterwards gazing at the tiny form an attendant noticed a gentle movement in the chest, and her efforts were rewarded by fostering into life the author of *The Rise and Progress*. Contemporary with Philip Doddridge there was growing up in a parsonage of Lincolnshire a boy of great promise who had already reached his sixth summer, when the rectory took fire ; all awoke in time and saved themselves, but the little boy was forgotten, or rather, it was left to God Himself to save him, and the “brand plucked from the burning” grew up to be the founder of English Methodism. A poor woman in the town of Stirling sprang up from her spinning-wheel with an impression on her mind that her child had fallen into a neighbouring well. She was just in time to snatch hold of a lint-white head

<sup>1</sup> Tennyson's *Idylls*, p. 240. For similar stories see Suetonii *Augustus*, c. 95, and the Tamul tale (referred to by Ewald) in B. Schmid's *Zerstreute Blätter* (1843), st. 2.

which had not yet disappeared, but which was no child of her own but the minister's son, Tommy Randall, afterwards abundantly known as the benevolent and noble-minded Dr. Davidson of Edinburgh.

We forget it as regards ourselves, but we see and feel it in our children. Surely a special Providence superintends them, and in their hands angels bear them up, lest at any time they dash their foot against a stone. Playing with the cockatrice; putting their hand on the lion's mane; making toys of edge-tools, and rolling down-hill live shells; scrambling up precipices, and falling out from open windows; swept a helpless bundle down the swollen torrent, or picked up from beneath the carriage-wheels; restored from desperate sickness or preserved amidst frightful accidents,—what mother is there who, at some moment, has not felt like the Alpine peasant when she saw the eagle sailing overhead with her infant in its talons? Who that has not once and again shrieked out in helpless agony, and then wildly laughed or wept at the marvellous preservation? Who is there that has a son grown up who does not acknowledge that he is the child of Providence? And who is there that has grown up himself but says with Addison:—

“ When in the slippery paths of youth  
 With heedless steps I ran ;  
 Thine arm, unseen, convey'd me safe,  
 And led me up to man :  
 Through hidden dangers, toils, and deaths,  
 It gently clear'd my way ;  
 And through the pleasing snares of vice,  
 More to be fear'd than they.”

Nobody knows the original name of Amram's second

son; the name his parents gave him became entirely superseded and absorbed in the name which the Princess gave him. And so any prized possession which we have succeeded in acquiring, or in long retaining, has attached to it, usually speaking, some circumstance of wonder or surprise in its bestowment or restoration. From a thing so small as some earthly possession, up to a thing so great as the salvation of the soul, it is a salvage from the flames; like Joshua the high priest, "a brand plucked out of the fire:" it is a gift from the flood, you name it Moses, and say, "Because I drew it out of the water."

The time of Moses' birth is one of the most instructive incidents in this history. We have no reason to suppose that the exterminating edict of the king remained in force for any considerable period. It did not exist when Moses' own brother was born, three or four years before, and if it had been in active operation for any length of time, it is utterly impossible that there could have been 600,000 grown-up males ready to accompany Moses in the march from Egypt. Much likelier is it that this was one of those frantic expedients to which despotism resorts in a moment of rage, and which after a while its myrmidons cease to execute, and are right in their calculation that it will not be renewed. Not improbably the decree became a dead letter soon after Moses was taken up and adopted by Pharaoh's daughter, and there can be no doubt that it had only newly come forth when Moses was born. In any case, it was the most dismal moment in the history of Israel's bondage—the very noon of Hebrew night; and it was the moment when the man was born who

should put an end to it all. Israel's extremity was God's opportunity; and the wrath of Pharaoh wrought the purpose of Jehovah. But for that bloodthirsty decree the son of Amram might have grown up a peasant and a bondman, but this decree promoted him to the palace, and trained him to be the deliverer of his countrymen, the conqueror of Egypt, and the death of Pharaoh's successor.

Such is God's method. The darker the cloud, the more brilliant the rainbow; the wilder the storm, the more welcome the haven; the more desperate the danger, the more delightful is the sense of deliverance and the more rapturous the thanks of the rescued. And so in His wisdom the Most High sometimes allows His people to reach the sorest pass before He breaks the silence and makes bare His mighty arm. Not only does He allow the bottle to be spent, but the dying boy to be cast away beneath the bushes, before Hagar's eyes are opened on the well. Not only does He allow Joseph to be sold into slavery, but to be flung into a dungeon and forgotten, before He calls him to the steps of the throne and the smiles of the monarch. Not only does He suffer the Holy Land to be invaded, but Jerusalem to be hopelessly invested, before the angel of death spreads his wings and exterminates the host of Sennacherib.<sup>1</sup> Not only does He permit the plot against the Jews to mature, but the scaffold for Mordecai is erected, before God gives the signal, and on His people's enemies executes vengeance. Not only does He permit a hostile king to take the crown, but He lets the bondage

<sup>1</sup> Oosterzee, p. 10.

begin, and the brick-kilns glow fiercer, and the murderous edict come forth, before the knell of tyranny is rung, and Moses is born. And so, if you have a clear precept to start you off, and plain promises to keep you going, do not fear though the path should grow precarious and narrow, do not flinch though dangers should swarm and multiply. It is the valley of Achor, trouble in every step, and a wall of rock in front,—a rock which no agility can climb nor any strength can penetrate. But in faith and fearlessness go forward, and as you reach the barrier a door of hope will open, and usher you into an elysium of repose or a paradise of beauty. If you have a plain intimation of God's will, you need be afraid of no king's commandment, for that God in whom you trust will find means to protect His own; and when He has a purpose to fulfil He can make the Nile-monster a nursing mother, and for Pharaoh's victims create a shield in Pharaoh's daughter.

So we leave safely landed the little papyrus boat, the ark of bulrushes,—which grows mystic as we gaze, and makes us think of other arks which have gone God's voyages, and, like the babe that sailed away from a bond-mother's arms to the bosom of a princess, have carried their freight to a brilliant haven. And not so much that colossal ark, which from out of a cursed and God-forsaken world, and across the ferry of the Flood, carried Noah and his family into that new and more favoured world which God would curse no more, and on which, in the person of Incarnate Deity, unimagined blessing was destined to descend: not so much of it as of that other ark

in which this great advent was effected—the manger which, not to Egyptian maids, but to Eastern sages, disclosed not Moses, but Messiah, that infant of days whose name should expand into “The Wonderful, the Counsellor, the mighty God;” and who, emerging from that manger, is ascended to the right hand of the Father, a Prince and a Saviour, and will return on His great white throne. And it makes us think of that papyrus ark to which infinite wisdom has intrusted the revelation of Himself—the parchment scroll, the paper book, the poor frail vehicle which, launched on the tide of Time, has had so many escapes from the chances of the stream, as well as the fury of its foes, but is now escaped from the house of bondage, and made a blessing to all nations. And as we see the mournful mother carrying

“Her babe, close cradled in her arms,  
To Nile’s green sloping shore,”

and intrusting it to the unfriendly-looking flood, little witting of the surprise which in a few hours awaited her, so we think of the rapture that awaits many a Christian parent, who in tears has stood over that sorrowful ark, the coffin of her child, and think of her joy and her wonder when the loved one, who in the earthly dwelling makes “a blank so large,” is recognised in the palace of Heaven’s own King.

## II.

### THE FATHER OF CHIVALRY.

“Moses . . . was mighty in words and in deeds.”—ACTS VII. 22.

A MAGNIFICENT land was the Egypt in the midst of which Moses grew up. With an atmosphere clear and dry, with a soil which no harvests could exhaust, with towns and temples at every bend of the river emerging from the midst of the great garden into which the surface had been carefully cultured, and with its bountiful Nile flowing on beneath the scented lotus, or spreading over the plain, with all the wealth of its far-travelled waters, nothing could be a more perfect symbol of prosperity and self-sufficing abundance, whilst a peculiar architecture imparted to it all an air of wonderful grandeur. That architecture was chiefly monuments and temples. The abodes of the living were sufficiently simple, but all the wealth and genius of the country were exerted to embody their ideas of immortality, and to do homage to the powers unseen. Already, in the days of Moses, the pyramid of Cheops had stood for nearly a thousand years—a mountain of masonry a furlong in length and breadth; and in temples which covered acres of land, and where colossal figures towered up a hundred feet in height,



sculpture did its best to rescue kingly memories from the tooth of Time, and awaken in the spectator's mind awful ideas of the immense and invisible, so that all the opulence and activity of the present were visibly linked to a remote and stupendous past, and through the sunny stir of the passing hour there fell constant and gigantic shadows from the surrounding "silent land."

The people who then inhabited this country,—and since then three millenniums and a half have passed away,—were more refined and intelligent than any race of which we possess the memorials. But when we say this we speak of the privileged orders: for just as the soil was the property of the sovereign, so learning was the monopoly of the priests or professional caste, and in all likelihood the mass of the people were as poor and ignorant as they usually were under all the ancient despotisms. But by the arrangements of Providence Moses was brought up a member of the privileged class. Adopted by one of the royal family, his princess-mother obtained for him the best instructors. He would be taught to read the curious character to which Egyptian sages had consigned their speculations and their learning, and his own meditations he would be taught to consign to a scroll of papyrus. In that geometry which the land-surveying exigencies of their inundated land made so necessary, and in the cognate astronomy in which they were wonderful adepts, it is likely that he would be in due time initiated; and from the fact that he was afterwards able to reduce a golden image to dust, it has been surmised that he was no stranger to the processes of their practical chemistry,

which had already presented them with glass and bronze and many pure and exquisite pigments. At the same time it is right to confess that a great deal of that Egyptian wisdom was the merest foolishness, and, if Moses ever mastered it, it would seem to have dropped from the memory of his more enlightened years, as baby gew-gaws drop from the open hand of manhood; and of their historical mythology there is no more trace in the Book of Genesis than there is in the worship of Jehovah trace of their ridiculous idolatry.

But Moses was not only a scholar; as years went on he had an opportunity of earning distinction as a warrior. According to Josephus, and we have no reason to doubt the correctness of his statement, the Ethiopians made an incursion into Egypt, and routed the army which was sent to resist them. Panic spread over the country, and Pharaoh trembled at the approach of the swarthy savages, who were already close to Memphis. The oracles were consulted; that is to say, advice was asked from the best-informed and most sagacious body of men in the capital, --the heads of the priesthood; and, well aware of his remarkable abilities, they advised that the command should be intrusted to Moses. He immediately took the field, and by a rapid though round-about march surprised the enemy, defeated them with heavy slaughter, drove them back into their own territories, and followed them up so hard, capturing one city after another, that they found no asylum till they reached the swamp-girdled city of Meroë. Here Moses lay down with his army, and would have found the blockade both tedious and difficult

had he not happened to gain the affections of an Ethiopian lady, whom he promised to marry provided she put them in the way to gain possession of the city. Her admiration of the handsome Hebrew was too strong for her patriotism, and the conqueror returned from his triumphant campaign, bringing with him his sable princess and the spoils of Meroë, and filling the minds of all his fellow-countrymen with hope and exultation.<sup>1</sup>

The substantial truth of this statement there is no reason to doubt. It could be no invention of Josephus, and it is adopted by Irenæus, a Christian father of the second century, and receives incidental confirmation from the fact that Stephen speaks of Moses as "mighty in words and in *deeds*,"—a man of brilliant achievements whilst still a resident at the Egyptian court, and it is still more confirmed by Moses himself, who casually mentions that his wife was a native of Ethiopia.<sup>2</sup> With the capacity which Moses had by this time abundantly indicated, and with the position which he occupied so near the person of the sovereign, nothing could be more natural than to intrust him with the command of an important expedition; nor is the probability diminished by the hint which Josephus gives, that the counsellors who suggested it calculated on one if not both of two alternatives: they were bound to hope that Moses might rid Egypt of the invader; if not, they would not be sorry that the invaders should rid themselves of an unwelcome rival and the court of Pharaoh of a powerful and dangerous upstart.

<sup>1</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities*, book ii. chap. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Numb. xii. 1.

In some respects the nearest modern counterpart to Moses was that great Prince of Orange known to history as William the Self-contained or Silent. Like Moses, the son of a pious mother, her lessons were not lost, but for a long time they continued latent. Like Moses, he soon left his home, and in early boyhood became a page to the great Emperor Charles the Fifth. The shrewd old Kaiser soon perceived the wonderful depth and quickness of the child, and by the time he was fifteen years of age the page had become a sort of privy councillor—present at the most confidential interviews, and master of all the Emperor's policy. Under the ablest tutor of the time, he learned a science far more arduous than Egyptian hieroglyphics, till he could read at a glance the hearts of princes, and from the lies of statesmen could enucleate their meaning and their motive; and under the greatest captain of the age he learned to be the cautious campaigner and the resourceful warrior;—such a favourite pupil that when the famous abdication took place it was on William's shoulder that the feeble Emperor leaned his hand whilst addressing the States-General. Charles resigned—Charles, who with his exterminating edicts and remorseless executions had been a Pharaoh to the Protestants; Charles resigned, and was succeeded by a Pharaoh of narrower intellect and harder heart—Philip the Second. But all this while William was the gay and hilarious courtier, captivating every acquaintance by his exquisite address, and charming wide circles by the bright overflow of spirits on which no burden pressed. When one day hunting with the King of France in the forest of Vin-

cennes, as the two rode along together, Henry told William of a secret league into which Henry of France had entered with Philip of Spain to extinguish Protestantism throughout Europe, by extirpating every Protestant. Too good a diplomatist to gasp or change colour at the astounding disclosure, William rode on and finished the hunt; but took the first opportunity to gallop off with his terrible secret. The doom that hung over his fellow-subjects in Holland roused all his patriotism, and by and by the lessons of his pious mother revived in his emancipation from Popery; and turning to account the lessons of soldiership and diplomacy which he had learned from his grim old tutor, in the hand of God he became the instrument to shatter the Romish league, to stultify the Pope, to roll back the hosts of Philip, to break the yoke of Spain, and lead forth to freedom the Seven United Provinces,—the Moses of a modern Exodus.

So we can quite conceive that it was his very success which precipitated the decision of the son of Amram and expedited his flight from the halls of Pharaoh. With his acknowledged ability, with his influential position, and still more with his military renown, it would have been natural for his compatriots to look up to him as their guardian and protector; and “he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them.”<sup>1</sup> But if “his brethren” understood not, the more perspicacious Egyptians would form their own conclusion, and the unscrupulous Pharaoh would have his fears. As the Jewish antiquarian tells us, “After being

<sup>1</sup> Acts vii. 25.

saved from the Ethiopians by Moses, the Egyptians began to hate him, and feared that he might stir up sedition and effect a revolution in the land; and, instigated by the sacred scribes, the king at last sought to slay him." The fear was not preposterous. These Hebrews had a mysterious aptitude for rising; and as a slave of this nation had once risen to be viceroy, who could tell but this fortunate foundling might aspire a step higher, and seek to be king? He had already commanded an army, and were there not scattered through the land half a million of his brethren ready to rise at his summons?

In any case his growing importance made decision more urgent, and if he was to continue at court, if he was to insure his own safety, there was now no option: he must conform to the established religion, he must bow to the idols, he must become out and out an Egyptian. It was a solemn alternative. On the one side, Egypt with its treasures, the prospect of rising to the highest rank in a nation the most renowned and the proudest of the earth, the society of sages, the splendours of a palace, the glories of a princely equipage passing through the admiring populace amidst shouts of "Bow the knee!" and, on the other, Goshen, with its slaves, the fellowship of thralls, with all generosity and spirit, all taste and intelligence crushed out of them, with bread of tears in lieu of royal dainties, and instead of floating down the Nile in a golden barge amidst the strains of voluptuous music, scorching in the brick-field amidst the groans of companions in captivity. But these bondmen were his brethren; their God, and not Osiris, was the true God; and afflicted and

depressed as they presently were, their God had promised to deliver them; and who could tell but He might honour Moses himself to be their deliverer? So farewell Memphis; farewell kind foster-mother; farewell gloomy and fitful Pharaoh; farewell, ye dreams of ambition; ye prospects of greatness and pleasures of sin, farewell!

A noble decision! Affliction with the people of God he preferred to the pleasures of sin, and reproach as one of Messiah's people he deemed greater riches than the treasures in Egypt. And the sequel proves him right. The day that he renounced his earthly prospects God served him heir to an inheritance incorruptible and which fadeth not away; and for ages past his solitary name has outshone all the monarchs combined of the one-and-thirty dynasties.

On his benevolent errand he reached the head-quarters of his countrymen. He examined into their circumstances, and found their position abundantly degraded and distressing. No doubt he did what he could to comfort them, and if he had brought away aught of his wonted wealth from the capital, we may be sure that words would not be his only consolation; but as he "looked on their burdens" his generous spirit boiled with indignation, and he could ill repress the inward rage awakened as coarse ruffians jeered and buffeted his brethren, and, like "dumb, driven cattle," forced to their tasks with heavy blows steps weak with age or staggering with infirmity. At last he came up one day as one of these sturdy tyrants was striking a Hebrew, possibly a kinsman of his own.<sup>1</sup> With a quick glance he satisfied himself that there were no

<sup>1</sup> Ex. ii. 11—"One of his brethren."

witnesses in sight, and, Hebrew as he was, he stepped forth his brother's champion. To Moses the man "mighty in deeds" it was a small affair to fell the caitiff, and a few moments sufficed to obliterate all trace by hiding the body in the sand. But oppression demoralizes its victims. In taking his own high spirit as the rule, Moses miscalculated the mettle of his countrymen. Not only was there no readiness to rise against their taskmasters, but there was no honourable feeling amongst themselves. The man whom his ready stroke had rescued from blows and bruises, and perhaps from death, had compromised his benefactor's life by noising abroad the matter; and when on a subsequent occasion he sought to separate two Hebrew combatants, he was met with the rough retort, "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? Intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian?" And soon finding that the affair had reached the ears and roused the wrath of Pharaoh, nothing remained to Moses but to seek safety in flight.

For his subsequent asylum Moses was indebted to Eastern hospitality and his own chivalry. Of that hospitality the traces still continue in these unchanging regions. A French traveller (M. Poujoulat) who had made himself at home in the desert, tells us how he one day rode up to the tent of a sheikh near Hebron. "I am tired with my journey, and when I saw your tents I blessed God." "You are welcome," replied the sheikh; "a guest is a favour from Heaven; rest you in safety." And finding, on longer acquaintance, what an enthusiast for Arab life was his visitor, how he preferred the tents



of Kedar to the palaces of France, the old Bedouin would not allow him to go away; and it was only on the third morning that he could extricate himself from the affectionate embrace of the Arab, who asked him, with tears in his eyes, "Why leave me? My tent and my flock shall be yours, and if you wish to have a wife, there is my daughter."<sup>1</sup>

In some such fashion was Moses invited into the tent of the priest or chieftain of Midian, only that he had rendered a service which well entitled him to a distinguished reception. He had now fairly escaped from Egypt, and had nothing to fear from Pharaoh, but he was a houseless wanderer—

"The world was all before him, where to choose  
His place of rest, and Providence his guide."

That Providence conducted him to a silent and lonely region beyond the nearer branch of the Red Sea—a district extremely desolate and solemn—lofty mountains raising their sharp ribs and bald summits far into the sky; and where, if his bag of dates and water-sack were not spent, the pilgrim might pass many days without ever encountering the "human face divine;" seldom a living creature to be seen except the lizard looking timidly from under the stone, or a coney as timid venturing forth for a furtive nibble in the cool of the day; seldom a sound to be heard, except the rare murmur of the bee among the acacia blooms, or the tinkle of the sand as it slid tunefully down the slopes of the granite—the desert's musical hour-glass—an oratory vast and

<sup>1</sup> "Corresp. d'Orient," quoted in Migué's *Dictionnaire de la Bible*.

tranquil and unprofaned, and with its absence of idols pleasant contrast to Egypt—where, for the next forty years, Moses was destined to spend many a day of exalted communion with Abraham's God and his own; and where, before the history ended, he should see the mountains shake, and hear those hushed valleys re-echo to the trumpet of angels and the voice of Jehovah.

One day he had reached a little oasis. There was pasture in the district, and if there were people they would be sure to come to the well. As Moses sat waiting, the first who arrived were seven sisters, who proceeded to draw water from the well and pour it into a trough, that the sheep might get their daily drink; but they had no sooner filled the trough than a set of rude fellows came up and drove forward their flock to appropriate the precious supply. With his native gallantry and his high-spirited resistance to wrong, Moses felt outraged, and whether it was awe for the magnificent man, or respect for his Egyptian uniform, the churls fell back and conceded to the terrible stranger what they would not have yielded to manly feeling, or even the more commonplace regard for fair play: a characteristic action which introduced its gallant author to Raguel or Jethro, and which was rewarded with a home in a good man's house, and in the midst of a family where the true God was feared and worshipped.

We hereafter read that "the man Moses was exceeding meek." At first sight the actions which we have now been observing seem hardly consistent with such a character, and, like that son of thunder and summoner of fire

from heaven who softened down into the beloved and loving apostle, we might be apt to suppose that in the case of Moses the hot spirit of the youthful soldier had mellowed down at last into the meekness of the law-giver. 'Tis possible; yet we are loath to concede that the ingredients are incompatible: courage on the one side, with instant and energetic resistance to the wrong inflicted on others; and on the other side patience, gentleness, and much endurance. As the great Lord Erskine said, "I never knew a man remarkable for heroic bearing, whose very aspect was not lighted up by gentleness and humanity; nor a *kill-and-eat-him* countenance that did not cover the heart of a bully or poltroon." And so to our conception the man Moses with the meekness or magnanimity which could bear any amount of personal abuse and obloquy, but with blood ready to rush up in the cause of the oppressed and feeble, in the quarrel of weak women or down-trampled slaves, counting no odds and fearing no consequence, stands forth the highest type of heroism, the presage of what in later times came to be known as Christian chivalry.

And, my friends, a chivalry truly Christian is one of the noblest forms which goodness can assume; and although what commonly goes by the name was soon caricatured and perished, in its origin it was a noble effort. On the trunk of old Teutonism it was an effort to engraft the Christian graces; those rugged blood-splashed warriors from Scandinavian fiords and German forests, so fierce and cruel that when Ulfilas translated the Bible into Gothic he left out the wars of the Israelites for fear

of worse inflaming their thirst of slaughter—it was an effort to soften into manliness those bulls of Bashan, an effort to take up and turn into right channels, and thus to sanctify, the martial instinct, so deep in hot redundant natures. So after watching his arms in a church all night—after musing and praying over the high career before him—on the morrow when the knight was to receive his spurs he placed his hands between the hands of the sovereign, and swore “to speak the truth, to succour the helpless and oppressed, and never to turn back from an enemy”—or, as it was sometimes expanded,

“ To teach the heathen and uphold the Christ ;  
 To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,  
 To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,  
 To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,  
 To love one maiden only, cleave to her,  
 And worship her by years of noble deeds,  
 Until they won her.”<sup>1</sup>

And although, as we have said, human depravity proved too strong for knightly vows—although by and bye some orders had to be broken up for their intolerable crimes, and the system itself became a fair subject for ridicule—in its outset the institution went far to humanize Europe and redeem its most dismal era. And in order to understand what was the ideal, what was expected from the wearer of the hard-won badge, we have only to read the descriptions in our older minstrelsy. For example, take Chaucer :—

“ A knight ther was, and that a worthy man,  
 That fro the time that he firste began

---

To riden out, he loved chevalrie,  
 Tronthe and honour, fredom and curtesie.  
 And of his port, as *meke* as is a mayde,  
 He never yet no vilanie ne sayde  
 In alle his lif, until no manere wight,  
 He was a veray parfit gentil knight.'

And of a type still higher the hero of the first book of the  
*Faery Queen* :—

“ A gentle knight was pricking on the plaine,  
 Yclad in mightie armes and silver shield. . . .  
 And on his brest a bloodie crosse he bore,  
 The deare remembrance of his dying Lord,  
 For whose sweete sake that glorious badge he wore,  
 And dead, as living, ever him adored :  
 Upon his shield the like was also scored,  
 For souveraine hope, which in his helpe he had,  
 Right, faithfull, true he was in deed and word ;  
 But of his cheere did seeme too solemn sad ;  
 Yet nothing did he dread, but ever was ydrad.”

It is true that in as far as the defence of the weak, generosity, truth, and a lofty standard of personal purity constituted chivalry, there was nothing in that institution which was not already in Christianity; but it was of some consequence in those regardless times to have even a limited number of virtues canonized and surrounded by the highest sanctions. And the fruits were fair. It was from a true feeling of chivalry that, when his favourite son broke his parole and escaped from the Tower of London, John of France took the place of the runaway hostage and died a prisoner in England. It was from the same feeling that when Edward the Third was about to put to death the citizens of Calais, the angry monarch who had resisted other intercession felt constrained to

grant the demand of his good Queen Philippa. "Dame, I wish you had been somewhere else; but I cannot refuse you. I put them at your disposal." It was the same feeling which, on the eve of the battle of Ivry, induced Henry of Navarre to go up to Colonel Schomberg and apologize for some hasty word, "in case I don't survive," and which led the gallant German to stammer forth, "Ah, sire! you kill me with your words; for now there is nothing for me but to die in your defence," as next day he did, in rescue of the king, and before his eyes. And the same knightly sentiment it was—not the less noble for being Christian—which on the field of Zutphen, when the flask of water was held to the lips of the dying Sydney, and he noticed the wistful look of the bleeding soldier near him, pushed it away with the words, "Give it to that man, his need is greater than mine."

Such things are no doubt older than mediæval chivalry, —some of them, we think, as old as Moses, and all of them as old as that Divine model from whose inspiring example, through channels sufficiently tortuous and turbid, they originally came. But something is due to the system which in days dark and savage caught up a few of those graces which once encircled the brow of Absolute Goodness, and entwining them together taught rough warriors to contend for the chaplet of knightly renown. And right sorry should we be if in standing up for the absent or feeble, if in forgiving the fallen, if in fulfilling his promise, if in commanding his passions, the soldier of Jesus Christ did not show that piety is the supreme of nobleness, and that the Christian is the flower of chivalry.

For example: Championship is chivalrous. Scenes like what Moses witnessed are of frequent occurrence; but when the bludgeoned Egyptian smites the unarmed Hebrew, when great hulking clowns water their flocks at troughs which feeble women have filled, there is not always a Moses at hand to punish the miscreants and redress the wrong. On such occasions be the Moses yourself: stand up for the weak and the weaponless. Your absent acquaintance is disparaged, or a man of worth who is no acquaintance at all—by your silent displeasure or outspoken defence let it be seen that in you the absent have a constant advocate. In the public vehicle some solitary traveller, poor sempstress or servant-girl, is annoyed by the rude gaze or ruder remarks of some low-minded passenger—change places with her, or reprove the ruffian outright; and you need not be afraid, these coarse fellows are so cowardly. Or some unfortunate neighbour cannot get his rights, by that most terrible tyrant, English Law, confused, contradictory, uncodified, with all its torture-chambers—Courts of Exchequer, Courts of Queen's Bench, Courts of Chancery: by its tremendous intimidation in the hands of unprincipled rapacity the rights of the widow and the fatherless are withheld:—if with the help of any good angel in a long black robe you could overturn the throne of iniquity and recover the spoils of injustice; or, better still, if you could explode the whole system of legal oppression, Hercules with his hydra, George with his dragon, would be champions less worthy than you; England would thank for ever the great legal reformer who smote its Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.

Or say, Generosity. When after the great fight of Crecy the prince bestowed 500 merks a year on Lord Audley, it was deemed a noble deed when he at once divided them among the four valiant friends to whom he felt that his success was owing. And so, few things should be better understood in this our day than pure and disinterested conduct in regard to money. Like Moses coming away from the treasures of Egypt, show plainly that you have elsewhere a better and enduring substance. Show plainly that if there are occasions on which you do not grudge to give wealth away, there are ways in which you disdain to make it.

Having mentioned as an attribute of Christian nobleness forbearance to the fallen—and it comes from the original code of honour, the statute-book of that Grand-Master who said, “If thine enemy hunger, feed him,”—I shall end with an instance taken from no book of heraldry, but from the humble annals of a Scottish minister. The Spanish Armada created great consternation in Scotland; but one morning James Melville awoke to find one of the magistrates of Anstruther at his bedside with the news that a shipful of Spaniards was in the harbour in great distress, and the captain ashore. “Up I got with diligence, and there presents us a very reverend man, of big stature, grey-haired, and very humble-like, who, after meikle courtesy, bowing close with his face near the ground, and touching my shoe with his hand, began his harangue in the Spanish tongue.” Of that the purport was the wreck of the Armada and the straits to which they themselves were driven. “I answered that how-



beit neither our friendship (which could not be great, seeing their king and they were friends to Christ's greatest enemy, the Pope of Rome), nor yet their cause, against our neighbours and special friends of England, could procure any benefit at our hands, nevertheless they should know that we were men, moved by human compassion, and Christians of better religion nor they. For whereas our people resorting amongst them on peaceable and lawful affairs of merchandise, were taken and cast into prison, their goods and gear confiscated, and their bodies committed to the cruel flaming fire for the cause of religion, they should find amongst us nothing but Christian pity and works of mercy." Accordingly the laird of Anstruther received Don Gomez and the other officers into his house, and entertained them generously, whilst the crew and soldiers, to the number of 260, were regaled during their stay with such food as the place could supply. It is pleasant to know, what Melville adds, "This Don Gomez showed great kindness to a ship of our town which he found arrested at Cadiz at his home-coming, rode to court for her, made great praise of Scotland to his king, took the honest men to his house, inquired for the laird of Anstruther, for the minister, and his host, and sent home many commendations."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> James Melville's Diary, 260-264.

### III.

#### THE MOMENTOUS CHOICE.

“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.”—HEB. XI. 24-27.

WHEN Hercules had grown up he went out into a solitary place to muse over his future course of life. After a while he saw two female figures approaching; the one in white apparel, with a noble aspect, open and innocent; the other painted and bedizened, and looking to see if people looked at her. As they drew nearer, this last ran briskly up, and was the first to accost him:—“Oh, Hercules, I see that you are perplexed about your path in life. If you will make a friend of me, I shall conduct you the smoothest and most charming road. You will not be troubled with business, or battles, or tasks of any kind; but your whole study shall be where to find the best wines and the nicest dishes, the newest scents and the most fashionable clothes, the merriest companions and the most exciting amusements. And you need take no trouble about the *wherewithal*, for if you will surrender

to my guidance there are friends and familiars of mine who will take care to provide the supplies." "And pray, madam," said Hercules, "what may be your name?" "My name," she replied, "is Pleasure, although my enemies have nicknamed me Vice."

Then said the other: "Hercules, I knew your parents; and from what I saw of you in your boyhood I am sure you are capable of noble deeds; but I must not deceive you with delusive promises. As the Higher Powers have arranged the world, you can hope for nothing good or desirable without labour. If you want the gods to be your friends, you must serve them; if you want to be loved by your acquaintances, you must make yourself useful; if you want your field to be fruitful, you must till it; if you want to be honoured by all Greece, you must do it some great service; if you wish to be a mighty warrior, setting free your friends from chains and slavery, you must take lessons from some good soldier; you must learn to bring the body into subjection, and must submit to discipline."

It was a frank statement, but there was in the speaker a truth and winsomeness which at once secured the honest heart of Hercules, and he rose up to follow Virtue along the rugged path to immortality.<sup>1</sup>

The choice of Hercules was no myth in the case of Moses. He had only to continue as he was, and he had everything that heart could wish. He had only to conform to the wishes of the kind-hearted Thermuthis, and his future was already made. A palace was his home,

<sup>1</sup> Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, ii. 1.

royal dainties were his daily fare, pages and lackeys were around to anticipate his every wish, and there was nothing to restrain the love of amusement or the appetite for sensual indulgence.

But at whatever period he first learned it, Moses had come to know that he was no Egyptian. Belike he had learned it from his parents early. His parents were believers. It was from their "faith" in God, and in all probability from some special revelation regarding their remarkably beautiful child, that they had ventured to conceal him so long; and after his wonderful preservation and promotion, it is not likely that, either for their own sake or their people's sake, they would hide from him his birth or his hoped-for destiny. At all events, in due time Moses came to know it, and the decision to which he came is one of the most heroic things in history. But, like all the higher feats of heroism, its motive and inspiration was his faith. God had promised to Abraham, "In thee and in thy seed shall all families of the earth be blessed;" and Jacob had died predicting, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah till that Shiloh come to whom all nations shall rally." And this Moses believed. He believed that the poor down-trampled people in Goshen were greater than their tyrants and taskmasters. He believed that, broiling out there amongst the brick-kilns, were slaves whose descendants would throw into the shade all the pomp and power of Pharaoh. Above all, he believed that the true God was none of those idols on whom Egypt wasted its worship, and to whom it erected fanes so imposing; but he believed that the one living

God was that unseen Creator whom his fathers had worshipped, of whom he had never seen any image or symbol, who had built his own temple in the universe, and who to Abraham had foretold, "Thy seed shall be four hundred years a stranger and a servant in a foreign land; and afterward I shall punish their oppressors, and bring out themselves with great substance."<sup>1</sup> And, acting on this belief, he refused to be called the son of the princess. No doubt she thought it perverse, nor could his companions admire his taste. To avow such base connections they thought mean-spirited and abject, and the very thing of which Moses gloried as his nation's destiny had become a subject of derision. It seemed a pleasant fancy—a Messiah emerging from these mud-fields, a sovereign of mankind who should boast for his ancestry hodmen and brick-bakers; and in the mouths of the heartless but humorous Egyptians the hope of Israel had become a taunt and a byword. But Moses believed it, and "the reproach of Christ" was to him greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; and, in circumstances far more trying, he made a choice more noble than the son of Alcmena, for he not only preferred virtue with all its hardships to sin with all its pleasures, but renounced all that this world could offer, for the sake of a people who had nothing earthly to offer in return.

The choice of Moses was an act of faith. It was "through faith that he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;" just as it was "through faith" that his parents hid him. And this is well explained by what

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xv. 13, 14.

afterwards is added: "He looked away to the future recompense;" "he endured,"—he held out or bore up,— "as seeing Him who is invisible." There was an attraction in the pleasures of sin; but Moses looked away from these allurements to pleasures higher and more enduring. There was terror in the monarch's frown, but Moses took refuge from it in the smile of a mightier Potentate. And this was faith. Had he merely closed his eyes on the charms of Egypt,—had he merely steeled his nerves against the threats of Pharaoh,—it might have been manly or noble-minded; but besides that without faith he was not likely to have done it at all, through faith he could afford to do it cheerfully. God had opened his eyes and shown him in heaven a better and enduring substance, so he could lay down without a sigh a chain of gold or even a kingly crown. God had opened his ear, and through all the din and angry demonstration, like father Abraham before him, a sustaining voice upheld him,— "Fear not, for *I* am thy shield;" and though the idols of On were so awful to their votaries, and though Pharaoh had an army at his beck, the Lord on high was mightier than all, and Moses went through with it serenely, sublimely, "as seeing Him who is invisible."

From time to time the Lord allows to take place like trials of the faith of His people. In the reign of Louis XIV. the Protestants were the flower of France, just as France was then the foremost of nations. Owing to their superior intelligence and morality the Huguenots had got into their own hands a large share in the trade and the largest share in the manufactures of the kingdom. They

were prosperous and wealthy and increasing, when a decree came forth proscribing the Protestant religion and prohibiting all Protestant worship. By a double stroke of despotism every Protestant minister was banished, every Protestant layman was interdicted from leaving the kingdom. But whilst the Calvinistic laity were kept at home, they were ordered to consign their children to the care of Romish teachers, they were forbidden to employ any but Romish servants in their families, and death was denounced on those who should attend any other than Romish worship. For the faith of some these penalties were too awful, and they yielded and conformed. But a glorious army preferred the reproach of Christ, and showed that they were not afraid of the king's commandment. They loved their beautiful France, and they hardly hoped to find another land with an air so elastic and with an inspiration so gladsome and gay : but France was not heaven, and after a few years of the better country the fogs of England and Holland would be forgotten. They loved the home of their fathers, and grudged to surrender to the Papist and stranger the fields they had bought with their earnings and the orchards they had planted for their children. And some of them, like Rapin and Savery, and Lyonnet and Basnage, were scholars and men of science, and they grieved to leave behind them the libraries and learned reunions of Paris. And the attempt was dangerous. If intercepted they were doomed to the galleys ; that is, for the rest of their days they were chained two and two on benches in long flat boats, and obliged to row with long heavy oars, unsheltered from the weather, and

allowed no other bed at night than the bench to which they were fastened by day. Yet, looking anxiously at it, they saw no alternative. To return to Popery would be to deny the Lord who bought them, and even if caught and consigned to the galleys, it would be better to "suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." And so by faith they forsook France, not fearing the wrath of the king, and the sentinels whom he had posted along the frontiers. Hid amongst bales of goods on ship-board, or in empty casks with only the bung-hole to breathe through; venturing to sea in open boats without provisions in wintry weather, with nothing to give their famished children but the falling snow; fine ladies disguised as market-women, and trundling barrows along the miry roads; grey-headed nobles driving cattle, or travelling by night and lurking in barns or caverns all day,—three hundred thousand of them earned their recompense of reward, and if they impoverished France they have ennobled Europe, and enriched the records of the faith by their martyr-like migration.

Events like these—the decision of Moses, the flight of the French Huguenots, the death of our own worthies,—God permits from time to time as trials of his people's faith and tokens of His own power to support and carry through. And they are of great value as tests or touchstones of our own sincerity, and as incentives to our own devotedness. Have we a faith like theirs? From the things present do we look away to the future recompense? And amidst all the witnesses of our conduct, do we remember that great Spectator who is invisible?



The lesson is especially significant to those who are in the outset of their career, and who have not yet given themselves to God. Let us look at it as calmly and yet as carefully as we can.

Perhaps you don't much like the people of God. You say that they are dull and melancholy, censorious and severe, narrow-minded and bigoted, and that you cannot take to them at all. Well, you certainly are not bound to love gloom and moroseness and uncharitable partisanship, and it is to be regretted if the Christians you have met are marred by such infirmities. They would be far nobler characters and much worthier of their name if they were bright and open, expansive and magnanimous. And that is the sort of Christian which the Lord asks *you* to become,—upright and manly, brave and truth-loving, with a mind as highly cultured as you please, but with a pure heart and a fervent. It is not so much with God's people as with God Himself that you have to do, and His claims are paramount. To Him give your heart. He asks it, He deserves it, and if you have a heart to give, and hold it back from infinite excellence,—if you have a heart to give, and refuse it to your best Benefactor,—there may be blemishes in Christians, but amongst true Christians there is no one with ingratitude so base and rebellion so dark as yours; there is no one saying to the best of Beings, "Depart from me," none turning his back like you on the Friend of sinners.

Hard words and strong, but I fear too true: for if conduct speaks as well as words, is not this the language of your life?—"O God, I do not love Thee. I wish Thou

wert not so holy ; I wish Thou wouldst not haunt me. I sometimes try to love Thee by hoping that Thou art kind and easy and indulgent to the foibles of poor wretches. But when I turn to the Bible my mind shuts up : I cannot love a God so righteous, strict, and true." Is not this the language of your life?—"O Christ, I cannot thank Thee. That kingdom of heaven which Thou didst open is not one into which I desire to enter. That heaven which Thou didst purchase has no attractions for me, except as the only asylum from hell. If it was to save from sin that Thou didst die, I have no present wish for such salvation."

And this brings out what is possibly the main point after all : "the pleasures of sin." I have no doubt that Christ's great competitor is Sin, and if it were not for some habit, evil and inveterate, perhaps the most of men would be Christians.

I cannot agree with those who speak as if sin had no pleasures. Surely all experience is against them. Probably the consciousness of many here contradicts them. If there were not something very sweet in the devil's bait, would so many nibble at it with full knowledge that a fatal hook is lurking underneath ? if the flowers were not fair and the fruits were not tempting, would so many venture within the precincts where prowls the murderer of souls ?

To some intoxication has its pleasures. They like to forget their misery or to feel their powers enhanced by the false and flattering cup ; or they like to look at life with the purple tints it wears as seen through the mant-

ling amethyst. Such pleasures has this sin, that they will drink though ruin stares them in the face. They will drink though the clothes are rotting off their backs, and the flesh is wasting from their bones. They will drink though decent friends are dropping off and desolation reigns in their joyless and dismantled dwelling. They will drink although in their sober intervals spectres haunt their brain, and God's own warning, "Drunkards shall have their portion in the lake that burneth," is fearfully countersigned by the fire already kindled in their bosom.

Others cannot resist the pleasures of sense and the gratification of the coarsest appetites. The books they read are bad; the places they frequent are infamous; their very "mind and conscience are defiled," and "having eyes full of adultery they cannot cease from sin." It is a shame to *speuk* of the things *they do*; but surely they would not do them if they did not feel some fearful fascination in their swinish paradise.

To some a pleasant sin is gambling. They know it to be wrong, they feel it to be low, they confess that it is foolish; but they still go on. They have burnt their fingers once or twice, but still their fingers itch for the golden pieces which the tempter holds out to them in his red-hot tongs; and rather than not bet or go back to the billiard-room they will risk the workhouse and the prison, the outlaw's hue and cry, the gambler's blood-besprinkled grave.

No indeed, there is no use to deny a fact so clear and manifest. Sin has its pleasures. Some of these pleasures are so great as to act on certain minds like a spell or a

sorcery. Like the little bird within spring of the rattlesnake, they look uneasy at sight of their enchanting enemy, and flap their wings, and flutter to and fro, and do everything but the one thing that would save them—everything but fly away. Sin has its pleasures, and consequently the minister of Christ pleads at a prodigious disadvantage, for he can only appeal and argue from without, whilst sin has already its advocate within.

Yet, brethren, try to look at it dispassionately. We admit that sin has its pleasures; must you not admit that it has also its pains? Is there not sometimes pain at the moment—a musk-rat in the bottle—wormwood in the wine—the miserable mar-all consciousness that you are doing wrong? the consciousness that this Sunday excursion is clouded by God's frown—the consciousness that in these gains of ungodliness you are resisted by a father's prayer? And when the pleasure is over, is there not often a pain in what follows? When the crackling of the thorns has subsided, do you find aught but the ashes—perhaps too the scorpions which the fire has awakened? The debauch is over—not so the headache; the night at the casino is over—but when will be an end to its consequences? the race-week is over, but when will its debts be discharged, and when will you see an end to its debasing or dishonest entanglements? And what of the lucid intervals? When moments of reflection clear and sober come—what do you think of yourself? You who have been living the beast life, who have thrown the rein on the neck of appetite and allowed it to run away with the man and the immortal, what can you say for yourself?

You who have wilfully put out the eyes of your understanding and doomed the mighty Samson to work so gross and grovelling—what say you for your moral suicide? What say you for having slain and buried the purest tastes and highest powers which God had given you? And you who have been living the demon-life—who as the sceptic or seducer have ruined another's hope or another's virtue—who as the gambler have expatriated yourself from the domain of Providence and been obliged to give up prayer—what say you for converting into instruments of iniquity those very faculties which might have been used to serve God and bless your brethren?—what say you for all the ruin you have wrought and which you never can restore?

Perhaps this is a lucid interval. So think now what you will think at last. These pleasures of sin “are but for a season.” Another world awaits you, and oh how soon its unending realities may enclasp you! It is the prospect of that world which gives such importance and urgency to the present. My hearer, you are to exist for ever! Your Creator has given you the priceless but awful endowment of immortality. Oh do not make that immortality a perpetuity of woe!

“As on a sphere all smooth and round,  
End and beginning are not found;  
For ever, even thus with thee—  
Unending, vast Eternity,  
Eternity! Eternity!  
How long art thou, Eternity!  
O Man, full oft thy thoughts should dwell  
Upon the pains of sin and hell,

And on the glories of the pure,  
That both beyond all time endure.  
Ponder, O Man, Eternity!"

Of that eternity you are soon to be the inhabitant, and whatever you are when you enter it, that you must continue all throughout. And sin has no pleasures there. The season of enjoyment is past; the season of remorse and punishment has come. Even now you are not without the occasional presentiment—for although you may bury your sense of immortality you cannot extinguish it: you may besot and stupefy it, but it wakes again. O that it would cry so loud as to scare you from your sins before you hear the waves of the eternal ocean chiming, "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still; he that is holy, let him be holy still." O that it would rouse you who are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, before you hear that strange and startling sentence, irresistible, irrevocable, that inverted gospel which your own impenitence extorts from no other lips than those of a long-rejected Saviour, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

Oh brethren, look away from the things present, have respect to the recompense of reward. Those prudential prospective faculties which you use so often to secure a temporal good, use them to insure a holy and happy immortality; that self-denial which you often exert, abjuring for days and years together ease and enjoyment, in order to win wealth or fame, exert it here, and in order to insure an eternity of blessedness renounce for the season of this mortal pilgrimage the pleasures of sin.

“The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence,” and there is no effort so vehement but it would be worth while to exert it here. In order to break off from the society of a bad companion, towards whom he felt a fatal fascination, we have read how Alfieri the Italian dramatist got his hair cropped, so that he should be unfit to go out of doors, and made his servants bind him in his own arm-chair till he was cured of his infatuation. And such are the struggles of men in earnest. By force like this should you take the kingdom of heaven rather than lose it altogether. By force like this should you rescue from the enemies now swarming over it that pearl of great price, your never-dying soul.

Yet, after all, it is not *force* for which there is occasion here so much as *faith*. Moses opened his eyes, and illusions fled away. He put his hand in the hand of God, and forth from the impure and idolatrous purlieus of Memphis was led by way of Midian and Sinai and Pisgah to heaven. By faith he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; but in so doing he rose to a higher rank, for at once God called him His son. By faith he renounced a fortune purchased by sinful compliances, and instantly found that he was richer than ever,—rich in peace of conscience and in the friendship of All-sufficiency. By faith he forsook Egypt, and in that very forsaking found life everlasting. By faith he surrendered the pleasures of sin; at the very longest they could have only lasted for fourscore years, and must have run very low before the end of that “season:” for three thousand years he has been enjoying the pleasures which are at

God's right hand,—pleasures which neither pall nor perish, for they are pleasures evermore.

So, dear brethren, look away from the things immediately surrounding, and surrender to the influence of those which are not the less urgent because “invisible.” By faith you know that you must die, although that final hour of your earthly history is not seen as yet; and when it comes the merriest of companions will be but a sorry comforter. You will want some one who can go into God's presence with you and so befriend you there as to take off the terror which must otherwise attend a guilty creature's interview with his Sovereign and Judge. But by faith you know—if not, learn it on the instant,—that there is a Friend of sinners, God's beloved Son, who will with all zeal and all efficacy perform that gracious office then, if you accept His friendship now. He is invisible, but He is not far away. He is here present; and how it would rejoice His tender generous heart if this very moment you would say, “Lord Jesus, Thou art worthy, and to Thee I give myself, body, soul, and spirit, to be for ever Thine. Lord Jesus, Thou art mighty: keep me from sin and Satan; keep me to Thy heavenly kingdom. Lord Jesus, Thou art merciful: wash away my sins in Thy own most precious blood; take me from the fearful pit and put into my mouth the new song of the pardoned sinner:—

‘A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,  
On Thy kind arms I fall;  
Be Thou my strength and righteousness,  
My Saviour and my All.’”

On the night after Hedley Vicars read in his Bible, “The



blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin," he could hardly sleep for thinking over that most wonderful of all truths which a sinner can discover. But it was enough. His mind was made up. "If this be true for me, henceforth, by the grace of God, I will live as a man should live who has been washed in the blood of Jesus Christ." He displayed his banner. The Bible, lying open on his table at this passage was thenceforward to tell what a Saviour he had found, and under whose colours he intended to march the rest of his journey. And God gave him grace to hold on, till in the trenches of Sebastopol the bullet pierced his heart, and the good fight was ended. Oh my friends, young and old, who are not yet decided, may God give you grace to do as that gallant soldier did, as did the most illustrious of all the Hebrews! May He so reveal to you the surpassing worth of your never-dying soul, and the peerless claims of the Son of God the Saviour, that there shall henceforth be no more halting betwixt two opinions, but that for you to live henceforward shall be CHRIST—the sole foundation of your hopes, the supreme object of your affection! Oh that the Holy Spirit would in His mercy make you wise and make you willing! Oh that He would make this a time much to be remembered, and this place to you ever sacred and ever dear as the valley of decision!

No; do not say, I will attend to it very soon, but this is not a convenient season. Perhaps it is not convenient; perhaps you have projects in view or engagements in hand which prevent you from instantly commencing a Christian career. If so, it would be better to abandon

them instantly; for if you wait till the devil gives you leave to come to Christ, you will wait too long; if you wait till pride and vanity, till worldly-mindedness and sinful passions, give their vote for goodness and for God, you will wait till repentance comes too late, and wisdom costs too dear. But why delay? Is it anything so dreadful that you are asked to do? Is it such a hardship to give up husks for royal dainties—the prodigal's rags for robes of beauty—the swineherd's hovel for the Father's bosom? You say this season is not for you convenient. But is there no other whose convenience ought to be consulted? Must the teacher wait till it is convenient for the pupil to take his lesson? Must the sovereign be kept waiting till the criminal shall make up his mind about accepting the pardon? Must the physician wait till the patient, who has received an envenomed wound, shall have leisure to take the remedies? Must the Saviour stand here, and follow you hence, and hover round you, offering you that pardon which He purchased with His blood? and is He bound to wait till you are disengaged, or have a fit of sickness, or some scrap of useless time to spare for Him? And must that kind Monitor and Persuader, who has so oft dealt with you, and despite your inveterate earthliness almost persuaded you, must the Holy Spirit wait till you are willing to be made more willing? Ah! I know not how it may be with you, but with that God whom you have offended, and who now offers to be reconciled, *this* is the time convenient. With that Saviour who this day holds out His arms of invitation, saying to you, O sinner, "Come unto me," this is

the time convenient. With that gracious Convincer who this moment makes you anxious in order to make you happy for ever, to-day, this hour, is the time convenient. Oh then harden not your heart! With God this is the day of grace—this is the accepted time; let it be to you also the convenient season, and then it will be the day of salvation!

## IV.

### THE FATHER OF HISTORY.

#### BOOK OF GENESIS—CHAP. I.—L.

ONE of the most delightful books which ancient Greece has handed down to us is the History of Herodotus. With its old stories of Persia, Egypt, and Babylon—with its romantic episodes and amusing anecdotes—with its clever sketches of character and its interesting details regarding countries which the writer actually visited, all given off with matchless simplicity and freshness, in a style free, open, and flowing, it forms a repertory of entertainment and instruction of which the reader never wearies, and to which, all its credulity and superstition notwithstanding, we return from time to time with affectionate gratitude. Its nine books, dedicated to the nine Muses, are said to have been publicly read over to the Athenians, who rewarded the recital with a vote of ten talents (£2400); and, Homer excepted, no Greek author has taken such hold of succeeding generations as he whom, with fond consent, they have agreed to call “The Father of History.”

There is no risk that we shall pluck a leaf from these ancient laurels if we remark that there is another more strictly entitled to the epithet. For the true Father of History we must go back a thousand years before the

days of Herodotus; and the fact that it forms a portion of the sacred canon is no reason why we should close our eyes on the historic value of the first book of the Bible and its many incidental charms.

We have already so far traced the history of Moses. Born in the midst of mournful circumstances, but miraculously preserved, we have seen him brought up amidst wealth and luxury and brilliant expectations; we have seen him initiated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and have no doubt that geometry and the movements of the heavenly bodies, with the jurisprudence and chronology of that wise and ancient people, became familiar to his mind. But although adorned with these "Egyptian jewels," we have seen how his heart continued loyal to his own people, and how, disdainful of the bribes of ambition, he quitted the tyrant's palace a Hebrew and a patriot. We have seen how the active and athletic frame into which his godly childhood had grown, prophetic of a green and energetic old age, was animated by the soul of a hero; and in our last lecture we saw that patriot and hero come out the noblest style of manhood,—a saint renouncing the pleasures of sin,—a believer casting himself on the protection and promises of God. We saw him an exile and an outlaw, escaping to a sublime but lonely region, and finding an asylum in a good man's tent, where, amidst simple pursuits, domestic affections, and the society of those by whom the true God was known and worshipped, Egypt and its enjoyments, if not Egypt and its captives, could easily be forgotten.

Here it was, we have little doubt, that he wrote the

Book of Genesis. How much of its information lingered in the memory of the Israelites, how many of its narratives and incidents had, with other patriarchal traditions, come down in the family of Jethro, it is idle to inquire, because impossible to ascertain. Enough for us to know that it is a portion of that canon to which the Saviour pointed when He said, "Search the Scriptures, for they are they which testify of me;" and of which St. Paul declares, "They are all given by inspiration of God." And we may just add, that with what has recently come to light of Egyptian theology and cosmogony, it is the last book which an Egyptian, or one learned in no other "wisdom" than theirs, could have written.

There are two ways in which the Book of Genesis throws light on its author. It helps to show us what manner of man he was, and it shows how far he was furnished for the work God had given him to do.

True, the book is inspired, but it is all the more expressive of its author on this account. Believing as we do the plenary inspiration of Scripture, we deprecate the theory which confounds a true inspiration with a mere mechanical instrumentation. An organ is an instrument. To the hand of a mighty master it yields effects which it might never otherwise have entered into the heart of man to conceive, but when that hand is withdrawn it falls mute and dead. Before Milton or Handel touched it, it was not thinking of Bethlehem or Messiah, and now that the strain is ended there is no longer any actual sympathy between the engine and the theme which it discoursed so grandly. But a mind, if it be an instrument, is also a

great deal more. With its intelligence and will, with its affections and feelings, when God uses as His instrument the mind of man, He does homage to the laws with which He has Himself impressed it, and brings it into unison with His own ; and setting aside the exceptional cases of Balaam and Annas, we may safely affirm that when God condescends to give forth His mind through the minds of our fellow-men, the prophecy and the character of the prophet are in keeping. Glorious gospels are not proclaimed by fierce and fiery Hildebrands, and great tribulations are not predicted by smart and dapper seers, who buy consols with the proceeds ; but just as *holy* men speak as they are moved by the *Holy* Spirit, we expect a congruity throughout. We expect that the light-giver will be himself enlightened ; that the utterer of great thoughts will be himself a thinker ; that the evangelist's own feet will be beautiful on the mountains ; that the life of a Jeremiah will be itself a lamentation. In other words, instead of setting aside the penman, or using him as a mere mouthpiece or machine, we expect to find the prophet full of his own oracle ; the sacred scribe his own volume impersonate and alive. The men of God we expect to find the truest types at once of manhood and of godliness ; God's men, but still men, our fellow-men, men of like passions with ourselves ; and none the less because it constitutes a portion of God's own book, do we regard the first volume of the Pentateuch as one of the books of Moses : a book indicative of his belief and his feelings, of his intelligence, of his taste, of his habits of thought and tone of mind.

Try to isolate this book. Imagine that it is once again what Genesis was once before, all the Bible in the world, then try to form from it a little summary of religion, a little system of theology, and you will be surprised to see how clear and ample is the light which, let forth from God, it sheds on man. Of God it teaches at once the spirituality and unity, revealing Him as the Supreme Creator, the ever-present, ever-watchful Governor. In the instantaneous expulsion from Eden it exhibits the strictness of His threatenings, in His dealings with Abraham and his descendants, the steadfastness of His promises. In Enoch, with his early assumption to congenial climes, it shows God's affection for His children, and the fond delight with which He takes all goodness to its proper home, even as we have the opposite abhorrence of iniquity in that Nemesis which, at the moment of his crime, clutched the first murderer, and, with fiery brain and branded brow, hurried him away from all but his own horrible companionship. That same revulsion from evil we perceive in the deluge which washed over a polluted world, and in the midst of their orgies swept down into the abyss the revellers obscene; and the same lesson we read again in the flames which, like a blot from the landscape, burned out Sodom. Yet God's mercy and patience and long-suffering, how soft and full they shine in the 120 years' reprieve granted to the guilty antediluvians, in those constant concessions to the cities of the plain, which only ceased when Abraham was ashamed to ask. And, so to put it, which of us could desire a God more gracious, more kind and condescending, than He



who talked with Adam in the bowers of Paradise, and with whom Enoch walked in the solitude of the surrounding wickedness? Which of us could desire a pavilion more secure or a portion more divine than opened to Abraham in the words, "Fear not, Abram, for I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward"? Who could desire a protector more assiduous and more provident than the Guardian who stood by Joseph in the dungeon as truly as on the steps of Pharaoh's throne; or who could seek a trustee and administrator more faithful and powerful than that great Covenant-keeper who gathered to their fathers, took to the abode of their godly ancestors, each successive patriarch, and at the same time watched so carefully the fortunes of their surviving and often sinful descendants?

Then for Man. In this little book we have man's original rectitude and innocence; we have the account of his early fall, with its forfeiture of God's friendship; and, both in the old-world fathers and in the races which radiated from around Mount Ararat, we have, in countless developments, the evil and worse-ward tendencies of unaided unsanctified human nature.

But at the same time we have in this little volume the two sublimest and most sustaining truths which bear upon the history of our species; the one distinctly announced, the other more dimly foreshadowed. What is man, and whence comes he? is a question which the wisest of antiquity have asked, and which was often most absurdly answered. Prometheus made a statue, then lighted a torch at the chariot of the sun, and man, the

fire-kindler, became king of the other creatures. Cadmus killed a dragon, and sowed in the ground its teeth, and they sprang up a crop of warriors ready armed. Deucalion and his wife found themselves in a drowned and desolate world, beginning to dry up; and, directed by an oracle, they flung stones backward over their shoulder, and shortly afterwards from the soft warm mud sprang forth the various nations of mankind. But, taught by the Almighty Maker himself, Moses tells how from earthly elements God formed man's body, and how, from God himself, and His inbreathing, came man's soul. "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." But what about that soul? What other soul or spirit did it most resemble? The soul of the surrounding creatures, or that of some pre-existing race of spirits elsewhere? Wonder, O heavens! and, O man, be astonished at thy own prerogative! "God created man in his own image; in the image of God created He him." By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God; and by faith we understand that a house eternal awaits elsewhere the renewed and ransomed spirit: but surely it needs the same faith to credit this astounding declaration. To look round on man as he actually is, to look round on him as he met the eyes of Moses—brutalized, besotted, scant of intellect,—and through the disfiguring filth and wretchedness espy the immortal, the run-away child of the Eternal, it needs great faith; but he who, with Moses, knows that it is true, needs no poet to proclaim the dignity of human

nature, and he need not stagger at aught which God deems fit to do for the recovery of a nature originally so exalted, and for the reinstatement of children once so dear, and still so tenderly desired.

“*God made man after His own image.*” Behold the fact surpassing fable! Behold the faithful saying which should make each man a terror and a glory, a grief and a rejoicing to himself! Is it so? Is this understanding of mine an image of God’s intelligence?—this imagination of mine an image of God’s immensity?—this immortality of mine an image of God’s eternity? This soul which I have got, was it made on purpose to love the holy as God loves it?—to shed affection and blessing and goodwill as these pour with sun-like constancy from God’s own beneficence?—was it made to commune with the Most High in lowly confidence and ever nearing intimacy? Then what a work there is for thee, O Spirit of all grace, to bring this nature, so debauched, debased, to bring it back to its first estate! and to recover tastes pure and holy, aspirations high and heavenly, what a work is there for myself! “**GOD MADE MAN AFTER HIS OWN IMAGE.**” That one sentence at the opening of the Bible accounts for all that follows. It shows how important is the race which was about to become the subject of a great experiment, and the man who believes this sentence—a sentence which to mental science gives new grandeur, and to man himself an awful and august significance—has no right to stagger at any interposition which Divine goodness might prompt or Divine wisdom devise on behalf of a race so illustrious in its origin and so vast in its capabilities, if

withal so woful in its self-entailed ruin. "Great is the mystery of godliness,—God manifest in flesh." But if it does not diminish the mystery, it gives the antecedent possibility when we read regarding the race thus distinguished, "God made man after His own image."

Alongside of man's exalted origin thus clearly revealed, Moses knew the good which God had in store for him, although in more obscure presentiment. In this same Genesis is preserved that germ of all subsequent gospels,—the promise spoken in Paradise, and which assured the disconsolate Mother of Mankind that her offspring should crush the head of the Deceiver. Here is also preserved that great promise to the Father of the selected Family: "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." And here too is recorded dying Israel's prediction: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh (the Prince of Peace or Rest-giver<sup>1</sup>) come, and to Him the people shall adhere,"—the nations shall gather. And whatever might be the specific form which the promise assumed to Moses' wistful and forth-going fancy, as he looked on the sin and the misery—as he recalled the groans of the brick-bakers in Egypt and the blows of their taskmasters—as he saw on every side the trail of the serpent and the work of the destroyer,—he exulted in the hope of a great deliverer, who, breaking Israel's yoke and giving rest to the nations, should bruise the head of the serpent and to all families of the earth be a blessing.

Compiled from the Book of Genesis, such we believe to

<sup>1</sup> Hengstenberg's *Christology*, i. 46.

have been in substance the creed of Moses. It was a possession unspeakably more precious than all the wisdom he acquired in Egypt, and in conjunction with his patriotism, his gallantry, and his expansion of mind, it wonderfully fitted him for the work God designed him to do. Even before that special manifestation at the burning bush, the Most High was to him no unknown God, and entering on the tremendous undertaking to which he was called as Israel's Liberator and Law-giver, it was of infinite value to have his spirit sustained by considerations so exalted and motives so sublime as those which must have been familiar to the mind pervaded by the sayings of that one book.

Of the contents of this most comprehensive book it is hardly possible in a few flying sentences to present an epitome. Commencing with the commencement of our human history; nay, we may say commencing with the commencement of the universe—for it tells that the universe is not eternal: it had a beginning and God is its Creator—commencing with the dawn of human history, it exhibits man at home in his own world, with the production of six creative days all ready around him, the plants and animals so various, so beautiful, and so fitted for man's use. There is rest and there is worship—for it is the Sabbath—the first in a long series. Then come work, observation, intelligence, culture, the muster of the animals named by an acute and friendly naturalist, that tilling and dressing of the ground in which man exercises his delegated faculty as a subordinate creator and improver, making that which is already "good" still better; that

social converse which is the still more important culture of himself. Then follows the first sin,—the first shame,—the first flight from God's presence. Then comes the first death,—a very dismal one,—the death of one who had brought back to earth much of the lost innocence and piety; a death amidst blows and bloodshed; a death by that dear hand which in tottering infancy the younger brother had often clasped as much for love as guidance; a death which leaves the afflicted parents doubly desolate, for their one son is in a martyr's early grave, and their other son is the murderer. Sin worketh death; and we have the development in that old world's depravity, till the Flood comes and clears it all away. The Ark is aground on Ararat, and for a moment there is devotion, there is gratitude. But Noah's altar has scarcely ceased to smoke, above the dripping crags and from the sundering clouds the rainbow flag has scarcely disappeared, when on the soil of the rescued family sin is sprouting faster than blades of grass are springing from the surface of the soft and reeking earth. And by and bye we see the Tower of Babel rising, with its proud effort to lift the name of Nimrod to the stars, and form a capital for all mankind. But lo! by a strange confusion in their speech, we see the centripetal attraction suddenly exchanged for a centrifugal repulsion, and from around the stunted, unfinished tower the vexed and alienated clans are pressing outward, each along his separate radius,—to meet no more till one great speech shall reunite the fragments of the exploded family. Having sent forth on their several ways the races still so interesting: those sons of

Ham, on whom a father's fault has long pressed heavily; those phlegmatic sons of Shem, with whom India and China still are teeming; and those others with the flowing beard and flashing eye, in whom we still recognise the Arab and the Jew; and last of all, those sons of Japheth, by whom the isles of the Gentiles should be peopled—pilgrims of the square forehead, the sturdy step, and iron sinew,—having for the present sent away to harden amidst their northern mists and snows these future tutors and rulers of mankind, till such season as they should reappear and take up their residence in the tents of Shem,—the record narrows in, and leaving the history of the world, the sacred penman restricts himself to the fortunes of the peculiar people. And throughout those nine-and-thirty chapters which it fills, that history is rather a succession of family records than the annals of a nation. Patriarch follows patriarch, and many an incidental personage flits across the scene. But even at the last the clan only musters threescore souls and ten, and it is only in the four centuries which lie betwixt Genesis and Exodus that the Abrahamic clan has grown into the great and numerous Hebrew nation.

To no historian was it ever permitted to recite events so stupendous as rise one after another in the opening chapters of Genesis, nor incidents more striking and touching or more fraught with special Providence than those which fill the remainder. And although we do not forget the protest of Heinrich Heine against Longinus and the critics who have attempted to point out the beauties of the Bible: "Vain words, your talk of its sublimity, its

simplicity : vain tests of human judgment. It is God's production,—like a tree, like a flower, like the ocean, like Man himself,—it is the Word of God ; that, and no more,"<sup>1</sup>—yet, as we have said, there is a human under-side, and we cannot help forming our own inference as to an author's dispositions from the way he performs his work, from the incidents he selects, from the scenes on which he dwells, from the conclusions which he forces his readers to deduce. Tried by that standard no author can be greater or more good. What tenderness flows forth in that tale of peerless pathos, Joseph and his brethren ; what sympathy with the high-souled, self-spurning Abraham in his restoration of the spoil and in his purchase of Machpelah ; what a love of rural quiet and pastoral simplicity in the fond minuteness with which he paints Abraham's interviews at Mamre, Eleazar's confidential embassy, Jacob's flight and adventures at Bethel, at Padan-aram, at the brook Jabbok ; what clear-eyed faith, what devout recognition of the Most High everywhere ! And although the grandeur of the themes be itself explanation sufficient, has it not in some measure been owing to the Divine artlessness and power of the narrative that Genesis has gathered towards itself so much of the genius of Christendom ? And after gazing on the ' Deluge ' of Turner or listening to the ' Creation ' of Haydn, after reading Vondel's *Lucifer*, or Milton's *Paradise Lost*, *The Death of Abel* by Gesner, *The World before the Flood* by Montgomery, how is it that it all feels so familiar and so fundamentally true, unless it be that the

<sup>1</sup> *Edinburgh Review*, vol. civ. 208.



original has been sketched in outlines so firm, with tints so transparent and details so suggestive, that the world could not bear the books which might be written, by expanding the great facts embodied in this Book of the Beginning?

For Moses we claim that he is the true Father of History; and what a delightful study would be the annals of our species, if always written in his spirit, so devout and candid and God-recognising! Even as it is, pens the most flippant have unconsciously recorded the fulfilment of prophecy, and the most hostile witnesses have been betrayed into involuntary recognitions of God's ever-working and all-commanding Providence; whilst in the pages of Sismondi and Guizot, of Merle and Neander, of the old Thuanus and the recent Müller, the devout student joyfully recognises the outstretched arm of that great Governor among the nations, who is wise in counsel and excellent in working.

Of good history there is already more than any one here present is ever likely to overtake; but it is a literature of that kind for which there will be scope and fitness in the leisure of a coming world. Amongst the spirits made perfect will there not be some who shall still look back with wistful interest to that strange and intricate scene in which they once were actors, and who, with the fuller lights supplied by the archives of the Upper Sanctuary, will love to trace again Earth's finished story? Even now the subject is full of interest, and, amidst all its appeals to our human sympathies, he is blind indeed who is not startled ever and anon by the sundering of the

cloud, and the coming forth of a resistless and ever-watchful Sovereignty.

Still, interesting as is the past, I must confess our personal concern lies mainly with the present and the future. In reading these bygone records our indignation is often roused by instances of great wickedness or stupendous folly, and we cannot help feeling chagrined and mortified when we see splendid opportunities vilely thrown away. But each of us is at this moment *making* history; each of us has the option of securing an everlasting abode in those regions to which Moses and all the best and wisest of past ages are already gone. Surely we don't mean to squander our accepted time and throw away this opportunity, and so furnish angel witnesses with a new occasion for astonishment, and ourselves with the materials of unending and unavailing regret. Indeed, my dear friends, if your taste be in unison with this evening's theme, let me make that very circumstance a motive and an argument for sparing no diligence so as to make salvation sure. In giving you the thirst for knowledge, God has taken you out of the common herd. Won't you suffer Him to take you into a company still more select and favoured, by awaking within you the "hunger after righteousness"? If the two co-exist, ample satisfactions are in store for you; but it will be very sad to carry hence an eager, expansive intellect, but in virtue of a heart godless, sensual, and unsanctified, to find yourself in that outer darkness where a superior understanding will only prove a sorer privation and a severer punishment. There are some historic facts to which you have not sufficiently adverted,

and they differ from many which you read in your favourite authors, in as far as you are personally implicated, and are yet to come in contact with the Great Agent in them. The Incarnation of the Son of God, His death at Jerusalem, and the commission with which He intrusted disciples before ascending into heaven,—these events are not only amongst the best-authenticated incidents in our earthly annals, but to every man who knows them they are full of anxious import. O be entreated to advert to them, and dwell upon them, till they become the hinges of your happier history ; dwell upon them till, with its simple key, the gospel opens for you a door in your vale of trouble, and lets you out into a golden future ; dwell upon them till, not in knowledge only, but in righteousness and true holiness, your mind is renewed after the image of the second Adam ; dwell upon them till Christ's resurrection has bridged a path over your own grave, and His ascension and intercession have taught your thoughts to mount toward heaven.

## V.

### THE CALL.

“ Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian · and he led the flock to the back-side of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. And the Angel of the Lord appeared unto him,” etc.—Ex. iii. 1, 2.

THE fortunes of the little Hebrew foundling we have so far traced. By a remarkable Providence we have seen the child of slavery transferred from the hovel to the palace, or rather from the jaws of the crocodile to the arms of a princess. We have seen him growing up a scholar, an inquiring spirit, intellectual and well informed,—a master of such wisdom as Egypt could supply; we have seen him coming out a hero and a patriot, even in the court of Pharaoh unable to forget that he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews; and at last, from devotion to his own down-trampled brethren, casting away all prospects of earthly promotion, and jeopardizing his life in the quarrel of his country. We have seen him the fugitive and the exile, and last Lecture we devoted to what is believed to have been one of the employments of his seclusion, and, without forgetting the Divine original of Genesis, we considered his claims and characteristics as the Father of History.

Quiet and happy lives make poor materials for bio-

graphy. The tourist who journeys from Rotterdam up the Rhine seldom looks at the river, for whatsoever may be the wealth afloat on its bosom, whatsoever the fertility conveyed by its waters, there is nothing striking or arresting in its current; and it is only when vexed into rapids at the Lurlei, or when it comes in a thundering cataract down at Schaffhausen, that eyes which watched the clouds or ranged along the banks are recalled to the forgotten stream. So of the three stages of his history Moses would probably have named as the happiest his forty years in the land of Midian. They were very obscure and inconspicuous. It was a great change from the court-end of Memphis, the fashionable quarter of Egypt's metropolis, to the back of the desert; it was a great change from a palace to the scanty accommodation of a tent, and from commanding an army it was a greater change to herding sheep. But "the mind is its own place," and the greatest minds are the least dependent on outward accommodations. The pleasures of Egypt were far from unalloyed. They were too mainly the joys of sense, and were so mixed up with idolatrous observances as to pollute and poison them all, and make them no better than "pleasures of sin." But with the meditative leisure he enjoyed amongst the lonely mountains, with the piety which he found in the homestead of the priest of Midian, and with the domestic affection to which he returned when in the cool of the day he brought back his flock to the canvas village, and Zipporah and his boy came forth to meet him, he was thankful for his peaceful seclusion, and felt what another was afterwards to sing,

“The Lord is my shepherd; He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness.”

There had once been a period when Moses had hoped to deliver Israel. How this hope had arisen—whether, as Josephus says (*Ant.* ii. 9. 3), a Divine premonition of his father had been communicated by Amram to his son, or whether his exalted position had whispered the hope to his patriotism,—sure enough not only had Moses been led to cherish the noble purpose, but (as Stephen relates) “he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them.”<sup>1</sup> That hope had been thwarted. It had been thwarted in circumstances as mortifying to self-love as they were calculated to quench his patriotism. “Who made thee a prince and a judge over us?” and after forsaking the court and casting himself on his own countrymen, they plainly told him that they did not want his services. Proscribed by the king and repudiated by his own brethren, nothing remained to him except to flee. And it would seem as if, in the asylum which he found, his ambitious projects had died away. Probably news did not travel very fast from Memphis to Midian, and in the mood of both Egyptians and Israelites it was prudent not to apprise any of his hiding-place. But all unconsciously the preparation was advancing in the school of God’s selecting; and of that preparation not the least was the *meekening* process in the mind of God’s destined agent and envoy.

John Knox was forty-two before he began to preach.

<sup>1</sup> Acts vii. 25.

To himself it was a great surprise when he was summoned to the work. Already in writing and in conversational discussion he had served the cause of truth; but when an unexpected appeal was made to him and a solemn charge laid upon him, "the said John, abashed, burst forth in most abundant tears, and withdrew himself to his chamber. His countenance and behaviour from that day till the day that he was compelled to present himself to the public place of preaching, did sufficiently declare the grief and trouble of his heart; for no man saw any sign of mirth of him, neither yet had he pleasure to accompany any man, many days together." Yet it was no faltering in the faith, nor was it any fear for himself that made him hesitate; for when the next Sunday came and with it the first sermon, the hearers exclaimed, "Others *sneel* the branches of the Papistry, but he strikes at the root," and others more ominously hinted, "George Wishart spake never so plainly, and yet he was burnt: even so will he be."<sup>1</sup>

In early life spirits are high and hope is sanguine, and therefore it is fortunate that in early life most persons get committed to their career. But Moses was about to commence an undertaking for which the self-reliance of a sanguine temperament would have been wholly insufficient. Had he been encouraged in his first attempt, had he found his compatriots ready to revolt when he was prepared to be their leader, we can imagine a successful insurrection. The Israelites were very numerous, and a sudden servile rising of half a million, most of them con-

<sup>1</sup> *Knox's Works* by Laing, i. 188, 192.

centred in one region, might have found the effeminate Egyptians off their guard, and before they could rally an exodus might have been effected, and by a sudden dash across the shorter desert a portion of southern Canaan might easily have been wrenched from the unprepared inhabitants; and so in a few days and by a succession of brilliant strokes the bondage of centuries might have ended in a speedy and triumphant return to Palestine. In that event, however, the training and purifying processes of the long wilderness would have all been superseded, and instead of entering the Land of Promise a peculiar people, God-guided and God-governed, they would have tumultuated into their new abode a mob of self-emancipated slaves and self-gratulating victors, with the vices of Egypt still uncured, and utterly unfitted to subserve Jehovah's special purpose.

In accordance, therefore, with the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, although much to the mortification of the moment, when in the flush of youthful enthusiasm—for at forty he was young—Moses offered his services, they were ungraciously declined, and the disappointed patriot seems to have abandoned all hope of being Israel's deliverer. But from the instant that he despaired of himself he began to grow fit for God's purpose. He whose way it has ever been to thrust down the mighty from their seats could now answer the question, "By whom shall Israel arise?" for Moses had grown humble and meek. In the long and sequestered years he had learned to know his own deficiencies, and in any work to which God might call him he was prepared to



merge himself in the will of the Most High. Instead of rushing on the work in vain-glorious confidence, he would now feel that it was one which God alone could accomplish. Instead of starting up the self-constituted agitator and orator, he was now prepared to go before Pharaoh in calm superhuman solemnity as Jehovah's messenger. And instead of maturing his own plans and devising his own expedients, and giving forth his own orders, he was in that state of mind which no longer caters for applause, but, prefacing its oracles with "Thus saith the Lord," ascribes of all prosperous achievement the glory to Him from whom all glories are.

When a youth leaves school or ends his course at college he is apt to feel a certain complacency. He knows three or four languages, and astronomy, and geography, and, in short, more or less of all things knowable. So learned is he that he would not like to be thought ignorant of anything, and would almost blush to be asked a question which he could not answer. But wait for twenty years; and although at the end of that time he has immeasurably extended his attainments, and is now so far a master or monopolist in some department as to receive homage from adepts and pilgrimages from strangers,—with himself far more profound than the sense of proficiency is the sense of imperfection, and whilst he sighs over vast departments on which he can never hope to enter, there is no phrase he uses oftener than the one formerly so much evaded, "I don't know." When a man begins a religious life, there is apt to be a self-complacent stage in his incipient piety. His conduct is correct.

Compared with some older Christians, there is more fervour in his zeal, more freshness in his feelings. In worship, praise and thanksgiving and intercession are the exercises in which his spirit is freely carried forth; he could almost dispense with confession. But as the years move on, he has apparently grown worse; for although others speak of him as so good a man, to take his own account his character is made up of desiderata, his career is all one shortcoming. There was once a time when Moses thought that he was the man to deliver Israel. But now when God actually proposes it, he is startled, almost petrified. "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and bring forth the children of Israel?" Are not you the son of Pharaoh's daughter and the topmost man among your people—the fosterling of royalty—the favourite of fortune—the statesman and the sage? and if not you, who is there else? But all these proud swelling thoughts have long since subsided, and Moses has again in his own eyes dwindled down into the son of the Hebrew thrall and the herdman of Jethro's cattle. And so as regarded superior sanctity, personal prowess, the gift of persuasive oratory—on every attribute of special aptitude for such a work he founded a special difficulty; and the man who earlier in the day had been so little deterred by any felt deficiency that he would have volunteered on the service, now that he is summoned to assume it he has only one plea after another: "They will ask me, What is God's name? They will not believe me. They will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee. And then, O my Lord, I am not eloquent."

From a subsequent expression of his father-in-law (iv. 18), it would seem as if Moses had little idea how affairs were proceeding in Egypt; but a new crisis had arisen. The old king was dead. In all likelihood this was an event to which his hapless vassals had looked forward with hope; for however profligate and unprincipled a young prince may be, he is seldom so cruel as a surly old tyrant. But in this instance a Claudius was followed by a Nero, and when the wretched bondmen found that the new sovereign meant to carry through the harsh measures of his father, their spirits failed. They could no longer cheat their misery with the hope of change. They could no longer cheer one another with bulletins of the old king's failing strength and advancing infirmities. The new king was young and strong, and in the course of nature would see half of them into their graves; and with his iron heart and savage humour it was a fearful prospect for themselves and their children. But having no heir-apparent now to look to, they looked—where few of them, it is to be feared, had looked before—they looked to the Lord; and as the cry of their agony pierced the heavens, "God heard their groaning." He remembered His covenant with Abraham, and slight as was the personal claim of the suppliants, He recalled His promise to their believing fathers and resolved to deliver them. But Israel saw no sign. There was no diminution of their tasks, no mollifying on the part of their inexorable masters, no hint of release or holiday: but the sky burnt hot and the rod fell hard as ever. Nay, there was not even an angelic messenger, nor a prophet sent from among their brethren

to bid them bear up and hold on. Yet it was all in motion: the Lord had arisen out of His place and deliverance was at hand; for whilst they were weeping and slaving and pouring forth the petitions of despair in Egypt, the bush was already burning in Horeb and the appointed deliverer was receiving his instructions and commission, and hastening on the path of rescue.

Wherever there is prayer God is present; nay, wherever there is prayer on the part of man, there is an immediate answer on the part of God, although that answer is not always instantly perceptible. The cry may go up from Egypt and the answer may come down at the back of the desert. Nay, God Himself may have come down to the very spot, and may be surveying the sorrow and sustaining the sufferer with a secret but powerful support; and yet, as there is no voice to break the silence, no visible glory to irradiate the gloom, the groaning may still go on and for a time the suppliant may continue to exclaim, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?"

What makes your misery? Perhaps you suffer through your fellow-men, through man's unfairness or man's oppression. You make bricks for the Egyptians. You serve an unkind or thankless master. You are unequally yoked with a companion morose and savage. If so, without omitting any reasonable measure for redress, your true refuge is in prayer. And hitherto all your efforts at extrication may have been allowed to fail just on very purpose to shut you up to this, the true and God-glorifying resource. So, without losing longer time, cry you to

God, and He will hear your groaning, and will come down and deliver you. By softening some stern nature, by opening some stubborn door, by raising up and sending to the rescue some forgotten or unexpected Moses, He will show that your extremity is His opportunity; that there are no circumstances which Omnipotence cannot conquer; no jarring elements or conflicting interests which Infinite Wisdom cannot reconcile.

What makes your misery? You are perhaps in slavery. You are serving divers lusts and passions. The Hebrew is in bondage to the Egyptian. The higher, finer nature is in subjection to the coarser and the worse. You know it, and you sometimes feel it; and as you look on the ignominious fetters, and shake the chains which gall you, you exclaim, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" And you are beginning to see that you cannot deliver yourself. You have tried both force and flight, you have knocked down your tyrant and tormentor, and you have also run away. But here you are again, the slave of appetite, the victim of strong drink, the gambler, the libertine, throwing away your substance in the devil's service, and into the bricks that are to build your own prison kneading up your health, your peace of mind, your reputation. Oh it is a bitter, bitter bondage! the immortal in thralldom to the brute; the foul fiend leading to and fro, with a rope around his neck, one who might have been the heir of heaven! But if you really loathe it, and cry to God by reason of the bondage, He will come down and set you free. His Holy Spirit entering will fill you with a joy and happiness which will leave

no lack and find no need for the pleasures of sin ; and, inspiring you with new and noble tastes, He will fortify you so as to resist and vanquish the temptations which will still be sure to come, until a better nature gets gradually built up within, a nature on which gross allurements exert no more attraction than the garbage which brings the raven to your feet has power to lure the turtle from the bough ; than the husks which the swine do eat have power to bend an angel from his flight. This is a kind which goes out by prayer and fasting. So cry to God. For the glory of His holy name, and for the sake of His interceding Son, beg that He would break that chain with which you have so long been bound, and the links of which your own hands have forged in days of delirious folly ; beg that He would loose you from your bond this very Sabbath-day.

What makes your misery ? Perhaps you are in bondage to a broken and threatening law. A law fulfilled is friendly, and such is the law to which the believer does homage ; a law fulfilled by his Representative, and therefore coming to himself, not to curse and condemn, but to counsel and control, to regulate and guide ; a law that is friendly and propitious for the sake of the law-magnifying Surety, the law-fulfilling Saviour. But perhaps the only law you know is the law which you have broken, and which frowns and looks severe, and says evermore,—“ The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” Or, to put it more plainly, you want to reach the promised land of peace and reconciliation, but you have in the meanwhile got into a house of bondage. You have fallen into the hands of a task-

master, whom we shall call the Commandment, and you say to yourself, "If I could only please this rigid overseer for a while, he would allow me to quit Egypt at last, and I should go on my way rejoicing. But he is so strict and stern. I have no sooner done one thing than he calls me to account for another. I said my prayers this morning as seriously as possible, and was rather pleased with myself because I read my chapter with some pleasure, when on a sudden provocation I lost my temper, and all my happiness took flight. A few days ago I was beginning to hope the best, for I was conscious of so much obligingness and charity and general good-will; when the spell was broken, and my love to the brethren was sensibly impaired by that primary and impracticable requirement, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul.' To confess the truth, in the way that he haunts and harasses me I feel as if my Lord's commandment did me more harm than good. He exacts bricks without providing straw; and when I begin to brighten up and ask if I am not doing well, he flourishes in my face a long list of faults and errors, and positively, by his severe and peremptory tone, he is like to put me out of love with goodness, and drive me to despair." Such at least was the experience of an earnest, anxious man, who has left his memoirs in the 7th to the Romans, and who tells us, "Sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all sorts of bad desires; and the commandment, which was originally ordained as the way to life, I found the means of death." And so will it ever be as long as you continue in the house of bondage,

resting your hope on your own prospective holiness ; resting your hope on propitiating that law which has no power to pardon, only the power to command and threaten and condemn. But from this legal bondage, this thralldom to a threatening, frowning law, the Lord Jesus offers to deliver you ; and this by doing no disparagement to the law itself, which He has magnified and made honourable, and all whose righteous requirements He fondly and loyally fulfilled. If to this greater than Moses you listen, “the law of the life-giving Spirit in Him will make you free from the law of sin and death.”<sup>1</sup> Crucified for your offences, and raised again for your justification, you will find expiation for the past in His sacrifice, and merit for the present in His spotless obedience. Made free by the Son, you shall be free indeed, and “walking” not in laxity, but “at liberty,” the taskmaster-precept will be transformed into a commandment holy, just, and good, and the mercenary obedience of the slave into the devotion of the affectionate disciple.

I shall enter no further on the narrative at present. There was a famous column in the Forum at Rome, and all the roads of the empire led to it, and their miles were measured from it. The Milliarium of the Bible—the centre of its system—is the Cross. All its paths lead thither. To-night we started from the back of the desert—we began our walk among the bleak ravines of Sinai ; and now, inevitably and by simply going on, we find ourselves in sight of Calvary. And we won't turn back. Let us go away looking at Him who took upon Himself

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 2.



the form of a servant in order to deliver us from a double slavery—from bondage to sin, and bondage to a cursing, because broken, law. My beloved hearers, are you sure of it? Has Christ given you this twofold liberty—deliverance from the bondage of corruption; deliverance from the penalty of a violated covenant, a broken commandment? Or, taking this last as the first, Have you found that “the wages of sin is death; but that the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord”? Have you learned with Luther, “Like as the earth engendereth not rain, nor by her own strength and travail is able to procure it, but receives it from above, the mere gift of God; so that other gift of God, eternal life through a Mediator, is given us without our works or deservings? Look then, as much as the earth is able to do in procuring the shower that makes it fresh and fruitful,—so much can our strength and works achieve in winning that heavenly boon of God’s eternal righteousness. It is God’s unspeakable gift, and is ours by His mere imputation.”

And has that same Divine Emancipator who proclaims liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, has He rescued you from the bond of iniquity, from besetting sins, from the despotism of imperious lusts and passions? If you fear *not yet*, let your cry go up to Him *now*. There is no need that you should die in the dungeon; no need that you should perish with Satan’s fetters on your limbs, with a sinful habit entwined and twisted round your soul. Cry to God. In rage and revenge against the accursed thing, cry to God to remember His covenant with His own beloved

Son, and look down in pity on your struggle with this crucifier of Christ, this vampire which has fastened on you, and is draining the life's blood of your immortal soul. He is very gracious. Most tender are His mercies, most prompt and present is His aid. He will surely see your affliction, and will hear your cry by reason of this task-master. He knows your sorrows, and will come down to deliver you; and in due time will bring you to a good land and a large, even a better than that land which flowed with milk and honey.

## VI.

### THE BURNING BUSH.

“And the Angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush ; and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.”—Ex. III. 2.

FOR His various pupils that great Teacher, the Holy Spirit, has different methods of training, and their education is carried on in widely different seminaries. In the case, however, of those who are destined to head mighty moral revolutions, we find that a period of seclusion and abstraction has been the almost uniform preparation. It was from a prolonged retreat beside the brook Cherith, and afterwards in a cavern of this very Horeb, that Elijah issued forth on the two great incidents of his grand career ; and it was from a similar but longer sojourn in the hill-country of Judea, that, in the spirit and power of Elijah, Messiah’s harbinger burst forth on an astonished people. Luther’s Horeb was the period he spent in the Augustinian convent ; Knox’s Horeb was his seventeen months in the French galley ; and there are men now living who are exerting a large influence on their brethren, whose own spirit was first wound up to the right intensity during a season of repose and solitude, and who came forth from their chosen or enforced retreat with a baptism on them which still remaineth.

A coated phial will hold a certain charge of electricity ; but if there are a number of minute conductors in contact with it, they will draw off the force as fast as it flows in, and reduce to nothing what might otherwise have been a flash of mimic lightning. A tree that grows in a forest, and surrounded by a million more—it may be straight and tall, and there may be no bend or flaw in its smooth and taper bole ; but its roots are shallow, and should some chance bereave it of its comrades—should it be left alone—the first blast will lay its leafy honours in the dust ; for its growth was entirely gregarious ; its safety lay in its associates ; and now that this shield is gone, having no depth of earth, the moment that the long fingers of the hurricane are twisted in its locks, it goes over with a crash, and the birds no longer build in its branches. So with earnest feeling in a bustling place : it gets no leisure to accumulate. The seriousness of the Sabbath is stolen by the week ; nay, it is spirited away by the first beams of the following day. A jocular companion, an urgent engagement, an absorbing care, a multitude of matters, some idle and some innocent—like so many furtive conductors, like the very vapour in the atmosphere, are quietly robbing you of the elevation or energy which you felt at night ; and before the good purpose comes forth in any definite or decisive act, the power has vanished and you are weak as other men. And so with the piety which is produced and fostered merely by good companionship : as long as you are under the roof of pious parents, as long as you enjoy the fellowship of earnest and fervent friends, you may hold on ;

but when cast on the wide world, or brought into circumstances of strong temptation, if you are not kept close to God by God himself; if you are not so rooted and grounded in the truth as to render your piety decided and independent of human support, it will be too likely to fall when the weather breaks and the tempests blow.

By choosing the better part, Moses was so far ready for any work that God designed; and in his palace-life he had been unconsciously receiving a portion of his training. He had got some insight to statesmanship and military affairs; he had acquired the etiquette of the Egyptian court, and had learned to be at home in the presence of princes. But these, like "the wisdom of the Egyptians," were mere accomplishments, and for the great but unguessed undertaking before him Moses needed a profound and peculiar discipline. He needed to grow in acquaintance with that God with whom he was hereafter to commune face to face, and whose messenger and spokesman he was to be in a manner so special and pre-eminent. He needed to be lifted completely and conclusively above those mixed or meaner motives by which well-intentioned men are so often in large measure actuated. He needed to be raised nearer to heaven than earth; and, we may add, he needed to have his entire spirit so habituated to lofty thoughts, so accustomed and inured to live at a high level, that in after days,

"As some tall rock amidst the waves  
The fury of the tempest braves,"

so his spirit should be able to surmount the molestations and the murmurs, the opposition and the obloquy, which

for the next forty years, like a troubled sea, should chafe and churn around him.

For such purpose no retirement could have been found more suitable than the desert of Horeb, that "great and terrible wilderness," which a friend thus describes:—"It was a vision of more utter barrenness and desolation than we had ever seen or fancied; no soft feature in the landscape to mitigate the unbroken horror. No green spot, no tree, no flower, no rill, no lake, but dark brown ridges, red peaks like pyramids of solid fire; no rounded hillocks, or soft mountain curves such as one sees in the ruggedest of home scenes, but monstrous and misshapen cliffs, rising tier above tier, and surmounted here and there by some spire-like summit, serrated for miles into ragged grandeur, and grooved from head to foot by the winter torrents that had swept down like bursting water-spouts, tearing their naked loins, and cutting into the very veins and sinews of the fiery rock."<sup>1</sup> Amidst this labyrinth of bald and blasted mountains, Moses dwelt for forty years; and although it is vain to surmise what were all the thoughts and musings of this protracted interval, we are inclined to think that a glimpse is given in that Ninetieth Psalm, entitled, "A prayer of Moses, the man of God,"—and which acquires new significance when we think of the hermit lifting up his eyes to these lonely silent pinnacles, and thinking, "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." And then, when his thoughts reverted to the

<sup>1</sup> Bonar's *Desert of Sinai*, p. 236.

wretched scenes in Egypt, "Return, O Lord, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants. Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil. Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it."

At last came the eventful day, and yet a day ushered in by no special sign nor devoted to any unusual solemnity. Moses had led out his flock as far as Sinai, where in some of the ravines could be found a fragrant pasture for the goats and the sheep, and where there was a good store of water. It was a sword of fire which guarded the gates of Eden; it was in a chariot of fire that Elijah ascended to heaven; it was a pillar of fire which guided the pilgrims in their desert journey, and which afterwards settled down between the cherubim in the Holy of Holies; it was with tongues of fire that the Holy Spirit symbolized His presence on the day of Pentecost; and it was with an effulgence beyond the noon that the fury-breathing persecutor was dashed down on the way to Damascus; so that the element which we deem the purest and most penetrating, Jehovah seems to have employed throughout as His especial badge and cognisance, the opening of His eye, the flash of His finger. But of this Moses was not thinking when a great sight arrested his eye. A bush, no palm nor olive, but a tamarisk or a thorny acacia, shone out with a brilliant flame. It did not crackle nor burn down, and Moses was hastening to

the spot, when his foot was arrested by a voice divine,—a voice which soon brought him to the dust, hiding his face and fearing to look upon God. In the wonderful interview which followed, the Lord announced His name and the purpose for which He had now appeared to His servant, and with marvellous condescension meeting all the scruples of a meek and self-disparaging recluse, He sent him home the most highly favoured and the most heavily burdened amongst the sons of men: the most highly favoured, inasmuch as he was the first to whom, after the silence of ages, Jehovah had spoken; the most heavily burdened, inasmuch as he felt crushed and overwhelmed with the commission which he dared not lay down, and which he trembled to discharge.

It is worthy of notice that Jehovah did not announce Himself as the God of Levi, the God of Kohath, the God of Anram, Moses' immediate progenitors; but He goes back hundreds of years, and says, "I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob," to show at once that it was an everlasting covenant, and that although it had not "grown" of late, it was neither dead nor dormant. All the parties between whom it had been originally ratified still were extant. God lived, and Abraham, Isaac, Jacob were living also. Thus Christ Himself explained the words. "Have you any doubt as to the soul's immortality? Do you not remember how at the bush God spoke of the patriarchs as friends of His, that is, as friends still living? For He is not the God of the dead. The great I AM does not identify Himself with that which has gone into annihilation and ceased to be; so that if



at the bush He proclaimed Himself Abraham's God, Abraham must still retain his identity and consciousness, and the time must be coming when he shall resume his body also,—that body by which alone his personality can be completed, and his identity manifested to those who (like Elijah and the saints surviving to the Advent and then translated) are not pure spirits, but clothed in corporeity."

This proof of immortality, as exhibited by the great Teacher, is sufficient; but we scarcely suppose that He gave this proof because the strongest or most telling. "In doubting the resurrection, in questioning the soul's immortality, ye do err from not knowing the Scriptures, neither the power of God. So pervaded with this doctrine is all Revelation, that it was implied in that fundamental revelation made to Moses, that announcement of God's name which commenced the theocratic history, and even the burning bush blazed with immortality." But instead of bearing hard on those whose cursory or cabalistic eyes so often scanned the words and missed the revelation, let us be thankful for announcements more articulate, for information more explicit, and for proofs so palpable that faith needs no longer tremble nor ask another sign.

And yet, with life and immortality brought to light, how many close their eyes and miss the comfort! A few days ago we read new biographies of two of the greatest bards of modern Britain; one the most ethereal and idealistic of our poets, the other such a master of the lyre as hardly Gray or Dryden has surpassed. When

Shelley was by a sudden squall buried in the Gulf of Genoa, William Godwin wrote to the young and distracted widow, his own daughter, "My poor girl! What do you mean to do with yourself? You surely do not mean to stay in Italy? . . . Above all, keep up your courage. You have many duties to perform; you must now be the father as well as the mother, and I trust you have energy of character enough to enable you to perform your duties honourably and well."<sup>1</sup> Is not this exquisite sympathy from a father to his favourite child, "My poor girl, what do you mean to do with yourself?" Is not this strong consolation from the philosopher who could dispense with Christianity: "Keep up your courage. I trust to your energy!" Again, when Campbell lost his wife (and I fear he had lost any practical faith in Christianity beforehand) his reflection was, "These are strange dispensations, and to what demonstrated end?" but added, "There must be a God, that is evident: there must be an all-powerful, inscrutable God."<sup>2</sup> With deaths so dreary, or rather with survivors so desolate in their sorrow, contrast the hope full of immortality. "Surely," writes the great scholar Bengel after the death of his child, "Surely, when the door of paradise is opened to let in any of our departed friends, delicious breezes blow through it upon us from that abode of blessedness." "As I reclined my head upon my dying child's little couch, I thought I could gladly die with it that moment." And when dying himself, said the successful physician Dr. Gordon, "I have

<sup>1</sup> *Memorials of Shelley*, p. 206. Lond. 1859

<sup>2</sup> Redding's *Reminiscences of Campbell*, vol. ii. p. 131.

found in Christ a happiness I did not think existed on this side the grave. People have said that death is *frightful*. I look on it with pleasure. I see no monsters around me. Death? I see no death at my bed-side. It is that benign Saviour waiting to take me. This is not the testimony of one who has nothing to live for. I am in the prime of life, with comforts and friends around me; but the prospect of heaven is more than all."<sup>1</sup>

You are immortal, my brethren. If you have found the Saviour, you have experienced a first resurrection. The heart which was dead before has come alive again, and you have got new feelings towards God and holiness. You trust in Jesus. You believe that He has gone to His Father's house, and you will believe that He will keep His promise, and that where He is you shall be taken at last, to dwell with Him for ever. But to keep that hope alive, you must keep close to Him who gave it. "A darkening universe" you may defy

"To quench your immortality  
Or shake your trust in God."

But that which a darkening universe cannot do may be effectually done by a sinful indulgence or a departing Saviour · for the wages of sin is death, and there is death in leaving the Fountain of Life. Oh, it is a chilly clime, that land of estrangement from God,—and under the hazy, frosty cloud which a guilty conscience brings over the scene, confidence Godward and the hope of a glorious hereafter wither away, and even the strength for discharging duty and the elasticity for bearing trial. So,

<sup>1</sup> *Dr. Gordon*, by Newman Hall, p. 171.

dear friends, as you would desire never to penetrate the fearful mysteries of the second death, escape from the darkness and horrors of the first. Be sure that you have really emerged from the grave of ungodliness,—the death of trespasses and sins. Be sure that, like a tombstone on your soul, there is no bad besetment, no sinful habit holding down your spirit. And in loving obedience and affectionate communion, keep near that Conqueror of death, who to faithful discipleship says, “Because I live, ye shall live also.” And in daily devotion, in the sanctified Sabbath and the frequented sanctuary, keep as near as you can to heaven’s gate,—in those connections and employments where He who is “the God not of the dead but of the living” will be apt to meet you, and where you may be cheered by a glimpse of that world in which Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob now dwell with God.

There is something wonderfully sublime and spirit-filling in that name by which the Most High now announced Himself to Moses, and by which, in its form of JEHOVAH, He is designated throughout the Old Testament Scriptures, “I AM THAT I AM,” the Self-existent, the Immutable, the Eternal, the one living God, to the exclusion of the lords many which Egypt and the other idolaters adored. But self-sufficing as His own perfections are, great are His compassions, most gracious and forth-going His propensities. The plenitude of His own joy occasions no indifference to the cry of the Hebrew bondmen, the absoluteness of His perfections is itself a necessity for fulfilling the promise to the patriarchs. And this is the believer’s privilege. In the Divine nature there is

nothing so august or glorious but it may become to him a theme of pleasing contemplation ; for that blessed relation to the Most High which through the Mediator he has resumed, invests each perfection with light and endearment. In itself, "I AM THAT I AM" is a name high and lifted up. Its Divine independence seems to shut the creatures outside ; it seems to fling "dust and ashes" to an infinite distance. But when we find that, through the grace of this glorious God, sinners may be saved—when we find that frail fellow-mortals may be taken up into God's eternity—when we find that the life of Abraham is now locked up within the life of God, whilst Abraham, the friend of God, retains his personality and his place in God's affection, the name grows full of strength and comfort. We venture to hope that we may be saved even as they, and that we too may find, within that unchanging name, our impregnable and immortal dwelling-place ; and so we sing, at once adoring and confiding—

"The God of Abram praise !  
 Who reigns enthroned above ;  
 Ancient of everlasting days,  
 And God of love !  
 Jehovah ! great I AM !  
 By earth and heaven confessed,  
 I bow and bless the sacred Name,  
 For ever blessed !

The God of Abram praise !  
 Whose all-sufficient grace  
 Shall guide me all my happy days  
 In all His ways :  
 He calls a worm His friend !  
 He calls Himself my God !  
 And He shall save me to the end  
 Through Jesus' blood."

That burning bush laid a lasting hold on the memory and imagination of Moses. When his commission was ended, when about to lay down his miraculous rod, and recalling how not one of the good things which God had spoken had failed, and how all the difficulties which his own timidity had conjured up had disappeared, he reverted to this memorable scene, and, in blessing all the tribes, the best blessing he could wish for Joseph was "the goodwill of Him *that dwelt in the bush.*"<sup>1</sup> Apart from all its adjuncts the sight was striking; in connection with the voice of Jehovah, in connection with the affliction in Egypt and the deliverance which from that instant dated, it was a sight never to be forgotten. It was a sight profoundly significant. As we have already hinted, the glory of God was emblemized by the effulgence which outshone the day; but it was not a mere effulgence. "The bush burned;" it did not simply gleam with a mere phosphorescence or lambent light, but it "burned *with fire*;" and it was with Moses the amazement how so fierce a flame could involve the branches and yet leave them fresh and green. Assuredly a sign, it was a symbol also, not merely a prodigy but a lesson to the eye, a symbol interpreted, when from the burning bush Jehovah said, "I have seen the affliction of my people in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their task-masters." And doubtless the Christian Fathers were right in understanding the lowly bush preserved amidst the fire as an emblem not only of Israel in Egypt, but of the Church of God in a persecuting world; and

<sup>1</sup> Deut. xxxiii. 16.

our Church of Scotland fathers have not only sanctioned the interpretation by adopting the emblem, but their records have supplied new illustrations to their own chosen motto, "Nec tamen consumebatur."

How signally the marvel has been repeated in the Babylonish captivity as well as in the Egyptian bondage, in the Christian Church passing through its ten persecutions in the days of imperial Rome, in the Albigenes, in the Lollards of England, in the Huguenots of France, in the Covenanters of Scotland, we need not linger to repeat. There is one inference of practical import with which we are content to conclude.

The individual believer, like the collective company, may be compared to this bush. Like the lowly shrub in Horeb, you feel small compared with the trees of the wood. Your abode is obscure, your attainments humble. You are a root out of a dry ground, and growing where there are few advantages. And, to make you more anxious, the fire has kindled upon you. You are in straits, in grievous perplexity and trouble. You are in pain yourself, or in deep distress on account of others, in the furnace of affliction, as we say. Or you are assaulted by fiery darts of Satan, fierce temptations, infidel suggestions, allurements to some great wickedness, till, in the red-hot rain, you feel as if you must be utterly consumed. But call on God, and He will come to your rescue. The bush may be in the fire, but if God be in the bush it runs no risk; the flame that laps it round may consume the cankerworms and caterpillars that preyed upon its verdure, but they will not scorch the tiniest sprig nor

consume the most tender blossom. There is no affliction so severe but under it God can support, and out of it can carry more than a conqueror. There is no furnace so hot as to consume a hair of your head if the Son of God be with you there. And although all other temples should yield to the torch of the destroyer, like the famed fabric at Ephesus, and the still more famous shrine at Jerusalem, whether it be the frail body of an afflicted believer or the twigs and tendrils of a bush in the desert, which forms the place of God's special indwelling, no fire of earth or hell can hurt a living shrine of the Godhead, far less consume a temple of the Holy Ghost.



## VII.

### MOSES AND MESSIAH.

“I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.”—DEUT. XVIII. 18.

“For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.”—ACTS III. 22.

ANY one who has a wide acquaintance with the story of mankind must have fallen in with many individuals and many incidents which, to a remarkable extent, are the repetition of one another. You are reading the battle of Morgarten, where a handful of Swiss drove back from their valleys the vast array of Austria, and you are irresistibly reminded of Marathon and the little Athenian company which there hurled into the dust the pride of Persia. You read the disastrous march of Darius into the bleak and hungry wilds of Scythia, and you see as in a glass Napoleon's retreat from Moscow. At Salamis you are startled with strange foreshadowings of the Spanish Armada and its destruction on the coasts of Britain; and even at Lucknow you will find few incidents absolutely new, if already familiar with the defence and relief of Malta and of Leyden. And as with incidents so with individuals. Miltiades and Aristides, the saviours of

Greece, are one day all but deified, another day the one is banished, and the other dies impoverished and disgraced. With such precedents, with such knowledge of the impulsiveness and ingratitude of a people, you do not wonder to find the brothers De Witt, after all their services to the republic, torn to pieces by the mob of Amsterdam. Caligula, savage, capricious, and fantastic in his cruelties, keeps the world in tremor, till in self-defence his parasites and favourites are obliged to join together and destroy the bloodthirsty madman. Seventeen centuries later the same words would describe the career and fate of another emperor, Paul of Russia.<sup>1</sup> All this is natural. If there be certain rules which guide the course of Providence, and certain laws which govern human nature, such self-repetitions must abound in the annals of our species. Selfishness and passion, if unrestrained—and there is nothing to restrain a despot—will develop into a fierce and headlong brutality, till even flatterers find themselves endangered, and in self-defence knock on the head the infuriate monster; hence Caligula, hence Paul of Russia, hence the history of Oriental despotisms. A people so fond of liberty as not to care for life without it, will seldom be allowed to lose it; hence Marathon, hence Morgarten and Sempach, hence Bannockburn. And hence the philosophy of history. Hence it is that a thoughtful man, acquainted with human nature in its springs of action and its actual doings, will often predict, with surprising accuracy, the history of a popular favourite, the career of a commonwealth, the effects of an

<sup>1</sup> See *Historical Parallels*.—Lib. Ent. Knowledge.

important law, the outgoings of a revolution. Give again similar men and similar circumstances, and you will have again similar results.

To these parallelisms we have adverted from time to time in our sketch of Moses, and as we proceed we shall likely notice others. But we are now called to mark an identity betwixt Moses and another, which cannot be accounted for as a mere casual coincidence, nor even as one of those historical parallelisms which are occasioned by similarity of disposition and circumstances. In the hand of God, Moses was himself a prophecy of a more illustrious Successor, and through his deeds and services the minds of the peculiar people were taught ideas which found their eventual realization in that great Prophet like unto Moses whom the Lord at last raised up from amongst His brethren.

When we say this we have not in view those outward or incidental resemblances with which every one is struck, and which certainly did not happen without the Divine intention and control. For example, Moses was born of parents in obscure and humble station, peasants, exiles, slaves; and Christ, born of a poor virgin, was called the carpenter's son; whilst the ark of bulrushes finds its equivalent in the manger at Bethlehem. Moses in his infancy had well-nigh fallen a victim to the wrath of Pharaoh; Jesus was only snatched by a hand Divine from the cruelty of Herod. The 'proper' child, the son of Amram, beautiful exceedingly, is suggestive of that fairest of all men whom God anointed with the oil of gladness above all His fellows. And "the man Moses,

exceeding meek," makes us think of Him who says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, for I am meek and lowly."

But the identity to which we allude is deeper, and it will come out, I hope, as we proceed.

1. Moses was a great Deliverer. The Israelites were in despair. They laboured and found no rest. Their tyrants died, but the tyranny did not abate. The years went on, but their sorrows did not lessen; and amidst their growing burdens and deepening anguish, it was vainly that they looked around for a protector or champion, for he was never like to come. Cowed and heart-broken, their cry, their "groaning" went up to God, and from God direct a deliverer dropped into their midst.

And the world was all one Egypt when Christ came. Men were very miserable. The great Roman bully had knocked down all his neighbours, and left no independent nation within sight of his Seven Hills. The submissive fed their masters, the resistful only supplied victims by the thousand for the gladiatorial games. And worse than prætors and proconsuls, men were serving divers lusts and passions,—the slaves of an unseen but ubiquitous Apollyon. The old Pagan faiths were worn out, and such poor virtues as heathenism for a time retained had yielded to unheard-of crimes, till the whole creation groaned,—till, mutually embittered and self-disgusted, all mankind had yielded to the bondage of corruption. It was then that Christ came. It was then that, hearing the cry, confused and anguish-stricken, from a world which had lost all means of self-emancipation or amendment,

God remembered His covenant and came down to deliver. It was then that the Son of God was manifest.

2. Moses was a Prophet. Not that he uttered many predictions—for to foretell the future is a very secondary and subordinate function of the seer; and the man of God who tells me what God is and who supplies me with motives to become what God desires, does me a far greater service than if he had projected ever so minute a map of the future. Of predictions strictly so called our text is almost the only example which occurs in the long career of Moses; and yet, among the mere sons of men, he stands forth unequalled for the contribution which he has been the means of making to our knowledge of God and of human duty. The entire Bible is built on Genesis. The whole subsequent revelations assume the unity of the Supreme Creator there revealed, and they assume the minute and careful vigilance of the great Governor,—the care taken of one poor lad from the pit in Dothan to the palace-gates of On by that same God who said “Let there be light,” and who launched the planets on their paths,—that ability of attending to every affair, large or little, which infinite power gives to infinite goodness, and which we call particular or special Providence, the Providence of Omnipotence. And to this fundamental lesson of all piety, transmitted from patriarchal times and preserved in Genesis, what emphasis is given, how important are the additions made in the teaching more immediately Mosaic! The absolute oneness and spirituality of the Divine nature, His unspotted sanctity, His overflowing goodness, His great compassions! And then the Ten

Commandments! "The law was given by Moses," and no tongue can tell the service rendered to the cause of virtue and of God by those waymarks and warnings,—those ten words of infinite weight which have kept on the path so many wayward feet, and which have haunted so many consciences till the wanderer returned,—that great manual of duty, that little hand-book of human happiness, which we call the Two Tables, or Decalogue.

But if the law was given by Moses, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. Still mightier in deed and in word than the great legislator, needing no wonder-working rod, for He had but to speak and it was done, needing no thunder nor trumpet to overture His discourse and astonish His audience, the Lord Jesus gave a new idea of goodness and a new exhibition of the Godhead. With Moses the first prodigy was to turn water into blood, with Jesus the beginning of miracles was to turn water into wine; and on the key-note thus sounded in the case of each the subsequent anthem went forward: severity, stern sanctions, the one,—grace, attraction, encouragement, the other; the shekinah of the one burning with fire, and fenced round with the warning, "Put off thy shoe, for this is holy ground," heaven so opening over the other as to delight whilst it dazzled, and make frail mortality still exclaim, "Master, it is good to be here." How mild the accents, yet how holy and how pure! how penetrating, how satisfying! softly falling like the dew, mellifluous as the manna, and filling each capacity, the greatest and the smallest, like the snow which gives its convenient portion to the crocus-cup or the lichen, and of

which there is enough for the widest valley! Not that Jesus ignored or set aside the law. "The law was *given* by Moses," but it *lived* in Jesus Christ. That holy law of God, He hid it in His heart, and so it circulated in the vital current of His blood, mantling in His cheek when a sinless indignation flashed on stupendous wickedness, and flowing forth in the more familiar tear which bewailed the fate which this wickedness entailed,—gleaming in the gracious smile which reassured the broken-hearted penitent, and bursting forth in that crimson sweat which, fainting yet pursued, and which, conquering its own reluctance, cried, "Father, Thy will be done!" But if in Jesus the law was fulfilled, so in Jesus God was manifest. True: He spoke many kind words concerning God, and some very solemn ones: some very solemn ones,—for it was He who said, "If ye forgive not them which trespass against you, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses." It was He who said, "It is better to enter into life halt or maimed, than having two hands or two feet to be cast into hell-fire." But mostly kind and comforting—indeed all kind and comforting, if we only listen to them sitting at the Master's feet, and so under the shadow of the Mediator's wing. Indeed, so kind and comforting, that He has only one name for the Most High,—“the Father,” “your heavenly Father,”—inviting us in His name to take it up and say, “Our Father which art in heaven.” But just as the Lord Jesus lived the law, so it was chiefly by His life that He let forth the glories of the Godhead—and for that manifestation of Him whom no man hath seen we must go not

more to the words than to the mien, the movements, the works of Immanuel. "Moses verily was faithful in all his house," but it was the faithfulness of a servant,—“but Christ as a Son over His own house,”—a Son the express image of the Father—the Only-Begotten, familiar with His Father’s thoughts from all eternity, and giving forth no new revelation as it gradually dawned upon Him, but freely acting forth the Father’s mind as it had been from the beginning—acting forth as far as a true body and reasoning soul gave scope for the manifestation. And so for the knowledge of Him with whom we have to do we must look to His incarnate Son. If we wish to know what are the prayers which God will not regard, we must note those which Jesus did not answer. If we wish to know what is the exigency in which God will not or cannot rescue, we must find out the cases where imperilled discipleship vainly exclaimed, “Save, Lord, or I perish.” If we wish to know what is the sorrow of which the Most High is a heedless or unconcerned spectator, we must mark the sufferers against whose cry of anguish Jesus stops His ear, we must mark the graves by whose brink He stands without a tear. If we wish to know what is the unpardonable sin and who are the penitents who need ask no forgiveness, we must find some sinner who clasped the feet of Jesus and was shaken off—we must find some blaspheming renegade, some cursing and swearing apostate, at whom Jesus would never look again, and regarding whom He made a special exception, ‘Go and tell them all (save Peter) that I go before into Galilee and shall be glad to meet them again.’



The likeness between Moses and Messiah we might pursue much further, and the parallel would not be the less impressive because in each particular we should find that the type was excelled or surmounted by the antitype. For instance, as a man, as a model or ensample to his people, Moses was nearly perfect; but although *almost* he was not *altogether*, and in the ebullition at Meribah the human frailty broke through. Not so with Jesus. If angry He sinned not. He never spake unadvisedly with His lips, and complete as was His code, sublime as were His maxims, there was a finish in His goodness, a divine felicity in His entire demeanour, which leaves Him unique and unapproachable among the sons of men. Again, the miracles which Moses wrought were by a delegated power: the rod he carried was a borrowed sceptre, and a higher power wrought all its wonders. But affluent in His own omnipotence, the will of Jesus was itself a fiat, and a touch, a word, a look was followed by a feast for five thousand guests, by a blind man's cure, by a dead man's resurrection. Once more, as a mediator Moses had compassion on the ignorant and on them that were out of the way, and he had great power with God. But it is Jesus alone who is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, and Jesus is the only mediator who in His intercession says, "Father, I will." And yet again, as the leader of the rescued Israelites Moses carried them far. He conducted them safely through the Red Sea and through the howling wilderness; but he did not bring them into the Promised Land. But Jesus is Moses and Joshua both in one. Those whom He brings out of

sin's bondage He carries through and sees them safe to the better country. His guidance never ceases, His eye never dims, His interest never flags; but those who once place themselves beneath His guardianship, lo! He is with them to the end.

So, Moses is no isolated personage. He is "that prophet" (John i.) who prefigures the greatest of all, and when we survey him we are looking at one who is looking unto Jesus. This view of his character and attitude we shall often find instructive. Like his own rod it will draw water from the flinty rock, and convert into green pastures the passages most arid-looking in all the history.

Meanwhile, it is with the prophet like unto Moses that we have expressly to do; and it behoves us to ponder the words here subjoined, "Whosoever will not hearken unto my words which He shall speak in my name, I will require it of him," or, as Peter gives the purport, "Every soul that will not hear that Prophet shall be destroyed from among the people." If there were any Hebrews so besotted that they refused to quit Egypt, they had only one opportunity. No second Passover came. No new Moses appeared. The Red Sea never sundered again; but by their own infatuation, cut off from their own people, they drudged out the dreary years in ignominious thankless bondage, and died in slavery.

When Peter adduced this precedent he was addressing his Hebrew countrymen, and he added, "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers. Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning

every one of you from your iniquities." Without any straining—retaining their real point and spirit—we might apply the apostle's words to a congregation like this, and say, "Ye are children of the prophets and children of the covenant. Many of you have had parents pious and God-fearing. You have been trained in Bible-classes and Sabbath-schools. You know a large extent of saving truth, and you have enjoyed an immense amount of helpful Christian influence. If you were deciding now, what an advantage you would have over the converted Pagan, or even over the converted Papist! How friendly are all the surrounding circumstances; how propitious to your progress! To you God gives the first offer of the Saviour. Suffer Him to bless you. Suffer Him to bless you by turning you from your iniquities."

"Well, and (you say) it is not much that hinders. In turning from my iniquities, I have not to give up the gambling, or the drinking, or the profligacy which you were describing last Lord's day; and as far as any rampant wickedness is concerned, I fancy that I might soon become a Christian. But I do not feel disposed. I do not see the need. I know that I am not what you would call a religious person; but I hope that on the whole I do my duty by one and all, and *worldly* as you call me, I think I have some virtues not possessed by all the godly." That is to say, you are in the position of an Israelite to whom with his divine commission Moses might have gone, and he should answer, "No, I thank you. My master is humane. He does not set me any revolting task, like so many of my brethren. I am

neither scavenger nor swine-herd, but I wear this handsome livery. And I like the leeks and the onions, the melons and the cucumbers; and have no notion of going out into a stony desert to fast and hear your sermons." Oh, what an abject! what a mean and unmanly spirit which can thus plead for leave to continue in bondage! how well he deserves to have his fetters made strong, and when times grow hard with him, and his taskmaster turns on him and delivers him to the tormentors, who shall pity him?

Yes, indeed, Christ's offer is irksome. You have learned to like Egypt. You cannot bear to be called a slave, and yet you are not free. You are in bondage to the world—to opinion and fashion, there are friends whose contempt or coldness you could not stand. You are in bondage to the flesh; you are the slave of appetite or indolence; you cling to the flesh-pots; you deprecate the march and the desert, the fatigue and the fighting. Or one is your master, even the devil; and by some fallacy or sophism that father of lies persuades you to put off or refuse altogether. Take care that you are not taken at your word! Seeing you hold salvation so cheap, take care lest when the Lord's ransomed set forward you be not left in the house of your bondage. Take care lest God swear in His wrath, "They shall not enter into my rest."

Finally, you who follow Christ, how much you owe Him! How much you owe Him already, and how much more you shall owe Him before all is over! Of your salvation He is the Captain. Of His intercession you may form some idea from that memorable prayer, "O

Lord, this people have sinned a great sin ; howbeit, if Thou wilt forgive their trespass ; and if not—then I pray Thee blot out my name from Thy book.” But as that is a name which cannot be blotted out, forgiveness asked by the great Intercessor cannot be refused. If once He takes charge of you, He will see you safe through. Of all guides and leaders, He is the meekest and most magnanimous ; and those who sing the song of Moses and the Lamb will have the same tale to tell of murmurings forgiven and mercies multiplied—of a patience which never intermitted and a love that never was exhausted.

## VIII.

### SIGNS AND WONDERS—THE PLAGUES.

“And the Lord said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh; and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet. Thou shalt speak all that I command thee; and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he send the children of Israel out of his land. And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt. But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, and my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt, by great judgments. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them. And Moses and Aaron did as the Lord commanded them, so did they.”—Ex. vii. 1-6.

God's contributions to the world's stock of knowledge and goodness have been sent through the persons of our fellow-men; and of these Heaven-sent messengers, of these mediums for bringing the mind of God to earth, none is more remarkable than Moses. As the Tell or Washington of early Eastern story, he would have claims on our admiration; as the first assertor of national independence; as the leader of the first war of religious emancipation; as the liberator of his people; as the divinely-commissioned conductor of the Exodus. But on the world's gratitude he has claims still stronger. Through whose hand was it that God issued to mankind the Decalogue, and gave a rule of conduct at once so plain, so portable, so comprehensive, as the Ten Commandments?

To whom are we indebted for the first promulgation of the unity, the spirituality, the self-existence, and all-pervasive providence of the Most High? Who was it that took in "that little piece of holy ground,"—the Jewish nationality,—and at once fencing the enclosure and trenching the soil, prepared the plat or bed in which Christianity should fifteen centuries afterwards strike root and grow till large enough to be transplanted into the outside world? Who is the penman of the Pentateuch? To whom are we indebted for those foundation-truths, those fundamental oracles on which David and Isaiah, Paul and John, have built up the fabric of Divine Revelation?

In the person of Moses the Most High inaugurated a new era in His dealings with mankind. Noah hardly excepted, Moses was the first in that series of prophets who were at once *seers* and *workers of signs*. He was the first, as the apostles were the last, who wrought miracles in attestation of their Divine commission, and to show that God was with them. And as the first example of a Divine message accredited by miracles, as the commencement of that system in the Divine dealings where Heaven-imparted truth calls in as its seconder or sanction Heaven-imparted power, the narrative is at this point peculiarly instructive.

After men have climbed it is a common trick to spurn away the ladder. They push away the ladder, and then at the top of their airy pinnacle they shout to spectators and flap their sleeves, as if these were the wings by which they had mounted. So now-a-days there is a disposition

to speak contemptuously of miracles. "Moral truth is as much more sublime than prodigies or portents as mind is greater than matter; and the Sermon on the Mount is more full of God than the resurrection of Lazarus;" whilst some put it differently, and say, "The course of nature is much more stupendous than any possible interruption. The perpetual miracle which raises that fig-tree from an atom, and out of dirty mould and viewless vapour builds up its broad-leafed canopy, is greater than the casual miracle which in a moment blasts it." Or to come to the actual case before us:—

"Earth's crammed with heaven,  
And every common bush afire with God:  
But only he who sees, takes off his shoes:  
The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries."<sup>1</sup>

But it won't do to stand on the top of the obelisk and wave your cloak, pretending that your own wings took you thither. It won't do, Master Poet or Philosopher, to perch on some top-truth of Revelation, and make-believe that you soared straight up there with a few easy flaps of your own intellectual pinions. Here is the ladder lying at the foot, with the marks on every round of miry shoes and hob-nails somewhat heavy.

You say, "Prodigies are for barbarians and babes; but the mature man, the philosopher, prefers great truths and high principles to vulgar signs and wonders." And in this the Word of God so far agrees with you. "Tongues," says the apostle, "are a sign to them that believe not." As soon as men are believers, they don't need this prodigy

<sup>1</sup> *Aurora Leigh*, 304.



to arrest their heedlessness and convince their incredulity. And says Jesus himself, "It is an evil generation that seeketh after a sign." If it were sufficiently sincere the truth would be its own witness. But unfortunately in its first coming into a world like this, God's truth does not find men friendly but hostile: it finds them not eagerly awaiting its advent but rather looking the other way. It needs to catch their eye, and conquer their aversion. As babes or barbarians it has to appeal to their faculty of wonder; and as more or less besotted, more or less wedded to evil or error, it needs to appeal to their fears or their self-interest, and convince them that if it comes to a contest the truth is stronger than they.

Wheatstone or Faraday is not always sending paper kites up into the clouds or drawing sparks from a coated phial in order to convince himself that electricity exists. "Excuse me, my good friend," he would be apt to say, "but I am far past that. I not only believe that the thing exists; but to my mind it is present everywhere. It is not the jar alone, but this room that is full of it; and you need not send up for it to the clouds, for at this moment you and I are under its powerful influence. Rather than be repeating evermore these elementary experiments, I love to trace still further its operation, and meditate upon its laws." And yet he will be far from despising the day of small things. He knows that in the whole of this matter a hundred years ago men were as barbarians or as babes, and that if their feeling of wonder had not been roused, if their sense had not been dazzled, babes and barbarians they must have still remained. It

was by working what may be called *scientific* signs and wonders,—it was by drawing a flash of fire from the human body, it was by drawing lightning from the clouds, that Dufaye and Franklin waked the wonder of the world, and founded a new science ; and therefore he looks back with reverence to that paper kite or Leyden jar as the parent of the electric telegraph and the transformer of modern metallurgy. Each of them was a disturber or interrupter of the course of nature ; but without the interruption they produced the true course of nature would never have been known : without the spark or flash which these disturbers elicited, the perpetual presence and the wondrous working of the latent power would never have been surmised.

So with the signs and wonders which for a moment interrupting the usual course of Providence, made the existence of that Providence more palpable. So with the signs and wonders which from time to time breaking the majestic silence of the Eternal, like a tocsin from the firmament have startled the world's apathy, and at once strengthened faith and confounded incredulity.

Standing as we do on the clear high vantage of a completed Christianity, it is difficult for us to get back into the times of ignorance. Even amongst the professed rejecters of Revelation there is a general admission of its sublimest truth, and few deny the existence of the one Supreme Creator, infinitely wise, irresistibly powerful. But once on a time it was very different. Egypt believed in its own gods, and left Ethiopia and Canaan free to believe in theirs, and although the children of Israel

should have known that the God of Abraham was the one true God, they were not absolutely sure. It looked too like as if Abraham's God was less kind or powerful than Egypt's gods; and we have reached that most interesting and eventful period when Jehovah arose from His place and began to prove that He was not merely one God among the many, but that there was none besides the great I AM supreme, self-existent, exclusive of every other.

The first mind which it was needful to satisfy was that of Moses himself. Possessing the knowledge which we find embodied in the Book of Genesis, we may assume that his theology was sound. Believing in that God who created heaven and earth, with whom Enoch walked, who had swept a crime-laden race away, who had received Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to their eternal homes, in the meditative seclusion of Horeb Moses could sing the 90th Psalm, and could look back with serene contempt on the bull-adorers and beetle-worshippers amongst whom he had passed his boyhood. But the faith which assures the heart in calm retreats is not always enough for energy and action; and if there ever was a man to whom it must have been a hardship to quit the solitary place, with its continual sabbath, that man was the fugitive from Pharaoh's palace,—the meek, meditative, unambitious, world-weary Moses. And yet for God's great design it was needful that the recluse should be aroused and hurried forth from his retirement; it was needful that the hermit should be quickened up into a hero; and so that God, in whom he had long believed, burst upon his view

in a bright and startling manifestation. To Moses that burning bush was itself a sign, and one would have almost thought that a Divine commission given from the midst of the flaming miracle would have insured instant compliance. But even after other difficulties were dispelled, an obstacle seemingly insuperable occurred to Moses in the incredulity of his own countrymen. "To say nothing of persuading Pharaoh, how shall I gain the confidence of my own brethren? They will not believe me. They will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee." And so, to furnish him with credentials to his own countrymen, just as the burning bush had been sign sufficient to himself, the Lord supplied him with three portable signs (so to speak), and gave him the power of performing three prodigies, which should be as well adapted to the crass and untutored minds of his brethren as the beautiful sign of the burning bush had been adapted to his own. 'Turn that rod into a serpent, from a serpent back into a rod again; draw thy hand from thy bosom; it is leprous; do it again and it is sound. And change into blood the water of the Nile; for if they will not believe thee, they will believe the sign, and if one sign fail a second will succeed.' And thus fortified, Moses set forth for Egypt. Along with Aaron his brother, who, divinely directed, came forth to meet him, he reached it at a moment when the people's anguish was kindled afresh by the accession of the new despot and the infliction of further atrocities. The brothers delivered their message, and "did the signs in the sight of the people; and the people believed." Their deliverers had come

opportune as angels from heaven, and grateful to Abraham's God, who at last had looked on their affliction, "they bowed their heads and worshipped" (Exod. iv. 29-31).

A harder task remained. Moses and Aaron needed no further sign. The burden of the Lord was upon them, and God's hand thrust them forward. So to speak, they could not help themselves, and you would say it should not have been difficult to rouse the hopes of sighing, wretched bondmen. But to beard a tyrant on his throne—to persuade a proud and obstinate king to surrender two millions of subjects, including the most useful labourers in the land—was an undertaking sure to be followed by discomfiture and personal destruction, unless backed by Omnipotence and enforced by the outstretched arm of Jehovah. And therefore to stem and concuss into submission the oppressor of Israel and the champion of Egypt's false gods—to avenge the wrongs of ages and signalize in its commencement Jehovah's war with idolatry, Heaven opened its terrible artillery and with plague upon plague crushed down the key-post of Paganism, the stronghold of Egypt.

On these plagues we have no intention to dilate, but we invite attention to one or two general remarks regarding them.

1. Pharaoh threw down the gauntlet. "Who is Jehovah, that I should obey His voice, to let Israel go? I know not Jehovah, neither will I let Israel go." Pharaoh cast himself on the protection of the idols of Egypt, and launched an insulting defiance at the God of Israel. And

the first retort was on that idol which might well be considered the best friend and greatest benefactor of Egypt, the Nile, whose current was instantly converted into a fluid so blood-like that its delicious waters were no longer drinkable, and the fish in which it abounded died. In like manner, the magicians who mimicked the earlier miracles, who by sleight of hand (to say nothing of supernatural assistance) gave the impression as if they could do on a small scale what Moses' rod did over all the land, these magicians were driven off the field when the infliction became a corporeal malady, and personal. "The magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boil was upon the magicians, and all the Egyptians."

2. A second remark which we venture to hazard is a certain congruity betwixt these supernatural visitations and the land on which they were inflicted. Although the rapidity with which they succeeded one another, although the circumstance of their coming on and departing whensoever Moses gave the word, and no sooner, although the exemption of Goshen when the rest of Egypt was overwhelmed, all show the Hand Omnipotent from which they came, yet the visitations themselves were more or less characteristic of the country and congruous to it. The vials were inverted by an unseen Power, but the channels in which the vengeance flowed were the courses already cut by phenomena more or less familiar to the people. For instance, the Nile, which this time, in the beginning of the year, flowed with blood, is apt every June to assume a reddish colour. Frogs, with

gnats, flies, and other insect plagues, are to this day no small source of misery in Egypt; and boils are of common occurrence among the people, and murrain among the cattle; and it may help to vivify the sacred text if from the pages of the Prussian explorer Lepsius I give two extracts, detailing a hail-storm and a locust-shower, as he encountered them about the close of the year 1842.

#### HAIL.

“Winter began with a scene that will ever remain impressed upon my memory. I had ridden out to the excavations, and as I observed a great black cloud coming up, I sent an attendant to the tents, to make them ready against it, but soon followed him myself, as it began to rain a little. Shortly after my arrival a storm began, and I therefore had the tent-ropes made fast; soon, however, there came a pouring rain that frightened all our Arabs, and sent them trooping to the rock-tomb, where our kitchen is situated. Of our party, Erbkam and Franke were only present. Suddenly the storm grew to a tremendous hurricane, such as I have never seen in Europe, and hail fell upon us in such masses as almost to turn day into night. I had the greatest difficulty in hunting our Arabs out from the cavern, to bring our things to the tombs under shelter, as we might expect the destruction of our tents at any moment; and it was no long time ere first our common tent broke down, and then, as I hurried from it into my own, to sustain it from the inside, that also broke down above my head.

When I had crept out, I found that my things were tolerably well covered by the tents, so that I could leave them for the present, but only to run a greater risk. Our tents lie in a valley, whither the plateau of the Pyramids inclines, and are sheltered from the worst winds from the north and west. Presently I saw a dashing mountain flood hurrying down upon our prostrate and sand-covered tents like a giant serpent, upon its certain prey. The principal stream rolled on to the great tent; another arm threatened mine, without quite reaching it. But everything that had been washed from our tents by the shower was torn away by the two streams, which joined behind the tents, and carried into a pool behind the Sphinx, where a great lake immediately formed, which fortunately had no outlet.

“Just picture the scene! Our tents, dashed down by the storm and heavy rain, lying between two mountain torrents, thrusting themselves in several places to the depth of six feet into the sand, and depositing our books, drawings, sketches, clothes, and instruments, yes, even our levers and crowbars; in short, everything they could seize, in the dark, foaming, mud ocean. Besides this, ourselves wet to the skin, without hats, wading into the lake to the waist to fish out what the sand had not yet swallowed. And all this was the work of a quarter of an hour, at the end of which the sun shone radiantly again, and announced the end of this flood by a bright and glorious rainbow.

“For several days we fished and dug for our things. Some things were lost, many were spoilt; the greater part



of all the things that were not locked up inside trunks or chests bore more or fewer marks of this flood.”<sup>1</sup>

#### LOCUST STORM.

“I had descended into a mummy-pit, to open some newly-discovered sarcophagi, and was not a little astonished to find myself in a regular snow-drift of locusts, which, almost darkening the heavens, flew over our heads from the south-west from the desert in hundreds of thousands to the valley. I took it for a single flight, and called my companions from the tombs, that they might see this Egyptian wonder ere it was over. But the flight continued; indeed, the work-people said it had begun an hour before. Then we first observed that the whole region, far and near, was covered with locusts. I sent an attendant into the desert, to discover the breadth of the swarm. He ran for the distance of a quarter of an hour, then returned and told us that, as far as he could see, there was no end to them. I rode home in the midst of the locust-shower. At the edge of the fruitful plain they fell down in showers, and so it went on the whole day till the evening, and so the next day from morning to evening, and the third; in short, to the sixth day, and in weaker flights much longer. The Arabs are now lighting great fires of smoke in the fields, and clattering and making loud noises all day long, to preserve their crops from the unexpected invasion. It will, however, do little good. Like a new animated vegetation, these millions of

<sup>1</sup> Lepsius's *Discoveries in Egypt*, pp. 27-29.

winged spoilers cover even the neighbouring sandhills, so that scarcely anything is to be seen of the ground; and when they rise from one place, they immediately fall down somewhere in the neighbourhood; they are tired with their long journey, and seem to have lost all fear of their natural enemies—men, animals, smoke, and noise—in their furious wish to fill their stomachs, and in the feeling of their immense number. The most wonderful thing, in my estimation, is their flight over the naked wilderness, and the instinct which has guided them from some oasis over the inhospitable desert to the fat soil of the Nile vale.”<sup>1</sup>

To this land of locusts and hail-storms, of epidemic boils and disastrous murrain, the warnings of Moses were abundantly intelligible. They were not threatened with an unknown visitation, but were in the predicament of a land like Britain, if, in the course of a short year or so, we were forewarned of nine such plagues as a frost in June, a potato-blight, the Hessian fly, the cholera. When they were foretold, we could have no difficulty in understanding what was threatened, and when they came on the predicted day, and on the predicted day when such of them as could go away departed, we should have no difficulty in identifying them as God’s own messengers.

3. Whilst, however, the plagues were of a kind to demonstrate conclusively the superiority of Jehovah and His commissioned messengers over the idols and their ministers, they were so conducted as to leave Pharaoh a free agent all throughout. He was not put on the actual

<sup>1</sup> Lepsius’s *Discoveries*, pp. 49, 50.

rack or held over a slow fire till his cruel hand relaxed and let the Hebrew bondmen go. The appeal was loud, and each time that it was repeated he and his people were shaken more severely than before ; but after every demand there was a respite, a pause, an opportunity to ponder, and either yield the point or recall a past concession. During that reprieve or lull, nine times repeated, the result was uniform : “The heart of Pharaoh was hardened ;” he turned on his hapless serfs as savage, and scowled on their mysterious Protector as sullen and defiant as before. And whilst we are so far admitted into the painful secret, whilst “the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared through all the earth,” so that “God hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth,” we can so far understand how naturally, in a proud and imperious mind, the process went on, and how truly it may also be said, “Pharaoh hardened his own heart.”

For, first of all, there was always time for doing it. Except on the last occasion, when the Israelites stood marshalled and ready to move off amidst the amazement and anguish consequent on the death of the first-born,—except on that last occasion the Israelites were never ready to take Pharaoh at his word ; but if he made some small concession overnight, he was able to recall it in the morning. And who will deny that he was strongly tempted ? To let his own vassals go—to create a gap so instantaneous and so wide in his kingdom’s industry ; to

part with the best bone and sinew of the realm, was no small sacrifice. And then the humiliation: to have that son of a slave glorying over him, to receive the dictation of that runagate; to let Apis and Osiris bow before the Hebrews' God, what would Nimrod and his Ethiopian neighbours say? Besides, what if all this time he was under some frightful spell, some horrible sorcery or glamour? Assuredly there was something very startling in the swift succession of so many plagues, and the God of Israel must have great power to send them, and to enable his servant to predict them. But perhaps the gods of Egypt would triumph yet. It seemed as if they too could turn water into blood and a walking-stick into a serpent; and they might yet enable their votary and champion to hold his own and avenge these insults. And so, for as often as he was reprov'd, Pharaoh still hardened his neck, until he was suddenly cut off, and that without remedy.

Such is still the method of God's procedure. No force is laid on the human will, yet some are allowed to harden themselves, whilst others are mercifully constrained to have mercy on themselves and flee to the Saviour of souls.

The process is insidious,—the self-hardening one I mean. God often reprov's. He gave Pharaoh ten times a place of repentance, but the hard man persisted, and was likely hoping still to escape when he was suddenly cut off, and that without remedy.

A man begins a course of dishonesty. Living beyond his income, he must accommodate himself with money passing through his hands; but the income of next year

does not fill up the deficit, and as the discrepancy has been so dexterously concealed as to elicit no inquiry, he goes on and on peculating and appropriating and purloining. And God goes on reproofing. He takes the man to church, where he hears a sermon on the text "Thou shalt not steal;" but the embezzling goes on. He takes him to a court of justice, and lets him listen to a dreadful case, the facsimile of his own, where from respectability and seeming affluence the delinquent is hurled down to the shame and wretchedness of convicted felony, and under this painful homily on righteousness and judgment to come Felix trembles; but after a few days the work of appropriation is once more resumed. And then to remind him that an eye is on him, his merciful Reprover elicits from some one's lips a sentence which greatly startles him. The cold sweat breaks, his face is ashes, and from the ominous allusion he fancies himself found out. But by and bye he finds that he was wrong, and emboldened by impunity, as if it gave an actual sanction to his crime, he launches out more largely and with increasing confidence, till some evening from the heart of a ruined home, and the unavailing grasp of affection shrieking forth its agony, he is hurried off to the trial which ends in a felon's doom and a convict's infamy.

Or the social glass has grown into the cup which does inebriate, and the misfortune is none the less because the sin is great; and in great mercy God's Word and Spirit and Providence for a long time reprove. If you don't put in the pin, says the doctor, I won't answer for the consequences. If you don't reform, says his employer,

next term we part company. If you don't repent, says God, you shall perish. And there is not only remonstrance but reproof. One night he comes home and finds that he has been robbed in the tavern or on the road from it of his quarter's salary. "Ah! that comes of my drinking." Another day he wakes up in a public hospital, and sees his miry garments hanging by the bedside, whilst they are applying iced lotions to his temples. "How came I here?" And when he hears that he was picked off the pavement with a threatened fit, "Ah! that too comes of drinking. I must really take the pledge." But for as often as he has been reprov'd, no sooner is he well than his spirit again is hardened, and reeling home in the moonlight beside the canal, the policeman hears a plunge, and he himself feels a momentary shock, and then opens his eyes,—not in the hospital,—not in his own home,—not even amongst the fumes of the tap-room,—but where there is no more place for repentance, and where for reproof habitually resisted there remains no remedy.

Pharaoh ten times reprov'd, yet always persisting,—Pharaoh repeatedly subdued, yet once more rebelling,—Pharaoh humbling himself one day under the mighty hand of God, and another day cut off in fierce conflict with Jehovah, stands forth to all time a glaring example. It tells how resolute and resilient is the stout heart of the sinner,—how, like a deceitful bow, when the pressure is withdrawn, it will bound back again. And it tells how guilty is the war and how bootless will be the battle with Omnipotence. Oh, brethren, may there be found amongst us no self-hardening Pharaoh,—none quitting

the parental roof, or Sabbath after Sabbath retiring from the sanctuary with a heart still joined to his idols, and determined not yet to forsake his sins. What will you do in the day when God contends with you? It is a fearful thing to fall into His hands, and who ever hardened himself against Jehovah and prospered?

## IX.

### THE PASSOVER.

“Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first-born should touch them.”—HEB. XI. 28.

THE ninth plague of Egypt was a deluge of darkness. Neither an eclipse of the sun, nor like anything to which the people were accustomed, it lasted three days, and was so dense that not only was labour arrested but men could not venture forth from their dwellings. A “thick darkness,” a “darkness that might be felt,” coming over a land so serene and so sunny, it was an ominous and appalling visitation, and might almost make them think that the end of the world had arrived. Whatsoever might be the secondary causes employed for its production, the language would imply that artificial lights were of little avail, and that social intercourse and ordinary occupation were generally arrested beneath the murky inundation. And beyond many of its predecessors this judgment seems to have shaken Pharaoh and his subjects. Their god, the sun, was frowning—or, in the grasp of some mightier divinity, he was overpowered and unable to help his worshippers. Goshen excepted, all Egypt was under a funeral pall, and, over and above its actual discomfort,



it filled superstitious minds with dread as foreshadowing some dismal catastrophe.

Pharaoh was effectually frightened, but there was no change in his feelings towards either Israel or Israel's God ; and therefore as soon as the murky flood subsided, as soon as the darkness palpable had rolled away, his spirits rose again, and he proposed a compromise. The original demand had been, "Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness,"<sup>1</sup> and now he offered to let the people go, but as a pledge for their return they must leave in Egypt their possessions. Terms like these could not for a moment be entertained, and finding Moses still insist on an absolute and unconditional outgoing, Pharaoh flew into a passion. "Begone ! Take care that I never see thy face again : for in the day that thou seest my face again thou shalt die."

Terror may be a powerful taskmaster, but something else is needful to renew the heart and transform the affections. As he lay in his palace during those days of darkness Pharaoh got time for reflection ; and even if he refused to think of Israel's rights and of the cruelties inflicted on them by himself and his predecessors, there could be no question that there had come to their rescue a powerful protector. This Jehovah was mighty in battle, and in nine successive encounters he had discomfited Thoth and Phrah, Isis and Osiris, the time-honoured guardians of Egypt, and had put shame on those great idols the sun and the river Nile. Pharaoh for the instant felt powerless in the hand of this unknown God, so awful

<sup>1</sup> Exodus v. 2.

and irresistible, and inwardly vowed that as soon as the present visitation ended he would make peace with Him by giving up the point at issue. But the visitation ceased, and along with it much of his consternation vanished. Here, on the fourth morning, the sun shone out so clear, and through the translucent margin the water-lilies looked up into the sky which reflected its unclouded mirror under them. Of such a pitchy night it was wonderful that no trace remained—the river was not ink, the blossoms were not black, and as the tramp of foot-guards crushed the open court, as barges went flashing up the stream, and the gay life of Memphis fluttered forth like the phantoms of a dream, the fears and vows of the monarch fled away, and he had courage to put Moses off with a poor and pitiful concession.

Who knows it not? On the stormy lake, pale as ashes, Volney drops on his knees and cries, "Christ, save me! O Christ, have mercy upon me!" and when the storm is over and they are safe on shore, he begs his friends not to reveal his weakness. Detected in a deed of dishonesty which he declares to be his very first—for there never was a thief who was not a liar also—the purloiner calls Heaven to witness that if you will only let him off this once, he will hereafter rather starve than steal; and six months afterwards he is at the bar of the Old Bailey. Laid on a bed of sickness the toper is plainly told how urgent is his case, and how many are the chances against him, "Oh, dear doctor, if you will only set me on my feet this once, I give you my solemn word, I never taste another drop," and the vow is kept

till he is pronounced past danger. In imminent alarm—with lying refuges swept away—like Pharaoh in the dark left all alone with Israel's God, you have seen the folly of a godless life and the terribleness of unprepared death, and have promised and protested that as soon as this crisis was over you would make God's friendship your first effort and His service your chief concern. But if it be a yew-tree staff, as soon as the pressure is taken off it will start up straight as ever; and if it be the same proud, self-sufficient, self-indulgent nature as before, it may bend for a moment beneath the mighty hand of God, but like a deceitful bow rebounding is sure to turn back erect and stiff as ever.

The milder warning was thrown away, and now the great woe was coming. God's ambassador had been dismissed. Under pain of death Moses had been ordered from the presence-chamber; and to the rude rebuff, "Let me see thy face no more," with the ominous dignity of one who knew his Master's might, Moses answered, "Thou hast spoken well: I will see thy face no more." And returning to his Master, the Lord said unto Moses, "Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt: after that he shall not only let you go, but shall thrust you out altogether."

This plague was so terrible that even at this distance it is awful to survey. By making men courageous the gospel makes them less cruel, and whilst it has braced up men's energies it has also softened their spirits, so that much as we may enjoy feats of prowess, the excitement of conflict, the exultation of victory, we turn away

from the devastation and carnage with which they are purchased. The naked announcement that in a single night a whole nation was plunged into mourning, every family bewailing its eldest son, looked at alone and dis-severed from the facts might well afflict our feelings. But we must remember the actual facts. "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, I will repay." Towards the Israelites the Egyptians had for long behaved so cruelly that, if suffering could be weighed or measured, we might safely aver that Israel's slow centuries of endurance were feebly countervailed by Egypt's night of anguish. Who can tell the protracted misery—the misery of a high-spirited free-roaming people who had been entrapped into sudden slavery? and what bottle but God's own could contain the tears of the broken-hearted bondmen, the tears of families torn asunder, the tears of hapless mothers entreating the stony-hearted ruffians not to hurl into the stream the babe snatched from their bosom, the tears of trampled abjects who saw their dearest kindred faint beneath their burdens or knocked down by savage overseers, and who dared not remonstrate or complain? And every one must be addressed in the language he understands. The tiger which has grasped your child—'tis no use to coax or flatter—it is only the flaming fagot you thrust into his face which makes him howl and drop his victim in the shock of sudden pain. "Israel is my first-born," said God—"let Israel my people go." But the lion only snarled, and even blow after blow made him only bite the firmer and make the bondage sorer: till an arm of fire gleamed through the night and "a great cry"

confessed the burning blow, as the victim dropped from his gory jaws bruised and palpitating, but still alive and FREE.

It was destined to prove "a night much to be remembered;" and, with a deliberateness and forethought truly divine, means were taken to engraft upon it a lesson of primary importance, and a celebration which should never be forgotten. This was to be the birth-night of Hebrew nationality, and it was to be further distinguished by a notable addition to the existing stock of revealed religion. Just as on the eve of the great event in human history, the Lord Jesus, in the fulness of His foreknowledge, instituted a Feast which should be at once commemorative and symbolic, so on the eve of the great event in Hebrew history, the Most High instituted a rite, at once a record of that fact and a revelation of God's great scheme of mercy. In each the fact and the practical lesson are indissolubly intertwined. In the Feast of the Passover, the Hebrew could not recall the outstanding incident in his nation's history without at the same time rehearsing, as in a sacred pantomime, those outstanding facts—a danger to be dreaded, and the blood of God's appointed sacrifice, as the sole protection from that danger. In the Feast of the Eucharist, the Christian cannot recall the overmastering incident in the annals of our world—the sacrifice for its sins which love incarnate offered—without also exhibiting in a brief but affecting drama the life which comes through that death, and the close and friendly relation which exists between every believer and that immortal "lover of our unworthy race."

When the other plagues swept over Egypt, the land

of Goshen was specially exempted; but now that this final judgment was about to fall, the preservation of the Israelites, whether in Goshen or elsewhere, was specially provided for; and the safety of every one was guaranteed who obeyed the Divine appointment and took advantage of God's own ordinance. For the time, every head of a household was exalted into a priest, and was directed to take a lamb and keep it up from the tenth day of the month till the fourteenth. On the fourteenth, in the evening, the lamb was to be slain, and its blood was to be sprinkled on the side-posts and lintel of the dwelling: "For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will *pass over* you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt."

Now, what was the principle in this procedure? Death was to be abroad that night, but death is the satellite or pursuivant of sin; and on the ground of their personal worth, their actual innocence, the Hebrews could count on exemption no more than the Egyptians. But if sin's wages be death, with God there is also forgiveness—forgiveness founded on sacrifice; and so to Israel God sent a message. He told them that the Destroyer would take his flight over all the land, but if they would only do as He directed they need fear no evil, for the plague would not come nigh their dwellings.

And so "by faith they kept the passover." They did not speculate nor argue; they did not say, "If a plague is coming it will be far more sensible to lay in a store of medicine; we should fumigate our houses; we should provide the most approved specifics; or, if an actual angel is to inflict the stroke, he will be able to distinguish *us* without so much ado. A few Hebrew letters on the door—a dash of red paint on the lintel, might answer all the purpose; but why insist on sacrifice? Why lay such stress on the blood of the slain lamb?" We do not read that any were so foolish. When Moses told the impending plague, and announced the means of preservation, "the people bowed the head and worshipped." They believed that a vial of vengeance was about to burst upon a sinful land, and they not only entered into their chambers, but shed the blood of the expiating victim, and hung out over every threshold the symbol at once of confession and deprecation,—the crimson sign which betokened their faith in God's mercy and their compliance with God's command.

So "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." He is the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world—the Divine and prospective victim who gave to all lesser sacrifices their meaning and their value. Little is the pleasure which God has in inflicting pain. Small is His delight in the death of him that dieth; but where there is evil there must be pain—where there is transgression there must be penalty—where sin exists death must follow. But so marvellous is God's mercy, He himself comes in between sin and its consequences. Rather than

that the sinner should perish, He has Himself encountered the penalty, and in order to become the pain-bearer, the death-endurer, the mystery of godliness was consummated, and God manifest in flesh offered Himself a sacrifice for sin, and was then received up into glory again.

The blood shed on that great occasion is of infinite value and of ever-during efficacy ; for it is the blood of God's own Son—that Lamb or Sacrifice of God which taketh away the sin of the world, and which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel, for it cries not for vengeance but for mercy ; it proclaims not a crime committed but a penalty exhausted, and shows its power not in hounding the perpetrator from land to land, but in pacifying his conscience and giving it a good answer towards God.

Christ our passover is sacrificed for us, and the case of Israel may help us to understand how we are to derive the benefit. They had faith in God, and did as God directed. Though it seemed a bold thing to do, each head of a household for the time being became a priest. It did not matter what a clown he might be, what a coarse, what a sinful life up to that period he had been leading ; it was now an affair of life or death, and if he did not wish death to enter his dwelling, on the head of the unblemished lamb he must lay his unused hands, and as a priest must present the offering. And all the rather because our hands are so impure, we need to lay them on the Lamb of God, and over the head of that great propitiation confess our sin and our death-worthiness ; and although a priestly act, it is not presumptuous ; for He



himself hath made us kings and priests to His Father, entitled to present as ours His one oblation, and to ask the blessings which it bought. And although there is no literal refuge into which we can retire, and there hide us till this night of danger end, and the morning of the great deliverance dawn, "the name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it and is safe;" the promises of God, the perfections of the infinite and immutable I AM, are a secure retreat to those who know and trust them. And although there is no literal blood which we can sprinkle, we know the fact that precious blood was once shed for the sins of many; and if we are satisfied with this divinely-appointed method of escape, if for protection from coming wrath our sole dependence is the blood of Christ, the doom threatening a Christless world will *pass over* us, and emerging to that joyful awful morrow where on the one side all is gladness, on the other all is weeping and wailing, we shall join the ransomed of the Lord in that final exodus—in the escape of the redeemed from earth's darkness and the bondage of corruption.

The *principle* on which the Passover was grounded we have endeavoured to explain; but I ought to add that the preservation of any given Israelite depended not so much on his understanding the principle as on his actually employing the divinely-appointed expedient. And so I am bound to add, in the still more momentous matter of personal salvation, it is not the extent of our knowledge that will save us, but the simplicity with which we receive what God reveals, and do what God

desires. We might fancy some intelligent Israelite saying, after hearing the message of Moses, "Well, it is an admirable provision. The observance prescribed is deeply significant, and it is in wonderful congruity with the whole course of the Divine procedure;" but if he neglected to adopt it for himself, his theology would not save him. Whereas we could equally imagine some plain unlettered labourer, some guileless Israelite, who, listening to the message, understood no more than what merely met the ear: "A great desolation is to sweep the land this night, and if you wish to escape, you will sacrifice a lamb and sprinkle on your posts and lintel its blood,"—we could imagine him comprehending little more than the plain warning and equally plain prescription; but, believing what was spoken, his faith would save him. "By faith, keeping the passover and sprinkling the blood, he that destroyed the first-born would not so much as touch him."

And so it is very important for us to remember that it is neither the extent of our erudition, nor the vividness of our fancy, nor the grasp of our philosophy, that will save us, but the readiness with which we fall in with God's requirement and do as He directs us. And happily for us His directions are exceedingly plain. Christ is set forth as a propitiation for sin, and all receive remission who have faith in His blood. Wherever there is a child of Adam there is guilt, and there the sword of the Destroyer should come down; but wherever the blood of Christ is put forward as the *piaculum* or plea, there is pardon, there is protection, *there* the destroying angel

passes by. And it is neither because he is a saint who hangs out the crimson sign, nor because it is a strong tower or a stately palace in which he dwells, but because God recognises the appointed token that He passes over, and says to the believer "Live."

My friends, suffer me to ask how it stands with you? I can quite imagine that some are a little tired of frequent iteration, and would be glad if we went on from these first rudiments; and perhaps in a stated pastorate we should. But yet what should be better news to those who are sinning every week than the gospel of forgiveness? or with all the wrath which God has revealed against unrighteousness, what hint can be more opportune, what exhortation should be more urgent than, "Get within, keep within, your blood-protected refuge"? My hearer, are you there? It is only on such that the morning of eternity will arise bright and gladsome, and it is only there that you can even now dwell with any reasonable sense of security. What right have you to be cheerful whose sins are not yet forgiven, and who have not yet got your sentence of condemnation cancelled? How can you be merry who, like an Egyptian, like a mere infidel, are going to lie down this night, and going to lie down ere long in your last sleep perhaps, with no pardon entreated in a Mediator's name, and with no protection provided against the second death and the wrath to come?

Nor can a word by way of remembrance come amiss to any. The only serious evil is sin. The sight of it filled the Son of God with such concern, that in order to

save some,—probably the whole of Adam’s infant progeny and a large number of the up-grown and responsible,—He assumed the body which the Father prepared for Him, and as the Lamb of God He offered up Himself a sacrifice.

“ O thou hideous monster, Sin,  
 What a curse hast thou brought in !  
 All creation groans through thee,  
 Only cause of misery !  
 Thou hast ruin’d wretched man  
 Ever since the world began ;  
 Thou hast God afflicted too ;  
 Nothing less than that would do.

Christ relieves us from thy guilt ;  
 But we think whose blood was spilt.  
 All we feel or hear or see  
 Serves to raise our hate of thee.  
 Dearly are we bought, for God  
 Bought us with His own heart’s blood.  
 Boundless depths of love divine !  
 Jesus, what a love was thine !”<sup>1</sup>

And if you want to have done with sin,—if you would not go on carrying its guilt to the grave, and its germs of immeasurable, illimitable evil into eternity,—cast yourself on the Saviour’s proffered mercy, and take refuge beneath the protecting covert of His most precious blood. In so doing you comply with God’s command, and cast yourself, not only on His pity, but on His truth and faithfulness. In so doing you honour the finished work of His beloved Son. In so doing you at once confess sin’s enormity and proclaim the atonement’s efficacy, and surrender the two main points of dispute between God

<sup>1</sup> Hart, Hymn 41.

and the gospel-rejecting mass of mankind. Like Israel on the night of danger, you put forth the crimson sign of confession, the red flag of deprecation, and in return Heaven waves the white flag of truce, the Saviour plants over the spot the banner of His love. *Ἐν τούτῳ σημειῶ*—under this standard you are safe. The penal consequences of sin are intercepted, for the sin is forgiven; and its prolongation beyond the present life is made impossible by that most merciful arrangement which in the case of Christ's redeemed leaves all their besetting sins on this side,—all their corruption in that house of bondage from which death delivers.

## X.

### THE PASSOVER.

“Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first-born should touch them.”—HEB. XI. 28.

“Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.”—1 COR. V. 7.

THE night before any decisive conflict is a solemn and anxious season. On the night before the battle of Ivry, which was to decide whether he should lose his life or gain a second crown, as he sat pondering a map of the battle-field the hair on one side of King Henry's head turned grey; and we like to know how the commanders felt on the night which raised the siege of Leyden, on the night before Pharsalia, on the eve of Blenheim or Waterloo.

Moses has not told us how he felt on the night before the Exodus; but he has given us some interesting glimpses of the scene, or rather the data for reproducing it. It was April, and it was the night of the full moon. The soft and silvery light fell on the white backs of the African mountains far away, and it streamed almost perpendicular on the mighty Pyramids which rose like silent symbols of eternity straight above his head. In the royal streets of Memphis all was silent, and all was silent in

the wide green plain around it,—so silent that if you had taken a quiet stroll by the river brink you might have heard the plunge of the night-feeding fishes and the pants of behemoth as he slept among the bulrushes. But although all was so silent, all was not locked in slumber. These lowly cottages,—they are Hebrew huts,—the hovels of slaves, and they have lights still burning. Peep through the chink and see what the inmates are doing. They are all of them astir; I declare not one of them has lain down, and they look like people preparing for a journey. On the table are traces of a finished repast, the house-mother is packing up her kneading-trough, with his staff in his hand the goodman is ready for the road, and the very children are excited and watching. But what's this red mark on the door? What means this blood on the lintel? Did you hear that cry? 'Tis the moment of midnight, and some tragedy is enacted in that Egyptian dwelling, for such an unearthly shriek! and it is repeated and re-echoed, as doors burst open and frantic women rush into the street, and, as the houses of priests and physicians are beset, they only shake their heads in speechless agony, and point to the death-sealed features of their own first-born. Lights are flashing at the palace gates, and flitting through the royal chambers; and as king's messengers hasten through the town inquiring where the two venerable Hebrew brothers dwell, the whisper flies, "The prince-royal is dead!" Be off, ye sons of Jacob! Speed from your house of bondage, ye oppressed and injured Israelites! And in their eagerness to "thrust forth" the terrible because Heaven-protected

race, they press upon them gold and jewels, and bribe them to be gone.

It was a night much to be remembered, for "a nation was born" in that night. During those four hundred years Jacob's family had expanded into a multitude, the threescore and fifteen souls had grown to at least a million. But it was a mere inorganic multitude, a horde without a head, with no laws or rulers of its own,—a helpless, down-trampled tribe, held together by common hardships, and a common mother-tongue. This night, however, they sprang to their feet an exceeding great army. In the surprise of their sudden emancipation, their mouth was filled with laughter and their tongue with melody. Scarcely credible, it still was true. Jehovah had made bare His mighty arm, and Pharaoh, crushed and humbled, was entreating them to fly. With no king over them but God, with no bonds save those of mutual brotherhood, they were now their own masters, and moving towards the Promised Land. No wonder that the night when as a nation they were born became a night ever memorable; a night much to be observed unto the Lord for bringing them out from the land of Egypt; a night of Jehovah, to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations. No wonder if the 15th of Abib, if the night of this glorious revolution, the return of their national independence, the recurrence of the exodus, became a joyful anniversary, and if, even without Divine direction, they had agreed to keep it as a joyful feast for ever.

But of such an event the memorial was not left to



mere chance or good feeling, and we have here the rules laid down which secured its continued celebration. And we know that in point of fact the celebration lasted as long as the Hebrew nation had a home, and in some of its features it is still kept up by that peculiar people. Everything was done to make it a joyful and suggestive jubilee, and if you had lived in the days of the Lord Jesus you would have seen it kept somewhat after this fashion :—First of all, the little capital would fill up with people from all ends of Palestine, would fill up and brim over like a great bee-hive, every house as full as it could hold, and thousands lodging anywhere, all bright and cheerful, hospitable and open-handed, for the maxim was, “This day is holy unto the Lord your God, go your way, eat the fat and drink the sweet ; neither be ye sorry, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.” Four days beforehand, the father of the family brought home a lamb, gentle and beautiful, sure to take the hearts of the children ; but in this instance a short-lived favourite, for in four days the lamb must die. Then came the day of preparation, with its hunt through all the house in search of that leavened bread which they were commanded to put away, when every drawer and cupboard was opened, and every corner carefully explored, and if the smallest morsel was found it was brushed into a basin, and carried out to a bonfire kindled on purpose, and burnt with a prayer for its annihilation. Then came the high day, the killing of the passover, followed by the paschal feast,—a feast with specialties sure to strike the younger spectators. Instead of putting off their shoes at the door of the

apartment, as usual, the guests walked in in their sandals, loins girded and staff in hand, and, not unfrequently, instead of reclining they simply stood round the table, like pilgrims or passers-by, who could hardly wait to snatch a hasty morsel. Then on the table, besides the all-important lamb, roasted, and with bitter herbs sprinkled over it, stood one great goblet of wine; and for bread, instead of the ordinary loaves, were thin airy cakes of the finest whitest flour, and a solid cake of figs and almonds, shaped like a brick, and with cinnamon strewed over it in imitation of straw. Whilst the feast was going on, at a signal from his mother, the youngest child in the party asked—"What mean ye by this service?" and then the grandfather, or oldest guest, made answer: "Long ago our fathers lived in Egypt, and the Egyptians made them slaves. The Egyptians used them very cruelly, and our fathers cried to God. God said to the king of Egypt, 'Let my people Israel go;' but the heart of the king was very hard, and for all the plagues which God sent on Egypt the king would not let Israel go. At last God said to our fathers, 'Take every family of you a lamb, and kill it to-night, and sprinkle its blood upon your door, and stand ready to start, for this night Egypt will be glad when you go.' And that night into all except the blood-sprinkled houses went the angel of death, and smote the first-born, whilst he passed over our fathers, whom, from that house of bondage, and that night much to be observed, with a high hand and an outstretched arm, God carried to this goodly land. So we, the sons of Israel, come together to keep the great feast of the Hebrew family. We eat the

unleavened bread and the lamb with bitter herbs as our fathers ate that night. This day is holy unto the Lord, and as we keep our joyful feast we sing the Great Hallel."<sup>1</sup>

The night of that great exodus was the birth-night of the Hebrew nationality. If we want to find the second birth-day of the world, or rather the true birth-day of God's redeemed, the period from which our human family dates its new life, its new hope and happiness, we must put two together—the one which saw the Advent effected, and that other which saw the Atonement accomplished; the one when to sinful men it was said, "To you a Saviour is born," and that other when, in the hearing of earth and heaven, this Saviour said, "It is finished." The two dates, with their intervening lifetime of thirty years, crush up into one great demiurgic day, a great divine day, with its morning softly spread on the hills of Bethlehem, with its sun going down amidst sombre clouds on Calvary; and it will depend a little on temperament, and still more on personal experience, whether it is on the morning or evening of Christ's "day" that the spirit mainly dwells: whether it be at the cradle of Incarnate Deity or at the cross of Atoning Omnipotence that it finds the wished-for consolation, and is prepared to depart in peace.

Christ our paschal lamb has been sacrificed for us. It is a sacrifice which needs not to be repeated, but surely it deserves to be commemorated; and if we are loyal to our Divine Benefactor and true to our own interest,

<sup>1</sup> See Helon's *Pilgrimage*.

we shall not fail to do thus much in remembrance of Him.

“But what mean ye by this service?” asks your son or asks the attentive spectator. And you make answer, “It was a night much to be remembered. Our whole family had fallen into captivity and servitude. We had become the thralls of Satan,—the world itself one vast house of bondage, and its different inhabitants the slaves of divers lusts and passions. But at last there came into our house of bondage one who did not originally belong to it. He was God’s own Son. In His spirit there was nothing servile. The largest slave-owners tried to have Him,—Gold, Ambition, Appetite, Apollyon himself, all came up to Him, each hiding a chain behind his back, and in the other hand holding out the lures which had hardly ever been known to fail. But there was no danger of their succeeding,—He despised their image and looked them through and through—looked them through and through—saw the foul purpose in their heart, saw the noose behind their back, and finding nothing in Him, discomfited they went their way. And then as if in this prophet like unto Moses a Joseph also had come again, He went and harangued His brethren. He sought to inspire them with those high thoughts which were familiar to His own free-born spirit, and on some—sons of Zebedee and others—His words so wrought that their abject eyes looked up and they leaped as if they had already lost their chains. And had it been with a mere taskmaster and tyrant that He had to deal—a Pharaoh or Apollyon who had no hold of right—He soon had set them free. But over all there

hung a heavy sentence in sad and sinful earnest incurred, and which could not be lightly repealed. Yes, before He could give life to them—to say nothing of liberty—a life free from forfeiture, He must give a life for them. Those immediately around Him were amazed. They could not understand it. They remonstrated, they begged that He would never think of it. They little knew the exigency. But He knew it well, and in awful far-seeing self-sacrifice went forward to the hour, for the sake of which He had come into the world. It was the fulness of time, and the cup of man's wretchedness and sin ran over—the signal for redemption. That same April month had come—that same full moon was hanging over Olivet which fifteen centuries before had lighted the ransomed of the Lord from Goshen to Succoth, and the feast of Israel's Redemption was about to be kept in the stirring streets of Jerusalem. He kept it Himself, and saying to the Father, "Father, the hour is come—the hour for whose sake I came into the world," He explained to His friends as far as they were able to bear it what was about to transpire. He hinted that for the protection of sinners a life more precious was needful than the life of this paschal lamb. "Eat this bread, and think of my body about to be broken—drink this cup, and remember my blood about to be shed for the remission of sins," and lo, he that betrayed Him was at hand: before another evening Christ the Lamb of God, our passover, was sacrificed for us. The price was paid, even that price which frees from second death and present condemnation, and with the penalty repealed and the sin-thralldom

broken, those are free indeed whom the Son of God makes free.

Woful is the slavery where the higher nature is in thralldom to the lower: as happened not unfrequently in days scarcely yet forgotten. A scholar, a traveller, a high-born gentleman, fell into the hands of pirates, and was carried off to some robber-nest on the Barbary shore, and there for the rest of life was he left to languish—rowing the galley, grooming the charger, tending the cattle of his Moslem master. Could aught be more bitter and heart-breaking?—to have tastes and aspirations which he could no longer cultivate, friends and kindred whom he could no longer see, a faith which he could only confess to incur taunts and mockery? It was not the drudgery—hateful as that might be,—but it was this horrible frustration of existence—this subjection of high capacities to a thralldom coarse and cruel. And man was free-born. Adam was the son of God, and if you are the servant of sin—if you are the slave of appetite or passion—if any sin has dominion over you,—you are in a state most unnatural—altogether unlike man's original, and most unworthy of a nature once free and strong for good. Perhaps you are not content; perhaps you are conscious of an occasional struggle. Reminiscences of the first estate come over you, like the sight of his country's flag, like the scent of some familiar flower which grew in the garden of his youth, and which fills with tears the exile's eyes—visitations come across your spirit of compunction and regret, and you exclaim, "O that I were free! O that I were strong for good! O that I were able to bring

under the body and keep it in subjection! O that I could break these chains of evil habit, and claim the glorious liberty of the sons of God! I detest my tyrant, I despise myself for so long enduring his odious despotism; but oh! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?" Are you indeed in earnest? Are you sick of sin's slavery and anxious to escape from Egypt? Then give yourself to Christ. If He claims you none can keep you, and if you cast yourself on Him He will not refuse you. Redeemed by His most precious blood, Divine justice has no desire to detain you, and Sin and Satan have no right. Rejoicing to succour those who seek to follow righteousness, but who confess that their strength is small, to your help will come the Holy Spirit, and, fostering the good desires which He himself enkindles, He will carry you from strength still forward unto strength, till you appear before God in Zion a redeemed and ransomed spirit—free from condemnation ever since the first step was taken, and now free from the body of death, free from besetting sins, free from temptation and all further risk of falling.

## XI.

### THE FIERY-CLOUDY PILLAR.

“ And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way ; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light, to go by day and night. He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.”—EX. XIII. 21, 22.

IN the campaigns of Alexander the Great, we are told that over his tent he caused a lofty pole to be set up, and on its summit was a brazier filled with combustible materials kept constantly burning. In this way, if any one wanted to find the commander's head-quarters he could never be at any loss, for over them floated the cloudy banner by day, the flaming beacon by night. This usage he borrowed from the Persians, but whence they derived it we do not know.

It was a good contrivance ; but here we find it anticipated after a fashion so august, that except as an illustration it is of no use mentioning the expedient of the Macedonian conqueror.

On the night of their destined deliverance, when at Succoth the Israelites reached the appointed rendezvous unorganized, and of late unaccustomed to martial movements, the inquiry of the more thoughtful would be as to their future progress and the plan of march. But Moses claimed no kingship. He had been God's messenger to



Pharaoh, and he had spoken God's messages to themselves; but except that reluctant prominence to which he had been forced by the absolute command of God, Moses had assumed no personal responsibility. He did not so much as profess to know the route, and as possibly there was no one there who had performed the journey across the desert to Canaan, they might soon have found themselves a helpless mass, a weltering crowd huddled together as sheep without a shepherd, had they not espied betimes a banner in the sky, the standard of their unseen leader, and gathered reassurance from its saving sign.

The word *Shckinah* is a Hebrew term. It denotes "dwelling as in a tent or tabernacle." And although the infinite Jehovah is nowhere excluded, although there is no spot in immensity where God is absent, to our limited and place-loving minds locality is a helpful element, and—especially in the ruder and more infantile ages of our race—the Most High has condescended and met this localizing propensity. He has selected a place, and in that place has made His presence manifest or palpable. Such a place was Horeb and its burning bush, when Moses took off his shoes; for there, on His servant's view, in visible glory, had flamed out a token of His presence, who is the heaven-filling, space-pervading I AM. Such a place for a thousand years was the Temple on Moriah; for although in His essential presence Jehovah had still His path on the waters and in regions where the wings of the morning could not penetrate, it was still with perfect truth that the worshipper recognised in that beautiful house a permanent Bethel, and feeling, "How dreadful is

this place ! this is none other than the house of God, the gate of heaven," prayed withal, "O thou that sittest between the cherubim, shine forth !" And during the desert journey such a place was this aerial pillar. So far like the flag alternately smoking and flaming, which a general would have suspended over his tent—a waving pendant by day and a torch by night,—so far like this as at once to suggest the head-quarters of their camp and the presence of their leader, it was so entirely miraculous as at once to lift their minds above Moses, and suggest to the dullest in their midst that they were under the protection of heavenly power, that the Captain of their host was Divine.

As far as the purposes of the Israelites were concerned, that cloudy-fiery pillar was the throne of the Eternal ; it was the Shekinah or dwelling-place of Israel's God ; it was the manifestation of His friendly protecting presence in their midst ; and often as the Israelite looked up and saw the majestic symbol, he felt assured, " And God is with us ;" as in the well-known words—

" When Israel, of the Lord beloved,  
 Out from the land of bondage came,  
 Their fathers' God before them moved,  
 An awful guide, in cloud and flame !

By day, along the astonished lands,  
 The cloudy pillar glided slow ;  
 By night, Arabia's crimsoned sands  
 Returned the fiery column's glow."

There was sure guidance in its goings—a pledge of safety in its presence ; by day a welcome awning in its shadow, and by night an illumination no less welcome in its forth-

flowing effulgence. That pillar was Israel's pioneer. When the cloud journeyed they journeyed, and when the cloud rested the people rested. It was Israel's protector. When Pharaoh gave chase, the cloudy pillar passed from the front of the camp to the rear, and became to the one a lamp, and to the other a "horror of thick darkness," so that the Egyptians could not get near the Israelites all the night; and the only time that they fled before their enemies, was when the cloud refused to advance, and yet they wilfully rushed into battle. The cloud was Israel's angel and oracle. On one occasion it shot devouring flame, and it was by a flash from its consuming fire that, in the act of rebellion, Nadab and Abihu fell dead; but usually, its presence was friendly and propitious. "They called upon the Lord and he answered them: He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar" (Ps. xcix.); and all the allusions show what a loved and welcome sign had that Shekinah been, and how sacred was its memory. "In the daytime he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire" (Ps. lxxviii. 14); and "He spread that cloud for a covering" (Ps. cv. 39);—to all which elements of protection, guidance, comfort, the prophet refers, in describing the millennial Church: "The Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence" (Isa. iv. 5).

This is our Etham. Let us look at the pillar of cloud and of fire which offers to guide and to guard us in our journey from Egypt to Canaan—in our journey from the

new starting-point of this morning to the mansions which Jesus has prepared for those who seek a better country.

Christ is our Captain. If you are a Christian, the Lord Jesus is your Leader. He is beside you, before you ; for He has said, "Lo, I am with you always." You have declared your confidence in Him, and your affection for Him. Whither He conducts you wish to proceed ; where He goes before it is your desire to follow. But where is your guiding star, your oriflamme, your precursor pillar, your fiery-cloudy column ?

On this point there can be little difficulty. The Bible is the Word of Christ. Into that brief but abounding record He has put all His mind concerning us. Like the angel of His presence (Ex. xiv. 19), we have it ever with us, the tangible token of His friendliness, the abiding exponent of His will. If we are at any loss we have only to consult its lively oracle, and if we are in any fear we have only to look up to the great and precious promise in its quenchless ray. The ultimate and true Shekinah was Immanuel. In Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily ; and when Jesus dwelt amongst us, the Godhead did, in a way most manifest and marvellous, in very deed dwell with man upon earth. Nor has He ceased to do so. In the Christ unseen but present still, earth is still God's dwelling ; but if we want something palpable, local, tangible, we have it in the written Word. The mind that was in Christ was the mind that is still in the Bible ; and should the Holy Spirit make a transfusion of that mind into our own, we should want

no more. We should want no argument to prove that there is a heaven, for we should have the earnest already in ourselves. We should not need to go up to older disciples and more experienced believers, saying, "Sir, we would see Jesus," for Christ would live in us, the light of all our seeing, the life of all our living, without whom the universe were dark to us and desolate. We should not need to say continually—

" 'Tis a point I long to know,  
Do I love the Lord or not ? "

for with such an Alpha and Omega to our faith and affections, we should be raised above sinful doubts and selfish solicitudes, and should have only one answer to the question, " Lovest thou me ? "

Christ is our Captain, and the Bible is His banner, which He bids us eye and follow. It is the fiery-cloudy pillar, regarding which He says, " Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him and obey his voice, for my name is in him." Christ himself, the Incarnate Word of God, still speaks to us in the written Word ; and if you ask, " Where is the Shekinah now ? " we answer, " In the volume of this book. Here it is that the mind of God still maintains its residence ; and here it is that He who sits between the cherubim still speaks to us. This is the enduring Bethel where the golden stair from earth to heaven can still be found—the ladder not yet drawn up and taken in, on which the shortest step and feeblest faith may find a footing ; the moving shrine, the perennial Shekinah, which whosoever

follows will find himself guided by God's counsel and at last received to His glory."

1. The Bible is a sure and certain guide. The Bible comes from God, and so it is the only book by following which we can be sure of getting back to God. Possibly enough the fiery-cloudy pillar was not at first sight particularly specious or imposing. On the banks of the Nile the Israelites may have seen a bigger bonfire, some magical and many-coloured illumination, fitted to make as great an impression for the moment, or even in the desert a sudden meteor may have launched into the sky and swift as thought along its line of light may have darted towards the promised land; but who would take for his guide an *ignis fatuus* or a shooting star? And this sultry afternoon, wafted from the sea, a great cloud has overspread the firmament. It is broader than the cloudy column, and all the camp is grateful for its canopy. And now that the sun is setting, how poor and tame the familiar pillar looks beneath its molten chrysolite and purpled majesty! But before the first watch is over, its bosom throbs with fire, and coming down in noise and tempest, before the morrow it is utterly vanished, and as a shadow from the heat the pillar remains the only awning in all that weary land.

A poet throws out a brilliant flash, a day-dreamer gets hold of a beautiful kind-looking thought, and teases and teds it, and tosses it out into a cloud fine and filmy, and avers that it covers more space, that it is more comprehensive and more fitted to the case of mankind than Bible philanthropy; but even the spark of a neighbour's

fire makes it up like gossamer, and nobody waits to see where the ashes come down; whilst theories more laboured and specious, ideal philosophies and godless philanthropies, systems exhaled from the great gulf of opinion, spread over the sky, and for a moment have it all to themselves; but at last in some Robespierrian revolution the thunder bursts, the storm comes down, and the sky is bare. But for the persistent pillar—the Word of the Lord which endureth for ever—there would be no comforter nor covert from all the sultry noon.

Says Jesus, “I am the Light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” You want pardon, and the word of Christ conducts you to the cross. You want a sense of God’s friendship, you want to know that the great God does not despise you, nor the holy God dislike you; and this Word leads you to the throne of grace, and teaches you to cry, Abba, Father. You want wisdom, zeal, and prudence, serenity and self-possession, a firm and noble constancy, with a bright and engaging winsomeness; and this Word tells you of the Holy Spirit, tells you that if you entreat the aid of that great Comforter He will come to you, and replacing nature’s gloom with heavenly gladness, will also give you the germs and earnestings of those gracious dispositions of which a better world is full.

2. The Bible is a guide adapted to every circumstance and every season. Its shade made the pillar welcome by day, its brightness made it still more welcome by night.

To any susceptible spirit it must have been a striking scene which at the noon of night opened from the outskirts of the camp; for you know that night is a great revealer. As soon as the veil of sunshine is withdrawn new worlds come forth: the azure canopy retires, heaven opens, and, as the starry vistas boundlessly withdraw, space grows infinite; and yet, what is very strange, whilst man grows little God draws near. Nor are they the great lights only, Sirius, Arcturus, and such mighty suns which burst upon our eye now that the glamour of the day is gone, but such lesser lights as the glow-worm on this bank, as the lantern-flies that rain beneath the tamarisk covert. And yonder is the forefront of the camp. Brother pilgrims are locked in slumber, but He that keepeth Israel, He slumbers not. Behold the sign—that tall and silvery column which sheds down on all the tents a softer day-spring, meet emblem of that Eye divine which never wearies, and which is beaming over His beloved even in their sleep.

So the Bible is the worker's book. "Work while it is day." To the toiling pilgrim there is direction in its pillared way-mark; there is comfort in its cool and shadowy covert. In Christ, within the camp, under His guidance, it is delightful to press on, working in faith, labouring in love, always abounding in that service so fruitful and blessed. "But the night cometh when no man can work;" the night of suffering or sadness, when all that you can do is to weep and be silent, is to sit still and wait. But if you "suffer as a Christian," your nocturnal experiences will be not a little instructive and re-



markable. For one thing, now that the garish day is gone, now that the near-hand glitter has passed away, the things unseen and eternal will shine forth,—

“Just as we see by night  
Worlds never seen by day.”

But not stars alone, not the everlasting glories overhead, but little joys and blessings all around, the glow-worms of our path, whose tiny tapers had no chance till now those lesser joys and blessings which are in almost every lot, but which no one says, “How good they are! how beautiful!” till the sun has set, and God’s lesser lamps get leave to shine, till the homely neighbour, till the wife or daughter comes in to cheer the poor man or the invalid. And then it is that the cloudy pillar of the working day becomes the brightening Pharos and soothing guardian of the wakeful night. To the sturdy thinker or practical worker, a proverb of Solomon was a motto for a whole day’s direction, an argument of Paul was a problem for a long winter’s discussion. But now that it is dark all over the desert, now that the watcher lies musing in his tent, and pushes aside a handbreadth of curtain, he is glad to see through the encompassing cloud coming forth a body of brightness; and as he wistfully gazes the form grows more definite, the features more divine, till on the great white throne of that radiant cloud he sees none other than the Son of Man. So move on, thou dim and mysterious column, or stand still, thou bright and transparent pillar, I follow thee. Jesus is in thee, and over green pastures, over rough deserts, through the Red Sea, through Jordan, along streets populous with friendship

and resounding with life, and adown the lone valley of death, O Word of God, I follow thee.

When the Israelites were at Etham they did not know all that lay before them. On the one hand, they had no notion what a waste howling wilderness it was, nor what a terrible time was to be spent passing through it. On the other hand, they could as little foresee the wonders which they were destined to witness, the miraculous meals, the fountain opened in the flinty rock, and above all that great episode when the voice of the Eternal broke the silence of ages, and from the pulpit of Sinai spake the Ten Commandments. All their future was hidden in the cloud of God's unsearchable wisdom, and yet in the movements of that visible pillar their own course was perfectly clear.

And so, my friends, a day like this is our Etham. We are so far on "the edge of the wilderness." A tract of untraversed time spreads before us, and although we shall not call it "a wretched land, which yields us no supplies," it is so far like the desert, inasmuch as it is a land unknown. Of one thing we may be very sure, it won't be all like Elim; it won't be all rest and relaxation, a protracted holiday, a perpetual paradise with ripe dates overhead and soft grass under foot; but there will be a good deal of toilsome marching, perhaps some fighting, a good deal of hard and hungry work, a good deal of self-denial. But let us also hope that, as in the past so still, there will be goodness and mercy. Let us hope that if an Amalek come forth against us, a face to the foe with hands uplifted to heaven may prevail. If arrested in our path,

if a sudden voice exclaims "Stand still!" let us hope that it may be in order to see some great salvation. And above all let us hope and be sure that the bread of life will not fail, nor the brook which runneth by the way, that Rock which followeth all the pilgrimage; and if any special manifestation of mercy or power be vouchsafed, let us pray that it may be a means of grace,—that like the sermon from Horeb it may write God's law deeper on our hearts, and impress His own perfections more profoundly on our awe-struck minds.

Up into this year may the angel of God's presence attend us, and make it a year of proficiency and progress, —a year of cheerful industry and patient endurance. May it add many to the Church of the saved, and in the case of God's people may it add grace to grace. Over every dwelling-place of Mount Zion, over all your habitations and all your assemblies, may the Lord create a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; and upon all the glory may He be Himself the defence.

## XII.

### THE RED SEA.

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.”—EX. XIV. 15.

FOLLOWING their fiery-cloudy pillar, the Israelites set forth on their journey, and the first stage or two would be sufficiently exulting and sanguine. They had no conception of what lay before them, and they might very well imagine that from the house of bondage to the land of promise would be a short and pleasant promenade. As the crow flies it was little more than a hundred miles, and a week's march might bring them thither. They might be excused if they already in imagination scented the milk and honey from its fragrant hills, and if, betwixt sport and earnest, they pictured their future homes and planned about their beehives and gardens, their dairies and their farms, and felt impatient to get a glimpse of the land which would be sure to look so goodly in this most pleasant month of all the year.

But here was a surprise. It was no goodly land but a watery gulf which stretched before them, and although by retracing their steps they might round the head of it—and this itself a sufficiently tiresome detour,—behold a new horror! A cloud of dust is rising in the rear, and it

can no longer be disguised that the squadrons of Egypt are in pursuit, fierce and headlong. The sea before and that serried host behind, it was a miserable alternative to men who could neither fight nor swim, and in the panic of the moment a great wail went up to heaven, whilst burning taunts were hurled at the head of Moses. "Were there no graves in Egypt? Bondage had been better than this butchery." And only knowing that God purposed to work a great deliverance, but still ignorant of the means, Moses could only answer, "Stand still and see God's salvation. The Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever."

The wondrous sequel we have read. Whatsoever be the point of the Red Sea which we select as the scene of the occurrence, and whatsoever incidental agencies of wind or tide we may call in as accessories, the substantial miracle remains; and amongst the marvellous things which Jehovah did in the land of Egypt and the field of Zoan, none stands forth more conspicuous than this dividing of the sea. As we have it in the vivid verse of Bishop Heber:—

"He comes—their leader comes! the man of God  
O'er the wide waters lifts his mighty rod,  
And onward treads; the circling waves retreat,  
In hoarse deep murmurs, from his holy feet;  
And the chased surges, inly roaring, show  
The hard wet sand and coral hills below.  
With limbs that falter, and with hearts that swell,  
Down, down they pass, a steep and slippery dell;  
Around them rise, in pristine chaos hurl'd,  
The ancient rocks, the secrets of the world;  
And flowers that blush beneath the ocean green,  
And caves, the sea-calves' low-roofed haunt, are seen.

Down, safely down the narrow pass they tread ;  
The beetling waters bulge <sup>1</sup> above their head :  
While far behind retires the sinking day  
And fades on Edom's hills its latest ray."

The same gulf which opened a triumphal path to Israel closed over the Egyptians and whelmed them in a watery grave, fulfilling the word of the Lord by Moses, "The Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them no more for ever." And in the progress of our narrative we ourselves shall see Pharaoh no more—a character which, after the manner of Cain and Herod, stands up from the sacred page awful and ominous, a seared and blasted peak without any redeeming verdure, and visited by no shower of blessing. A hard man, God left him to himself, so that he grew harder still. Proud, imperious, selfish, like the second James of England, at once a bigot and a despot, he got gradually committed to the unequal strife, and, by a succession of steps as false as they were natural, was hurried forward to the fatal issue.

We say that Pharaoh's course was natural. A selfish man and supremely arrogant, it would have been surprising if he had listened a single moment to the demand, "Let Israel my people go." As serfs and bondagers they were invaluable, and to let them go would be to annihilate the half of Egypt's industry. Nor was his a mind with which considerations of equity or humanity had any weight. It would not be of the smallest use to urge how long Israel had already served for nothing, and how unkind it was to keep in odious captivity men who had done nothing to forfeit freedom. He looked simply at

<sup>1</sup> Storm.—HEBER.

his own interest, and scouted the monstrous proposition to give up a million of his people, and rather than be so soft he would buckle on his panoply and defy the consequences. These consequences were terrible ; but once involved in the contest, Pharaoh's was not the nature to succumb ; and although he could not hide it from himself that a mighty and mysterious power had risen up to rescue Israel, it became a point of honour to persist, and, assured by the magicians that the gods of Egypt were mightier than the God of Israel, he doubtless cherished the hope that they would yet arise to the succour of their champion.

But whilst all this was entirely natural, alongside of it and underneath it was a great deal which was immensely wicked. Pharaoh was a proud and heartless autocrat. Like another Lucifer, he set himself on high, in haughty self-sufficiency, looking on all beneath him and around as created for his own aggrandizement, and this made him at once defiant of a higher power and disdainful of his fellows. In all the distress which his obstinacy entailed, we never detect one spark of compassion for his people ; no royal granaries thrown open, no grants from the privy purse to mitigate the tremendous misery ; and in keeping with this sullen apathy towards his own Egyptians is his savage bearing towards the Israelites. He is told that they are fainting beneath their burdens, and he is entreated to grant a holiday. Instead of at once consenting, as a good-natured prince might have done,—“ Well, a week's play after four centuries' work is no great matter ;” instead of instituting some inquiry, as a temperate though

cold-hearted ruler might have done, Pharaoh sends that very day for the taskmasters, and bids them lay more work upon the people, and as a punishment for complaining, they are after this to find the straw with which the bricks were toughened. And in keeping with the cruelty of the tyrant is the arrogance of the autocrat: "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." Pharaoh was a polytheist, and on his own principle of "gods many and lords many," although he had had no reason to believe that Jehovah was pre-eminent or supreme, he had every reason to believe that Jehovah was divine. On his own principles as a Pagan, the Hebrews had a God as well as he, and there was gross impiety in his answer, its tone of supercilious irreverence plainly showing that if the demand had been made in the name of Thoth or Phrah it would hardly have prospered better. "Who is Jehovah, that I should obey his voice?" not obscurely intimating that in his own eyes Pharaoh was himself a deity, and throwing him open to the answers which came so awfully on behalf of the Powers Unseen, as well as on behalf of Israel's omnipotent Protector, when the river rolling down in blood, when hail and locust-rain and darkness palpable, and at last the Red Sea's closing billows, made reply to the self-idolater, "I am Jehovah."

A course of conduct may be very wrong, and yet all its steps may seem quite natural. The man himself may see no alternative, and if we grant that he was right in the outset, it will be difficult to show that the particular act of robbery or bloodshed was so very far wrong. If Judas



was right in his first principle, that money is the one thing needful, it was very natural that he should try to get it by selling his Master. And if Pharaoh was right in his first principle, that all things existed for the sake of the king of Egypt, and that no one in heaven or earth had any right to resist his will, it is not wonderful that he should have gone to war with Jehovah.

You say he was not right. You say that in his starting-point he was monstrously wrong; that in his first principle of proud self-idolatry he was diabolically wicked. But alas! my friends, it does not need that a man should be a monarch in order to repeat the career of Pharaoh. "Who is Jehovah?" says the voluptuary when urged to give up his sinful pleasures; "who is the Lord, that I should let my enjoyments go?" "Who is the Lord, and who is Israel?" says the worldling hastening to be rich, and who in his all-absorbing avarice has no bowels for his bondmen, no consideration for their souls or bodies, who without straw are baking his bricks, and who without a Sabbath are building his pyramid. "Who is Jehovah, that I should obey his voice?" says the hardened gospel-hearer, who has long listened to the claims of God, and yet, entrenched in apathy, holds out, preferring to be his own all-in-all, and somehow hoping that he shall be the exception to the rule, and if the worst comes to the worst, that he shall be the sinner saved who yet never had a Saviour. In every stout and resistful spirit, in every proud, self-indulgent nature, there is a certain root of Pharaohism; and unless you humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, you will find, like Pharaoh

when at last he sank like lead in the mighty waters, that it is "woe to the man who strives with his Maker."

A great word is that word of God to Israel. There they were, a sea before them far wider than their familiar Nile, and with the wild tumult of its waters very terrible; a sea before them, and on their rear, with his jingling chargers and his sounding chariots, an angry, ruthless king. Unarmed and unused to conflict, to face round and fight was for a flock of sheep to charge a pack of wolves or lions, and across that gulf they had neither wings to fly nor boats to ferry; but although still invisible, it was across that gulf that the path of the ransomed stretched, and from God's "Forward" the veiling waters fled away, and revealed the road which no created eye had seen till then.

And so whenever the fiery pillar conducts to the water's edge, and God says, "Go forward," the waves open and the weakest pilgrim passes through. Luther, you are a fine, genial fellow; you are made to enjoy this wonderful world; don't leave it by a heroic suicide. You are a father, and the solace of a thousand friends. Not a rootless stick or a rigid palisade, like these heartless, homeless, dehumanized monks, you are a green tree with roots in all our hearts; by wilful self-destruction don't dash to the earth so many nests and wound us all. But he is resolute. "Here I stand; I cannot retract, so help me God." It is the edge of the Red Sea, the very point to which the guiding pillar has brought him, and, like the pursuing Egyptians, the Romish myrmidons have closed upon him, and ramp and ravin for his blood. But just as

they are about to clutch their prey the sea sunders, their host is troubled, and as the waters stand up a wall on either hand, with conscience clean, with honour saved, with the gospel uncompromised, the Reformer passes through.

The like does not happen to every one, yet something of the sort may chance to you. Following your guide, shut up by the events of Providence, and acting under the dictates of religious principle, you have reached the edge of your Red Sea. The compliance pressed upon you would hurt your conscience; the match which they wish you to make has every advantage,—wealth, position, prospects; the only drawback is, the man's a profligate. The situation you are about to lose is lucrative, and it would be entirely to your liking, but the condition affixed to your retaining it is immoral: you must act or utter fraud and falsehood. The trial is very terrible, but right above the flood hangs the unchanging oracle, "What shall it profit? Be not unequally yoked," and you must forward, for behind you hear a voice, which, pointing to that flood, says, "This is the way, walk ye in it."

However, there is one crisis in every history when faith is tried, and when all the courage is needed which can be derived from God's "Go forward." The sea I speak of we have all to cross. Some try to forget it, and to some, through grace, it has ceased to be formidable, whilst to others still it has a painful fascination. You cannot forget what lies before you, and you have not ceased to fear it; you cannot help going down to the water's brink from time to time, and taking along the strand a pensive medi-

tative stroll, and almost pitying yourself because you must some day pass over. "O thou flood of sorrow! wherefore is it that thou still dost flow betwixt myself and Immanuel's land? Dark waters! I do not like your look. I shudder at the thought that I must one day face round and turn my footsteps towards your tide. I wonder whether there will be a swell on your surface, or a great calm that day. I wonder what all I shall see in your mysterious unreported caverns; and, above all, I wonder if I shall make good my landing on the farther side. I sometimes fear that my faith shall fail." But although it is appointed to all men once to die, we doubt if such rehearsals of a dying hour are needful. We are inclined to think that the best preparation for that Red Sea passage is to follow, on these unflooded plains of life—on the *terra firma* of daily duty, the fiery-cloudy pillar. In order to lose the dread of death, do you learn to place confidence in Christ; learn to think of Him trustfully and affectionately now, for, as the Angel of God's presence, as the very soul of the Bible, as the bright eye ever beaming from the cloud of witnesses, the expressed mind of Christ is ever with you in the volume of the Book; His power and love are around your path in His ubiquitous never-absent Godhead. Depend upon it, if thus in frequent recollection and daily prayer you press up into Christ's friendship, these remoter anxieties will dwindle or disappear. That same Saviour of whose mediation you feel the need when you bend the knee to confess your sin and ask forgiveness, will not be more remote when you bow the head and give up the ghost,

and with as little sense of effort then as now He will tell you, "I am the way: no man cometh to the Father but by me." This is the way, walk in it. And although it is already the once-dreaded passage, you will hardly be aware, for to you it is as much dry land as ever, although on either side "the waters great do swell up to the brim;" and although from the verge tearful eyes follow you as you pass down into the dim and mysterious valley, these waters shall not overwhelm your soul, and you will only know that it is the Red Sea you have crossed by seeing no more of your old enemies, temptations, infirmities, and strongly besetting sins. Those Egyptians whom you see to-day, take a good look of them, for after that you will see them no more for ever.

At which rate it is no tame application of the text, it is no degradation of the Divine watchword, if, on this thanksgiving Sabbath after the Communion, we pass it round as our motto, and say to one another, Go forward! Go forward in faith and holiness, in activity and zeal; go forward in brotherly kindness and charity, in devotion and self-denial; go forward in the self-knowledge which destroys confidence in the flesh; go forward in the courage which waxes strong in Christ Jesus; go forward in the humility which, conscious of unworthiness, still high-hearted and hopeful, seeks the things above; and forward in that seriousness which, taking truer views of life and its outgoings, has also joys and consolations unguessed by carnal levity. Go forward! for in the van are the bravest and the best; go forward, for the guiding pillar is far before, so far before that the Bible is sometimes

like to get out of our sight altogether ; go forward, for the Forerunner has passed ahead, and they are the happiest pilgrims who so far can overtake as to pursue their course "looking unto Jesus." Go forward ! for the best accommodations and refreshments await those who are farthest in advance ; and "from strength still onward unto strength," their burdens are the lightest and their difficulties the fewest, who, "forgetting the things that are behind," evermore "press forward,"—forward on the way where the guiding pillar precedes, "to the prize of our high calling," even the place which Christ has prepared.

### XIII.

#### M A R A H.

“Moses cried unto the LORD, and the LORD shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters [of Marah], the waters were made sweet.”  
—EX. xv. 25.

THE Red Sea is crossed, the Egyptians are drowned, and that most ancient as well as most magnificent song of triumph has been sung,—a song so sublime that we purposely postpone exposition; in its spirit and its circumstances so sublime that even Revelation offers no other entirely parallel, and its companion and counterpart is only known to those who along with “the Song of Moses the servant of God” sing also “the Song of the Lamb.”

It was a great deliverance, and the people felt it deeply. Perhaps there never was a gush of purer gratitude than poured from the lips of all that million as Miriam’s timbrel led the dance; and as one after another the swell bore helpless to their feet the steed in gorgeous housings or his stiff and stalwart master, the exultation leaped up anew, and the shout, “Sing to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.” They were a people near to God. They felt as if they were entirely in His hand,—the people whom He had purchased, and whom He designed to plant in the mountain of His holiness. And if it could

have been put to them, "After this will you ever doubt God's power or providence?—will you ever wish that you had another God or were your own masters?"—they would have replied in one unanimous outburst, "The Lord is my strength and my salvation: He is my God, and shall reign for ever and ever."

But a little week is hardly past, they have only gone three days into the desert, when the Red Sea minstrels are changed into mutineers and murmurers; and as soon as their first grievance is remedied they find a new hardship and a fresh occasion for despair, and for charging God and His servant foolishly. It is no longer, "The Lord is my strength," but "What shall we drink?" It is no longer, "Thou, Lord, in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed," but "Would God we had died when we sat by the flesh-pots! for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill us with hunger."

At first sight this looks fearfully ungrateful and monstrously fickle, and we are apt to praise ourselves obliquely,—we are apt to get up a little sly self-complacency by bearing hard on the perversity of Israel. But if we would judge righteous judgment, we must advert to the actual facts of the case.

To begin with, was there not a real hardship? Few of us can enter into it, for few of us in health have gone without food for so much as four-and-twenty hours together, and the sensation we call thirst is no more like the mad and raging fever of the desert than our cool and verdant plains are like the baked and blistering rocks of



that burning wilderness. This was their predicament. After marching three days through dust and fiery drought they came on wells clear and limpid-looking; but the moment they put the water to their lips it was poison. What wonder if they uttered a great cry of disappointment and horror! After a month's absence from Egypt they were no nearer the land of their hope than when they first set forth, and to aggravate the trial their provisions were spent. The supplies which seemed so ample on the 15th of Abib were exhausted by the 15th of Zif; and was it no hardship to be obliged to slaughter the flocks and herds with which they had intended to stock their expected farms?—was it no hardship to feel their own strength decaying, and to see their children coming round them with sunken eyes and hollow cheeks, and crying for that bread which they no longer had to give?

It is easy to swim on dry land; it is easy to be a Samson as long as the Philistines are only phantoms in the air; but “judge not that ye be not judged.” Have you ever tried to go through your daily task with a throbbing, bursting brain, or even with an aching tooth? Have you tried against all comers to keep your temper? When worn with successive nights of wakefulness or watching, have you tried to stay your soul on God, and hold forth a sunny face all day? Or, when the balance hung betwixt a loved one's life and death, have you tried to say, “Thy will be done”? If so, you will judge in the spirit of meekness even the poor mourning Israelites, lest thou also be tempted.

Another consideration is, they were new to it. True,

their life in Egypt was hard enough; but it was not the best preparative for this kind of experience. As slaves, they were abject, resourceless, spiritless; they had no long look forward; they lived within the day. If the flesh-pot was full they had no further wants, because no higher hopes, or at least they found it better to have none. And you know very well the worth of a main-spring, the value of some motive sufficiently persistent and powerful. Hence it is that, accustomed to refined society and elevated pursuits, a Park or a Clapperton does not grudge to spend years in dreary wastes and among treacherous savages, for the solution of scientific problems and the extension of the bounds of knowledge is the hope set before him; hence it is that, in the heroism of humanity, a Kane or a M'Clintock braves the rigours of a hyperborean winter, and, sustained by the hope of bringing succour to those that are ready to perish, takes joyfully the blast which, without this hope, would freeze within the bones the marrow; hence it is that, in the dreary trench, amidst the drifting snow, the high-bred noble and the peasant soldier alike bear up, remembering that God and England expect from them their duty; and hence it is that an Eliot, a Zinzendorf, a Judson, constrained by the love of Christ, and striving to speed the day when His saving name shall be everywhere renowned, can face without a fear the heathen clamouring for their blood, and can sing psalms in the death-prison.

But although the Hebrews had a hope set before them, it was new to them, and they had not learned to live upon it. Although they had found a God, even He was new

to them, and they could only trust Him when His eye was visibly upon them, and His arm sensibly around them. Rescued at a rush, carried through the Red Sea in a mass, all saved at the self-same moment, they were a nation born in one night; and whilst this made them so far the more signal trophies of God's goodness, it also conspired with outward influences to give to their moods of mind a peculiar sympathy or simultaneousness. They were twins a million times repeated, and in the close contiguity of their camp their feelings flowed and ebbed together; and although a Caleb or a Joshua, or some rare spirit, might retain his steadfastness, it was difficult to resist the contagious ardour or depression, and the narrative proceeds as if all murmured or rejoiced together. "The people murmured," "the children of Israel murmured," "the whole congregation murmured against Moses and Aaron."

There is another remark which we would here interpose, and it applies to several of the miracles here recorded. A frequent attempt has been made to reduce them to incidents, which, although surprising, were not supernatural. For instance: there is still found in the midsummer months in that peninsula of Sinai a substance now called manna. It is a sweet, gummy exudation from the *Alhagi*, the *tarfah* or *tamarisk*, and other plants, produced by the puncture of an insect; and it is either scraped from the leaves, or gathered up where its drops have trickled down to the ground; and many travellers and interpreters have pronounced this to be the manna or "bread from heaven" on which the Israelites subsisted for forty years in the desert. If so, the miracle is not

much diminished, for the entire crop of tree-manna in the Sinai peninsula amounts only to six or seven hundred pounds weight each year, which to the Israelites would have been at the rate of the hundredth part of a grain to each person per day. But the tree-manna has none of the properties mentioned by Moses except the size and the sweetness. It is not perennial. It is not found at all seasons, but is restricted to the midsummer months, and far from being available for forty years successive, there are years when there is none of it. It does not on the sixth day exude in double quantity, and entirely intermit on the seventh, and far from having any propensity to putrefy, if kept all right few things keep better. Nor do we suppose that any straightforward unsophisticated reader would draw any other conclusion from the narrative of Moses, and the allusions to that narrative in the Psalms and New Testament, than that it was a miraculous table which was spread for Israel in the desert, and that they were fed in a way unwonted from God's own garner.

At the same time, there is a principle applicable to many miracles, on which we would gladly dwell if an occasion like this permitted. Miracles are no violations of the laws of nature—thereby meaning the laws of God—the principles on which the Most High conducts His own procedure. Although to our experience they are rare and exceptional, they are neither efforts to Omnipotence, nor are they episodes and interruptions in the scheme of the unchanging I AM. They are the evolutions of a higher law, which for the moment seems to set aside or

supersede the common law, the ordinary course of Providence; but, as we might expect from their majestic Author, these miracles are no mere whimsies or vagaries, no monstrous portents or idle prodigies such as Eastern imagination has delighted to invent, but the signs and wonders of One who is wise in counsel and excellent in working—signs which in a moment transport us into the presence-chamber of Omnipotence, but wonders which are wonderfully marked by the same wisdom, goodness, holiness, of which we have examples in His familiar well-known ongoings.

Hence in many miracles we are not surprised to find the reappearance on a scale of sudden expansion or enlargement of facts or principles with which we have long been conversant. The letters are on a gigantic scale, or as they run along the wall they float and flicker with a dazzling light; and yet in a moment we recognise the self-same handwriting,—the autograph inimitable, unmistakable, which we have all along beheld growing in the grass or projecting its revelations on pages of the Bible.

In virtue of this Divine self-consistency there is often what we would call a *natural* element in the most supernatural interposition; and so far from lessening the value of the miracle, does it not impart to it new beauty and significance? Not to say that there is no waste of the wonderful, is it not worthy of the Most High that by accelerating His own processes, or making new uses of His own creatures, He should exhibit effects which in any hand but His, these processes, these creatures, would be powerless to display? and in that boundless diversity

which marks His manifestations, whether ordinary or extraordinary, who shall say which is the most Divine, the miracle where the whole springs forth direct, startling and stupendous, from a simple fiat; or the other, where there exists a germ already in some familiar phenomenon,—a phenomenon, however, which by virtue coming forth from God suddenly expands into dimensions confessedly Divine? Was it not a miracle, when to the whelming billows Jesus said, “Peace, be still!” and by that word, creating an instant calm, He saved the drowning mariners? But when just at the moment an angry king was about to grasp the fugitives,—when just at that moment God made an east wind to blow, and split a passage through the flood, walling it up on either hand, was there nothing supernatural in the opportuneness of the breeze, nothing supernatural in its unprecedented power? When to the barren fig-tree Jesus said, “Henceforth no fruit grow on thee for ever,” no hail-storm fell, no caterpillar came, but feeling at its heart the awful word, instantly withered away, the conscious cumber-ground. But is it less than supernatural and divine when to the tyrant it is said, “Let my people go, or to-morrow about this time expect a grievous hail,” and to-morrow at that time the icy shrapnell—the hurtling hail-shower—pounds into the earth the sprouting corn, and shatters every tree? That hail, is it not the hand of God? that east wind, is it not His breath? and in wielding either at the moment, and for the special end, was there not the same omnipotence as went forth in the word, the mere *will expressed* of Jesus?

Coming to the case in hand, we are extremely interested to learn that a pearly-looking substance, suggestive of honey, is still found in that Arabian wilderness; for although it cannot account for the miracle, it accounts for the key-note on which that miracle was pitched. Now that He was about to feed His famished children with supplies straight from His own storehouse, the Most High selected a substance congruous to the place and in keeping with their circumstances. In the bare and burning desert He did not cause to spring such rice-crops as they had left in the deep inundated soil of Egypt, nor did He perplex them by raining all around them what they would not have understood,—the ready-made loaves, the bread-fruits of the then unknown Southern Isles; but selecting a palatable product of the place, or a substance near akin, to these pensioners at Heaven's gate the Great Almoner gave what was none the less Heaven's bread, because a sample somewhat like it was indigenous,—all the more truly Heaven's bread, because the existence of that other showed how well adapted it was for desert pilgrims. And just as the Lord Jesus, when about to feed five thousand hungry guests, as He did not fling away the five loaves which were actually forthcoming, but used them as the starting-point or key-note of His miracle, multiplying them a thousandfold,—so when about to feed His million guests for forty years, Jehovah did not ignore the handful of meal already in the barrel, the few drops which already trickled from the tarfah-trees, but multiplying the supply a hundred-thousandfold; instead of a mere taste of honey-dew; instead of a few tiny and tantalizing particles, with

Divine profusion He emptied a whole garner over them every night, and scattered it round their tents thick as snow on Salmon.

These little links are valuable. Rightly regarded they do not make the supernatural less wonderful, but they make it more instructive and more interesting. They afford a revelation of God's character whilst letting forth a coruscation of His power; and they are gentle inclines by which from the level of every day we may ascend towards the throne of an ever-wakeful, ever-working Omnipotence,—gangways or bridges by which our feeble steps may cross over from the frail barque of our own existence—circumscribed, mist-bounded—to the ever-adjacent mainland of the infinite and the eternal.

This principle we have little hesitation in extending to Marah and the sweetening of its waters. It is quite true, as Professor Johnston and others have shown, that some kinds of water, brackish or bitter, may be rendered drinkable by steeping in them certain woods or berries; and there is a legend that the waters of China were so bad that the people could not drink till a certain sage pointed out a little tree whose well-known leaves many of us consider an improvement to even the best of water. But we cannot help feeling that in a context like this we must rise higher than any such rationalistic rendering of the incident; for even if any plant efficacious for such purposes had grown in the region—as several recent travellers strenuously deny,—its virtues were unknown to Moses till the Lord revealed them, and even after that they must have been singularly enhanced in order to



supply to such a multitude a pure and potable beverage. "The Lord showed unto Moses a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet;" and the supernatural character of the occurrence comes out more strikingly in that standing promise, that "statute and ordinance" by which it was followed: "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in His sight, and wilt give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee." As much as to say, "My dealings with Israel shall be the converse of my dealings with Egypt. They were resistful and rebellious, and I sent them punishments and plagues: but if you be diligent and docile, I will heal and comfort you. And accept the earnest: behold the sign. As my wonders in the field of Zoan began by turning into blood the delicious waters of the Nile, so my wonders in the wilderness begin by turning into sweetness the bitter springs of Marah. Jehovah Rophi: I am the Lord who healeth you."

Surely there was a lesson which, running to these waters, Israel read, and which it would be a pity if it were lost on us.

In itself water is one of the best of things. Pure, cool, pellucid, it is the good gift of God,—a cup of cold water the very emblem of unmingled blessing. And as it comes from heaven, it is always clear and uncontaminated; it is only in earth's reservoirs that it sometimes gets muddied, and sometimes even poisoned. There are salts of copper

in the soil through which the current percolates; the manchineel has shed its deadly fruits into the fountain, or an enemy has passed this way and drugged the wells.

Books, leisure, learning, friends, and children,—wealth, accommodations,—the beautiful in nature, the exquisite in art, are all the gift of God, and as they come from God they are all pure and unalloyed. If the cup which catches the morning dew itself were clear as crystal,—if the pool that receives the rain had nothing miry or deleterious in it, good and pure would the gifts remain. But alas! too often it is a bad and bitter soil,—a proud and selfish spirit, a morose and murmuring heart, a godless, and so a hopeless, joyless mind, into which the mercy comes, and when the moment arrives that the happy possessor should drink and be refreshed, he turns away disgusted. “What’s the matter with the well? It looks clear enough. What’s the matter with the man? He has a good house, an ample income, a fine family; but the curl of contempt, the wrinkles of unrest on his countenance, the ‘vanitas vanitatum’ in his tones, proclaim dissatisfaction and discontent. What’s the matter? Don’t you know? The water was good enough till once it came there: but here the soil is Marah. It is the bitter soil that makes the bitter fountain; and you must give the man a better heart,—more humble, more thankful, more genial, more devout,—in order that he may get the full enjoyment of the good and perfect gifts which God bestows.” It must, however, be admitted that besides the Marah within there are bitter fountains to which God in His providence sometimes conducts His people. That is to say, in their

way to the better country, God sometimes sends His people trials where they looked for blessings. A child dearly loved and doated upon is taken away. Another is spared to turn out neither a credit nor a comfort. A beloved relative is laid aside by lingering sickness, or is banished to the ends of the earth, or is still more mournfully secluded from your society by the great gulf of an imagined wrong, a wounded spirit, or a mind diseased. Or after a toilsome tramp through the desert you have attained the oasis : you have made your modest competence, and in this rosy little hermitage you hope to spend life's evening quietly and not uselessly, when, lo and behold ! your sight is failing, or the power of locomotion is withdrawn, or some incipient malady gives warning that to suffer will henceforth be a main part of your vocation.

What ever shall you do ? Whom shall you imitate ? the multitude or Moses ? Moses was as much disappointed as the people, for he was as parched and faint as they ; but whilst they murmured, he cried to God. And so, if wise, will you. Cry to God. There is a remedy ! There is that at hand which, if you knew it, would make all right again, and the Lord can easily show you what it is. Perhaps He may bid you move forward another stage, for at Elim there are palm-trees and pure water in plenty. But most likely He will put you on a plan for sweetening those mercies which are for the present embittered. His name is the Lord the Healer. If you be diligent and docile, if you hearken to His voice, and do that which is right in His sight, He will make all things work together

for your good; and by the tender sympathy He raises up, by the timely help He sends, by the gentle sustaining of His own Spirit inwardly, He can work such a change on Marah that where once you stood aghast in horrible surprise you can now stoop down, and as you drink abundantly shall wonder to find that it is no longer bitter.

“ For there’s a wonder-working wood,  
I’ve heard believers say,  
Can make these bitter waters good  
And take the curse away.

The Cross on which the Saviour died  
And conquer’d for His saints,  
This is the tree, by faith applied,  
Which sweetens all complaints.

Thousands have found the bless’d effect,  
Nor longer mourn their lot;  
While on His sorrows they reflect  
Their own are all forgot.

When they by faith behold the cross,  
Though many griefs they meet,  
They draw a gain from every loss  
And find the bitter sweet.”

## XIV.

### MURMURS.

“ And Moses and Aaron said unto all the children of Israel, At even, then ye shall know that the LORD hath brought you out from the land of Egypt : and in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the LORD ; for that he heareth your murmurings against the LORD : and what are we, that ye murmur against us ? And Moses said, This shall be, when the LORD shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full ; for that the LORD heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him : and what are we ? your murmurings are not against us, but against the LORD.”—EX. XVI. 6-8.

MURMURING ! It must have been a malady characteristic of the Hebrew people, or a disease peculiar to that desert. As we proceed with this narrative we are constantly meeting it, creaking along in discord harsh and chronic, or amazing earth and heaven by its shrill, ear-piercing paroxysms. They lift up their eyes, and as the Egyptians pursue, the people murmur. They come to a fountain, the water is bitter, and once more they murmur. Then there is no water at all, and of course they murmur. Then no bread ; murmurings renewed. Next bread without flesh ; murmurings redoubled. Moses is long in the Mount ; murmurs. He takes too much upon him ; more murmurs. When shall we reach that promised land ?—murmurs extraordinary, loud murmurs. We are close to the land, but its inhabitants are giants, and their towns

walled up to heaven. Oh, what a take-in! and the last breath of the last survivors of that querulous race goes forth in a hurricane of reproach and remonstrance—a perfect storm of murmurs.

What a good thing that the race is exterminated! Was it not fortunate that all their carcasses fell in the wilderness? Would it not have been a great pity if any of that root of bitterness had found its way into the goodly land, so as to infest with its cleaving burrs and envenomed spines the pleasant fields of Palestine?

But are you sure? This weed so noxious, has it really gone into the fossil flora?—this vice so hateful, is it utterly extinct and only known amongst the crimes of history? Then why last week, “What a pity that I am not beautiful! Why did not God give me a fine voice or handsome features—something that would have made me be followed after and admired?” Why yesterday, “Is that a dinner for a Christian?” [Under one cover there was nothing but manna, and the other was only quails.] Why this morning such fuss and fury because a chimney smoked, or because in some well-meant arrangement of your papers a tract had been mislaid which you wished to read? Why that monotone of peevishness, discontent, fault-finding which runs through the lives of many, and which, if noticed, unhinges and makes unhappy those around them, and which, if no notice be taken of it, renders their own rage still fiercer? You call it climate, weather, a flaw in the peptic processes, the Englishman’s privilege of grumbling. But we fear that if the truth were known, it would turn out an old disease with a new

name. It does not need much Hebrew to ascertain that it is nothing more nor less than MURMURINGS.

But what's the harm of it? Why, this harm: God was good to Israel. He had done for them what He never did for any nation. He had chosen them for Himself as His peculiar treasure. Stooping down upon them, He had snatched them from chains and tyranny, and at that very instant, as on eagle's wings, was bearing them to a good land and a large. And they should have been thankful and trustful, and remembering that they were in the arms of Omnipotence—those arms which had snatched them from under the scythed chariots of Pharaoh, and which, flying over the Red Sea billows, did not let them drop into its weltering waters,—would it have been too much if, in any emergency, they had calmly stood still to see God's salvation, and if in their daily march they had made the passes re-echo with their songs of rejoicing? God was good to Israel, and, as praise is comely, He would have delighted in aught that betokened consciousness of His benefits and trust in His care. Instead of this they soon forgot His mighty works, and from over the graves of these grumblers the Lord proclaims to His people in all time, "Harden not your hearts as in the provocation, as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works. Forty years long was I grieved with that generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways. Unto whom I swear in my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xcvi. 8-11. See also 1 Cor. x. 1-12.

Am I wrong in surmising that this is peculiarly a sin of God's people? Not that they are more apt than others to indulge in complaints and despondency; but do they not tolerate in themselves a peevish, foreboding, murmuring spirit to a degree to which they would be terrified to indulge almost any other sin?

And is it not wicked? Are you not under the cloud—the guiding pillar? Have you not the hope that God for Christ's sake will take you to heaven? Have you not been baptized into Christ? Do you not profess to be His disciples, and in Him have you not often found as often as you sought it refreshment for your soul—spiritual meat and spiritual drink? And should not the thought of your high distinction fill you with habitual gratitude, and so with habitual happiness?

And is it not unwise? This creating of your own crosses, this embittering of your own mercies, this chiding with your lot, this quarrelling with the Most High, this falling-out with fellow-pilgrims, is it not foolish and unwise? What advantageth it you that God is good, if you neglect His gifts or push them from you? What the better will you be of the Saviour's grace and power, if you cannot trust Him? What the better are you of all the blessings which God sends you in providence and in the gospel, if you won't allow that they are meant for you—if instead of closing over them the warm and thankful hand of faith, you nibble at them with the long metallic pincers of a technical theology—if, instead of taking home that great cargo of blessings which Christ sends you in His word, and living on them day by day, you



leave them miles off in the bonded warehouse of your creed?

Oh, my friends, far be from us the heartlessness which would make light of real afflictions, or which would speak as if there were no such thing as pain and sorrow. But the sorest sufferers are seldom the loudest complainers, and by bringing God near, a real affliction usually drives murmurs far away. "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because *Thou* didst it." "For this shall every one that is godly pray unto Thee. Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him. Thou art my hiding-place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance." We have seldom found a true mourner who murmured. The struggle might be hard, but the strength was imparted, and we have so often seen the peace which passeth understanding keeping the heart from which a great joy had departed, that—like the blind man when asked, "What shall we do to make this man happy?" and who answered, "Put out his eyes"—we have sometimes felt that for causeless complaints and fanciful grievances there is a remedy real though dreadful in an actual bereavement. And this suggests that the true relief under little and every-day trials must be found where we seek for support under great tribulations.

And what is that? Like the Israelites we have our Shekinah—our cloud of glory and of guidance in which God hath put His Name,—only more articulate and nearer hand, in the Volume of the Book. The very sight of it should be reassuring. In its mere presence there is

a source of hope ; in its great and precious promises there is everlasting consolation.

But when we consult it more particularly, we find that to bring our own spirits into the right state, they need to be under the direct influence of God's Spirit. How it is that He reaches our minds and works upon them we hardly know, but that He can do it we are told, and that if sincerely asked He will. If we are selfish, He is benevolent ; if we have faint love to Christ, He loves Him and delights to glorify Him ; if we are slow to believe, He is the author of faith and can make us trustful ; if we are complainers, He is the comforter. And if we being evil know to give good gifts to our children, our heavenly Father will give His Holy Spirit to them who ask Him.

And let us remember our mercies. If you had seen the chosen people on the Red Sea shore,—with that returnless rubicon between themselves and the house of bondage, and their persecutors still as a stone beneath its molten sepulchre,—you would have said, “O Israel, who is like unto thee, a people saved of the Lord? The deliverance of this day will never depart from your memory, and all the rest of your pilgrimage you will continue singing to the Lord who hath triumphed so gloriously.” And yet one little week destroyed the tune, and changed hosannahs into murmurs. And we shall much mistake if we imagine that any single mercy, however surpassing, can of itself awaken life-long thankfulness or even secure habitual happiness. I have known people surprised into enormous fortunes, and after the first rapture was over

they relapsed into their wonted sullenness, and wandered about amidst their wealth with the old verjuice in their tempers and the old scowl on their faces. And I have seen men rejoicing on the Red Sea shore,—tears in their eyes and rapture in their looks,—because they had escaped from Satan's bondage, and feeling as if they could never lose this blessedness; and even these I have lived to see dwindle down into "murmurers, complainers, and spots in the feast of charity." And this mainly because they had forgotten God their Saviour, and the wondrous things He had done for them.<sup>1</sup> And whilst this confirms what we have already said,—that in order to keep up the memory of a mercy we need a Remembrancer, one constant as is God Himself, and who can come near our spirits as God's Spirit can; it also shows that we ought to stir up our own minds by way of remembrance of that great deliverance,—the salvation wrought by Christ, and Christ Himself. Sabbaths are invaluable mementos, and so are sacraments, and all high and hallowed seasons. But over and above we must put forth an active effort. We must stir up our minds, we must look back, and look around, and try to revive the feeling with which first we stood on our Red Sea shore, and shouted, "The Lord is my strength and my song, and he is become my salvation."

Then, suppose we try to invert the process. We are ingenious in finding out *desiderata*: it may not be the best Latin, but it would be an excellent habit if we tried to find out the *suppletata*,—the wants that have been supplied and the blessings that have been sent even

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cvi. 21, 22.

without our asking. A mighty inventory :—The Saviour—The Word of God—The hope of glory—The pardon of sin—Eternal life, even now begun—The Holy Spirit—Our British birthright—Our nineteenth century—These books—These friends—This family circle still in sight—And other members in Heaven—This morning's meal.

## XV.

### THE DECALOGUE.<sup>1</sup>

“And God spake all these words, saying, I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me,” etc.—Ex. xx. 1-17.

IF it takes some time to learn, it also takes some time to forget. Before he fell away from God's friendship, man had enjoyed a wonderful intimacy with his Creator; and as the Lord God used to talk with Adam in the cool of the day, we can easily believe that our first father made attainments in Divine knowledge such as have been vouchsafed to none of his descendants. And setting out of sight those perfections of the Godhead which he had no occasion to know, if asked to name the greatest theologian who has ever lived, we doubt if we should name Calvin or Aquinas,—nay, if we should name even Paul or Moses. For clear and unclouded knowledge, for child-like and familiar intimacy, we are apt to think that no one has yet come near the student and worshipper of Eden: we fancy that before his fall Adam knew by intuition, and as the result of affectionate intercourse with Heaven, a great deal which his descendants have not yet been able to recover.

<sup>1</sup> Preached before the British Society for the Evangelization of the Jews.

And what he thus learned we have no reason to suppose that he ever afterwards forgot. The Fall banished him from Paradise, but it did not annihilate his memory ; and he lived on for nearly a thousand years thereafter, we have every reason to believe, a penitent and a preacher of righteousness. He lived on—that old world's Bible—able to tell all that he had learned in the days of innocence, with the addition of that gospel which had been revealed to him on the day of his mournful exile ; and to every conscience-stricken Lamech, to every guileless God-fearing Abel, to every devout and heavenly-minded Enoch throughout successive centuries, he could repeat the things which he had heard and seen, nor need any have felt helplessly benighted who could inquire at such an oracle.

And long after our first father fell asleep, the light still lingered. It was no scanty nor corrupt creed which issued from the Ark, and well had it been for the world had the morning spread upon Mount Ararat gone on, and brightened into perfect day. But it soon began to fade. Men did not like to retain the true God in their knowledge, and it was not long before darkness covered all the earth, and gross darkness every people. Idolatry was all but universal, and no less universal were the accompanying immoralities and crimes.

At this juncture, to save the scanty relics of primeval truth, and to receive and preserve further revelations, the Lord took this method. Water spilt upon the ground cannot be gathered up again. It sinks into the soil. There were tons of it yesterday, but if you go out to fill

your pitcher to-day, it all is gone. If you want to preserve the precious element you must prepare a tank or reservoir. You dig a pool, and to prevent it from leaking you line the sides with concrete or with marble closely fitting; and if carefully covered over or buried in the cool heart of the mountain, in such a storehouse it may be kept for years. Exotic flowers or foreign plants, if seeded on the mountain-side or inserted in the meadow amongst the promiscuous herbage growing there, soon get choked and disappear. If you wish to transmit from season to season, or from age to age, the flaming glories of the Cape or the rich fruits of the tropic, you must provide a garden enclosed—you must keep out the weeds and the ruffian weather. And so to preserve truths and lessons for which there was no predisposition in a fallen world,—from which there was rather an aversion in the mind of the promiscuous multitude, the Lord “took in a little piece of holy ground.” He fenced in the Hebrew nationality, and fitted it for receiving His successive revelations. Within the enclosure of their mountains and the desert surrounding, and within the enclosure still more effectual of their peculiar institutions, He secluded them and walled them in, and made them His own conservatory,—a conservatory where such truths as the unity and spirituality of God, mediation, atonement for sin, the promise of Messiah, should survive uninjured, and where should flourish institutions so humane and so holy as the Sabbath and the synagogue, sacrifice and a provision for the poor. The water of life was in danger of being lost if it rained indiscriminate on a besotted world; and so the Most High

prepared a reservoir. He dug it deep and lined it carefully. By terrible punishments He weaned the nation from idolatry, and by laws defining their very food He made them a peculiar people. That ritual was the asphalt or cement with which He lined the reservoir, and then, to make assurance doubly sure, into the inner tank, the iron cistern of a written record pouring the full flood of saving knowledge, He provided for the thirst of all ages, He provided so that in all the coming centuries when the poor and needy cried unto the Lord, they should be able with joy to draw water from the wells of salvation.

As the Lord said to Israel (Ex. xix. 5), "If ye will obey my voice and keep my covenant, ye shall be a peculiar treasure to me above all people: ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation:" a sacred community, a sacerdotal society, a kingdom of priests. And as "the priest's lips should keep knowledge," it was to be Israel's function to receive and preserve the lively oracles;—they were to be in an attitude evermore to learn God's will, and they were to be careful to maintain in the midst of a forgetful world His worship and His way.

In connection with the Life and Times of Moses we have so far traced the process by which the Most High prepared the peculiar people. Amidst bondage and abuse we have seen the chosen family grow into a mighty multitude; and now, rescued by the outstretched arm of Jehovah, torn from the grasp of Pharaoh, and sped through the trough of the Sundered Sea, we find that rescued multitude beginning to realize its distinct and independent nationality. Fifty days have passed since that night so memor-



able when the fiery pillar gave the sign and showed the path to the marching million, and now conducted into the very depths of the desert, and prepared by such miracles as the manna and the smitten rock, the people were ready to receive the first, and, in its accompaniments, the most stupendous of all the revelations.

No scene could be more suitable. Enclasped between the two arms of the Erythrean Gulf is that enormous labyrinth of dry valleys and desolate mountains into the midst of which the wanderers now had penetrated,—a region new to them, but not unknown to their leader, for in that same Horeb he had fed the flock of Jethro, and there at the burning bush he had received his great commission. And we can easily imagine what a strange and solemn region it would be to Israel,—come away from the Nile, broad and overbrimming, to these ravines, down which nothing flowed but rivers of hot air; from the loud streets and stirring lanes of Goshen and Memphis to that listening silence which seemed to await the voice of the Eternal, and those lofty peaks which, relieved by no verdure, and interrupted by no life, carried the eye that rested on them straight up to heaven. If it be the perfection of a place of worship to have nothing to distract the mind, there could be nothing more stern and still than this inland solitude, with its granite pinnacles soaring up nine thousand feet into the firmament,—an Alpine skeleton, a Tyrol or Savoy, with its forests and its snows torn off and its lakes dried up,—the ruins of a world.

So awful was the sanctuary, so sublime the pulpit to which Jehovah led His people, that they might hear His

memorable sermon and receive the statute-book of heaven. After two days of solemn preparation, the third morning dawned, and Sinai was lost in clouds, and as from around the dark pavilion the flame-like ministers went out and in, and an aërial trumpet mingled with the crashing thunder, the voice began, "I am the LORD thy God, who have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage: Thou shalt have no other gods before me;" and proceeded till all the emphatic words were spoken, which, afterwards graven on stone by God's, own finger, are still recognised by Christian, Jew, and Moslem as the basis of all religion and all morals—the great standard of right and wrong,—the Ten Commandments. On this code we have but a few remarks to offer.

1. The Decalogue is unique. God gave to the Israelites many other statutes and ordinances, but these others He gave by the hand of the lawgiver—silently and in personal communion imparted them to Moses, and by Moses they were conveyed to the people. But when the ten commandments were spoken, Moses himself was on the plain and on a level with the rest of the congregation. And although they were afterwards consigned to stone tablets, so terrible was the voice of the Eternal—so like to dissolve their quaking frames as thrill after thrill it cut and hewed the fleshly tables of their hearts—that they said to Moses, "Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die." Both as spoken by God's own voice, and as written on the rock by God's own finger, these commands stand forth alone—their supreme importance sufficiently betokened by their pro-

minence in the forefront of all the rest, and by their promulgation so directly and entirely Divine.

2. Then the Decalogue is marked by wonderful simplicity and brevity. The second, third, and fourth commandments go into some detail, but like the rest each of them can easily be condensed into a single sentence; so that they will merit the old Talmudic name, *The Ten Words*,—Words so plain that he who runs may read, so portable that he who forgets everything besides may easily remember them; and thus a wonderful contrast to our human legislation—to our British statute-book, for instance, which it would need an elephant to carry and an *Œdipus* to interpret, and which is so ingeniously complicated that the most conscientious are continually transgressing it, and rogues are constantly surprised by finding that they have unintentionally fulfilled it.

3. These ten words are as comprehensive as they are brief and authoritative. The first table is religious, and the second is moral. The first table fixes the right object of worship—the one supreme, self-existent *Jehovah*,—the right mode, direct and without the intervention of images,—the right spirit, reverently and with godly fear. The second or ethical table is the protector of life, of person, of property, of character, and as the rest sufficiently cover the outward conduct, it closes the series with one which reaches the thoughts and intents of the heart,—*Thou shalt not covet*.

On the several precepts it is impossible to expatiate; but a remark may be useful regarding two or three points.

In the second commandment we have a reason annexed: "Bow not to idols; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth [generation] of them that hate me, and showing mercy unto thousands [of generations] of them that love me." To some this threatening sounds severe and arbitrary; but we fancy that their misgiving arises mainly from a misconception. It is not meant for a moment that the pious son of an idolatrous father shall be punished for his father's idolatry; for in such a case (to use the language of Plutarch<sup>1</sup>) "the punishment destined for the race is cut off by the son passing over from the family of vice to that of virtue." Thus Josiah, the devout son of the idolatrous Amon, was not only exempted from any punishment for his father's sin, but on the ground of his individual piety the penalty hanging over an idolatrous country was suspended until Josiah should be safe beyond its reach: "Behold, I will bring evil on this place (saith the Lord), because they have forsaken me, and have burnt incense unto other gods; but because *thine own heart* was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, behold, therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers in peace; and thine eyes shall not see the evil which I will bring upon this place."<sup>2</sup> It is only if the third and fourth generations continue haters of God themselves that they will be punished at once for their own sin and the sin of their God-hating or idolatrous ancestor.

This is all that is said, but even if it had said a little

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Kalisch.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Kings xxii. 16-20.

more could we not still understand it? Can we alter the constitution of human nature? Dare we complain of the course of Providence? In that constitution is not the parental or transmissive principle so deeply embedded that we shall never get it out? and in the course of that Providence is not good on the one hand and misery on the other continually flowing through this parental channel? And do you not feel justified in continually making appeals of this nature:—"My good friend, if you have no regard for yourself, think of your family. You are living without religion, and at this rate your children are likely to grow up reckless and irreligious also; your boy is already mimicking your oaths. Your fierce passions are reappearing in your child. Your tippling will be transmitted, and with it the rags and wretchedness, even unto the third and fourth generation of them who like yourself love liquor and abuse themselves with strong drink. And do not say that it is hard in God to punish the poor innocents. If they are innocents God will not punish them; but it is you who are doubly doing it. Now that they are comparatively innocent, you are punishing them by throwing away your good name—a legacy better than any gold you could have left them; and you are punishing them by squandering their comforts, and you are doing infinitely worse. You are not only a bad father yourself, but by ruining their principles and corrupting their morals you are doing all that you can to deprive them of the fatherhood of God. By making them bad, you are ruining their prospects for either world. Have you no heart? have you no pity for

your own? by bringing them up in idolatry, in Sabbath-breaking and dishonesty, will you put them out of the pale of that mercy which is abundant enough for a thousand generations? will you put them within sweep of that law which, when the sin is inherited, sends also the penalty, and thus have your own crime perpetuated and your iniquity visited in children like-minded to the third and fourth generation?" So that, rightly understood, we can see in the words nothing harsh or unkind. The fifth commandment concludes with a promise,—that second commandment concludes with a warning,—not a mere threatening, but a warning which includes both threatening and promise. "Honour thy parents," says the one, "that thy days may be long." "Be loyal to thy God," says the other, "that it may be well not only with thyself, but with thy children after thee:" and if there be any difference, it is a purer and wider affection—a more extended self-love to which the second commandment addresses its appeal.

A wonderful code! and a wonderful occasion!—

"The terrors of that awful day, though past,  
Have on the tide of time some glory cast;"<sup>1</sup>

and it is impossible to calculate the impressions and impulses which date from that hour of awe and wonder. As the people witnessed the thunderings and the lightnings and the noise of the trumpet, and listened to the proclamation, "I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of Egypt," there remained no doubt in any mind. In every fibre of their frame they felt and knew that Israel's

<sup>1</sup> Joanna Baillie.

God was present, and all their bones could say, "Who is like unto thee, O Lord? Thou art Lord of heaven and earth, and there is none besides." And all infirmities, all idolatrous backslidings notwithstanding, of that great impression neither they nor their children ever rid themselves entirely. A sensation as of Sinai is in the heart of Israel still; and it has been a great thing for the world that through all these three thousand years there has existed in the midst of the nations—amidst pagan polytheism and papal idolatry—a race of monotheists and spiritual worshippers—a race witnessing for the unity and inconceivable majesty of the Most High.

An occasion to which we, my friends, are particularly indebted; for, as an eloquent Israelite has remarked, "The life and property of England are protected by the laws of Sinai. The hard-working people of England are secured a day of rest in every week by the laws of Sinai."<sup>1</sup> And more than that: for all the rest of Revelation and all the subsequent Hebrew history rotate round Sinai. The heroism of Jewish warriors and the inspiration of Jewish minstrels were equally animated by the first and great command; and as the same writer adds, "As an exponent of the mysteries of the human heart, as a soother of the troubled spirit, to whose harp do the people of England fly for sympathy and solace? Is it to Byron or Wordsworth, or even the myriad-minded Shakespeare? No; the most popular poet in England is the sweet singer of Israel, and by no other race except his own has his odes been so often sung. It was 'the

<sup>1</sup> Disraeli's *Tancred*.

sword of the Lord and of Gideon' that won for England its boasted liberties; and the Scotch achieved their religious freedom, chanting upon their hill-sides the same canticles which cheered the heart of Judah amid their glens."

Thus the commands were given, and thus on adamantine tablets they survived—a standard of righteousness universal and everlasting. But alas! though the Law is holy, man is weak and sinful, and if a perpetual restraint to evil, that law has also been to the most strenuous obedience among the children of men a standing reproof, a perpetual despair. With its concluding prohibition of evil desires, and with that love to God and our neighbour which is confessedly its necessary pervading spirit, no man has ever gone to God and said, "I have kept it all. My case is complete. Are there any more commands, for in thought, word, and deed I have perfectly obeyed the Ten?" But like David, and Isaiah, and Jeremiah, in the saintliest men self-knowledge has extorted the confession, "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips! My very righteousness is filthy rags. O God, enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified."

So stood the law for fifteen centuries—a monitor, a reprover, a mirror, into which, on the great day of atonement, pride might look and see the grey hairs in its goodness, the blemishes in its best obedience. There it stood for fifteen centuries a challenge to mankind—a sword which none could wield, a trumpet which none could sound, armour which, if any one could wear and



walk in it, the gates of heaven would open to him of their own accord.

There it stood, and there it would still be standing, a mere protest and reproach, had not the Lawgiver Himself become the Law-fulfiller. But at last that Son was given to our human family, whose name is Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Mighty God! In the guise of our mortality He brought to our extremity the help of Heaven, and going up to the Decalogue and brushing off the dust of ages, He read it all anew. "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law," He said; "I am come not to destroy, but to fulfil." And forthwith He began. To every precept rendering heartfelt homage, He presented withal a complete obedience:—in His own emphatic words, *fulfilling*. Where others read only prohibition, He read requirement, and their negative He relieved and brought up into the positive. "Do no murder" was with Him "Be meek, be merciful, be magnanimous;" and from the time that, in saving lives and healing sickness, He struck the first note, till, in "Father, forgive them," He breathed forth His spirit, responsive to the sixth command; He sounded the entire diapason, and showed Himself a true law-fulfiller. "Keep holy the Sabbath" was with Him not merely "Sit still and do nothing," but, in order to keep holy the Sabbath, He filled it up with heaven, and by healing broken hearts, by curing life-long lazars, by filling sinful spirits with thoughts benign and beautiful, He secured for the Lord of the Sabbath new love, and for the day itself new sanctity. And so all throughout, till over-against the two tables of requirement

arose a life of fulfilment—on the one side a holy law, on the other a holy history—on the one side a precept as perfect as the God from whom it came, on the other side an obedience as perfect as we could wish our own to have been.

And now, brethren of the House of Israel, we have much for which to thank you. To you belong “the giving of the law and the promises.” In the hand of God you have been the benefactors of the human family. The substructures of our faith rest upon your Bible. We sing your Psalms; we believe your Prophets; as the rule of our conduct we recite your Ten Commandments. The heaven to which we aspire is the heaven of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. At the same time we frankly confess that we have no hope of reaching it through our own holiness. Do not twit us, as well you may, by saying, “So much the better for you, because you have none.” If it come to that, may it not go hard with the strictest Jew? Another scene awaits us more awful than even that morning at Sinai, and as, before God’s nearing sanctity, dust and ashes feel like to die, the least sinful might be thankful to say to some Moses, “Speak thou for us,” and might give the world for some passport to heaven other than his personal purity.

Such a passport we who are Christians believe that we have found, and for it we own ourselves indebted to One who was not the less a member of your nation because we believe Him to have been a great deal more. According to our view, Messiah has not only offered a sacrifice for sins, but He has magnified the law and made

it honourable. As the representative of His people, and on their behalf, He has fulfilled all righteousness, and with that righteousness His Divine Father is well pleased. We owe much to Moses, but we owe more to Messiah. Moses handed down from God to your fathers a law right but rigid, and said, Do this and live ; but Messiah handed up to God, on behalf of His people, a perfect obedience, and from God He hands down to His people in return a pardon all complete, and says, Take this and live. Moses led your fathers to the fenced and flaming skirts of Sinai, but Messiah leads us to the feet of His Father and our Father, and teaches us to say, "Our Father who art in heaven." Such happiness as we have we owe it all to One whom, according to the flesh, we owe to you. By a singular combination of circumstances, the most of you have been led to repudiate His claims, although to our minds He is the glory of Israel, and that all-important Personage, for the sake of whom your nation has received and still maintains its mysterious and unprecedented existence. But, forgive me for saying it, you are wrong ; your position is a false one ; for the facts of history and the facts of consciousness are both against you. We respectfully urge you to examine for yourselves, and as the result of candid inquiry we can only anticipate one conclusion. From that conclusion your minds at this moment revolt ; but if it should prove as we predict, you will eventually wonder at your own repugnance. And amongst other results, besides making the Bible a book true, beautiful, and significant beyond all that it has ever been before, one happy effect will be to give the Deca-

logue a look no longer threatening and penal, but friendly and propitious. Finding in the Lawgiver the Law-fulfiller, the commandment will acquire a new character, and you will find accomplished that promise of the Lord by Ezekiel, "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."

## XVI.

### THE LAW AND ITS FULFILLER.

“And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep and do them. The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day. The LORD talked with you face to face in the mount, out of the midst of the fire, (I stood between the LORD and you at that time, to shew you the word of the LORD : for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount,) saying,” etc.—DEUT. v. 1-21.

SUCH are the Ten Commandments. Such is that great code of religion and morals on which the legislation of Great Britain is founded, and which pervades the jurisprudence of Christendom. In many sanctuaries it is read over every week, and to each precept the worshipper responds with the prayer, “Lord, incline our hearts to keep this law ;” and even where it is not written on the wall or recited from the altar, few are the memories to which it is not familiar. Indeed, so omnipresent is it now in the life, the ideas, and the language of our country, that the difficulty is great to throw ourselves away from it even in thought, so as to mark its features and admire its symmetry. We cannot imagine a world without it, and so we can hardly estimate the service which has been rendered by its promulgation ; not that its details were new even at Mount Sinai, but that then and there the

rules of eternal righteousness, which had been lying about the world—tossed along from age to age, vague, amorphous, and unauthoritative—were handed forth from heaven anew, and, clear beyond cavil, sufficiently compact for the smallest memory, and comprehensible by the feeblest understanding, became to mankind a statute-book for ever—a statute-book direct from the presence of Infinite Majesty, and in the solemnities by which it was sanctioned, suggestive of that awful tribunal when it will reappear as the law by which the righteous Judge shall render to every man according to his deeds.

1. The Decalogue is the first statute-book which has abolished idolatry and polytheism. “No God but me,” says the first commandment; “No likeness or image,” says the second; and in thus learning the unity and spirituality of the Divine nature, Israel was at once put in advance of the rest of the world by at least fifteen hundred years. In the most important of all knowledge, the little Samuel who could repeat these two commands was wiser than Socrates or Cicero adoring a statue. He was wiser than Homer, or Hesiod with his lords many and gods many; he was wiser than Confucius, or Lucretius without a god at all.

2. Another peculiarity of this statute-book is its consecration of one day in seven to the service of Jehovah. The temple was a sacred place, and in the middle ages it was usual to claim for churches the right of sanctuary, so that whosoever took refuge within the hallowed precincts was safe from the avenger. But it is not to a holy place but to a holy day that God has given this protecting

privilege. Addressing a world to which He had said, "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread," and addressing a community in which there was a great deal of forced labour, many bondmen and many bondmaids, the purport of it was—"Yes, labour. You require labour from your servants, and I require labour from you. Toil is the taskmaster, entitled to seize you and to take it out of you wherever he finds you; but there is a sanctuary. There is one asylum into which I invite you, and into which I forbid my taskmaster to follow you. Every seventh day shall be an absolute cessation. It is the Sabbath of the Lord your God, when you are to do no work yourself, nor are you to ask your man-servant or maid-servant to do any." The blessing which this weekly respite brought to Israel was unspeakable, and of all the boons which from Palestine have overflowed the surrounding world, there is not one which has been more widely shared, or which ought to be more gratefully guarded; none which the sons of industry should so resolutely refuse to sell, or which they should so scorn to steal from one another. To quote the words of one whose testimony is not the less valuable that he despised all religions and hated Christianity: says Humboldt,—“The selection of the seventh day is certainly the wisest that could have been made. To some extent it may be optional to shorten or lengthen labour on other days, but in regard to men’s physical power and for perseverance in a monotonous employment, I am convinced that six days is just the true measure. There is likewise something humane in this, that the beasts which aid man in his labour share the

rest. To lengthen the interval would be as inhuman as foolish. When, in the time of the Revolution, I spent several years in Paris, I saw this institution, despite its Divine origin, superseded by the dry and wooden decimal system. Only the tenth day was a day of rest, and all customary work was continued for nine long days. This being evidently too long, Sunday was kept by several as far as the police permitted, and the result was too much idleness."

3. A third peculiarity of this legislation is that it extends to the thoughts and intents of the heart. "Thou shalt not covet." Thou shalt not cherish wrong desires. Thou shalt not only forbear from doing the sinful deed, but shalt forbear from thinking it. In all human legislation there is no such requirement. If there were, who could enforce it? If the tongue is silent, if the face is blank, if the hands are motionless, who can read his neighbour's heart? who can go and testify against him, "I saw him imagining the king's death. I saw a great greedy thought of his devouring a widow's house, traced the chimneys going down as you trace the horns of a kid down the throat of a constrictor. I saw him in a fearful fit of inward passion, shaking his spirit's fist, foaming with revenge and rancour, and pouring forth unuttered imprecations?" Man looketh on the outward appearance, and as long as our neighbour's outward conduct is correct we accept him as a good citizen. But the Lord looketh on the heart. God is a Spirit, and our truest self is a spirit also; and unless that hidden man of the heart be right, all outside accuracy profiteth nothing. And so in this its



solemn and heart-searching close, as well as in its august commencement, the Decalogue reminds us of Him with whom we have to do. And although a commandment which to many occasions small concern, there is no one more fitted to arouse and quicken conscience. The Pharisee who has fancied that he was advancing straight up to heaven's gate, along the avenue of ample and well-observed commands, has come to a standstill on reaching this one. High arching above, with room on either side, a gateway for a camel, rises the first command, and, with head erect and broad phylactery, he marches on, full sail, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men,—no idolater, no blasphemer, no murderer, no extortioner,"—when suddenly he strikes his head a hard blow on the lintel, for the vista ends in "Thou shalt not covet;" and although he stoops and tries to wriggle through, the effort is in vain. It is the needle's eye, too strait for anything which does not yield the point, and cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

4. A fourth peculiarity is the place here given to parental authority, and consequently to filial piety. It has been much debated whether the fifth commandment closes the first table or commences the second; and we deem it more interesting that such a controversy should exist, than important to have it decided. It shows how well the precept would suit for either purpose,—to shut up our duties to our Father in heaven, or to preface our duties to one another. Like that remarkable architecture still found in the land of Bashan, where a door will be hewn out of the solid rock, and door, rock, and hinge are

all a single stone, the two tables make but one law, and the fifth commandment is the axis or hinge on which they open and close—the connecting point where you pass from the one to the other. “Revere thy God,” says the first table, and “Honour thy father and mother,” says this first commandment with promise: “Be a virtuous citizen,” says the second table, “but in order to this be first an obedient child.” “God teaches us reverence for Himself through the blessed name of ‘father,’ and inspires love for what is holy by the boundless heart of ‘mother.’ He spreads His smile over the face of duty by the socialities of home, and gives us foretastes of heaven in the domesticities of the Church on earth: so that if parental love be trifled with, and those domestic influences in which is so much of God’s own Spirit set at nought, the hold of man upon God is all but snapped.”<sup>1</sup> So, children, obey your parents in the Lord, for it is right, and it is requisite to your highest welfare. God will not accept you as His dear and duteous child unless you be affectionate and deferential to those parents whom in life’s first outset He has made so much His own vicegerents, and whose names you uttered, and with whose faces you grew familiar before you learned His own. And likewise, ye fathers, provoke them not by anger and caprice. Be so affectionate that they needs must love you, but withal so firm, so fair, so consistent that they still must “honour” you. As far as possible let your rule be a copy from God’s own government,—kind without blindness; merciful and gracious, forgiving transgression yet not clearing

<sup>1</sup> *Yes or No*, I. 105, slightly altered.

the guilty ; not spoiling by soft indulgence, and yet withholding no good thing when there is no good reason ; insisting on obedience, yet always open to that cry of the repentant prodigal, "Father, I have sinned against thee." Where there go hand in hand a mother's love, tender, self-denying, inextinguishable, and a father's, wise, firm, and far-seeing, the best natural foundation is laid for piety ; and he who has learned to honour such a father and mother has many helps and advantages for loving, trusting, and revering the God whom he has not seen.

So there it stood, this law so holy, just, and good, so brief, so plain, so self-commending in its requirements, so majestic in its origin,—there it remained by Jehovah's finger written on the tablets of stone ; by Moses transcribed in the Book of the Covenant ; engraven on the minds of the people by the solemnities of so august a promulgation. There that law remained, a revelation of its Author's holiness, a preacher of righteousness, a protest against the sins of men, and furnishing a text of tremendous import to every Elijah or Malachi or John the Baptist who came enforcing the claims of God, and appealing to the conscience of his countrymen. There it stood, a challenge to the world,—a moral dynamometer asking which of the sons of Adam could raise it to the tenth or topmost mark, and thus earn eternal life—a brazen gate, with a new Eden on the other side, but closed with a ward-lock of ten letters, which could not be wrenched open, and of which no man possessed the password.

There it stood for fifteen centuries, when at last Christ

came. Entering on His mission, one of the first things He did was to resuscitate this law and expound it all anew. The grand old pillar had disappeared. A jungle of weeds and worthless creepers had sprung up around it ; and instead of insisting on the pure heart and the holy life, the school-divines of Palestine, the ritualists and word-splitters and tradition-mongers, laid down rules about the shape of scarves and the breadth of hems, and preached about the washing of pots and tables and the paying tithe of mint and cumin. With the sharp sword of indignant rebuke the Lord Jesus cleared away this noisome tangle, and whilst the newts and blind worms wriggled off from the unwelcome light, the Foundation of God, that memorial column inscribed with man's duty and his Maker's will, stood forth to view, and beholders were astonished at its majesty. The Sermon on the Mount was (so to speak) a sequel and a supplement to Sinai ; but, as befitted the dawn of a more spiritual era, there was no cloud nor voice of trumpet to stun the soul and overwhelm the sense ; but it was the simple force of truth, the tremendous power of heart-searching words,— words penetrating as Omniscience, and weighty as unchanging righteousness. Then, as in many others of His sermons, the Lord Jesus expounded the Decalogue. From its negative He printed off the positive, and showed how beautiful is the resultant holiness, how blessed is the soul thus brought to harmony with God ; and by something more divine than any rhetoric, by the authority with which He spake, and by His own sublime separateness from sin, He awakened in His hearers at once a wonder

and a wistfulness : " Never man spake as this man. Oh that I were like Him ! "

More especially did the Lord Jesus fill out the law, and bring its sayings into relief, by laying stress on its pervading principle. Of that law the epitome and essence is, " Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy soul, and thy neighbour as thyself. " As we saw a little while ago, in thus grasping the springs of action, in claiming dominion over the thoughts and intents of the heart, this code differs from all human legislations, and, we may add, from all human religions ; but it differs still more gloriously in the same direction in this master-principle, in thus dictating holy love as the mainspring of all goodness, the one sufficient but essential motive of all duty to God and those around. This epitome was not unknown to Israel. It occurs repeatedly in the Pentateuch, and it was recited by the young ruler in his interview with Christ. But the Lord Jesus continually returned to it. It was the motive with Himself, and He delighted to dwell on it. In morals and religion *love* is the supreme philosophy. " If men loved God supremely, there would be no idolatry upon earth, nor any of its attendant abominations ; no profaning of the name of God, nor making a gain of godliness ; no perjuries nor hypocrisies, no pride nor self-complacency under the smiles of Providence ; no murmuring, sullenness, nor suicide under its frowns. Love would render it men's meat and drink to obey God, and it would take everything well at His hands. And if they loved their fellow-creatures as themselves, there would be no wars between nations ; no strifes between neighbours ; no in-

tolerance nor persecuting bitterness in religion ; no deceit nor overreaching in trade : there would be no murders, thefts, nor robberies ; no cruelty in parents or masters ; no ingratitude nor disobedience in children or servants ; no unkindness nor treachery between friends ; no jealousies nor bitter contentions in families ; in short, none of those streams of death, one or more of which flow through every vein of society, and poison its enjoyments.”<sup>1</sup>

But the Lord Jesus was not content with expounding the law of God : He exemplified His own exposition. All that the law required He did ; all that enters into our idea of perfect goodness He was. If love be the fulfilling of the law, love was but another name for Jesus Christ. And so, confronting the precept in all its breadth, fathoming it in all its depth, He met it with a corresponding compliance—an obedience in which nothing was exaggerated, nothing was omitted. Going up to the adamant gate with its lock of the tenfold ward, it opened to the word “Fulfilment,” and entering in, the Fulfiller of all Righteousness walked with God—in that presence where there is fulness of joy, and in the enjoyment of that ineffable complacency wherewith the Father regarded that well-beloved Son who always did the things that pleased Him.

Viewed as a covenant—as the condition of life everlasting—the Lord Jesus has fulfilled the law. To all its requirements, on behalf of His people He has presented an obedience spotless as His own perfection and as magnifying to that law as may be imagined from His own

<sup>1</sup> See Andrew Fuller's *Gospel its own Witness*, ch. iii.

intrinsic glory. "Your work He hath done, your debt He hath paid," and in quitting the scene of His sojourn He hath left an open door through which the weakest and least worthy may enter in, and through the merits of the great Forerunner find acceptance and the smile of God.

Christ has done more. To Israel rescued from Egypt the Decalogue was not merely a code of laws or rule of conduct, but it formed the basis or condition of a national covenant. On the side of Israel that covenant was perpetually broken and its conditions never were fulfilled; but looking forward to a happier time, by the mouth of Jeremiah Jehovah promised, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt; (which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord;) but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my LAW in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people."<sup>1</sup>

These days have come. The first of them was Pentecost. Ten days after Christ's return to heaven—remarkably enough, it was the anniversary of Sinai, the day when the law was given, the fiftieth day after the Feast of Passover: but instead of thunder and the voice of a

<sup>1</sup> Jer. xxxi. 31-33.

trumpet there was a noise as of a rushing mighty wind, and instead of forked lightnings on the distant mountain-top, on the heads of every one of them were flaming mitres,—tongues of bright but unconsuming fire. It was no second giving of the law; it was the inauguration of the gospel. There were no stone tables in their hands, but heaven was in their hearts, for the Holy Spirit was there. Effectually set free from the old legal spirit, they were full of the mind that was in Christ, and so full of might and power on behalf of Jesus; and they not only spake with tongues as the Holy Spirit gave them utterance, but began to lead such lives and entered on such a career as the world could little have expected from the men of Galilee.

And, brethren, this is our dispensation. The Holy Spirit has been given. Not as in the manifestations which made Pentecost so marvellous, but in mild, assuring, strengthening power, God's Spirit will be with you if you ask His aid. He will awaken in you a hunger after righteousness,—a hunger which in the Father's house shall be abundantly filled. He will teach you to know the Lord, so that you shall not need to ask your neighbour. He will show you God's covenant—that new and better one of which the terms have been fulfilled by the Divine Surety, so that you have only to take the benefit. And freeing you from the law's condemning, threatening power, He will write it in your heart, endearing it as the rule of your own conduct and the revelation of God's righteousness.

Nor will you like this law the less because its opening



sentence is the gospel: "I am the Lord thy God: thou shalt have no other gods before me." 'Thou shalt have no god but me.' Addressing every sinful child of Adam, the Possessor of heaven and earth says, 'For thy own God take me.' Now that in the person of Jesus his Son, now that in the person of Him who says, "I am Jesus your Brother," God has drawn near to our guilty family, His overture to each is, "I am the Lord thy God," and the right reciprocation is, "My Lord and my God." "O my soul, thou hast said unto Jehovah, Thou art my Lord." Is it not wonderful? Is not this to "bow the heavens and come down"? Is not this a condescension truly divine, that addressing dust and ashes the Eternal should say—that addressing a weak empty worm the All-sufficient should say—that addressing sin and impurity Infinite Holiness should say, "I am thy God"? But He says it. To put an end to all cavil He puts the gospel into the form of a precept, and from the top of Sinai and in the forefront of the Decalogue He preaches that gospel, and to every hearer says—what is the end and essence of the gospel,—“For thy own God take me.” Some think it presumption to appropriate a gift unspeakable or to accept too kind an invitation; but surely it is no presumption to obey a precept—it is great presumption to refuse compliance with God’s command. And God commands you to be happy. He commands you to be saved. He commands you, as your very first act of obedience, to become His subject and His son. Will you not reply, “O Lord, thou art my God. Other gods have had dominion over me;

but now their bands are loosed, and I am thy servant. Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever."

## XVII.

### THE THEOCRATIC KING AND THE OATH OF ALLEGIANCE.

#### (SINAI COVENANT.)

“And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.”—Ex. xix. 3-6.

“And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do. And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt-offerings, and sacrificed peace-offerings of oxen unto the LORD. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.”—Ex. xxiv. 3-8.

FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS was a learned Jew who flourished in the latter half of the first century, and who wrote two admirable works on Hebrew history. Besides these he published a tract, still extant, and known as *Josephus against Apion*. Of this tract one object is to explain to

Gentile readers Hebrew peculiarities, and to vindicate as facts what many of them deemed mere Jewish fables. In the course of it, having occasion to explain the Hebrew polity, he uses the following language:—"Some legislators have placed their people under a monarchy, others under an oligarchy, and others have resolved them into a republic. But our legislator took no account of these modes of government, but instituted what we may call a *Theocracy*<sup>1</sup>—ascribing all power and authority to God, and persuading them to have regard to Him as the author of all their privileges. He taught them that it was impossible to escape God's observation in any of their outward actions or even in any of their inward thoughts; and his legislation had this advantage over other legislations, that whereas they made religion a part of virtue Moses made all virtues a part of religion. As so many ingredients in piety towards God, he included justice, and fortitude, and temperance, and the loyalty to one another of the different members of the commonwealth."<sup>2</sup>

As far as I know, it is in this passage that the word "Theocracy" first occurs—a word so convenient and so constantly used, and which is so admirably descriptive of Hebrew polity, as distinguished from every other. Commonwealths like Athens and republican Rome were *self-governed*; monarchies like Persia and Egypt were *king-governed*; but Israel, rescued from Egypt, and as God designed to plant it in Palestine, was *God-governed*. Neither Moses, nor Aaron, nor Joshua claimed to be

<sup>1</sup> τῆς εἰποι βιασαμένους τὸν λόγον Θεοκρατίαν.

<sup>2</sup> Jos. c. *Αρῖων*, ii. 17.

king or first consul or president of the republic ; but the Lord was the king, the Lord was the lawgiver, and Moses and all the rest were only His ministers or servants—the channels or internuncios through whom He published His edicts and made known His will.

Although eventually modified, although conceding to the foreseen desire of the people to have a visible head of their commonwealth, Jehovah Himself gave directions as to the regal office, yet the true and original type was, in the word coined by Josephus, a theocracy, or government by God. And had the people but been worthy, no position could be nobler. Here they were just rescued from thralldom—clean sundered from Egypt and its abominable idolatries, baptized in the Red Sea, on the eagle wings of Omnipotence transported into this large place with its sabbatic silence and its impregnable seclusion, and Jehovah draws near, and if they themselves are inclined and feel equal to it, He offers to be Himself their captain and their king. “Let it be a compact. Make a covenant and keep it, and ye shall be all my own—from all earth’s peoples selected as my own peculiar treasure,—a kingdom of priests, a holy nation.” Had the people but been equal to it here was an occasion unprecedented, an opportunity given to a new and virgin nation to start on a career the like of which had never been exhibited, receiving their laws from God and from Him deriving their protection,—God dwelling amongst them palpably, fighting their battles, brightening their abodes, preserving their going out and coming in, and with His approving presence glorifying their entire existence.

The ideal was imperfectly realized. Except to a very partial extent, and for brief intervals, the nation never rose to its high calling, and seldom was it that either the camp of the pilgrimage or the land of the promise suggested the heaven on earth which it ought to have been. But no knowledge of Israel's frailty, no foresight of human failure, hindered the Most High from propounding His own gracious plan, and showing Moses in the mount its pattern—a pattern suggestive of higher things elsewhere—for if God was so kind and condescending as to come down and offer to be their sovereign, how could earthly life more nearly approximate the life of the celestials, what earthly citizenship could come nearer the citizenship in heaven, than that nationality which recognised the Holy One of Israel as its almighty and its only king?

When in the history of a nation any great epoch arrives, it is usual to emphasize it by some solemn celebration. A great deliverance has taken place, a new dynasty has acceded, a new prince begins to reign; and on the one side a constitution is proclaimed or a code is promulgated—on the other the oath of allegiance is taken, and the people vow to be faithful to the sovereign.

In one sense Jehovah had all along been the head of the Hebrew race, and as far back as the days of Abraham He had sworn, "I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee." But now that seed had become a mighty nation, a separate and self-contained community, and, released from slavery, it was in a position to judge and act for itself; and therefore the opportunity was given to

the nation by a distinct and deliberate act to accept or reject Jehovah as its king.

On Jehovah's side a constitution had already been proclaimed, and a code promulgated: "If ye will obey my voice and keep my covenant, ye shall be my peculiar treasure, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation;" and mounting His theocratic throne amidst thunder and lightning and the pomp of flaming seraphim, the Eternal had proclaimed, as the essence of His code and the basis of all further legislation, the Ten Commands. And now the time was come that the people should plight their faith, and vow allegiance to their mighty but condescending Monarch. And with a view to this they all were mustered, and by some suitable arrangement Moses orally communicated "all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments." They were good precepts and gracious promises, and the people could only answer with one voice, "All the words which the Lord hath said will we do." This preliminary assent received, Moses retired and con-signed to writing the various provisions—the Decalogue, and most probably those regulations contained in the intervening chapters; and next morning early he came forth with the written document, and met the assembled people.

That day was a high day,—the swearing-in of an assembled people to their Redeemer-Sovereign,—and with much work to do, Moses rose betimes. Beneath the mountain, and at God's footstool, he reared an altar, and facing it, to denote the twelve tribes of Israel, he set up twelve pillars; and as soon as the young men appointed

for the purpose had slain the calves and bullocks, and half the blood had been poured upon the altar, and whilst the smoke of the oblation began to ascend into the serene, summer sky, Moses produced the roll of the covenant, and from the volume of that book read all the words which God Himself had dictated; and when to the august recital from over all the plain a multitudinous murmur answered, "All that the Lord hath spoken will we do, and be obedient," to ratify the deed Moses took a hyssop-sprinkler, and, dipping it in mingled blood and water, he showered the crimson rain over the swarming throng, and by way of signature and seal, with a few drops of the self-same blood he bedewed the all-important document, and set it aside till that sacred shrine was ready, soon after known as the casket of the covenant, the Ark of the Testimony. And from this great swearing-in at the foot of the mount which might not be touched, the people passed away with a sublime and awful consciousness that God had spoken and so had they. "I will be your God," had Jehovah said, "And all that Thou hast spoken will we do," had they replied, and, registered in heaven, it seemed as if the vow were written on the floor and roof at once of that great desert sanctuary. Gone into God's memory, if from their own it ever faded, the stones of that altar and these twelve pillars would cry aloud and condemn the covenant-breakers; and even although the volume of the book should perish, and no blood of confirmation blush again to confront the false swearers, the words of that great vow had burned deep into every conscience, and rather than



that God should be without a witness Sinai would once more break silence, and that "faithful witness in heaven," the sun, which that morning shone over the grey wilderness of Paran, would publish to the universe the treason.

It was a great event, the transaction of that day, which on the separate and self-contained nationality of Israel placed a crown of glory, by superadding Jehovah's sovereignty. Every devout and believing soul through that populous camp, looking at the fiery-cloudy column, as it moved ahead, at once a royal standard and an aërial fortress, could say to himself with thrilling assurance, "The Lord is our defence; the Holy One of Israel is our King." And although in later centuries between the people and their King immortal and invisible a monarch was interposed, both visible and mortal, faith and affection always ascended to Jehovah as the true king in Jeshurun, and under pious princes like Hezekiah and Josiah, when the covenant was renewed, overlooking, or at least overleaping the earthly ruler, the people swore again the oath of allegiance to the Sovereign Supreme, the Divine and undying Head of the Hebrew commonwealth.

This theocratic element accounts for many things in Hebrew institutions and Old Testament history. For instance, it explains the severity with which idolatry was punished. It was not only a sin, but a treason. Amalek was not more truly the king of Moab, Pharaoh was not more exclusively king of Egypt, than Jehovah was king of Israel; and the Israelite who bowed the knee to Bel or Moloch, who adored the golden calf or Apis, he not only

committed a gross and disgraceful sin, but a capital offence, and for revolting against his Liege, his Lord and Sovereign, he was liable to be cut off from among his people. And although there were good reasons over and above why such outrages as the golden calf should be visited by signal retribution, it must not be forgotten as an important element that the thousands who were cut down on that occasion were mutineers against their Captain,—rebels caught red-handed in revolt against their King. And so, although in a somewhat different way, the same principle explains other incidents in which our first feeling may be a sense of extreme severity. For instance, soon after Jericho was taken, the Israelites were mysteriously repulsed in an assault on Ai. Inquiring at the Lord, the answer was, “Israel hath sinned, and they have transgressed my covenant: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and they have also stolen, yea and dissembled also, and have put it among their own stuff.” As Josephus says, “The Israelites were taught that nothing could escape the observation of their Divine King, either in their outward actions or their inward thoughts.” But this was a lesson hard to learn, and needed to be enforced by some startling instances. And here was one. Flushed with an easy and surprising success at Jericho, they were all the rather chagrined by their defeat at Ai. It seemed utterly inexplicable, but, though burning to revenge the disaster, they were told it would be vain to resume the battle till a secret fault was confessed and put away. So all pleading ignorance, it was referred back to God’s omniscience, and when amongst

the assembled million His finger was firmly placed on the son of Carmi, "My son," said Joshua, "give glory to the God of Israel, and confess what thou hast done;" and as the golden wedge and Babylonish garment came to light, the troubler of Israel paid the forfeit not more of his covetousness than of his atheism, and as the smoke of Achan's funeral pile ascended in the vale of Achor, spectators slowly turned away musing on the painful lesson, but penetrated with the conviction,—“Yea, darkness hideth not from Thee.”

Need I say how, under the new dispensation, the theocratic principle has been perfected! It is no longer national but personal. The Most High does not now lay hold of a captive nation, and, wrenching it from the jaws of the oppressor, carry it on eagle wings into some desert sanctuary; but He lays hold on an individual. Some slave of Satan He singles out, and, rescuing him from his cruel taskmaster, He brings him to Himself and says, "I will be thy God; take hold of my covenant and thou shalt be my peculiar treasure;" and thenceforward made a king and a priest himself, he becomes a God-governed man.

And indeed the only way to be truly free is to be God-governed; the only man who walks at liberty is the man who is "under law to Christ." During the days of the Saviour's sojourn there were men possessed by the devil. As if to impersonate and make palpable those evil propensities by which bad men are borne along, and in order to make more personal the contest between the devil and Him who came to destroy the works of the devil, in some

instances it was permitted to demons to take personal possession of bad men; that is to say, when a bad man had sold himself to some course of wickedness, an evil spirit took possession of him and urged him on to yet wilder extremes of the self-same wickedness; and even although lucid moments might intervene during which the man grew sick of his foul familiar, and would fain have turned him out, the unclean spirit was sure to come back again and carry his unhappy victim captive at his will; and it was not till Jesus spoke that mighty word, which "devils fear and fly," that the foul fiend absconded to his own place and left the vacated house open to a worthier occupancy. If that vacated sanctuary received the Saviour—if into his thankful heart the man received his mighty Deliverer, by becoming the servant of Christ he became master of himself. He who had been fiend-possessed became self-possessed by becoming God-possessed,—Christ's servant, and so his own master.

And so, if you have not given yourself to God you are still the servant of sin; his servant you are whom you obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness. If you have not given yourself to God, you are still in the bond of iniquity; you carry your Pharaoh within—a tyrant in the shape of some master-sin, or "many masters"—so many petty tyrants, so many domineering taskmasters in the shape of divers lusts and passions—foul desires, fantastic follies, lawless affections, to which you yield by turns—sometimes cursing your infatuation, and sometimes drowning remorse in the delirium of a new excitement, till, your strength and

substance wasted, youth gone, strength and beauty gone, money gone, health gone, life going, eternity coming, you exclaim, "I have played the fool; I have erred exceedingly."

Do you desire deliverance? Would you be free from this hateful dominion, this horrible lust, this frantic possession? Then give yourself to God. In the lucid interval fall at Christ's feet, and, like the dispossessed demoniac, beg that He would not leave you, nor suffer you to leave Him; and as Christ's Spirit takes possession of your mind, as in answer to prayer the Comforter comes, in the peace and the purity which He sheds abroad, unruly emotions will subside, angry passions will obey the voice, "Peace, be still!" and a stronger than Satan having entered in and expelled the usurper, you will taste the blessings of a renovated heart and a heavenly rule, and will find that you have returned to your right mind in returning to your rightful Master.

In the gospel, God invites each of us to take Himself for our God, and He offers to take each of us as His peculiar treasure; and it is well that, like Israel at Sinai, this kind offer of His should be met by an act of our own, express and explicit. Personal covenanting and solemn self-dedications were not unusual among our godly ancestors, and documents like the following still are extant:—

"Oct. 20, 1686.—I take God the Father to be my chiefest good and highest end. I take God the Son to be my Prince and Saviour. I take God the Holy Ghost to be my Sanctifier, Teacher, Guide, and Comforter. I

take the Word of God to be my rule in all my actions, and the people of God to be my people in all conditions. And this I do deliberately, sincerely, freely, and for ever.

(Signed)      “ MATTHEW HENRY.”

And as a date, as a definitive landmark and starting-point, there may be an advantage in a form thus written and subscribed; but if made too minute, above all, if in any way it assume the form of an oath or vow, it will become a snare and a source of subsequent distress and embarrassment, for, after every declension and failure, you will feel that you have been unfaithful in your covenant, and that you have sworn deceitfully. Happily for us, God's voice has been obeyed, and His covenant has been kept on our behalf by our glorious Representative, and it only remains for us, by a meek and thankful assent, to enter into all the blessings thus bought for us, whilst, with a voice more subduing than the trumpet of Sinai, Christ's sacrifice calls for our surrender. Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price; tell the Saviour how thankful you are, and how willing; and whilst you deeply feel that for all your future constancy you are dependent on His own good Spirit in the competition for your heart's supremacy, do you decide for that King who reigns in righteousness, and who makes His subjects kings and priests unto God His Father.

## XVIII.

### THE TABERNACLE.

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, On the first day of the first month shalt thou set up the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation; and thou shalt put therein the ark of the testimony,” etc.—Ex. XL. 1-38.

ISRAEL had escaped from Egypt; the Moral Law had been given from Mount Sinai; the Most High had revealed Himself as the self-existent and eternal I AM, to the exclusion of the lords many and gods many which Egypt and other nations adored, and a very solemn transaction had just been completed, on which, as on a nail fastened in a sure place, hung the whole future of the peculiar people. To the nation whom He had so signally rescued, whom through the Red Sea and across the burning sands He had borne on wings of His own omnipotence into the heart of Horeb, to the nation resting in this safe asylum on the way to its promised land, Jehovah drew near, and, claiming to be their God, He at the same time offered to be their King. He offered to bring them into a relation to Himself such as no other nation had ever occupied:—“If ye will obey my voice and keep my covenant, ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” And God’s gracious overture the people

joyfully reciprocated. On a set day and a solemn, they took the oath of allegiance to their Heavenly King, "All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient;" and thenceforward the Head of their nation was neither Pharaoh nor Moses nor any mortal man; they had a Sovereign who was deathless and invincible: their only and immediate Monarch was God; the Holy One of Israel was their King.

This theocracy or government by God was the great distinction of the Hebrew people; and the day when it was ratified by covenant may be deemed the main hinge of Hebrew history. That great transaction, the National Covenant, we have already considered, and we must now turn our thoughts to some of those details which necessarily followed.

And in considering these, we must not forget that Israel's King was also Israel's God, and that in the peculiar politico-religious organization which the arrangement involved, it was needful to provide at once for the worship of God and for the social welfare of the people.

The Most High—the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him; but linked to matter as we are, living in these bodies and limited to a certain space, locality enters into our thoughts when we think of God; and ever since we were banished from the bowers of Eden, the longing of all earnest spirits has been after something palpable and near, a longing after God manifest and God in the midst of us as well as after God propitious and reconciled.

This longing of devout and earnest spirits was most graciously met in the camp of Israel. From the memor-



able night of the exodus there had always moved before the camp or hovered over it a mystic symbol, cloud by day and fire by night, the sign and cognisance of their celestial Leader. And now Jehovah said, "Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them;"<sup>1</sup> and to the invitation the people replied so willingly that gold and silver came in to the amount of a quarter of a million sterling.<sup>2</sup> With this large offering, acting under Divine direction, and carrying out the work with the aid of Aholiab and Bezaleel, Moses reared and furnished forth the tabernacle.

It was a great day, that New-Year's day when the tabernacle was at last erected. It was twelve months after their departure from Egypt, and the first New-Year's day which they had spent in the wilderness. Everything was ready. At measured intervals were placed sockets or pediments of silver, and on these were set up columns of acacia-wood so thickly overlaid that they stood up like eight-and-forty golden pillars, joined together by transverse beams, similarly resplendent. Inside of these pillars were suspended gorgeous tapestries, with cherubim wrought into a ground alternately blue, purple, and scarlet; and outside the walls were covered successively by hair-cloth, by a sort of morocco leather, and on the top of all, as a protection from the weather, by a stout pall of badgers'-skins; and the roof resembled the sides, so that if any one could have entered, he would have found himself in an oblong apartment, about fifty feet in length and one-third as broad, roofed over and

<sup>1</sup> Ex. xxv. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Ex. xxxviii, 24-31; see Kitto's *Pictorial Bible*.

hung round with curtains of delicate texture, all wimpling with the golden wings of cherubim. But inside the full length was never seen, for at the end ten cubits were cut off to form the Holy of Holies. This inner shrine was divided from the rest of the tabernacle by a veil or beautiful curtain of byssus, and contained the Ark of the Covenant. That ark was a golden chest, into which Moses put the two tables of the Law, Aaron's blossoming staff, an urn full of manna, and the book of the Covenant;<sup>1</sup> and it was surmounted by a throne entirely golden, backed and overcanopied by two cherubs with outspread wings—a mercy-seat or throne of grace reserved for the Shekinah, for Him who, marching in the cloudy pillar, also sat between the cherubim. This inner shrine—the throne-room and presence-chamber of the Eternal—was trod by mortal foot but once a year, on that great day of atonement when, protected by sacrificial blood, the High Priest entered—entered to present the propitiation for the people, and returned to show that God was still good to Israel; but inside the tabernacle the more spacious ante-room called “the Holy Place” was accessible to all the priesthood. By night and day it derived its illumination from a massive candelabrum of seven branches, with lamps of oil-olive, softly burning; and this apartment had an atmosphere exquisite with odour: for another prominent object in it was a golden altar on which no victim was ever laid, but on which Aaron burned incense twice each day. The other remarkable object in the

<sup>1</sup> Kalisch (*Erodus*, p. 479) says that the two tables alone were *in* the ark, the other objects before or beside it.

furniture of this Holy Place was a golden table on which every Sabbath twelve loaves of unleavened bread were placed—the shew-bread or loaves of presentation—on behalf of the twelve tribes, a recognition or remembrance to Him who day by day was giving them their daily bread. All round the tabernacle ran a spacious enclosure, open overhead, but fenced round by curtains, with an entrance from the east, and open to every Israelite. The most striking objects within this court of the congregation were a large altar and a basin-fountain of brass. This fountain or laver was intended for the priests, who there washed their hands and feet before engaging in any sacred service ; and it was interesting as a memorial of female piety. Brass was scarce in the camp of Israel, but the ladies surrendered their burnished mirrors in number sufficient to construct this ornamental tank, a free-will offering.<sup>1</sup>

The tabernacle was a peripatetic shrine,—a cathedral that could be carried about,—a temple of canvas and tapestry which accompanied Israel in their wanderings, and which sufficed as a visible centre of worship, till such time as the waving tapestry solidified into carvings of cedar, and the badger-skins were replaced by tall arcades of marble, and the tent had grown to a temple. And that New-Year's day, when Aaron and his sons came forth in the gorgeous garments which they now for the first time put on, and when over the dedicated shrine the cloud descended, and such a glory filled the tabernacle that Moses and the attendant ministers were forced to with-

<sup>1</sup> Ex. xl. 17-33.

draw, devotion must have felt something like what, on a similar occasion, Solomon expressed, "Will God in very deed dwell with man upon earth?" and as all through that New-Year's night and the many nights succeeding, above the tent of the testimony there was seen "the appearance of fire until the morning,"<sup>1</sup> each believing Israelite laid him down and took his quiet sleep, fearing no evil, for He that keepeth Israel would neither slumber nor sleep.

It was a fine ending to that first year in the wilderness, and it is a fine ending to the book of Exodus (xl. 34-38). "At the beginning of the book we found the descendants of Jacob a multitude of ill-treated and idolatrous slaves; we leave them a free nation, the guardians of eternal truth, the witnesses of overwhelming miracles. Released from the vain and busy worldliness of Egypt, they encamp in the silent desert, in isolated and solemn solitude, holding converse only with their thoughts and with their God. Before them stood the visible habitation of Him whom they acknowledged and adored as their rescuer from Egyptian thralldom; the mysterious structure disclosed to them many profound ideas of their new religion; and they respected the priests as their representatives and their mediators. Between God and His people communion was opened; life had its aim, and virtue its guide."<sup>2</sup>

In order to complete our view of the Hebrew religion and worship, we ought to examine its various sacrifices and ceremonies; the sin-offerings, the trespass-offerings,

<sup>1</sup> Numb. ix. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Kalisch on Exodus, p. 621.

the thank-offerings ; the festivals, the passover, the feast of tabernacles, the great day of atonement ; the law of the leper, the laws about priests and Levites. But to do this would need many lectures. Those who would like to examine the subject fully will find abundant information in Bonar on *Leviticus*, in Principal Fairbairn's *Typology of Scripture*, and in Dr. Gordon's *Christ in the Old Testament*. Of the entire subject there is an excellent epitome in Cowper's hymn on the "Old Testament Gospel," which even those who are most familiar with it will forgive me for reading over :—

“ Israel, in ancient days,  
     Not only had a view  
 Of Sinai in a blaze,  
     But learn'd the Gospel too ;  
 The types and figures were a glass  
 In which they saw a Saviour's face.

The Paschal sacrifice,  
     And blood-besprinkled door,  
 Seen with enlighten'd eyes  
     And once applied with power,  
 Would teach the need of other blood  
 To reconcile an angry God.

The Lamb, the Dove, set forth  
     His perfect innocence,  
 Whose blood of matchless worth  
     Should be the soul's defence ;  
 For He who can for sin atone,  
 Must have no failings of his own.

The scape-goat on his head  
     The people's trespass bore,  
 And to the desert led,  
     Was to be seen no more :

In him our Surety seem'd to say,  
'Behold, I bear your sins away.'

Dipt in his fellow's blood,  
The living bird went free ;  
The type, well understood,  
Expressed the sinner's plea ;  
Described a guilty soul enlarged,  
And by a Saviour's death discharged.

Jesus, I love to trace,  
Throughout the sacred page,  
The footsteps of Thy grace,—  
The same in every age !  
Oh ! grant that I may faithful be  
To clearer light vouchsafed to me ! ”

Reverting to the Tabernacle : It served its purpose. At the time it was set up the worship of the one living and true God had become almost extinct ; but the Tabernacle, with its successor the Temple, was a perpetual protest against idolatry,—a centre and rallying-point to monotheistic worship. And the doctrine of the Divine unity and spirituality has triumphed. Monotheists, or believers in one God, supreme, self-existent, and distinct from the universe He has created, are not only counted by hundreds of millions, but they include all that is worth naming of the world's intelligence and civilisation. All the inhabitants of Europe are Monotheists. Every Christian is a Monotheist, so is every Jew, so is every Mussulman.

But the tabernacle had a purpose still more precise, more practical and home-coming. So to speak, it brought God again into the midst of men. He who in the bowers of Eden had been so friendly and familiar, but who at

man's sin withdrew, and who from that time had rarely broken the silence, this God it again brought into our midst, and recording His name in His appointed place, He declared it to be His fixed abode and chosen dwelling.

And yet condescending, close-coming as was this sojourn of Deity in the Tabernacle of the Testimony—assuring as it was to see in the midst of the camp those symbols of propitious and protecting Omnipotence, and in cases of emergency delightful as it was to be able to inquire at the oracle, and from the Urim and Thummim receive a decisive response, there was still in the midst of the manifestation something withheld, and notwithstanding the local proximity there remained on many a mind a certain sense of remoteness. The symbols were there, and Omnipotence was there; but the cloud was not God, the fire was not God, the tabernacle was not God; and there still was room for the prayer, “O Thou that dwellest between the cherubim, shine forth,” and in sight of the Shekinah, and his own face shining with insufferable lustre, Moses still could pray, “O Lord, I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory.” But as soon as a body was prepared for God's beloved Son, as soon as the Word came and *tabernacled* amongst us, the glory was beheld for which an expectant Church had sighed and waited,—the glory of the only-begotten, the express image of the Father, full of grace and truth. His name was called Immanuel, God-with-Us; and so express, so complete, so conclusive was the manifestation, above all, so fitted to our frame, so personal, so human, so brotherly, that neither heart nor intellect should ask for more, and

none need now repeat the behest of Philip, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us," for he that seeth Jesus seeth God.

"Destroy this temple;" it was no longer a tent but a temple,—“Destroy it,” said Jesus, alluding to the tent or temple of His body, “and in three days I will build it up again.” Yes, this was the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man! the body that was born of the Virgin Mary, and about to be crucified by Pontius Pilate,—the holy and beautiful house in which the God-head had dwelt for years, and in whose “moving tent” He had perambulated the towns and villages of that Holy Land, giving forth oracles, attracting to Himself the guilty, the sin-laden, and such as were out of the way, and finishing off by that great oblation in which the Priest Supreme offered up the Victim Divine,—in which the series ended and the symbols were fulfilled, for the Son of God had offered up Himself.

That temple they destroyed, but in three days the Divine inhabitant had built it up again—this time a body more beautiful than ever, indestructible, immortal, death-defying, a norm or pattern of that glorious body which the Saviour designs to give to each disciple. And there is in the thought something truly animating. Of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man, there is now a restoration unspeakably glorious and absolutely indestructible. Over that celestial body in which Christ hath ascended death hath no dominion; and in due season each ransomed spirit shall be the tenant of such another temple. The holy and beautiful house on



the heights of Zion was not a greater advance on the tabernacle, with its ropes and its poles and its canvas, than will be the improvement on the present imperfect and disordered materialism of your house from heaven. It will be a glorious body, one which pain cannot prostrate, which accident cannot damage, which advancing years cannot render less efficient, and one which has for ever done with dying. It will be a body exquisitely organized, where the mind shall have no volitions for which the members shall not find the instrument or the vehicle ; where the heart, the understanding shall have no thoughts nor feelings for which the lips, the eyes, shall not find language. And although looking at some countenance, venerable or lovely, behind whose translucent veil something of Heaven's glory was enshrined, we may have felt for the moment, "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!" could we draw nearer and listen to the language of the actual inmate, we should sometimes find him complaining of straitened space and inappropriate accommodation. "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened ; for we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. . . . Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given to us the earnest of the Spirit."

## XIX.

### THE DIVINE GLORY.

“ I beseech thee, show me thy glory.”—EX. xxxiii. 18.

WHEN the funeral of Da Costa took place last month at Amsterdam, when the church was filled with mourners and the grand organ had played a soft and muffled tune, the music grew articulate and the assembly melted into tears as they sang,—

“ Like as the hart for water-brooks  
In thirst doth pant and bray ;  
So pants my longing soul, O God,  
That come to thee I may.

My soul for God, the living God,  
Doth thirst : when shall I near  
Unto thy countenance approach,  
And in God's sight appear ?”

They felt that the words were true. They were descriptive of the brother departed. As philosopher and historian, as jurist and divine, above all as the sweet singer of the Netherlands, his had been a life of achievement ; but still more conspicuous than all achievement was a certain air of unrest—a certain pressing forward and looking upward—in one word, a certain aspect of continual aspiration. The goal of his spirit was God. It was neither to the temple of fame nor to the chair of science that his ambi-

tion had pointed; but he had showed plainly that the magnet which drew him—which, in the meanwhile, made him touch the earth so lightly, and which, by and bye, would draw the very soul forth from the body,—he showed that this mighty attraction was infinite excellence. And now he had reached it. He had reached the living God, and was drinking from that river of pleasures for which he had all his life been panting, and tears of triumphant sympathy mingled with their tenderness. And no doubt it deepened the feeling to remember that the same funeral hymn had sounded over the grave of a still mightier minstrel, Bilderdijk, thirty years before, whose life, like Da Costa's, had been marked by high genius and exalted goodness, but still more by longings after a greatness and goodness which earth has not got to offer, and which it is needful to put off these bodies in order to attain.

Where intellectual elevation and deep devotion exist together there is sure to be somewhat of this feeling. Moses is an instance. Through eighteen lectures we have traced his history and his services—as scholar, warrior, patriot, as leader of the Exodus, as mediator between the people and their celestial Monarch; and we have had occasion to admire him as the man of genius, as the man of culture, and above all as the man of God. But nowhere do we get a more vivid glimpse into the depths of his being than just in the words of our text, and, taken in connection with the man and with all the attendant circumstances, they teach us many a lesson.

1. They teach us that it is *God's* glory which an

enlightened spirit longs to see. There are sights which we are accustomed to speak of as "glorious;" and of these Moses had seen many. He had seen Pharaoh in all his glory, and as a resident in the court and as a military captain he had seen his own share of martial pomps and ovations. He had seen glorious landscapes—the Nile brimming over with bounty, sunrise from behind the Pyramids, and the majestic mountains of this great wilderness; and the ninetieth Psalm and all the poems in the Pentateuch show how alive he was to the spectacles of beauty. But the glory after which he panted was God's own: "For Thee, O God—O living God!—for Thee." And so, my friends, it is well if you belong to that little company who inherit the earth, for on the most of men this glorious universe is wasted. At sight of ocean, earth, or sky their eye never tingles, their bosom never heaves, the tear never runs over. But if you be not only susceptible but devout, mingling with your emotion, and often overmastering it, will be the feeling of God's own presence, and in a sense not pantheistic but truly scriptural you will see Him ride past on the wings of the wind, and will feel His rest-giving nearness in the sabbath of the silent hills; the eye that never closes will look down on you from amongst the twinkling stars; suspended a solitary waif in the centre of that round-rimmed sea, infinitude above and mysterious miles below, the everlasting arm will enclasp and uphold you; and like the Hebrew priest in the holy place, viewing the brightness which emanated from within the Holy of Holies, as from under the edges of the veiling night an opalescent splen-

dour begins to issue into the eastern sky, you will welcome the coming day with something like the prayer, "O Thou that sittest between the cherubim, shine forth."

And yet, although there is far more truth in such feelings than in their absence—although a universe blank and silent, with no God living and moving in it, is a universe with the glory blotted out,—the mind which sees the most of such glory will long for something more, and even amidst the sublimest scenes of nature will wistfully repeat the prayer, "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory."

2. And if we pass to revelations more articulate and explicit, we shall find the principle still obtain, and he who has seen the most is the likeliest to ask for more. In this respect no one had been favoured than Moses. The "God of glory" had appeared to him at the bush, and had spoken to him the incommunicable name. He had seen the glory of God on that night, so much to be remembered, when Jehovah's royal ensign fired the firmament, and under Heaven's immediate guidance the glorious march began. And but a few days were past since this Sinai smoked, and whilst the glory of the Lord like devouring fire encircled the mountain-top, the voice of the Eternal filled the surrounding solitudes with words which echo still and shall never pass away. But all this did not suffice, and in the mind of Moses there was only enkindled a longing for some manifestation more intimate and soul-contenting. Jehovah's answer shows in what direction the heart of Moses pointed. "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory," says Moses. "Yes," answers Jeho-

vah, "I will ; I will show thee my goodness, my kindness, and my grace." Of majesty and grandeur he had already seen as much as heart could wish, as much as the frail body could endure. The personality, the might, the holiness of the Most High were never likely to be effaced from his awe-struck spirit as long as he had any being ; but still amidst all its condescension, what wonder if the terrible majesty still left an impression of something far-off and formidable ? But just at this very instant in the devouring fire had opened an inlet mild and merciful, and Israel's intercessor glimpsed a glory still interior—the heart of Jehovah, rich in forgiveness and radiating forth its ceaseless loving-kindness. Not only had He pardoned a most scandalous insult to His supremacy, and in answer to Moses' bold entreaty consented still to abide by the ungrateful people—"My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest,"—but with overflowing tenderness He had spoken most friendly words to the intercessor himself, "I will do as thou hast spoken, for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name," and grasping at that gracious word—pressing up into the exalted intimacy of which he had obtained an earnest so encouraging, Moses replied, "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory." "Let me still nearer. Prolong this blessed moment, and admit me still further into Thy presence."

And so of every soul divinely enlightened, or rather, I should say, of every soul divinely enkindled. God is its chiefest joy. Whether it knows it or not, God has come to be its supreme felicity, and nothing can make it pro-

foundly and abidingly glad except the sense of His friendship and a certain nearness to Himself. Nor is this a desire which a single vouchsafement can appease, or which can live contentedly on even the most marvellous and transporting memories. "O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee: my soul thirsteth for Thee, to see Thy power and Thy glory, so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary." And the believer goes back to the Bible, he hails the return of the Sabbath, he welcomes another Communion as a possible occasion of new insight to the Divine perfection, and as a likely means for enabling him to realize more blissfully the friendship of All-sufficiency. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple." And when to the entreaty, "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory," is answered, "No man can see Me and live," faith and affection will sometimes venture to reply, with St. Augustine, "Then that I may see Thee, Lord, let me die."

The prayer of Moses was answered. Another morning came, so different from that other and august occasion when a quaking multitude surrounded a thundering mount; this time there was neither blackness nor tempest nor sound as of a trumpet, but, with his two stone tables under his arm, the lawgiver ascended in the clear cool dayspring. He ascended and sought the appointed place, and as there in the cleft of the rock he waited, a cloud drew nigh—a cloud like that which floated above the tabernacle, and as the Lord passed by, a voice, still and

small perhaps, but kind and clear, proclaimed—"The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." It was enough. The Lord had answered the prayer of His servant, and had showed to Moses His glory, the glory of His goodness. Moses bowed his head and worshipped, and, during the protracted interview of the forty following days, a perfect love cast out fear, and from the pavilion of this friendly presence and its rapt communion Moses came down with that shining face, which only re-appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. I incline to think that piety of the highest pitch, piety of the pattern nearest Heaven, is that which, with David, pants after the living God,—is that which, with Moses, cries, "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory." But it is not common now. It was more common when they dwelt in dens and in dungeons, in caves of the earth and in clefts of the rock. The insulated cloud which from its lonely bosom could launch a bolt big enough to rend the mountain or make the welkin ring again, if touched at every point by its trailing neighbours, if stranded on the tree tops or the mountain side, soon loses all its lightning, drawn off in inconspicuous sparklets, and subsides into a feeble feathery innocent, a thin pale ghost of vapour. And so from isolated spirits, from those who, like Elijah, dwelt apart, or who, like Moses and David, lived alone amidst the multitude, from such vast self-contained,



secluded spirits, men with whom their fellows could hold no converse, and who were thus shut up to exclusive fellowship with the Friend ever present and supreme; from such concentrated souls great bolts of prayer went up, or, like the fire of heaven, in some flashing word the long-gathered thought came down. But, and let us not be too severe on circumstances not absolutely evil, in days of much amenity, in a time like this when Christian companionship is no rarity, and when countless objects of beneficence give outlet to those better feelings which in severer or less busy times went back to God; in such a time devotional feeling is hardly permitted to accumulate sufficiently; the sacred fire is drawn off in driblets, and after our friends have got their share, and our neighbours theirs, and the public theirs, alas! there is little left, and instead of the whole soul going up to God in some heaven-rending ejaculation, it is all that our spent and diluted piety can do to appreciate, for we can hardly venture to repeat, the behest, "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory."

Yet how it helps us, that is to say, how it at once exalts and humbles when we meet with genuine instances. I venture on a specimen. The author is hardly known, but he lived in the same parsonage once tenanted by the holy Herbert, and beneath the spire of Salisbury, and on those wide Wiltshire plains he walked with God, unnoticed and unknown. It is in words like these that the hidden life of Norris of Bemerton wells over: "My God, my happiness, who art as well the End as the Author of my being; who hast more perfection than I have desire, and who art truly willing to quench my great thirst in the ocean of

Thy perfection ; 'I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory.' Withdraw Thy hand from the cleft of the rock, and remove the bounds from the mount of Thy presence, that I may see Thee as Thou art, face to face, and dwell for ever in the light of Thy beauty. I have long dwelt with vanity and emptiness, and have made myself weary in the pursuit of rest. O let me be taken up into the only Ark of repose and security, and let me see enough of Thyself to love Thee infinitely, to depend on Thee for my happiness entirely, and to bear up my spirit under the greatest aridities and dejections, with the delightful prospect of Thy glories. O let me sit down under this Thy shadow with great delight, till the fruit of the Tree of Life shall be sweet to my taste. Let me stay and entertain my longing soul with the contemplation of Thy beauty, till Thou shalt bring me into Thy banqueting-house, where vision shall be the support of my spirit, and Thy banner over me shall be love. Grant this, O my God, for the sake of Thy great love, and of the Son of Thy love, Christ Jesus. Amen."<sup>1</sup> Words like these, who does not perceive that they are wings of a dove, and that the soul which sincerely can utter them is being wafted upon them by God's own Spirit to God's own heaven ?

But who again, reverting to this context, can fail to see that God's glory is His goodness ? Amongst astronomers it is a favourite speculation that the sun himself is something else than a mere ball of fire, and that inside of his burning atmosphere there may be a mighty globe with cool meadows, with seas of glass, and rivers clear as

<sup>1</sup> Norris's *Essays*, etc., p. 226.

crystal, and with every conceivable provision for a vast and rejoicing population, the possible home of even the just made perfect. And even so, when forced near to God the guilty conscience feels as if it were forced forward towards a consuming fire—towards a holiness which hurts its love of sin,—towards a righteousness rectorial and retributive, which on all its evil radiates condemnation. And it is right, for “He will by no means clear the guilty.” But within this light inaccessible, within this refulgent atmosphere of truth and sanctity, is a glory more intimate and essential still, the inmost perfection and divinest beauty of the Godhead. Coming from within that light inaccessible, the only-begotten Son from the bosom of the Father declared what was there, and He declared that it is love,—a love which had sent Himself and which invited up into its blissful asylum every weary and sin-laden spirit. And so on this occasion, to the meek and wistful Moses preaching the gospel, Jehovah expanded that one word of love into the name, “The Lord God, merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.”

And those who know that name will put their trust in God, especially now when the saving clause or reservation has lost its ominous look, and lost it not by being spirited away, but by being signally fulfilled,—more signally fulfilled than if all the guilty had paid each and individually the personal penalty. And now that the Divine Representative has submitted to take your place, and be treated exactly as if the guilt were His, not yours, —and now that, in virtue of ample satisfaction rendered,

that great Substitute is cleared,—now that Christ offers to include you in His full quittance, you may let the refracted rays return and unite again,—you may let this name proclaimed to Moses condense again into that name revealed by Jesus,—you may surrender to the joyful assurance that God is love, that in Christ He is your Father and your God. The prayer is answered not to Moses only, but to all of us, on whom these ends of the earth have come. God has showed His glory. Nay, the very “brightness of that glory” has come forth and dwelt among us. Bow the head and worship. Adore the Incarnate Mystery, and as you continue to commune with God manifest, your face will begin to shine. The gladness in your heart will illuminate your countenance, and both from reflected beauty and inward assimilation you will be changed into the same image, glorious as first it dawns and more glorious as it still proceeds.

## XX.

### THE LAWGIVER.

“ And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day ?”—DEUT. IV. 8.

A MODERN jurist, a Frenchman and an infidel, observes, “ Good right had Moses to challenge his Israelites, And what nation hath statutes like yours ? a worship so exalted, laws so equitable, a code so complete ? Compared with all the legislations of antiquity, none so thoroughly embodies the principles of everlasting and universal righteousness. Lycurgus wrote not for a people but for an army : it was a barrack which he erected, not a commonwealth ; and sacrificing everything to the military spirit, he mutilated human nature in order to crush it into armour. Solon, on the contrary, could not resist the effeminate and relaxing influences of his Athens. It is in Moses alone that we find a regard for the right, austere and incorruptible,—a morality distinct from policy, and rising above regard for times and peoples. The trumpet of Sinai still finds an echo in the conscience of mankind,—the Decalogue still binds us all.”<sup>1</sup>

Did the merit belong to Moses, in the annals of legis-

<sup>1</sup> *Législation Française*, par Hennequin, tom. i. 609.

lation his would be the proudest of names, for never before nor since did a code spring into such sudden existence or conquer such tremendous difficulties. As it is, that name stands out in serene and saintly pre-eminence, as the meek self-merging medium through which Heaven conveyed to earth the choicest of mercies. "Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon Him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?"—Where it is beautiful to see how God gets all the glory, and Israel all the good; how, on the one hand, mingling himself with the mass of the nation, the man Moses, so very meek, he speaks of Jehovah as "*our* God,"—their God as much as his; and how, on the other hand, he tries to lift their hearts from the midst of their mercies to that God who gave them this mercy surpassing, statutes and judgments so righteous. Like a magnificent Alp, whose green skirts are the nest of a nation, and whose top white and glistening, if terrestrial at all, is something transfigured, our lawgiver stands up in the horizon of history, not proud but pre-eminent—a halo round his head, and an emancipated people at his feet—claiming to himself no credit, but rejoicing in their happiness, and pointing to that high source from which it all comes down.

In order to understand the Mosaic legislation rightly, we must remember a distinction. The Israelites were to

be a peculiar people. They existed not for themselves, but they had a function to fulfil towards all mankind, and, in order to fulfil this function, it was needful that they should be for a time a people separate and self-contained, singular in their usages and sequestered in their dwelling. In order to fix them down to one spot they had their local worship. It was a law that all the men amongst them should rendezvous at the central shrine three times a year, and thus foreign settlements or distant journeys were made impossible. The Hebrew home must be within a short and easy radius round the Temple, and if he went abroad he carried this tether, and was pulled back again by the Passover or some other pilgrimage. Then again to keep Israel distinct and immiscible, there were imposed upon him many rules and restrictions. If a stranger wished to settle in the Holy Land he must submit to circumcision; he must keep the Sabbath; he must not bring with him, on pain of death, his idols or his own religious observances; and, on the other hand, if a Hebrew wished to roam, if on business or pleasure he went abroad, he must not adopt the usages of the people round him. He must not adopt their garb; he must not even wear his hair as they wore theirs; above all, he must not join them in their feasts or share their usual food, so that what with his peculiar garb and flowing beard, with his horror of things strangled, and with his long catalogue of unclean beasts, if the stranger found the Hebrew in the Holy Land a stiff and unaccommodating host, the Hebrew on his travels made himself a grotesque and inconvenient guest. And this was exactly what his

law designed. It was intended to preserve him a personage peculiar in his own self-consciousness, and conspicuous in the eyes of others—the world's prophet and its priest till once his function was fulfilled—till that Divine personage had arrived who was “the end of the law,” and, emancipated from meats and drinks and divers washings, men like Paul and Peter merged the Jew in the Christian and the Catholic, and, no longer calling anything common or unclean, found in every clime a country and in every saint a living temple.

Whilst some laws were designed on purpose to make the Jew peculiar, in reading others we must bear in mind how imperfect were the people to whom they were originally addressed. There might have been better laws, as we are apt to imagine, throwing backward our New Testament light, but they were the best that the people could bear. A wise lawgiver has regard to the powers and to the prejudices of the people for whom he is legislating, and will not lay on them burdens greater than they have strength to carry. He will take into account their climate, their prevailing pursuits and callings, their previous training, the present state of religion and morals, and whilst it will be his object to help them up to a higher level, he will not make the steps of the ascent so cyclopean that none but giants can climb. Thus the law of Moses allowed certain forms of slavery, and it forbade the taking interest for money. It allowed a man, in certain cases, to have more wives than one, and it gave facilities for divorcement, which, in the words of the Saviour, showed great “hardness of heart,”—a bluntness



of feeling and coarseness of sentiment such as could not have been "in the beginning," and such as cannot well exist under the refining influence of the gospel.

At the same time, there are in this Mosaic code many traits and touches which anticipate the higher tone and tenderness of a later dispensation. "If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him; thou shalt surely help with him."<sup>1</sup> What could be more disarming, what more likely to electrify an enemy into sudden subjugation! what finer conquest over one's-self, for the first impulse is to glory over the perplexity of an opponent; but although revenge would fain "forbear to help," religion says, Thou shalt surely succour. "Rise up before the hoary head."<sup>2</sup> A ruffian race, mere warriors and freebooters, despise and dislike the old, for they can fight no longer; but it needs some sentiment and some homage to worth and wisdom to recognise in the hoary head a crown of glory. Then again, how many of these laws are marked by a considerate humanity! "If thou at all take thy neighbour's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down. It is his only covering; wherein shall he sleep?"<sup>3</sup> "And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. Neither shalt thou glean every grape of thy vineyard: thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I

<sup>1</sup> Ex. xxiii. 4, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Lev. xix. 32.

<sup>3</sup> Ex. xxii. 26.

am the Lord.”<sup>1</sup> And the same kindness which thinks of the poor and provides for them from the superabundance of the rich, extends its regards to the lower forms of life. “Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn.” “If a bird’s nest chance to be before thee in the way, in any tree or on the ground, and the dam sitting upon the eggs or upon the young, thou shalt not take the mother-bird with the young : thou shalt in any wise let the dam go free, and take the young to thee.”<sup>2</sup>

On the laws of Moses we shall not enter further ; but they will repay the study of those who have taste and leisure for such investigations. They will repay the historian, for they will introduce him to a civilisation compared with which the Grecian culture and the Roman commonwealth are but of yesterday. They will repay the scholar, for in Moses, with his monotheism,—in Moses, with his sublime cosmogony,—in Moses, with his laws so protective to the poor and so equitable towards every citizen, he will find some of the sublimest things in Plato’s philosophy, and some of the wisest, humanest things in Plato’s imaginary Republic. They will repay the jurist, for in the deodands and compensations, the doctrine of trespass and damage and malice prepense laid down by the Hebrew lawgiver, he will find the origin or earnest of much in our own British statute-book. And they will repay every student of morals and of mankind, for, as has been truly remarked, “Thoughts colonize as well as races. Ideas, like families, have a genealogy and a propagation ;”<sup>3</sup> and in tracing the migrations of thought

<sup>1</sup> Lev. xix. 9, 10.

<sup>2</sup> Deut. xxii. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Wines’ *Commentaries*, p. 103.

from land to land, in following up these spiritual migrations, there is many a great idea of which we do not find the birthplace till we reach the Books of Moses, many a notion which has widely influenced mankind, and which is still wielding over the world a powerful sway, of which we shall not find the germ or principle till we reach this cradle of all codes,—this book of all beginnings.

## XXI.

### THE WATER OF MERIBAH.

Then came the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, into the desert of Zin in the first month : and the people abode in Kadesh ; and Miriam died there, and was buried there," etc.—NUMB. XX. 1-12.

FOR the first two years after leaving Egypt the career of Israel, and consequently of Moses, was full of incidents. The Red Sea was crossed, Sinai was reached, the Law was given, the Tabernacle was set up, and that economy was established by which for the next three thousand years a peculiar people was destined to be known and distinguished. And there was at one time every appearance as if, before the second year had expired, the favoured and Heaven-protected nation would be comfortably settled in their promised land. They were already near it, so near that a few days more might have carried them into the midst of it, had they not been arrested by their own incapacity and unworthiness. A deputation of their number had been sent to explore the country. They came back with a glowing account of its climate and its produce, "it flowed with milk and honey, and here is a cluster of its grapes;" but like the golden apples guarded by the dragon, it was a treasure which could not be touched ; the people were such giants and their garrisons so impregnable that it was mere madness to attempt an

invasion. It was to no purpose that Joshua and Caleb protested. They did not deny that the Canaanites were tall, and their castles strong; but "the Lord is with us," and "if He delight in us, it is an exceeding good land, and He will give it us." The contagion of dismay had overspread the multitude; a cry was raised to choose a new commander, and hasten back to Egypt; and Joshua and Caleb were warned that it was as much as their lives were worth if they spoke another word.

It was a sad outburst of cowardice and childishness—a whole army blubbing at the prospect of a battle: "All the congregation lifted up their voice and cried; and the people wept that night." To men of mettle like Joshua, to men of sense and spirit, it was mortifying to hear them like babies, crying, "Take us back to Egypt," forgetful of all the horrors of the house of bondage. And to men of God, like Aaron and his brother, it was still more distressing to see how, at each new danger, they lost all memory of past deliverance, and could only believe in God for the moment when His arm of might was actually made manifest. Altogether, it was a discouraging revelation, and it seemed to indicate that an abject, servile spirit on the one hand, and a great perversity on the other, were too deeply engrained to be ever pounded out, seeing that they had survived thirty-eight years of discipline and training in the heart of that desert, and seeing that on the very first trial the new race broke down in the same way with their fathers; and in view of all the provocation, we who are but flesh and blood are apt to say that Moses did well to be angry.

Angry he certainly was; and when, reverting to a former miracle, the Most High directed him to take the wonder-staff—his rod of many miracles—and at the head of the congregation “speak to the rock,” and it would “give forth its water,” in the heat and agitation of his spirit he failed to implement implicitly the Divine command. Instead of speaking to the rock he spoke to the people, and his harangue was no longer in the language calm and dignified of the lawgiver, but had a certain tone of petulance and egotism: “Here now, ye rebels; must we”—must I and Aaron, not must Jehovah—“fetch you water out of this rock?” And instead of simply *speaking* to it, he raised the rod and dealt it two successive strokes, just as if the rock were sharing the general perversity, and would no more than the people obey its Creator’s bidding. He was angry and he sinned. He sinned and was severely punished. Water flowed sufficient for the whole camp and the cattle, clear, cool, and eagerly gushing, enough for all the million; but at the same moment that its unmerited bounty burst on you, ye rebels, “a cup of wrath was put into the hand of Moses.”<sup>1</sup> To you, ye murmurers, there came forth living water; to your venerable leaders the cup of God’s anger. “The Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.”

How severe the sentence! and how inclined we are to sympathize with those good and much-enduring men

<sup>1</sup> Van Oosterzee, p. 213.

who, at the very end of their task, and on the very edge of the Promised Land, saw vanish from their grasp the blessing which they had never once forfeited all these forty years! But the Judge of all the earth must do right, and we cannot help inquiring, "What was the precise offence which was so instantly and inexorably punished?"

The usual answer and the most obvious is, that Moses lost his temper. And the fact cannot be controverted. As we read in Psalm cvi., "They provoked the spirit of Moses, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips." And on the face of the narrative we see abundant signs of wrath and perturbation. But was Moses the only person then present whose frame of mind was not what it ought to be? Was not the whole multitude in a buzz of hot and angry murmuring? Had they not passed the night in petulant complaints and infantile lamentations? and, the day before, had they not threatened to stone Caleb with stones? We fear that there were few good tempers that morning; and if every man had borne his own iniquity, we fear that few of that company would have gone forward from Meribah, or even survived to drink its living water. What was it then? Along with his temper what else had Moses lost? or what was there in an act outwardly so trivial which made it "a great transgression"?

In order to arrive at a reply we must revert to the words of Jehovah: "The Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because *ye believed me not*, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore," etc. Here there

is nothing expressly directed against their temper or spirit; but they are charged with unbelief. If their temper had failed, the saddest effect was that their faith had also failed; and, allowing their mind to be thrown off the balance, their faith shared the general unhingement. In the dust and smoke of combat, men not only get dim and distorted views of their fellows, but the serene sky overhead grows darkened; and this unexpected outbreak of the Israelites, whilst it took Moses and Aaron by surprise, for the instant went far to make even these good men faithless or forgetful. "Has Jehovah's purpose been defeated? Has all this weariful detention failed of its design in weeding out the murmurers and preparing the people for the promised rest? And owing to this miserable outbreak must Aaron and I make up our minds to forty more years in the desert?" And just as happened with Jonah, who let out his spite upon the gourd, but who was really angry with Nineveh for repenting, and angry with God for sparing it; and just as happens with most people when they get into a passion, Moses wreaked his anger on the people and on the rock, but he was not altogether pleased with God Himself. For once he disobeyed his Master's orders, and instead of doing exactly as the Lord commanded, he did what he thought should do as well, and instead of the simple and sublime instructions he had received, he substituted an unwarranted and undignified procedure of his own. For the moment he himself was unmindful of the Rock of his salvation, and from not believing made too much haste.



To use the words of one who thought profoundly and whose every word was weighty,—Dr. Robert Gordon,—“Perhaps Moses and Aaron doubted whether it were enough simply to speak to the rock, and whether it would not be necessary not only to smite it, as on a former occasion Moses had been instructed to do, but to smite it twice. If so, then it was a distrust of God’s power—a doubt whether the rock would give forth water at the Divine bidding unaccompanied with the smiting of Moses, which formed no part of his present commission. If so, the rebuke which followed is full of instruction to all subsequent times. That rock was one of the most significant types of Christ with which the Old Testament church was supplied. As that rock was once smitten with the rod of Moses, Israel’s lawgiver, so it behoved Christ the antitype to be smitten once, but only once, with the rod of the great Lawgiver, that He might vindicate the law and make it honourable. When Moses therefore smote the rock again, and twice too, not only without authority, but in opposition to the Divine command,—for he was commanded to speak to it,—he marred the beauty of that type whereby the perfection of Christ’s one sacrifice was so clearly set forth; and the rebuke which he and Aaron incurred does most emphatically condemn the presumption of those who would add to Christ’s one offering of Himself, either by works of self-righteousness, or by the frequent offering of what they call His body and blood in the idolatrous sacrifice of the mass. The divine influence which Christ by His Spirit imparts to His Church may, for the chastisement of the

Church, appear for a season to be dried up, as the rock in the wilderness did for a time withhold its water from the thirsty Israelites. But in order to give forth to His people the water of life Christ needs not to be smitten again either in reality or in figure. He has only to be 'spoken to' in the prayer of faith, founded on the warrant of God's Word; and whether such prayer proceed from the individual believer in his humble cottage, or from a united Church in her collective capacity, it will not fail to draw down those communications of His grace, even the quickening influences of His Spirit, whereby He refreshes His inheritance when it is weary."<sup>1</sup>

May we not go a little further? What was Moses, what was Aaron? You reply, The one was the prince and prophet, the leader and lawgiver of Israel; the other was Israel's priest. True; but on whose behalf—by whom appointed, whom representing? You answer, God. That is to say, each was in a certain sense a mediator. Each stood there so far representing God and communicating with Him and with Israel—the one mainly as prophet or revealer of His mind,—the other mainly as priest or reconciler for the sins of the people. For such a function the first essential was unison with God; the next, and hardly the next, for included in the former, compassion on the ignorant and wayward. In a dispensation itself mainly gracious, and foreshadowing one which would be grace altogether, it was of prime importance that the mediating men should be men merciful and gracious, long-suffering and slow to anger. And such

<sup>1</sup> Gordon's *Christ in the Old Testament*, vol. ii. pp. 95, 96.

they were in marvellous measure. The man Moses was exceeding meek, and if for patience and a sweet submissiveness the palm had been assigned to any one besides, it would have been to Aaron his brother. But after all they were human. Their endurance was wonderful, but it was not inexhaustible; and on this occasion, instead of hastening in betwixt an infatuated people and the God against whom they murmured, and crying, "Pardon the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of Thy mercy," when it turned out that God had this time pardoned already, and was about to give them good for their evil,—instead of faithfully exhibiting the Divine munificence and calmly asking the rock for its water, they (so to speak) defeated the Divine generosity, and failing to sympathize with God's forgivingness, He was not "sanctified in the eyes of the children of Israel." The final start for Canaan was marked, like every previous stage, by murmurs; but remembering that they were but flesh, the Lord would not deal with them after their sins, nor reward them according to their iniquities. No fire came forth, no chasm opened; but "all was mercy, all was mild," and, condoning their complaints, the gift they needed was about to be conferred on the rebellious. But to this effort of long-suffering and loving-kindness the chafed spirit of Moses and Aaron was unequal. By the way they managed it they spoiled the moral glory of the miracle, and what on God's side was a gift of pure grace, under their hard blows and hot words assumed the aspect of an angry gospel. They believed Him not, to sanctify Him in the eyes of the children of Israel.

Brimming over with instruction as is this passage, we must leave it with a few remarks.

1. How careful preachers of the gospel and expounders of Scripture should be not to give an erroneous impression of God's mind or message. The mental acumen is rare, but the right spirit is rarer. But what is the right spirit? —A loving spirit, a gentle spirit, a faithful spirit, a meek and weaned spirit, a spirit which says, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth," and a spirit which adds, "All that the Lord giveth me, that will I speak," that excellent spirit which is only imparted by the good Spirit of God. For if He withdraw, even a Moses ceases to be meek, and ceasing to be meek even a Moses becomes a bad divine and an erroneous teacher, striking the rock that has been already stricken once for all, and preaching glad tidings gruffly. He who gives the living water does not grudge it; but sometimes, instead of "Ho! every one that thirsteth," the preacher says, "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" and makes the very invitation repulsive.

2. When any one has run long and run well, how sad it is to stumble within a few steps of the goal! If Moses had an earthly wish, it was to see Israel safe in their inheritance. And his wish was all but consummated. Faith and patience had held out well-nigh forty years, and in a few months more the Jordan would be crossed and the work would be finished. And who can tell but this very nearness of the prize helped to create something of a presumptuous confidence? The blood of Moses was hot to begin with, and he was not the meekest of men

when he smote the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. But he had got a good lesson in ruling his spirit, and betwixt the long sojourn with Jethro and the self-discipline needful in the charge of this multitude, he might fancy that he had now his foot on the neck of this enemy: when lo! the sin revives and Moses dies.

Blessed is the man that feareth alway! Blessed is the man who, although years have passed without an attempt at burglary, still bars his doors and sees his windows fastened! Blessed is the man who, although a generation has gone since the last eruption, forbears to build on the volcanic soil, and dreads fires which have smouldered for fourscore years! Blessed is the man who, even when the high seas are crossed and the land is made, still keeps an outlook! Blessed is the man who, even on the confines of Canaan, takes heed of the evil heart, lest, with a promise of entering in, he should come short through unbelief!

3. Elevation of mind and sweetness of spirit are pearls of great price, and if we wish to preserve them we had better intrust them to God's own keeping. If Moses lost his faith, it was by first losing self-command: and if a man lose this, it is hard to say what next he may lose: like the mad warrior who makes a missile of his shield and hurls it at the head of an enemy, he is henceforward open to every fiery dart, to the cut and thrust of every assailant. But, as John Newton remarks, "the grace of God is as necessary to create a right temper in a Christian on the breaking of a china plate as on the death of an only son;" and as no man can tell on any dawning day

but what that may be the most trying day in all his life, how wise to pray without ceasing, "Uphold me according unto Thy word. Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe." "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth: keep the door of my lips." "Who can understand his errors? cleanse Thou me from secret faults. Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression."

## XXII.

### THE HERMIT NATION.

“For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him :  
lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the  
nations.”—NUMB. XXIII. 9.

As long as its channel is rock there is no fear for the river. There is no risk that its volume will lessen, or that it will fail to reach its terminus, although the ocean should be a thousand miles distant. But if in its progress it is met by a sandy desert, what is it to do? This Sahara will engulf it, and although it were another Nile, this sultry monster is able to devour it every drop, and cheat the thirsty regions beyond.

The first ages of the world had no lack of revelation. For a thousand years they retained Adam, rich in the recollections of Paradise, and from time to time men rose up like Enoch the prophet and Noah the preacher of righteousness—men who revived forgotten truth or faded piety, and who added new elements to the pre-existing knowledge; and from all the probabilities of the case, we do not doubt that not only was there communion with God and with one another among the members of the little church which survived in the ark, but there is every evidence that it was a pure and ample creed which

emerged from that floating tabernacle—a creed which recognised the unity, the spirituality, the truth and holiness of God ; which kept sacred one day in seven ; which looked for a seed of the woman who should be deliverer and restorer of humanity ; and which retained the practice and the doctrine of sacrifice.

In all likelihood Noah's creed was much more minute and comprehensive than this, but it is a great matter to know that all this was included. It is a great matter to know that four thousand years ago there was a church catholic—a church within which there were no schismatics, as there were no separatists without—a church unanimous in worshipping, without any idolatrous intermedium, the King eternal, immortal, and invisible—a church which lived in the hope of redemption—a church which kept holy the Sabbath, and which solemnized its signal deliverance and sanctified its new abode by that great holocaust of Ararat.

But it is sad to see how soon this primeval and catholic creed got corrupted. Men did not lose it entirely, but they so depraved and distorted it that its features could scarcely be identified. Instead of worshipping the unseen all-seeing Creator, they chose His brightest creature, and, like the ancient Persians, became worshippers of the fire or the sun ; or they put together rude emblems of wisdom, swiftness, and strength,—the head of a man, the wings of an eagle, the legs of an ox or a lion, and, like the old Assyrians, at last bowed down and worshipped their carved or molten symbol. The Sabbath faintly survived in the traditions of all lands, and the coming Redeemer



was travestied in the incarnations of Bramah and Vishnu, whilst a device of His advent may be perceived, more or less faintly, in the musings of Plato, in the sighs of Socrates, and in Virgil's beautiful vision. But the true doctrine of sacrifice soon got divorced from the practice, and, losing sight of the Lamb of God who should take away the sin of the world, the descendants of Noah found poor consolation in that blood of bulls and goats which can never cancel transgression. With most of them the offering became a mere bribe to the Deity, the price of some favour which they wished to procure; and those who retained the idea of a vicarious atonement, like the earlier Greeks, and like the Phœnicians, the predecessors of the Jews in Palestine, by way of adding value to the victim, and rendering it actually life for life, they outraged Heaven's Majesty by the slaughter of a human sacrifice, and by giving the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul.

Dark and dreadful as some of these systems were, it must not be forgotten that they were perversions of an original truth. When that coin came from the mint its milled edges were sharp, its image and inscription stood out, and its lustre was spotless. But now that it has passed through ten thousand hands, wantonly defaced by some and inevitably worn by others, it has thinned down into a mere glittering scale, a blank unmeaning counter; or you drop it into the sea, and years afterwards, at the same spot, you dredge up a curious conglomerate, a mass of pebbles, shells, and sand, all aggregated round a black and rusty nucleus; and it is only by dint of assiduous

polishing, or by the use of some chemical re-agent, that you recognise your lost piece of silver. As the world's second father received the truth from God, it was all in Heaven's own currency, full weight and without a flaw, and what would have been accepted in the Great King's assay. But as soon as it began to circulate it began to deteriorate. Some truths simply wore out. The Sabbath, for example, soon ceasing to be a day of rest and religion, thinned off into a mere nonentity; and although most nations deemed seven a sacred number, and counted time by weeks of seven days, they could give no right reason for the usage. But most truths get tarnished and corroded. Consigned to no written record, when intrusted to the memory of man, with all his prejudices and bad propensities, they were like shillings dropt into the tide. When next you see them you can hardly recognise them, crusted over with such uncouth or monstrous additions, and changed into a substance so remote from the bright original. This black mass, slippery with weeds and crawling with sea-worms, who could conceive that it was hiding in its heart a shekel of the sanctuary? And even when you get at the nucleus, it is so damaged and decomposed that you feel it is now good for nothing; it must be cast into the furnace and melted anew before it will be accepted as precious metal again. And just so, when we dredge into the sea of ancient history, or when we dive into the dark places of the present day, and bring up some ugly superstition, it is hard to believe, and yet it is often true, that its core is one of these old Noachian coins; and although man's tradition has so corrupted

God's saying as to give it the aspect and effect of an impious falsehood, even under that falsehood may be detected a trace of the primitive truth. "When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and, making corruptible images of the incorruptible God, they changed his truth into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator. And as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind." When, as in the days of the post-diluvian patriarchs, they possessed the knowledge, they lacked the piety, and for want of the piety they soon lost the knowledge. "Their foolish heart was darkened." But still, for all their first germs of knowledge they were indebted to God's own teaching. Their most horrible superstition was a truth of God, which they had "changed into a lie;" and as the beginning of idolatry we recognise the abuse of symbols and the depravation of a theology originally true; and at the basis of every sacrifice, however mercenary in its spirit, and however offensive in its mode, we recognise a reminiscence, distant and distorted no doubt, but still a reminiscence, of what was in the beginning a Divine institution. In other words, the fragments of truth which have come down in the heathen religions are relics of the primeval and universal religion which issued from the ark with Noah, and with that Church of which Noah was the pastor and the priest; and just as we call Popery a corruption of Christianity, so may we call Paganism a

corruption of Patriarchism—a perversion of the primitive and catholic religion.

Or, to revert to the comparison which we made at the beginning : from Ararat there flowed a stream of revelation fresh and pure, and had the channel been retentive, had men's hearts been honest, and had they liked to retain God's truth in their knowledge, that stream might have come down to the era of the Advent pellucid and ample, and making wise unto salvation the successive ages as it passed. But as its course extended it was soon perceived that its volume was lessening and its contents were corrupting. It was not merely as if it had come to a sultry desert where it was likely to disappear in the burning sand ; but it had reached a swampy wilderness, where it was sure to merge in the brackishness and noisomeness of the festering ooze, and retain no token of that gladsome river which took its rise at Noah's altar and beneath the rainbow of God's covenant. It pleased the Most High to obviate this disaster. By narrowing the channel He saved the stream. He no longer left the conservation of His truth to the world at large ; but He selected a people and set up a system which should place the great saving doctrines beyond the casualties of time and the caprice of changing generations. He segregated from all the families of the earth the line of faithful Abraham, and He set up that peculiar institution which is known as the Levitical Economy, or Mosaic Dispensation.

Precisely as before the flood, all flesh were again corrupting their way, and there was every danger that true

religion would utterly expire. If left any longer to the memory of mankind at large, it was plain that the promise of a Saviour and the true doctrine of sacrifice, and Sabbath-keeping, and the knowledge of God's perfections, would soon be extinct. And whilst there was still a godly remnant, the Most High chose out a specific depository for the all-important revelation. So to speak, He formed a canal or aqueduct along which the stream might be conducted safe from the irruption of the bitter and offensive fen on either side. And although, with its straight and monotonous banks and unvarying width, the canal is not so picturesque as the free meandering river, in such a case it is the only security. He not only took the new method of confiding His precepts and promises to a written record—the tables of stone and the book of the covenant,—but He had recourse to an additional precaution, and these lively oracles thus written down He intrusted to a *peculiar people*. The very existence of that people as a nation he bound up with the preservation of these records, and thus secured in His wisdom a twofold guarantee for their unimpaired transmission. It was as if the engineer of our artificial river had intrusted its embankments to some special clan whom he appointed its guardians, so contriving it that if through their fault any breach were committed their own supply should be cut off or their own fields should be flooded. Or perhaps it would be more correct to say, that for His revelation God provided a twofold receptacle. writing it in letters of ink on the Hebrew Bible, and in indelible usages and unaltering ideas inscribing it on the Hebrew people. It was a

concentric channel : within, the tables of stone compactly joined together ; without, the concrete, almost as impervious, of a nationality the most tenacious and cohesive which our world has ever witnessed,—the living network of willows by the water-courses, whose fond branches skim the glassy current, whilst their wattled rootlets guard and cradle the bed in which that current flows.

With their precious deposit of a revelation at once written and ritual, it was the purpose of God that the people should “ dwell alone,” and not be mingled with the nations ; and with this design He made it difficult for them to go far from home, and at the same time inconvenient and distasteful to associate with strangers. It was not only by depriving them of horses and giving them no instinct for the ocean, that the Divine Lawgiver confined them to their own country ; but, by appointing festivals which required their attendance in the capital three times a year, He rendered long journeys all but impossible. On the other hand, by prescribing rules as to their daily life,—rules of singular minuteness as to things which they must not taste, nor touch, nor handle,—He made it a problem full of anxiety and peril to travel among their heathen neighbours or to have their heathen neighbours sojourning with them. And altogether, betwixt that short cable which kept them moored to the Temple, and that regimen which made them and the rest of the world so ungainly if not odious to one another, He secured for this singular people a seclusion almost as absolute as if they had been transported to some island in a distant sea.

Thus isolated, shut up in the calm enclosure of their Holy Land, the Most High commenced that series of lessons by which He educated the pupil nation up to the proper point for appreciating Messiah when He came, and on the strength of which her more proficient scholars were destined to become the recipients of the final revelation and the first heralds of God's mercies to mankind. But without stretching away into a theme so vast as is that anomalous Hebrew history, our present object is to see the precise relation which that Hebrew system bears to its patriarchal predecessor. And if we do not greatly err, it may, as already hinted, be described as a reservoir or artificial channel, in which the remains of patriarchal theology were conserved, and in which provision was made for the reception and transmission of all the intermediate revelation which Jehovah might vouchsafe till the Word should be made flesh, and grace and truth should come in Jesus Christ.

What all remained of the patriarchal or primeval theology, it is vain to conjecture: but all that remained, we may safely assert, was absorbed into the new dispensation. For if we found a Sabbath in Paradise, and signs of a Sabbath in the Ark, and if we find in the readiness with which it was recognised in the wilderness that it had not been absolutely forgotten in the brick-kilns of Egypt, this patriarchal Sabbath was adopted and sanctioned as one of the most prominent features in the Hebrew economy. If we found graciously given to the exiles of Eden the promise of a Saviour, under the name of Shiloh, and the prophet like unto Moses, and the root and offspring of

David, we find the promise repeated and restricted till the Desire of the World became the hope and the proud prospect of Israel. If our first father knew the Father of Spirits in the awe of His justice as well as the endearment of His mercy, and if the world's second father saw the Divine perfections diffracted, as in yonder symbolic bow, in the various tints of vengeance, patience, pity, the founder of that new dispensation saw the scattered rays again united in the white focus of the burning bush, and in the name, "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, yet by no means clearing the guilty," received a presentiment of the great gospel announcement, "God is love." And if substitution and expiation by sacrifice are as ancient as the world before the flood, we find the principle assumed and the practice systematized, codified, reduced to a rubric, in the statute-book of Israel, and the precedents of Abel, Noah, and Melchisedec, carried out in the priesthood of Levi, and in those altars which did not cease to smoke for fifteen centuries.

And yet, although so much of the old patriarchal revelation was restored or preserved in the Hebrew economy, the knowledge of God, access to Him through mediation, the hope of a Redeemer, sacrifice, and Sabbath-keeping,—in other words, although Judaism was in one respect a reform from Paganism and a return to the pure and primitive Patriarchism (as Protestantism is a reform from Popery, and a return to pure and primitive apostolism), it must not be forgotten that in all its outward form and figure it was a very different system; and could an Abel or an Enoch have made the direct transition from



the palmy days of the patriarchal piety to the era of the Aaronic priesthood, he might have felt it a change from liberty to bondage, and from sunshine to clouds and shadows. And even although the actual transition was from an old dispensation's twilight to a new one's dawn, and from the vagueness and uncertainty of decaying tradition to the precision and permanence of a written revelation, so narrow was the range, so strict the rubric, and so stern the threatenings of the new economy, that, looking back to that incident in the childhood of the Church of God, we feel as if it then had quitted the lap of a nursing mother to be under the bondage of a school-master. Its first salutation,—one which the wild and wayward scholar greatly needed, but still a salutation harsh and startling,—was in the hoarse thunder of Sinai, and its first lesson a severer ordeal than Pythagoras imposed on his pupils, a novitiate of forty years' silence, a probation not of forty days but of forty years, in which one murmuring word would be fatal. And the task which was prescribed, and which it took a thousand years to learn, was enforced by so many pains and penalties, and truant moments were visited by corrections so severe, that after ages of so strict a monitor we do not wonder that it was felt a joyful emancipation when Jesus stretched out His hands and said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" we do not wonder that in exchanging Moses for Messiah those who made the trial declared His yoke to be easy and His burden light.

## XXIII.

### THE HERMIT NATION.

“For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him :  
lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the  
nations.”—NUMB. XXIII. 9.

IN last Lecture we saw how the Patriarchal passed into the Hebrew dispensation. It was needful to narrow the channel in order to save the stream. For our present purpose we do not require to ask, What became of the residue? What became of those little rills which were not included in the great artificial canal, but which were allowed to run off into the great expanse of humanity? It is an interesting inquiry, and justice has hardly been done it. Too frequently, and in forgetfulness of what the Bible tells, it has been assumed that the whole of that primeval revelation evaporated and left no trace. But although the trace may be minute or the stream may be muddy, there is nevertheless an appreciable tincture of primeval truth in almost all the religions of Paganism. It may not be sufficient to make men better; nay, like that pure element which carries health and exhilaration in its free and open current, but which in its stagnant overflow converts into a pestilent swamp what before was but a barren wilderness, the corruption of a truth may be

more offensive and more deadly than simple ignorance, yet still they are not without significance, those vestiges of primeval verity. What means this tradition, so prevailing, of a golden age that was, this longing, so universal, for a better time not seen as yet? Whence this dark discomfort, this conscience of sin, this dreary feeling that God and man are disagreed, and whence this general effort to get anew into a right relation? those peace-offerings and vows and sacrifices which confess transgression, and plead for pardon and for mercies otherwise unmerited? Are they not the relics of a better religion that once existed? a few fragments, rusty and corroded perhaps, of that earlier truth which in Noah's ark was transported from the old world to the new?—so many little pools or runnels which in their choked and struggling course are still derived from the fountain which started so clear and strong on Ararat?

But for the present we take leave of this primeval and catholic revelation, with its fast-disappearing and corrupting remains. We need not even discuss the question how far it was possible for the Gentiles to come to the saving knowledge of God with the light that in some places lingered after the Mosaic dispensation was established. Our business now lies with that little country which, for fifteen centuries, was the Goshen of the earth; the one illumined region in a world whose spiritual gloom was deepening age by age, till at last it had become a darkness that might be felt. We are to contemplate that system which at first sight is to many of us cumbrous and uncouth, but which, on nearer inspection, we shall find,

like the other works of Jehovah, a masterpiece of wisdom wonderful.

And looking at Judaism, the first thing that strikes us is its local limitation. Here is a little spot of 10,000 square miles,<sup>1</sup> about one five-thousandth part of the globe's terrestrial surface, or a fifth of England's area; and in this little nook we find locked up the peculiar people, the privileged possessors of the only authentic religion, the exclusive guardians of the one Divine revelation. The people dwell alone, and are not reckoned among the nations. And it is not only that their territory is small, for, like the eagle whose home is a crag, but whose hunting field is the entire domain of ocean, earth, and air, Macedonia, Carthage, and Rome nestled on a narrow ledge, but made the flap of their pinions heard afar; but, with the fire of ambition blazing in his eye, Israel is an eagle whose wings have been shorn. Without horses, without a navy, without the talent for conquest or command, he is forced to tarry at home; and religion requires what Providence indicates: for he must not lose sight of the Temple, he must not mingle among strangers, whose very touch is defilement, he must not lodge in their tainted dwellings nor sit down at their idolatrous boards. And therefore, only known to his neighbours for his strange unsocial ways, he dwells apart, like the cony of his own overshadowing Lebanon, a hermit nation, a mysterious recluse, a sequestered and separate community, building his houses on the rock, and chiefly pro-

<sup>1</sup> The area of the Holy Land was about 10,000 square miles. The terrestrial area of the globe is upwards of 48,000,000 of square miles.

tected by his isolation. Of purpose. Such was the design of the Most High. He desired to isolate the people. To intrust the forthcoming revelation to the world at large would have been to lose it, but to secure its conservation He prepared a place and a people. That revelation should not again be water spilt upon the ground, but, collected into this reservoir, it should be guarded with religious care by a race who knew that their national existence was bound up with its integrity, and who, instead of courting foreign alliances or aspiring to imperial dominion, felt that they had a mission still more august, and that, as custodiers of God's oracles, and guardians of His temple, they had a distinction above all the peoples that dwell on the face of the earth. Hence everything was done to keep them at home, and to keep them separate. Hence was it that a dietary was prescribed which made the Hebrew a troublesome guest and an uneasy traveller in the land of the Gentiles. Hence was it that his means of locomotion were taken away, and that a few days' radius from the Temple became the necessary limit of Hebrew homes. Hence was it that the heart of the Jew was taught to cling with a tremendous tenacity to his Holy Land, till exile became the sorest of judgments, and a grave in the sacred soil was deemed almost essential to a joyful resurrection.

But looking again at Judaism, we are struck with the minuteness of its rubric and the rigidity of its ritual. Not only was the isolation of the peculiar people a great contrast to the catholic patriarchism which went before, and to the world-embracing gospel which followed; but

their singular system was a striking antithesis to the law of liberty which marked primeval and apostolic times. With the Jew, religion was itself a business. Almost every movement was fettered by certain rules and prescriptions, and it required much circumspection to pass unscathed through a single day. To take the most obvious example : Our Lord has taught Christians to eat whatever is set before them, thanking God, and asking no questions ; and the meal is now religious if he who partakes it eats and drinks to the glory of God. But in order to be a safe meal to the Hebrew, it was needful that the viands should be of a certain description, and that they should be prepared according to a certain formula. On particular days it would have been a trespass to eat bread with leaven, and on any day it would have been a serious offence to partake of delicacies much prized among the neighbouring nations : so that the Shadrachs and Meshachs, the truly conscientious, were sometimes constrained to send away untasted dainties from a royal feast, and appease their hunger with pulse and lentils. And even after every precaution had been observed, although it was known that the viands were all authorized and properly prepared, various accidents might mar the meal and disperse the famished group from around the polluted table. And then if, all his circumspection notwithstanding, the Israelite were betrayed into some transgression, it was both a laborious and expensive ordeal to expiate the offence and eliminate its consequences. There was the bathing, and there was the costly sacrifice, and there was the exclusion from the society of one's

friends, so irksome, and often so inopportune. And in order to have some idea of the Hebrew's trammelled life, we have only to read their great directory, Leviticus, which, with its meats and drinks and divers washings and carnal ordinances, still stands upon the record to teach us, among other lessons, from what a yoke of bondage the Saviour has set His people free. It was a burdensome institute; but there was a meaning in its very burdensomeness. No doubt, to many its very chains grew golden, and its yoke became a proud badge of distinction; and, as if its fetters were not sufficiently felt, the later Jews busied themselves in contriving new prohibitions and in multiplying ritual minutiae. Still, to the freer spirits of that legal economy, especially when it was waxing old and ready to vanish away, there was an irksome restraint in its ceremonial routine and punctilious regulations; and, like the winged creature developing within the crust of the creeping thing, they panted for larger fields and a higher flight. They groaned and travailed till the Son of God was manifest; and when at the resurrection-word, "Loose him and let him go," the cerements burst and the grave-clothes fell off, it was with an exulting shout that Pauline spirits hailed the liberty wherewith Christ had made His people free, and refused to be again entangled with the yoke of bondage.

In its limited locality, and in its punctilious ritual, Judaism differed from both the Patriarchism which preceded it and the Christianity which followed. For fifteen centuries Jerusalem was the focus of all light, the magnet of all piety, the one place for acceptable worship. And

during all that period the Levitical code was binding,—a code so difficult that few could observe it except those born and brought up under it, and who had for its details something of a hereditary instinct.

But if in these respects Judaism was unique, when we look at it again we observe one feature in which it closely resembled the dispensation that followed, and that is, in the possession of a *written revelation*. It had now been ascertained that the true faith could not be kept alive by tradition. Man's memory was too treacherous to be intrusted with a matter so distasteful to his fallen spirit as the true character of God ; and even where there was a traditional theology, like the stream which flows through many soils, and which takes a bitter taste from one and a dusky tint from another, in its transmission from race to race it was found that the oral revelation grew dark and offensive. In this stagnant swamp, weltering with reptiles and fuming with pestilence, who can recognise the stream which bounded from the Alpine crag, pure as the melted snow and salubrious as Heaven's own precipitate ? And in these Gentile religions, all alive with hideous pagods and deadly with abominable idolatries, who could believe that this is what man has made of that Revelation which started on its course from Ararat so clear and pellucid ? But by consigning it to a written record, the Most High took care that, uncorrupted and undiminished, His oracles should continue lively to the last ; and He made it at once the duty and the distinction of the Jews that to them these oracles were committed : their distinction to have a treasure so unique confided to their



keeping, their duty to preserve it unimpaired. Ages of ignorance or error might intervene; but here in the volume of the Book was the well of wisdom undefiled, and though a thousand years might have passed away since the thunders of Sinai fell silent, here evermore the worshipper who prays, "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory," sees God's stately goings and hears that very Name which was proclaimed unto Moses; and although it has wandered many a sultry mile since it left the heights of Zion, though to reach these willows of Babylon it has had to cross a weary desert, this is the very brook from which the panting Psalmist drank, at which the soul, thirsting for God, the living God, now drinks and is refreshed.

The pre-eminence of a written revelation is unspeakable. It is a permanent provision not only for the satisfying of every longing soul, but for the constant reviving of the Church. When, like Patriarchism, a traditional revelation has once grown turbid, man possesses no filter which can clarify it again; but written down, however bad the times may grow, the book preserves it pure and limpid to the last. And like the Wycliffes and Luthers of the Christian time, when the Church was dead, and faith almost extinct, the Josiahs and the Ezras of the Hebrew time had only to bring out the Book of the Law, and Jehovah spake once more, and the people trembled before Him.

But if, in its written records, its documentary and enduring revelation, Judaism anticipated the Christian dispensation, it was a prolongation of Patriarchism in its

continued use of *types* and *emblems*. There were types in Paradise: for the tree of life was an emblem of Him who grows in the midst of God's garden, and of whom partaking the soul lives for ever. There were types before the Flood: for the Sabbath is a type of the rest which remains for the people of God; and Sacrifice was a foreshadowing of that Lamb of God whose one offering should for ever take away sin. And if the Flood itself was not a type, assuredly the Ark was one, in which "the church of the saved" was rescued from a doomed world, and deposited in safety beneath the bow of God's covenant. But in the Mosaic dispensation these types grew so numerous that time would fail should we reckon the whole; those objects and observances and incidents which all had a shadow of good things to come: the High Priest, the Tabernacle, the Temple, the Veil, the Ark of the Covenant, the Table of Shewbread, the Cities of Refuge, the Morning and Evening Sacrifice, the Day of Atonement, the Passover, the Feast of Tabernacles, the Law of the Leper, the Healing of Marah, the Descent of the Manna, the Smitten Rock, the Guiding Pillar, the Passage of Jordan, the Destruction of Jericho. And without descanting at present on all the advantages or drawbacks of this mode of instruction, it will be conceded that it was one well adapted to the early state of society. If it was not so precise or expository as writing, it was more arresting, and in an age when few could read it was a universal language. In fact their system of types gave the Jews the benefit of a twofold Bible. They had a written Bible and they had a pictorial Bible.

They had a Bible, written on the parchment rolls, which the scribes and the scholars could read; and they had another blazing on Aaron's breastplate, and curling up in the smoke of the altar, and hovering over the mercy-seat, a Bible which the runner could read, and which the infant and peasant could spell; whilst to the Master in Israel both Bibles were patent, and the one expounded the other. For instance, if a Hebrew believer had been looking at his pictorial Bible, and the question had arisen, What mean these endless washings? what means this laver in the Temple, and this constant resorting of the ceremonially unclean to the running river? he had only to open his written Bible and read, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Or if he had been reading in his written Bible about Jehovah's majesty or sin-excluding sanctity, "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints. Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?" most likely the words would make faint impression on his mind; but when he went up to the house of God, and joined the adoring company, as afar off he descried the mystic curtain and remembered that within that Shekinah dwelt which on the intrusive foot would flash instant and devouring

flame,—as he marked how anxiously these Levites observed each minute prescription, and how careful was Aaron's successor not to approach the awful shrine save with incense and with blood,—he felt the force of the Psalmist's question, and his spirit was subdued to reverence. Thus did the two Bibles illustrate and interpret one another. Thus what was dark in the type was made clear in the text, and what failed to impress in the written word struck the sense and filled the imagination in the dramatic or pictorial oracle.

## XXIV.

### “ A PRAYER OF MOSES, THE MAN OF GOD.”

“ Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children.  
And let the beauty of the LORD our God : be upon us and establish thou  
the work of our hands upon us ; yea, the work of our hands establish  
thou it.”—Ps. xc. 16, 17.

ALTHOUGH some difficulties have been started, there seems no reason to doubt that this Psalm is the composition of Moses. From the remotest period his name has been attached to it, and almost every Biblical scholar, from Jerome down to Hengstenberg, has agreed to accept it as a prayer of that “ man of God ” whose name it has always carried.

If so, it is one of the oldest poems in the world. Compared with it Homer and Pindar are (so to speak) modern, and even King David is of recent date. That is to say, compared with this ancient hymn the other psalms are as much more modern as Tennyson and Longfellow are more modern than Chaucer. In either case there are nearly five centuries between.

The occasion on which it was written can only be conjectured ; but from internal evidence we should say that it must have been either towards the end of the wilderness sojourn, or after that calamitous outburst which was punished by a lengthened detention in the desert, and

from which it resulted that of those who were forty years old on leaving Egypt only two made out the fourscore and arrived in the land of promise (7-11).

This is enough to account for the tone of the Psalm, so pensive and plaintive. Moses himself was an exception. He had nearly made out the sixscore years, but this made him only the more lonely—the greater contrast to the youthful race which had started up around him. It gave him the feeling described by a poet of our own (Dr. Young),—

“One world deceased, another born,  
 Like Noah they behold,  
 O'er whose white hair and furrow'd brows  
 Too many suns have roll'd.  
 Happy the patriarch! he rejoiced  
 His second world to see;  
 My second world, though gay the scene,  
 Can boast no charms for me.  
 To me this brilliant age appears  
 With desolation spread;  
 Near all with whom I lived and smiled,  
 Whilst life was life, are dead.”

And although there is every reason to believe that the new generation was an immense improvement on its predecessor, it had the drawback of being dreadfully new. It contained no one with whom in the days of his youth the Psalmist had been acquainted. As if a flood had swept over the scene, that race had been carried completely away; and now he was left at once a spectator and a spectacle,—in the midst of a race none of whom had known him when young,—like the primeval oak or elm looking down on a whole upstart forest, and himself

the venerable monument of a generation which had utterly vanished.

Nothing can be more pathetic than the middle portion—verses 3-10; nor can anything be more expressive than the imagery under which the shortness of our earthly existence is described. Compared with the years of the Eternal it is nothing. Even although the original millennium were continued—even although the thousand years of Adam and Methusaleh were still vouchsafed,—they would pass, and after they were past,—“before God’s sight,” compared with the years of the Eternal, they would look no more than a rapid and returnless “yesterday.” Life, he says, is like “a watch in the night.” The weary warrior lays him down, and he fancies that he has hardly closed his eyes—it does not look like forty winks—when he is roused to take his turn in the trenches or relieve the sentinel on the battlements, or join the forlorn-hope—the storming party in the escalade. And like such a short “sleep” is our mortal history. We have had some pleasant dreams, and others rather frightful: when we wake up and see a ghastly apparition bending over us. “What, O Death! is that you already? It cannot possibly be time.” And he answers, “Yes, indeed. The tale is told; the night is spent; and now you must turn out into the morning. Nor is it so short as you imagine. Look at the clock, and you will see that it has come to threescore and ten. Look into the mirror, and you will see that there are snows upon your head, that there are furrows on your brow, that there are crows’-feet in the corners of your eyes.”

From man's mortality the Psalmist seeks refuge in God's eternity. As the first and foremost thought it begins the Psalm; and there evidently underlies it the assumption that man's immortality is involved in the immortality of God. "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations," and as at the bush Jehovah proclaimed, "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,"—showing that these godly patriarchs still were extant, and still had a life in the great I AM, so from the wreck and desolation all around him, the Psalmist lifts his eyes to that true and only Potentate, who alone hath immortality. Of all the godly generations God is the eternal home. Nothing which He once blesses with His friendship is ever blotted out of being, or is disappointed of that exceeding great reward to which He Himself has taught it to aspire. The tent is gone, but the pilgrim lives. The tent is torn and scattered amongst the elements; but the pilgrim has exchanged its frail and flimsy shelter for a house eternal. He has got better than any building made with hands, for he has passed in beneath the covert of the Almighty, and will henceforth have that home which God had for Himself before the mountains were brought forth, or ever He had formed the earth and the world.

*If man be ephemeral, God is eternal.* Such is the first consideration. But a second thought strikes the Psalmist. After he has depicted life's shortness he seems startled by his own description. Is it so? Is it really a dream—a sleep—a yesterday? Then how astounding is the universal delusion! what a mad mistake is this general hope



that to-morrow will be as this day, and much more abundant! "Lord, teach us so to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." On which Calvin remarks, "Children learn numbers as soon as they begin to prattle, and we do not need an arithmetical tutor to enable us to count a hundred on our fingers. So much the more shameful is our stupidity in never comprehending the short term of our life. Even the most accomplished accountant is unable to calculate the fourscore years of his own existence. Surely it is monstrous that men can measure all distances outside of themselves. They can tell how far asunder are the several planets, and how many miles it is from the centre of the moon to the centre of the earth, but they cannot measure the three-score years and ten which divide their cradle from their grave. To do this no one is wise enough till God shines into His understanding by the Holy Spirit, and for this rare wisdom Moses now sets himself to prayer."

That prayer passes on to other points. He entreats that the period of rebuke and chastisement may now be succeeded by a season of revival and renovation. "Return, O Lord, how long [wilt Thou be angry?] and let it repent thee concerning thy servants. Oh satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil." And more especially he prays that the present juncture may be signalized by more of God's power and presence, so that before the departing generation entirely left the stage, it might have the comfort of seeing that its work

was done, and that a better race was coming on. "Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it;"—a prayer in which is involved the principle that the shorter the individual existence is, it becomes all the more urgent to exert a beneficial influence on others, so as to transmit to posterity a portion of ourselves which shall thus become imperishable; and a prayer which in the instance before us was abundantly answered; for now that the murmurers were dead, now that a new generation had learned the dangers of disobedience, and been somewhat weaned from idols, it is probable that the Hebrew nation exhibited as much of the beauty of holiness as at any period of their history. Referring to this time, the Lord says, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord" (Jer. ii. 2, 3). And as this "beauty of Jehovah" was on the rising race, Moses had reason to believe that the Lord's work was appearing, and that his own work would be established; and—now that it has assumed the form of prayer, and so from man's sin and frailty has risen up into the region of Jehovah's faithfulness and love—the meditation loses all its mournfulness, and ends in a gleam of hope and gladness.

This Psalm has already furnished us with two discourses (vers. 12 and 14), and so we shall now confine ourselves to the lesson of its closing verses.

1. You will observe a beautiful parallelism between two things which are sometimes confounded and sometimes too jealously sundered: I mean *God's agency* and *man's instrumentality*, between man's personal activity and that power of God which actuates and animates, and gives it a vital efficacy. For forty years it had been the business of Moses to bring Israel into a right state politically, morally, religiously: *that* had been *his* work. And yet, in so far as it was to have any success or enduringness, it must be God's work. "The work of our hands" do Thou establish; and this God does when, in answer to prayer, He adopts the work of His servants, and makes it His own "work," His own "glory," His own "beauty."

And so if any of you are concerned for the good of others, the secret of success and the best security for permanence is prayer. To all your efforts bring your best; throw into them all the tact and all the energy of which you are capable; bring to them the utmost of your affection, skill, and earnestness; and when you have done your best you will feel most deeply that God Himself must do it all. Here you stand seeking into the mind of this loved one admission for the gospel and for the Son of God; but you stand before a door which cannot be forced, and it is only He that hath the key of David who can open it, and who, introducing your message, can withal enter Himself. Here is a history over whose early and critical outset you are anxious. At present it is like a rill rising on the watershed of a far inland range, and although you make every exertion to direct it into that quarter where it will flow long and illustriously and use-

fully, it shows a sad propensity towards those sour and swampy levels where it must be engulfed and wasted, and where it will ignobly disappear; but the heart of the youth, the heart of the child, is in the hand of the Lord, and, as a river of water, He can turn it whichever way He will; and if He will kindly interpose, from this time forward its course will be shaped aright, not perhaps so steady and so uniform as you wish, not so straight as a conduit, not so placid as the surface of a canal; a little wriggling at the first, a little noisy, a little redundant now and then; but by and bye gladdening the banks on either hand, and to the right course too far committed to make you fearful of its deflecting towards the desert or turning backward to the sea of death.

2. A man of piety is a man of public spirit. It is not only in the great congregation, but in secret and domestic devotion, that the man of God has at heart the cause of God, and prays, "Let thy work appear." Hitherto God has been working in the world. His great work is that which He carries on in the souls of men, and there has never been a time when some did not experience His *work* of saving and transforming grace. But the time when God works most apparently is the time when His people pray most earnestly. This year opened with much prayer, and every successive week has brought instalments of the answer. In some of the mission fields—amongst the Karens of Burmah and the Hindus of Tinnevely—the awaking has been wonderful; and here at home—in Wales, to some extent in London, still more in Dublin, in Glasgow, Perth, and Aberdeen, and in the fishing villages

along the eastern coast, from Eyemouth to Peterhead, great numbers have been added to the Church. And with the patriotism of Moses, with the philanthropy of Christians, it behoves us to urge the prayer, and with every corresponding effort emphasize the *Amen*, till God's work "appear" throughout these isles, till His way is known through all the earth, till the name of His holy child Jesus is adored by all the nations.

3. God is glorified and His work advances when His church is beautiful. "The beauty of the Lord" is the beauty of holiness,—that beauty which in the Lord Jesus himself shone with lustre so resplendent, and which ought to be repeated or reflected by every disciple. And it is towards this that all amongst us who love the Saviour, and who long for the extension of His kingdom, should very mainly direct their endeavours. Nothing can be sadder than when preaching or personal effort is contradicted and neutralized by the low or unlovely lives of those who pass for Christians; and nothing can go further to insure success than when prayer is carried out and preaching is seconded by the pure, holy, and benevolent lives of those who seek to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. Dear brethren, be this your effort. In loving meditation and affectionate communion draw near to the Lord Jesus. Draw so near that His glory will lighten upon you, and that His lineaments of grace and truth will be reflected by you. Draw so near that the beauty which for a great way round encircles Him will enclose and encompass you. And then the living evidence, the palpable demonstration will go further than a thousand

arguments. The book may be shut and flung into a corner; the sermon may be forgotten, or the lay figure which was left in the pew whilst the inner man went back to the opera or took a run through his ledger,—that lay figure may never have listened to a single sentence: but when at last the day-dream dissolves, when the man is come to himself, he will say, “Yes, but it is real. There is in religion something more than forms or phrases. I have seen it. In the old disciple I have seen its mellow grandeur,—its meek, patient, un murmuring majesty; in the deathbed of the young believer I have seen the love of life, the fear of death, absorbed in the hope full of immortality. In that sincere and solid comrade, so pestered and so persecuted, I have seen the might of sterling principle; in that helpmeet so rallied for her scruples, and often so obstructed in her well-meant efforts, I have seen the inexhaustible long-suffering and gentleness which God bestows on those who pray for it. These are saints; for I have seen them, and they were very beautiful. O God, be merciful to me a sinner.”

## XXV.

### THE DEATH OF MOSES.

“So Moses, the servant of the LORD, died there, in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day. And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.”—DEUT. XXXIV. 5-7.

CALM and colossal, not so much distinguished by his individual features as by the mighty deeds with which he is identified, stands out the figure of that Hebrew law-giver; and betwixt the romantic incidents of his birth and upbringing, his unparalleled achievements as the conductor of a national exodus, and his exalted function as the founder of the Hebrew commonwealth and the father of a new dispensation, no mere man has exerted a larger or more enduring influence on human history.

The end was in keeping with such illustrious antecedents. Lately we had occasion to consider the solitary false step or stumble in his public career, and nothing could more strikingly exhibit the strictness of that “school-master” economy than the way in which this single offence was visited. The eating of the forbidden fruit was hardly more fatal to Adam than was the smiting of the rock to Moses; and even although we can see the rectitude of the dispensation, our hearts will still revert to its severity. It

may be true that a significant type was spoiled by his smiting on this second occasion a rock which had been smitten once for all already, and which now needed only to be spoken to ; it may be true that his spirit was provoked, and that the impression which he conveyed to the people was very different from that divine munificence and mercy which originated the miracle : yet remembering his long services and his rare consistency, and conscious as we are of our own infirmity, we are apt to share the grief and disappointment of Meribah. The sentence may be righteous, but still it is severe, and we feel deeply concerned for the leader who, after forty years of signal service, receives a rebuke so marked, and who sees vanish from his grasp that crown for which his hoary hairs so long had waited.

But if we behold the severity of God we also behold His goodness ; and indeed, we may add, what was in itself so great a humiliation only brought out more strikingly the real grandeur of Moses. To err is human, and Moses erred ; but to be rebuked, to be punished, and show no resentment, is a rare nobleness. This nobleness the grace of God gave to Moses, and hence it came to pass that in all his career there is nothing grander than its ending. On the one side, mercy triumphed over judgment, and if the lawgiver had received a rebuke, that was more than compensated by the peerless distinction attending his exit. On the other side, grace triumphed over nature, and instead of wasting the time in a murmuring remonstrance or unmanly lamentations, warned by God that he was now to die, he who as a servant had been so faithful



in all God's house, now bestirred himself in the final task, and for the last time set that house in order.

1. He first of all addressed the people. In that discourse, which fills the first thirty chapters of Deuteronomy, he rehearsed their history, and recapitulated those commandments and that covenant, by adhesion to which they were to become a people peculiar and Heaven-protected. In these thirty chapters we have the essence of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers; only conveyed in a tone of patriarchal affection and personal tenderness, Deuteronomy is a speech rather than a book, full of that anxious fidelity and fatherly desirousness which, knowing that it is a last opportunity, can hardly leave off, and which, after attempting to close, begin again, in the spirit of the last sentences, Deut. xxx. 15-20.

2. Then he installed his successor. Joshua, so gallant and God-fearing, and found so faithful amidst the faithless many, in the presence of Jehovah and the people he set apart to that conquest of Canaan to which he himself had once aspired as his dearest guerdon, and the fit close of his pilgrimage: "Be strong, and of a good courage; for thou must go with this people unto the land which the Lord hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it. The Lord will be with thee; he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed."

3. Next into that most remarkable of all his productions, the thirty-second chapter of this book, he condensed the substance of all his warnings and entreaties, and along with them poured his own soul. Than "the song of

Moses" Scripture recognises nothing as more sublime except one other composition, and with that other they only are acquainted who have received a harp of gold, and along with "the song of Moses, the servant of God," sing "the song of the Lamb." It has been well termed<sup>1</sup> "the Magna Charta of prophecy," and in its historical recollections and premonitory warnings, in its remonstrances and exhortations, its entreaties and regrets, and, above all, in its loyalty to Jehovah, it supplies the keynote, which we find constantly recurring in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the prophets who come after.

4. And finally, as the Prophet like unto Moses began with beatitudes, so, with a blessing broad and comprehensive this type of a Mediator closed; and, with parting breath transferring them to "the eternal God as their refuge," leaving "underneath the everlasting arms," he handed to his successor the rod of office, and laid down the task of all those arduous years.

Thus much on the side of Moses. His life and his work were well wound up, and in the manner of it God was glorified. And in His gracious dealing with His servant, God glorified Himself.

Although the sentence was not literally reversed, its bitterness was greatly mitigated. Although not permitted to pass over Jordan, Moses was allowed to look over it, and, with his eye preternaturally strengthened, he got such a sight of the goodly land as days of actual exploration might have failed to give. From Nebo he looked down on the palm-trees of Jericho, close under his feet,

<sup>1</sup> By Eichhorn.

and from the deep warm valley through which the Jordan was gleaming far across to yon boundless sea; from Jezreel, with its waving corn, to Eshcol, with its luxuriant vines; from Bashan, with its kine, to Carmel, with its rocks dropping honey; from Lebanon, with its rampart of snow, south again to the dim edge of the desert; and as he feasted his eyes, as what had so long been the land very far off, and what to the fretful host in the wilderness had seemed no better than a myth or mirage; as the splendid domain spread out, hill and valley, field and forest, in the bright garb of spring, the Lord said, "This is the land!" "This is the land which I swear unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, I will give it to thy seed." But beautiful and overwhelming as it was, just then there began to rise on Moses' sight a still more wondrous scene. It was no longer the Jordan with its palms, but a river of water clear as crystal, and on either side of it a tree of life o'ercanopying. It was no longer Nebo's rocky summit, but a great white throne, and round it light inaccessible. He had just heard the name of Abraham, and if this is not Abraham's self! and if he is not actually in Abraham's bosom! and in a better land than the land of promise! Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see that sight. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit that better land.

"So Moses, the servant of the Lord, *died*." The spirit was gone home. Behind that countenance, still radiant with the beatific vision, no longer worked the busy brain, no longer went and came the mind, which so long had conversed with God, and managed the affairs of a million

people. Powerless is the hand which had swayed Jehovah's rod, and split the sea in sunder; and cold in its unconsciousness is that majestic presence before which proud Pharaoh learned to tremble. A corpse is all that now remains of the mighty lawgiver, and there is no man there to bury him.

But the Lord is there, and in this moment of nature's helplessness and humiliation the Lord confers on His servant the crowning act of honour. As it has been described—

“ By Nebo's lonely mountain,  
     On yon side Jordan's wave,  
 In a vale in the land of Moab  
     There lies a lonely grave.  
 And no man dug that sepulchre,  
     And no man saw it e'er ;  
 For the angels of God upturned the sod,  
     And laid the dead man there.

That was the grandest funeral  
     That ever passed on earth,  
 But no man heard the tramping,  
     Or saw the train go forth.  
 Noiselessly as the daylight  
     Comes when the night is done,  
 And the crimson streak on ocean's cheek  
     Grows into the great sun :

Noiselessly as the spring-time  
     Her crown of verdure weaves,  
 And all the trees on all the hills  
     Open their thousand leaves :  
 So, without sound of music,  
     Or voice of them that wept,  
 Silently down from the mountain's crown  
     The great procession swept.

Perchance the bald old eagle,  
On grey Beth-peor's height,  
Out of his rocky eyrie  
Looked on the wondrous sight.  
Perchance the lion stalking,  
Still shuns that hallowed spot :  
For beast and bird have seen and heard  
That which man knoweth not.

Ent when the warrior dieth,  
His comrades in the war,  
With arms reversed and muffled drum,  
Follow the funeral car.  
They show the banners taken,  
They tell his battles won,  
And after him lead his masterless steed,  
While peals the minute-gun.

Amid the noblest of the land  
Men lay the sage to rest,  
And give the bard an honoured place  
With costly marble drest,  
In the great minster transept  
Where lights like glories fall,  
And the choir sings and the organ rings  
Along the emblazoned wall.

This was the bravest warrior  
That ever buckled sword ;  
This the most gifted poet  
That ever breathed a word ;  
And never earth's philosopher  
Traced with his golden pen  
On the deathless page truth half so sage  
As he wrote down for men.

And had he not high honour ?  
The hill-side for his pall,  
To lie in state while angels wait  
With stars for tapers tall,

And the dark rock-pines like tossing plumes  
 Over his bier to wave,  
 And God's own hand in that lonely land  
 To lay him in the grave :—

In that deep grave without a name,  
 Whence his uncoffined clay  
 Shall break again—most wondrous thought!—  
 Before the judgment-day ;  
 And stand with glory wrapped around  
 On the hills he never trod,  
 And speak of the strife that won our life  
 With the incarnate Son of God.

Oh lonely tomb in Moab's land !  
 Oh dark Beth-peor's hill !  
 Speak to these curious hearts of ours,  
 And teach them to be still.  
 God hath His mysteries of grace,  
 Ways that we cannot tell ;  
 He hides them deep like the secret sleep  
 Of him He loved so well.”<sup>1</sup>

And so, my dear friends, we finish our sketch of the Life and Times of Moses. It has occupied five-and-twenty lectures, and, by way of sequel or supplement, I should like to give some day, in a single lecture, a bird's-eye view of Hebrew History, the fortunes and distinguishing features of that people on whom, in the hand of God, Moses impressed its religious and political characteristics, and the function which they have fulfilled in the world at large. In this way only can we appreciate how great the work of Moses was, when we see its results not only in Solomon and Daniel, in John and Paul, but all down the ages in Ben Ezra and Maimonides, in Mendelssohn and Meierbeer, in Rothschild, in Spinoza, in

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Alexander.

the minstrels who have held by the ears enraptured capitals, in the millionnaires who have carried in their pockets the peace of empires, in the philosophers who have given new problems for wit to solve, new realms for mind to conquer.

And the lessons of that life! Yes, my friends, every life has its lessons, and every good life has its example and encouragement. Even the little household lamp which shone on your table through that one short winter, now that it is out it leaves the public street no darker, but oh! so desolate as it has left your dwelling! But histories like this are suns, and age after age myriads rejoice in their light.

You are not a prophet nor a bard, nor the father of a people, and yet the life of Moses has something for you. As the honest carpenter said, "I like to read about Moses. He carried a hard business well through. A man must have courage to look at his life and think what'll come of it after he's dead and gone. A good solid bit of work *lasts*; if it's only the laying a floor down, somebody's the better for its being well done, besides the man who does it."<sup>1</sup> It was a hard business, but he carried it well through. You, poor widow, who have a large family to bring up and to educate—you, householder, who have many likings to consult, and many tempers to study—you, manager of your own or another's business, who have many casualties to provide for, and many cares coming on you daily, cast yourself on Him whom Moses in each emergency consulted, and depend

<sup>1</sup> *Adam Bede*, vol. ii. p. 68.

upon it He will carry you through. The work of Moses was done in the presence of the fiery-cloudy pillar, and as conscience was in it, so immortality surrounds it; and if your work be done for God's sake, and under His eye, it will last long after you are gone.

From Moses you should learn to despair of no excellence. Many of the Bible worthies take their peculiar tint or tone from one particular grace—Job from his patience, Abraham from his faith, Nathanael from his guilelessness; but meekness is the attribute assigned to Moses. But when did he get it? He was not meek to begin with. He was not meek when he smote the Egyptian and hid him in the sand; nor would you have thought him meek when, descending the mountain, at sight of the people's idolatry he dashed in pieces the tables consecrated by the holograph of Heaven, and for the moment felt that it was no use taking further pains with such a people; and yet in order to subserve Jehovah's purpose it was needful that the temper of the leader should become ductile as the beaten gold and elastic as the tempered steel. Seldom has the triumph been more complete. The man Moses became exceeding meek, and throughout all the sequel Meribah is the one brief outburst which interrupts the sweetness and self-control of nearly forty years. So you need not despair. In a besieged town all pains are taken to strengthen the weakest places, till at last they are often the strongest; so when the believer knows his own weakness, it will make him unhappy. This is the point against which Satan is sure to aim a surprise or muster a fierce assault,



and if the town is taken the man may be lost. This sends him to prayer, and the Spirit of God builds up and strengthens where nature was weak,<sup>1</sup> till at the point which is the key of the entire position a tower of strength uprises. What is your besetting sin? Would it not be glorious to have it replaced by some contrary and conspicuous excellence?—the love of luxury by simplicity, self-indulgence by sobriety, cunning and finesse by straightforwardness and sincerity, dulness and earthly-mindedness by fervour and devotion? Would it not be an excellent test of the genuineness of your profession if you could bring yourself to search out the worst point and the weakest in your character, and, whatever it might be, having found it out and fixed upon it, will you go to the Rock of your salvation and say, “This sin is like to be my ruin. This is the point at which the enemy will come in like a flood, unless, O Spirit of the Lord, Thou lift up a standard and raise an embankment against him. Here, where I am weak, make me strong. Here, where I am defenceless, be Thou my shield and my buckler”? And would it not be to yourself most comforting, to the name of Christ and to the grace of the Spirit most honouring, if the result of felt infirmity and consequent prayer, and watchfulness consequent on that again, were, that (the weakness of the disciple bringing out the power of the Master) your natural gruffness became a Heaven-nurtured gentleness, your natural self-absorption a divinely-implanted kindness, your natural wrath and precipitancy a meekness like that which, if it

<sup>1</sup> Isaac Williams on Old Testament Characters, p. 86.

cannot be learned from Moses, may be acquired from that greater Master who says, "Learn of Me, for I am meek, and you will find *rest* to your soul,"—that rest which Jesus never quitted, and into which you also will with Moses enter the moment true meekness begins.

We get one glimpse of Moses after death, and it is important, for the light it throws on the world unseen. There was one thing which Moses desired of the Lord, and sought after, and that was an entrance into the Land of Promise. But there was another thing which he sought still more expressly, and his prayer for which also stands on record, "I beseech Thee, show me thy glory." But during his earthly existence neither desire was fully granted. From the cleft of the rock he obtained a remote and rearward view of God's glory, and from the top of Pisgah he saw the goodly land, but with the Jordan between. And then he died. He died; and there are embargos which death removes, just as there are barriers it overleaps and penalties which it pays in full. Moses died, and long ages afterwards was seen on earth again; and surely in both the time and place there was a deep significance. It was on the holy mount when the Lord Jesus was transfigured, and when He received from God the Father honour and glory. The veil that shrouds the viewless was for a moment sundered, and frail mortality could not stand it; but at home in the midst of it, and familiar with it, Moses and Elijah appeared amidst the glory, and, as if in their appropriate element, "talked" with the glorified Redeemer. And where? In the heart of that Holy Land,—on the top of one of those hills

which his mortal feet were never to tread, but which may have been the frequent resort of his ransomed spirit. To meet with Moses and Elijah Jesus ascended that mountain apart, knowing that He would find them there ; and the glory which startled disciples was no surprise to them, for they had been beholding the like through all these intermediate centuries. " I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory," " I pray Thee, let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, even Lebanon." Such are the two prayers of Moses, the man of God, and he dies (you would be apt to say) with neither petition granted, with each earnest prayer unfulfilled.

But come along to Tabor, and say, what good land is this which spreads around ? What goodly mountain is that which into the northern firmament rears its verdant sides and snowy pinnacle ? Whose glory is this that with rapt but not unaccustomed gaze he is looking on ?

And would not the Lord thus teach us that " the desire of the righteous shall be granted " ? With Moses do you pray, " Show me thy glory " ? Well, you shall see it. The Lord Jesus also prays, " Father, I will that they whom Thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory," and you shall see it. " Woe is me, that I sojourn in Meshech ! " Wearied with the dry and monotonous desert, do you long for scenes fairer and more fruitful ? God will show you a pure river of water of life proceeding out of the throne of God, and on either side of it the tree of life, with twelve manner of fruits, and with leaves that heal the nations. Dissatisfied

with the tents of sin, do you desire this one thing,—that all your days you may dwell in the house of the Lord? Your desire shall be granted; for if you hold on, you shall become a pillar in that temple, to go no more out. Do you pant for knowledge, for broader views, deeper insight, clearer apprehension? Then you shall know even as you are known. Do you hunger and thirst after righteousness? Then

. . . “with the fatness of God’s house  
You’ll be well satisfied;  
From rivers of His pleasures He  
Will drink for you provide.”

THE GOLDEN SERIES

BEING

EIGHT LECTURES ON 2 PETER I. 5-8.

## N O T E.

THE following Lectures were delivered in Regent Square Church during the earlier months of 1854. In some places the MSS. are not fully written out, but as the completed passages sufficiently indicate Dr. Hamilton's train of thought they are inserted as he wrote them.

## I.

### THE GOLDEN SERIES.

“And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue ; and to virtue, knowledge ; and to knowledge, temperance ; and to temperance, patience ; and to patience, godliness ; and to godliness, brotherly kindness ; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”—2 PETER I. 5-8.

THE word translated “add” is *ἐπιχορηγήσατε*, and in its primary significance it alludes to the choric dances, where, with hands joined together, the performers kept up a measured movement to the sound of music. And going back to this radical meaning the exhortation would be, “Hand linked in hand, let all these graces advance together. With Faith to lead the measure, and giving one hand to Courage, whilst Courage gives the other hand to Knowledge, and Knowledge does the same by Temperance, let all keep step and all keep time : each different but each beautiful, and all united, making up one harmony—embodying to the beholder’s eyes the cadence of the joyful sound.

But we need not lay stress on any metaphor. The spirit of the passage is abundantly obvious, and it suggests sundry great lessons.

1. It is no one grace which makes a Christian. A man

may have great knowledge, but if he wants charity it profits nothing; or if he be a man of courage but without godliness, he is a hero, but he is not a saint.

2. Nor does any number of excellences united make a Christian, unless they be excellences added to "faith." It is faith which makes the dead soul a living one, and so susceptible of every excellence. It is faith which joins the worldling to the Lord Jesus, and so makes him concordant with the Saviour, and inclined towards all good. Whatever courses there may be in the structure, faith is the foundation. Whatever tints of splendour may variegate the robe of many colours, faith is the mordant which absorbs and fixes them all. Whatever graces may move in the harmonious choir, faith occupies the fore-front and is the leader of them all.

3. But where there is faith all that is needful in order to possess any other grace is "diligence." Give all diligence, and add. On the one hand, diligence is needful. These graces will not come without effort, nor remain without culture, and there are some of them in which particular Christians never become conspicuous. But with God's blessing and the help of His Holy Spirit diligence is sure to succeed. There are some things in which diligence may fail. A man might give all diligence and fail to acquire an ear for music. He might give all diligence and never be distinguished for mathematical talent. And there are some people whom no diligence could make poets, or statesmen, or popular speakers. But there is no kind of moral worth which is beyond the attainment of believing diligence. We say "believing



diligence." For moral worth may be compared to one of those lofty mountains up the sides of which there is only one path practicable—in other words, which you can only scale if you set out from the proper starting-point. Other slopes may look more gentle and inviting, but they end in impassable chasms or overhanging precipices. But the man who takes the gospel for his starting-point—who sets out in the name and in the strength of the Lord Jesus,—there is no ascent of temperance, godliness, or brotherly-kindness so steep but he may one day find himself on the summit. At this instant he may be remarkable for peevishness; but by giving all diligence he will add to his faith patience. At this instant he may be distressed at his coldness and self-seeking, but by giving all diligence he will add to his faith brotherly-kindness. At this instant he may bewail his indevotion and earthliness; but by giving all diligence he will add to his faith godliness. And with half the effort which some expend on growing rich or learned, all of us might become holy, devout, and heavenly-minded.

Few passages of Scripture have received more ample illustration, and much skill has been shown in expounding the principle on which each successive grace is linked to its predecessor. It strikes us, however, that this concatenation is one of chronology mainly—in other words, the sequence is in the order of time. As soon as a man becomes a Christian—in other words, gets faith,—the first grace for which he has occasion is the "courage" of confessorship. And so of all the rest—a principle on which we shall proceed in a rapid review of the passage.

You have faith. You have found in Jesus of Nazareth a kind Friend and a mighty Saviour. But in this discovery you are somewhat singular. The world knows Him not. The world ignores or scorns Him. The world would sooner see you wear the Quaker garb, or make yourself ever so grotesque, than find you following out and out the Saviour's mind and maxims. If, when you speak of a dear earthly friend you employ ardent language and the tear fills your eye, the world thinks it quite natural; but if you evince similar emotion in speaking of your Saviour the world calls it cant, and feels annoyed and put out by your fervour. If you come up to the world's standard of honour, you are respectable; but if you come up to the Master's standard—if your yea is yea—if you are meek under insult—if you avoid all appearance of evil—if you busy yourself not in pleasure-seeking but in labours of benevolence, the world thinks you righteous overmuch, and taunts you as a poor-spirited, priest-ridden fanatic; and it needs courage, either expressly or by implication, to avow yourself Jesus' disciple. But if it needs courage to confess Christ before men, the very confession will help to make you courageous, and every decisive step you take, every valiant deed you do, makes your vantage stronger and the next step more easy. And after joining the Church's communion—after refusing this and the other doubtful compliance—even those who most dislike your singularity will respect your decision, and those who do not approve of your conduct will let you alone—whilst even that singularity which identifies you with a Friend so exalted will be felt by yourself as a blessed isolation.

Should God give you this courage you will soon find the need of more knowledge. For instance, in your zeal to make converts you are at first regardless of times and places; but larger experience teaches you not to cast pearls before swine, and you add to your courage prudence. Or perchance you find on the one side scoffers asking a reason of your hope—on the other, impressed acquaintances or ingenious scholars inquiring—What must I do to be saved? and when then thus called to express it simply and clearly you find for the first time that you have still to acquire a knowledge of the Christian evidence or a summary command of the specific gospel revelation.

And here let me enforce the exhortation of the text. You who are believers in Jesus, add to your faith knowledge—not only such knowledge as shall protect yourselves from error and illusion, but such knowledge as shall give you the power of saving others. True religion is neither a cold intellectuality nor a fierce and fanatical bigotry; but it is a mind at once warmed and illumined by the truth as it is in Jesus. To that truth do you open your mind, and far from deprecating or dreading any truth, remember that of all truth the Fountain is One and Divine, and that if it be a devout and adoring spirit into which knowledge is absorbed, the warmer will its affections become, and the firmer and more unfaltering its faith.

But there is a risk lest knowledge be merely speculative; and in point of fact it will be found that some are content with a logical creed and a loud profession. They have a knowledge of Scripture, and they have a pleasure

in putting down heresy or defending sound doctrine ; but they have not done battle with their own bad habits, nor conquered their easily besetting sins. To such the apostle says : " Add to knowledge temperance. Lead not a life of luxurious speculation, but of vigorous practical virtue. Curb each appetite. Have all your passions under control. Abstain from all evil, and in recreations and such things as are innocent, let your moderation be known unto all men : the Lord is at hand."

If by temperance we understand the control of the animal nature, knowledge itself is a mighty assistant in winning the victory ; for a man who has drunk at the fountain of earthly science, is not so likely as his ignorant neighbour to thirst for the riotous wine-cup and other inebriating enjoyments. But temperance has a range still wider. It is equivalent to Self-control ; and it implies that the man truly temperate has the faculties of his mind, as well as his constitutional propensities, under the completest command. Like the managed steed in the hand of the rider, like the helm in the hand of a steersman strong and steady, his tongue, his temper, his very thoughts, are under authority, and instead of being run away with and rendered ridiculous by his own wayward passions, his strong will—strong in Another's strength—is ever able to subdue the whole body. Temperate in all things, he is able to look without envy on the pleasures of sin, and in his farewell to Egypt he feels no pang for the flesh-pots. Amidst provocation still calm, and never frustrating by intemperate language well-intended reproof or remonstrance, he gains in momentum the force

which others waste in fluster and fury ; and crowns the whole by the elastic promptitude with which he is able to transfer from one theme to another all the powers of his mind, or make the instant transition from needful repose or congenial pursuits to duties stern and imperious.

Yet to Christian perfection there is still something lacking. The strong will has conquered the appetites and passions ; but it is needful that that strong will should itself be the Saviour's conquest. Therefore to self-command the apostle says, "add submission." And here again we find how in the wise arrangements of God provision is often made for the evolution and growth of the passive and enduring graces. With his cool head, his clear intellect, his firm convictions, and his frank and manly port,—temperate, intelligent, fully persuaded, fearlessly confessing,—you envy a mind so sound, a character so fixed and strong. And you are right. It is a priceless possession. To attain it is an object worthy of all the hale and hearty years you pass in the land which the Lord God giveth you ; to get a "faith" which will cling to the Saviour in grateful affiance fast and close as this eager spirit clings to its own immortality ; to get courage resolute as the seaward rock on which the briny waves burst and are broken ; to get a knowledge tall as some high watch-tower, which overlooking the village brawls, and undimmed by the village smoke, takes into its comprehensive landscape the fenced orchards and high-walled gardens of a hundred neighbours, and looks far out for the public foe ; to get a temperance, sturdy and unswerving

as the athlete's arm, and which can guide and govern strong passions and a fiery spirit, even as Alexander tamed Bucephalus,—these are gifts from God, and to acquire such noble attributes, who would not give all diligence? Yet after all, is their possessor not rather the heroic athlete than the saint?—an Ariel, a lion-hearted angel, rather than the meek and lowly follower of the Lamb of God? And to complete this character, to put the finish on it of an endearing loveliness, is it not needful that, like the Captain of Salvation, it should be made perfect through sufferings? Is it not needful that over all these stern and outstanding features there should come the soft suffusion which wins your sympathy, and which sends back your thoughts to One fairer than the sons of men? And so, in His adorable providence, on the loins of this erect and stalwart Christian, the Lord makes the bands of affliction to lie. Men ride over his head, or God's waves and billows pass over him. He is afflicted. His property disperses. His health is shattered. His darling child is stricken. And at first his impulse is to bear up and brave it out. But, alas! he cannot shake it off. The barb has entered, the poison dulls his spirit. He must even succumb, and, breaking down beneath the mighty hand of God, he feels that a crisis has arrived when bravery and energy will not avail; when he must humble himself under the mighty hand of God, and drink the cup which his Heavenly Father gives him, and endure as seeing Him who is invisible.

Nor are there many things more instructive to witness than the softening effect of affliction on these strong and

stately spirits; and how by adding a new experience to their history it adds a new element to their character; an element of touching grandeur and saintly majesty and winsome beauty: an element that weakens nothing, but mellows and ennobles all. Suffering affliction with the people of God, the hot-blooded Hebrew who smote the Egyptian and hid him in the sand, comes back the man Moses so exceeding meek that the Great Governor could depute no leader of the stiff-necked generation more tolerant of their murmurings or more in unison with God's own magnanimity. And the writer himself—he could remember the day when he had hardly even “faith” to begin with, but the Master heard his prayer and increased his faith. Then, crest-fallen and abashed at his own cowardice and shameful treachery, and at the same time perplexed with the injunction, “Go into all the world, and preach the gospel”—a gospel which he hardly understood and a world which he had no spirit to face,—Heaven heard the ten days' prayer, and in the Spirit's outpouring there came at once the utterance and energy, the courage and the knowledge, and the boor of Galilee was baptized into the eloquent evangelist—the craven of the high-priest's hall was exalted into the bold and outspoken confessor. And temperance followed. No longer the man of ungoverned impulse, but buoyed up by one blessed hope, and borne forward by one glorious purpose—that hope and purpose gave a stable grandeur to his entire career, and, like men of one great pursuit, his very earnestness kept the body under and brought into subjection all the powers of mind. But in the excitement of a

constant itinerancy—in the bustle and perpetual motion of one who has a thousand things to manage, whatever motives there may be to temperance, there is no good school for patience. But the education is incomplete, nor is the believer meet for the Father's House till the passive graces are added to the active powers; and in order that Simon, the gifted, the tempted, the fallen, the forgiven, the grateful, the brave, the busy, may be conformed to that Master who said to him, "Follow thou me," he is cast into the furnace of affliction. He is old, and others gird him and carry him whither he would not; but the trial is sanctified, and the ardent evangelist comes forth the affectionate pastor—and, tribulation working patience, and patience experience, the tender-hearted apostle feeds his Master's sheep, he feeds his Saviour's lambs.

It is during these times of trial that "godliness" grows exceedingly. Not that godliness is then produced—for of all these graces the germs, more or less developed, exist from the commencement of real religion in the soul. But the same cloudy weather which is good for patience promotes the growth of godliness. In the seclusion of the sick-room the Bible grows companionable; and just as gentle friends are sometimes exchanged for brilliant or boisterous comrades, but are more welcome than ever when grief arrives—so in that silent chamber and with that aching head the noisy volumes of the polemic or the politician grow irksome, and the merry pages of the humorist are sadly out of place; but that dear, kind book comes back again, and its still small voice is heard once more and telling you of a chastening Father and a sympathiz



ing Saviour, speaking to you of sin and the heart-plague and the blood of sprinkling, it adds to your experimental piety. And even so, under the pressure of some heavy sorrow, under the shadow of some coming calamity, the soul is sent to God. Prostrate before the mercy-seat it stretches forth its hands to its Father in heaven; and, to say nothing of the help which He sends from His sanctuary, and the might with which at the moment He strengthens inwardly, in the very exercise the man's godliness groweth exceedingly. In the contemplation of the wisdom and rectitude and sovereignty of Him who doeth all things well, there come into the mind consoling thoughts for the past and a confidence that all will be right in the future; and in this adoring contact with Infinite Excellence the soul imbibes new elements of strength and hope and joy.

Yes, and elements of kindness and affectionate cordiality; for it is not at random that after patience and piety the apostle names fraternal affection and charity—*φιλαδελφίαν, ἀγάπην*. The man of sanctified suffering becomes a man of sympathy. He remembers those who are in the body as bound with them, and the Church often gets better than his active services in the kind things he is led to devise for afflicted disciples, and in the heartfelt intercessions which, as a true brother of the Great High Priest, he is led to offer for his companions in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. And so the man of piety becomes the man of piteousness and charity; nor is there perhaps a better test of a sound theology than its fruitfulness in benevolence and brotherly kindness. The man who knows God will love the brother whom he has seen;

and if he cannot regard a godless world with God's intense compassion—if he cannot regard the redeemed of the Saviour with an affection as catholic, as generous, and as practical as that with which the God and Father of our Lord Jesus views them, in proportion as he knows God and becomes like-minded with God, his love to the Christian and his humanity will wax stronger and stronger.

## II.

### FAITH AND FORTITUDE.

“Add to your Faith, Virtue.”—2 PETER I. 5.

HE does not say, “Add to yourselves faith;” for he assumes that his correspondents are believers already. He writes to those who had obtained “precious faith” (verse 1), and whom he was anxious to stimulate with a holy ambition. God hath called us to glory and virtue, and to believers He has given great and precious promises; and if of these you catch hold, and cling to them, they will draw you out of the miry clay, they will draw you up to God. Escaping the corruption that is in the world, you will be made partakers of the Divine nature. And his exhortation is to this effect: Be not content with being merely believers, or with fancying that you are. But add to your faith—at once evince its genuineness, and use it for its proper purpose, by adding to it virtue, knowledge, etc. Faith is the foundation grace; but a foundation is of little use if no structure follows. Faith is the vitalizing grace: it grafts the branch into the vine, but if it is to be winter all the year, if there is to be neither bud nor blossom, neither flower nor fruit, who can tell whether the branch is dead or living, a barren sapling or a fruitful bough? Faith is

the motive grace—the moving principle—the active power; but if it be not able to draw along these other graces in its train, it must be weak; nay, there is danger lest it be altogether dead. The building is the best argument for the foundation. The tree is known by its fruits. Performance is the best index of power.

And yet I can imagine some saying, “Before going further we would like to know what faith itself is. If this be an exhortation to believers, I should like to be one, in order that it may be an exhortation to me.”

What then is faith? In its Bible sense, it is conviction of truth, or confidence in a trustworthy person. It is such an assurance that a particular statement is correct, that the understanding rests in it and is satisfied. It is such an assurance that a given person is trustworthy, that the affections rest in him and rejoice. Faith in the atonement is a conviction that the Son of God incarnate offered Himself such a sacrifice for sin that God is now a just God in saving those who take their stand on that sacrifice. Faith in Christ is a persuasion that He is as mighty and as merciful, as willing to intercede, and as powerful to pardon now as when He saved to the uttermost those first transgressors who came unto God by Him. And if the person who believes these things is serious—if he is in that state of mind which makes it a matter of anxious moment whether there be any forgiveness of sins, or any Divine Friend of sinners, the conviction is accompanied with a corresponding sensation of relief, and, according to the depth of his previous solicitude, he now, in the ascertained reality, rejoices with an exceeding great joy.

And here let us try to clear up confusion. Have you never fancied as if Faith and Reason were not only distinct, but almost antagonistic? Have you never felt as if the more reason the less faith? and as if it were very much the believer's business to bring under the judgment and keep it in subjection? Such is the teaching of the Church of Rome, and such is the impression often conveyed by confused Protestant preaching. But such is not the teaching of Scripture; and, happily for themselves, it is not always the procedure of those who preach it. But, like a great deal of our modern confusion, it comes from using words without a definite meaning, and from consequently confounding the things which differ. It comes from confounding reason with sense, and from supposing that what the faculties cannot comprehend is tantamount to what the judgment cannot credit.

But need I say that we are constantly believing things beyond our outward sense on the one side, and above our mental comprehension on the other? We did not see Julius Cæsar in this island, and yet we believe that he was here. We have not seen to-morrow, but we have no doubt that it is coming. Here our bodily senses do not serve us. Not one of you was on the Kentish coast that morning when the Roman galleys ran ashore. None of you saw the wild onset of the savage warriors on the beach, nor did you see the standard-bearer of the Tenth Legion leaping into the tide and struggling with his eagle to the land. And yet you know it. You never were *sensible* of its happening, and yet you would deem the man a maniac who doubted it. Even so, you have not seen to-

morrow nor the next day, and yet you have no doubt that to-morrow the shops will open and the streets will fill with traffickers and people hurrying to and fro; nor have you any doubt that on the day following there will be a procession from Buckingham Palace to Westminster, and that the British Parliament will open. There are things past and things future as far beyond the ken of your eyes and ears and outward senses as aught that has ever gone into the "eternal silences," or aught that is ever coming out of them, and yet you have a persuasion of their existence as implicit as you have in the existence of that nearest neighbour whom your eyes do see and your hands do handle. And why? Well, you say, I believe them because though they are beyond my senses they are not contrary to my reason. In favour of the past occurrence there is a testimony quite uncontrovertible; in favour of the future one there is a presumption, an analogy so overwhelming, that insanity alone can hesitate. The things in question are super-sensible, they are not unreasonable. They are imperceptible to the five senses; but they rest on *evidence* of their own, and that evidence is utterly irresistible.

Then, again, there are things which your mental faculties cannot comprehend, but which carry your full conviction. For instance, when an astronomer says that Sirius is twenty billions of miles from the earth, you believe it, but you have little more notion of what is meant by that number than what is included in infinity. And so of many things in science which are just as transcendent, and at the same time as true. They are too vast for the mind to comprehend, but they are too well established for the reason to

refuse. They are beyond your comprehension, but they are not beyond your credence. They also rest on an evidence which cannot be gainsaid. Of that evidence Reason takes cognisance, and having satisfied herself, and countersigned the statement, it goes into the repository of matters ascertained, and which must be disturbed no more for ever.

We see then that a subject may lie beyond our bodily senses, and that it may soar above our mental comprehension, and yet that we may find ourselves obliged to believe it. And why obliged? Because it is for our interest to do so? because we are promised a reward if we assent, and are threatened with punishment if we doubt? By no means. These may be motives for attending to the evidence, but the only thing which can make us actually believe is when there is evidence sufficient to command our understanding and carry the verdict of our judgment.

So in that territory which we traverse every Sabbath,—so, I mean, in regard to the things of revelation. We believe because the evidence is irresistible; we believe because our reason is convinced. In Churches where ignorance is the mother of devotion it may be different; but our God is the God of truth, and man when created in His image was created intelligent, rational, knowing; and into no den of delusion however delightful, into no cavern of shadows and phantoms however magical, shall we descend, as long as God's sunshine glads this upper world, and as long as there is a revelation appealing to our calm and dispassionate inquiry. We must know what it is that we believe, and the grounds on which it rests. And we rejoice that ours is a faith of which a

reason can be given, and that the Saviour whom we trust is one regarding whom it may be said, "I know whom I have believed."

And should there be any here who wish that they had obtained this "precious faith," and who lament that they have it not, even for the securing of this grand pre-requisite we would say, "Give diligence." Have a distinct conception of what it is you want, and spare no effort to secure it. Your desideratum is "precious faith." You want to see the atonement as a sufficient expiation for sin, and as a provision availing for you. You want to see the Saviour as able and willing to take the charge of your immortal interests; and you want to see God as no longer offended, but propitious—a God who parts with no glory, and who compromises no perfection when He bestows on you forgiveness and holiness and life everlasting. And we answer for it that if you pursue this inquiry soberly, seriously, prayerfully, you will come out on the same landing-place of strong consolation on which thousands have emerged before you. Amongst the most certain of facts will you find the "decease accomplished at Jerusalem," and among the sublimest and most soul-expanding of truths will you find the purpose for which that sacrifice was offered. Among personages not only of the most ascertained historic certainty, but of the intensest vitality, the presiding and all-pervasive Presence, will you find that Benefactor of our species to whom the truest of books introduces you; and to crown the delight and the wonder, you will find that the aspect of the Most High, which exhibits the most completely His



immutable perfections, and which does the highest homage to His holy law, is the aspect most propitious to yourself. Conducted to discoveries which flesh and blood could not reveal, and perhaps acknowledging in the process the guidance of a Mind infinitely wiser and stronger than your own, you will still confess that the most rational of all convictions is a scriptural belief, and that the spot where historic certainty and the supreme philosophy meet together is the spot where God's righteousness and the sinner's welfare merge in one another.

Returning to what we said in the outset : this faith may be either assurance that a given statement is true, or a given person trustworthy, or both—vers. 1, 8. And though the way of God's Spirit is not the same with every convert, I believe that most usually the former precedes the latter. There is first faith in a fact, and that is followed by trust in a Friend. There is first faith in the outwrought and proffered righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, and then there is an affectionate confidence in Jesus Christ himself. The faithful saying is believed, and then the faithful Saviour is loved and trusted and adored. The ark of refuge is entered, and the first feeling is delight at deliverance ; but as the blessed Pilot comes to be known, there spring up and strengthen in the mind feelings towards Himself of the most tender attachment and fervid veneration. Escaping from the wrath to come, the soul is at first too thankful to find an open refuge ; but safe under the covert it is charmed to find that it is not merely the shadow of a great rock, but the porch of a beauteous palace, and that its illustrious

Occupant is not only one who bids him welcome, and treats him as a friend, but that He is one whose recognition dates a new and noble dignity, and whose society is the commencement of pleasures that shall last for evermore.

But whether it be the general prepossession of the Saviour's character which secures your confidence to His several declarations, or whether it be an abstract truth—the atonement, the way of acceptance—which first draws your attention and rivets your attachment to the glorious Person, faith is only complete when it closes with the Lord Jesus as the Alpha and Omega, the faithful Witness, all whose words are true, and all whose spirit is influential, and when, in scriptural language, it makes the man “one spirit” with Christ.

In such a case, where faith has such respect to the person of the divine and adorable Redeemer, a precept like this will have a tendency to secure its own fulfilment,—for devotedness to the Master is diligence, and the more devoted the disciple is, the more diligence will he give to abound in those things which the Master desires. The excellences of his character will in that case be, not so much the mechanical additions, as when you add new stones to a building, or new layers of timber to a structure, as the vital outgrowth, the living aggregation of strength and substance, as when the tree adds a new zone to its fibre, or the child that is thriving adds a new cubit to its stature.

Of these graces the first enjoined is Fortitude, or Valour. “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath

raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Seeing that such is a standing law of the kingdom, and seeing what difficulties beset compliance in these early times, we can understand why courage—the courage of confessorship—is placed in the forefront of these Christian graces. It needed courage in the outset. It needed courage, after the mind was made up, for the mouth to open and say, I am a Christian. When the Jews regarded him as a renegade and apostate, at once unpatriotic and profane, and when the Greeks regarded him as a fool and a fanatic, it needed courage to say, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." And days still darker followed—days when it was not mere mockings and jeerings, mere taunts and nicknames, which the disciple of Jesus encountered; but when he had to face bonds and buffeting, exile, torture, and death. Thousands and tens of thousands did so. Without shutting their eyes, without deluding themselves into the hope that they would be luckier or get off more lightly than their neighbours, they took the decisive step, and one by one went over to the ranks against which the world stood arrayed. They knew that parents would weep, and most likely their wives should soon be widows. Most likely they would not have even the poor privilege of dying promptly, but, macerating in loathsome dungeons, and wrung with slow tortures, at last they should finish their course in the lions' den, or in pitchy vesture should light up the streets of Rome. They foresaw and they confronted it. The love of Christ constrained them. They recalled the King

of Martyrs. They remembered the great Cross-bearer, and they went forth to Jesus outside the camp, bearing His reproach. They remembered His own emphatic words, "Whoso confesseth me before men, him also will the Son of Man confess before his Father;" and dismissing all craven fears, regarding as a crying treason what worldly wisdom suggested as a proper reserve, a prudent silence, one by one they witnessed their good confession, and earned the martyr's crown.

Mere physical daring is a fine and stirring spectacle ; but there are few things more magnificent, or which do the world more good than moral courage. It is this in which Christianity so abounds, and to which it owes its conquests—the fortitude of faith. The first plantation of the gospel was a great fight ; and there never were braver spirits than those valiant saints who came away from the foot of their Master's cross and went into all the world to proclaim the kingdom of the Crucified. Never was there seen aught like their tolerance of pain and their cheerful readiness to die ; nor ever did conqueror go forth on his campaign with a bound more exultant than they set forth on each successive pilgrimage of pain and sorrow, and in their great tour of tribulation strode from strength still onward unto strength. We know their feelings. We know how on the eve of such a journey they would say, "Now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem—the Holy Ghost witnessing that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the

Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." And when the worst was come, when it was not the spirit but the body that was bound, and the course was finished, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, and henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me in that day." Or as Chrysostom wrote in his exile: "If the empress wishes to banish me, the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof. If she would saw me in sunder, let her saw me in sunder: I have Isaiah for a pattern. If she would thrust me into the fiery furnace, I see the three children enduring that. If she would stone me, I have before me Stephen the proto-martyr. If she would deprive me of my worldly goods,—naked came I into the world, and naked shall I leave it. If I yet pleased her, I should not be the servant of Christ,"—a firmness of mind which even Gibbon is forced to own is far superior to Cicero in exile.

To this courage of the Christian the world owes everything—Elijah before Ahab—Stephen before the council—Apostles before heathen tribunals—Every convert in fierce heathen lands—Alban and his executioner—Athanasius—Luther—Latimer—Knox—Whitefield in the mob.

We ought to have it—Frankness in confessing Christ, in defending truth, in reproofing sin. Christ's own: brave without bluster—fearless without ferocity.

### IIL

#### KNOWLEDGE.

“Add to your . . . virtue, Knowledge.”—2 PETER I. 5.

WERE there in the Bible an exhortation: “Give all diligence and add to your fortune; add to your cottage a garden, and to your garden an orchard, and to your orchard a field of corn, and to your corn-field a few acres of pasture;” or, “Add to your capital—add to the one thousand another”—in such a case you would seldom hear people alleging, as an excuse for remissness, the decrees of God or the doctrine of the Divine Sovereignty. They would say, “The object is well worth an effort, and the very fact that God has enjoined such effort is a presumption that He will bless and prosper it. I do want to grow rich and independent; and, giving all diligence, I shall now begin and add field to field and pound to pound.”

That is to say: In this case, so desirable is the boon, that, in their anxiety to attain it, most men would be carried over all cavils and idle curiosity; and the mere knowledge that a sackful of treasure would be found at the goal, would supple the stiffest joints, and put wings to the heaviest heels.

But the Word of God bids us do better. With its eye to eternity, it says little on the acquisition of earthly possessions; but its great exhortation is to improve ourselves. And when you think of it,—when you think how soon we must be severed from this earthly scene altogether, and how, even here, our happiness depends not so much on the extent of the possessions, but incomparably more on the character of the possessor,—you see the Divine wisdom and goodness in saying, not, “Add to your substance,” but “Add to yourselves.”

The best commodity is moral worth. The most enduring acquisition is a character pure, noble, and holy: those devout and benevolent dispositions which will be on earth a foretaste of heaven, and which heaven itself will only complete and perpetuate. Add to your faith all possible excellence; add to it manliness, intelligence, self-control, patience, piety.

Yet, brethren, is there not a self-deceit which turns the edge of such exhortations, and makes us content with a very confused Christianity? Is there not a tendency to take for granted that we have faith, and yet we can hardly show any fruits of faith? And is there not a cunning laziness, a sly and self-indulgent hypocrisy, which, under the pretext of honouring God, evades His commands?

Add to your faith virtue—*i.e.*, courage, heroism, energy—an exhortation equivalent to, “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” It is the tendency of faith to produce a character fearless and forcible. You are naturally timid; but like the child who is brave in the arms of his father, like the soldier

who forgets his fears when he remembers that his leader is invincible, you lose your nervousness when you recollect that the Lord is with you, and that in the enterprise to which you are committed your Commander is one who must conquer. And you are naturally feeble. When sinners entice you, yours is a consenting nature, and you are prone to comply; or your refusal is so faltering that it only tempts the assailant to a more importunate urgency. And when you are engaged in a good work, it is your tendency to throw into it such fitful and intermittent exertion that the harvest is come before your seed-time is ended,—the one gable is ruined whilst the other is building. But faith is moral force. It realizes those unseen verities, whose influence is so startling and rousing. It sees the beckoning hand of the Forerunner, and it feels that it is followed by the on-looking eye of the Master. The tempted it emboldens to a decisive and indignant refusal, and the toiling it inspires to a strenuous, exulting industry. And the man who used to find that, with only a few good friends to back him, and a whole evil world to discourage, he could accomplish nothing, now finds that he can dare all things, and can do them, through Christ who strengtheneth him.

Valour and vigour, or that high-hearted energy which includes them both, are the right result of trust in the Saviour. And surely it is a great and blessed attainment to be thus strong in the Lord. When you see how many people fritter life away in languid desires and abortive beginnings; when you see how often the crash of reputation and the shipwreck of conscience are the result of a



timid and temporizing policy ; and when you know what life-long regrets and remorseful upbraidings thousands have entailed on themselves through the want of timely faithfulness, or the inability to utter the conclusive negation, will you not resolve to add to your faith *firmness* ? Will you not entreat from the Lord, as a precious grace, and cultivate as a most incumbent duty, that steadfastness of purpose which will give to your career the grand continuity of one who sets the Lord alway before him ; and that strength of character which will throw off influences malign and sinister, and indent deep on the minds around you the convictions of your own ?

But to this energy add “knowledge.” To be steadfast in error is stubbornness, and vigour working in a wrong direction is only mischievous madness. And in order to serve society, and save ourselves from much sin, it is needful that zeal be enlightened, and that earnestness should work for good and worthy ends.

Amongst the different kinds of knowledge, there is one department of transcendent importance. It is that knowledge which in a flood of overwhelming illumination burst in on the proud pupil of Gamaliel, and in a moment subdued him into the lowly disciple of Jesus Christ ; and which, in the case of similar fervid spirits, has again and again produced the same effects—constraining them to cast aside the Encyclopædia in favour of the Gospel, and making them feel—after they learned the one faithful saying—as if all their anterior acquirements were an elaborate ignorance, and all their boasted wisdom an ingenious folly. And making every allowance for the

difference betwixt Western phlegm and Eastern fire,—making every allowance, too, for the different ways in which men are brought to the knowledge of the Saviour—the slow, dim dawning whose commencement can scarcely be recalled in the remoteness of early instruction, and the midnight of unbelief flashing into the instant and perfect day of Christian conviction,—making every reasonable allowance, a man has too much cause to fear that he does not know the Saviour at all, if he does not count as the most excellent knowledge the knowledge of Christ crucified, and if, in the event of its coming to a competition betwixt the learning of the schools and the revelation of life everlasting, he is not prepared to count everything but loss compared with the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord.

But in point of fact there is no such competition. Doubtless some have spoken as if there were; and just as there was a fanatical Mussulman who burnt the Alexandrine library because all needful knowledge was already contained in the Koran, so there are fanatics in Christendom who refuse to read that book of creation to which the Bible sends them, and who deem it a sin to study the classic authorship from which inspiration quotes. But this is not the wisdom from above. This was not the procedure of Moses and Job, of Paul and Apollos, nor has it been the procedure of those master spirits in whose fortified and well-furnished minds religion found at once a stronghold and a palace, a home and a defence. And if you, my friends, would live to the highest purpose—if you covet a solid footing to your faith, and a full employ-

ment for those noble faculties which God has given you, you will add to virtue knowledge—add to it a comprehensive knowledge of the scheme of mercy. The master-key to all theology, and indeed the pass-word to all moral science, is the cross of Christ. And we only know how good, how holy, how righteous, and how kind is the Most High, when we obtain some insight to the incarnate mystery. But in our own day there are many quarters where this saving mystery is misapprehended or despised. Forgetting the Christ of God—the Divine and loving Saviour, who shed His blood as an atonement once for all, and who now sits at the Father's right hand, a High Priest, alert, sympathizing, all-knowing, and almighty,—some trust to the cross of a water-baptism, or say their prayers to the crucifix which adorns their church or their chimney. And others, bounding off to the opposite extreme, and ignoring all the facts of revelation, and all the teachings of incontrovertible history, conjure up to themselves a Deity of their own devising, as vague and impersonal, as unobservant of men's conduct, and as indulgent to their sins, as suits their own lawless desires. And it is only the historical Christian—the scriptural believer—who in the Gospel Revelation finds a foothold for his faith, which he vainly sought in the magic of the Papist, or in the Pantheist's ever-changing mysticism. Seeking a light to guide him to a blissful immortality, the one is an *ignis fatuus* which only leads to the fetid marsh, or to the sepulchre full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness,—the other is an aurora, not so low in the region where it shines and shimmers, but still a light of

earthly origin, and destined to grow pale and perish when most desired. And it is only the Sun of Righteousness which can guide the inquiring spirit over and along a path so clear, so straight, so worthy of a holy God that he has no doubt of its ending in perfect day. Or if a man is animated by some benevolent feeling, and fain would serve his human brethren, he will find no instrumentality of power and aptitude at all to compare with this. Here is the world which you want to move, and here is the pivot on which to plant your crowbar. But the Papist's figment is brittle as a rod of glass, and the dream of the infidel is feeble as a bending bulrush or a floating gossamer. The faith of the Christian—the fact of the gospel—the cross of Christ—is the only lever which has already turned the world upside down, and which is destined yet to place society and the individual man on a new and blessed basis.

So add to your knowledge of the specific gospel a knowledge of Scripture in all its various contents, and in all its delightful details.

To all this add sound information, and practical skill of every possible kind. There is a great difference betwixt erudition and intelligence; a great difference betwixt a learned or knowing man, and a wise one. The stores of science and the facts of history in many a memory are like arrows in a quiver or like cannon-balls in a caisson. In the hands of a mighty man they are capable of great execution; but if the bow is broken, or the piece of ordnance is honey-combed and rusty, the best ammunition will win no victories. And although the thirst for infor-

mation is laudable, although it is pleasant to meet with furnished minds, and you are glad to encounter an industrious reader or an ardent student, you know very well that it requires a sound understanding to turn these treasures to useful account. But this is no small distinction of the wisdom from above. It imparts understanding to the simple, and in imparting faith it gives that faculty to which all knowledge comes as wholesome nourishment, and by which it may be all again expended in a saving or a salutary power.

For instance, such a Christian cons the page of history, and when he finds that with the progress of pure and undefiled religion coincide the periods of a nation's intensest patriotism, of its most exalted moral worth, its richest resources, and its busiest industry—in one word, when he finds that the gospel is the truest "Wealth of Nations"—he gets at once a new evidence of that gospel's Divine original, and a new motive to spread it. Or when penning the annals of the Church he encounters everywhere the superintending providence of her exalted Head—amazed and encouraged by the joy of her martyrs—startled by the resurrection of truths and the revival of testimonies—astonished by signal deliverances from danger—the promise of the Master grows a palpable Presence, "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world," and amidst raging heathen and moving kingdoms he sings right joyfully, "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early," and acquires a delightful confidence in the coming ascendancy of that kingdom which cannot be moved. Or pondering the re-

cords of Christian experience, studying the volumes of Christian biography, he alights on some trait of moral loveliness—some beauty of holiness, with which he is exceedingly impressed, and struck with the fact that it is a feature which he himself entirely lacks, he is led to labour and watch and pray till God's blessing makes it his own. Or amidst the stores of miscellaneous scholarship—in the fields of science and learned research—he alights on some Egyptian jewel, and carries home the discovery of the tourist or the antiquary to decorate the temple of the faith or to enrich the treasury of religious beneficence.

Of all religions, the religion of the Bible is the only patron of knowledge, the only religion in which ignorance is not the mother of devotion. God is light—God manifest is the Light of men—His disciples lights of the world—Soul without knowledge—Christianity is a reasonable service—Belief is rational conviction—Search Scriptures—Give reasons—Sing praises with understanding—1 Cor. xiv. 15—No mummery, no magic, no mystification—Encourages all knowledge—"The God of the intellect is the God of the Bible"—Churches which done most for the education of the people have done most for soundness of faith and social worth—Scotland, Holland, New England—No Mormonism, etc.—Little crime—Keep closest to Scripture—To faith a safeguard, to valour a guide, help to sobriety—Theological temperance—Knowledge a pedestal—makes a man tall—Magnanimity—Good sense.

## IV.

### TEMPERANCE.

“Add to your . . . knowledge, Temperance.”—2 PETER I. 6.

IN the days of Alexander of Macedon there was a splendid war-horse—so swift, so strong, all his points so perfect, that every one admired the noble creature. But he had this great fault,—he was so fierce that no one dared to mount him. However, the young prince took him in hand, and whether from his peculiar skill, or from that kingly and commanding faculty which all in contact with him appeared to recognise, he entirely subdued the fiery charger; and from that period onward till, finding himself wounded in battle, the faithful servant carried his master to a place of safety and lay down and died, there was no journey in which he did not feel proud to carry the hero, and no battle which he did not help to win; and so associated has the gallant steed become with his victorious rider, that the poet and the sculptor fancy that it is scarcely Alexander if in the group they do not introduce Bucephalus.

Many people have a languid temperament. Their passions are not strong, and it is rather a spur than a bridle which their laggard nature requires. But here is

a man of fiery mould. Abundant in life and conscious power, fire flashing from his eyes, and clouds of scorn rolling from his distended nostrils—it feels as if nothing could tax his triumphant strength or squander his excess of immortality. As impatient of control as he is eager for pleasure, he is apt to feel as if the whole cycle of created enjoyment were a field provided for his exulting range, and the very stars of the firmament were flowers created for such a Pegasus to soar and gather. “My lips are my own, who is lord over me?”

Yet that strong impetuous temperament is after all the lower nature. It is the wild horse to which you may be bound like a Mazeppa, and hurried madly along till you plunge over some precipice, or at the close of the day you and your frantic courser drop dying together; or it may be the noble steed which, curbed by an imperial hand, shall learn to do its master’s bidding, and help you to win better victories than Issus or Arbela.

The apostle Paul had such a constitution; he was a man exquisitely susceptible, and intense to enthusiasm; and the question was which should prevail—the horse or the hero, the animal nature or the immortal rider. But by making him a saint the gospel made him a king and a conqueror. It enabled him to keep under the body, and bring it into subjection. Striving for the mastery, he was temperate in all things; and with passions which might have plunged him into perdition, with these passions under completest control, and with all his energies devoted to a great end, he grew independent of literary gratifications and material luxuries. Not so ascetic as to



refuse them, nor so morose as to denounce them, he was so devoted as to be above them. He could say, "In whatsoever state I am, I have learned therewith to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry. I can do all things, through Christ who strengtheneth me." In other words, to his faith he had added temperance.

The coarser or entirely corporeal gratifications are the most obvious sphere for the exercise of temperance, and in some respects the easiest. We do not canonize a man because he only drinks to quench his thirst, and because his use for food is the restoration of his exhausted powers. But though there is little danger of a Christian becoming an Apicius or a Heliogabalus ; though even a man of ordinary spirit would disdain to make the aroma of wines and the flavour of viands his chief end in existence ; and though a man must have long since taken leave of his Christianity if he has become a glutton or a drunkard ;— it must be confessed that in the great conflict some candidates for the immortal crown find fleshly lusts their strongest antagonists ; and it is only by a war of extermination, by putting a knife to their throat, and refusing to look at all on the sparkling cup, that they are able to bring under the body and keep it in subjection.

Wise men they are at whatever price they purchase the conquest ; and in clear unclouded faculties, in a mind constantly equipped and agile, in dreamless slumbers, and in those tuneful nerves and firm-strung fibres which carry

out the wishes of the mind, they have usually their ample recompense.

But even where it does not come to this mortal struggle there is abundant scope for a conscientious and systematic temperance. And without converting the Christian Church into a convent, or making one long Lent of the Christian year, we submit if it is not by greater simplicity in our tables and in our attire that most of us are to be able to do anything signal for Christ's sake and the gospel's? "Thy kingdom come" should be a prayer as comprehensive and as earnest as that other, "Give us this day our daily bread;" but would not that daily bread be more pleasant if we did not expend on it so very much more than we spend on the extension of the kingdom?

Would it not give a new sincerity to our petitions, and a delightful directness to our conduct, if we felt that rather than on royal dainties or goodly garments we were bestowing our substance in instructing the ignorant, in consoling the wretched, and in rescuing from ruin our outcast neighbours? It would be doubly blessed, for whilst conferring incalculable benefits on our brethren, it would save ourselves from many sorrows.

Sleep and repose give occasion for temperance. Our bodies need rest, just as they need the refreshment of food; but in the same way that we are tempted to an excessive indulgence of the one, we are apt to overstep the right limit with the other. The wise man was taking a walk with his disciple, when they came to a neglected garden. The rain had washed off the mould from the terrace, and the melons and cucumbers sprawled through

the weeds, blanched and meagre. There was a gap in the fence where the wild beasts went out and in, and as the travellers looked over the broken wall, a whole host of lizards and scorpions scampered off to hide in the rubbish. "Is the owner dead?" No. "Is his garden such barren soil as to be worth no culture, or was it badly reclaimed at the first?" No; the soil is good enough. The very rankness of these thistles tells how rich it is, and at the first some pains was taken. This terrace was levelled; this fence was reared; these trees were planted, and for a time the owner felt in it a proud complacency. "What then has gone wrong?" "Intemperance." "Ah! is he given to strong drink?" "No; but he is given to much slumber. He is an intemperate sleeper." And thereupon they entered the house. The sun was near the meridian, but the lattice was shaded, and their call was only answered by a drowsy murmur from the stertorous dreamer in the dusky corner. "Yes, a little more sleep, a little more slumber, and poverty shall arrive; he is already posting express towards this dwelling, and he shall grasp in the mailed hand of a warrior the somnolent owner."

The sluggard had once a satisfaction in his little property, and when the stones were cleared out, and the wall was built, and the seeds were newly sown, and in all the enclosure not a dock nor a nettle could be seen, he gazed over the whole well pleased with himself and full of hope for the future. But as a check to man's supineness the Creator has ordained that the creations of zeal, however complete, shall dilapidate unless kept in repair by constant

industry. And, not because he had no love of neatness—not because he had no liking to fragrant fruits and juicy esculents—not because he had failed to put forth a prodigious effort at the first, but because he could not be content with temperate slumber, the labour was lost and the whole ran to ruin. Whilst he was turning on his bed the torrent was washing the mould and the saplings in one muddy heap down the mountain; and whilst he was dreaming of gushing vats and foaming wine the clusters were crushed beneath the hoofs of the boar or were em-purpling the jaws of the jackal. And though overnight he always intended to be early astir, every morning he found his couch so pleasant that the sun was high in the firmament and the time for work was over before he could coax himself to rise; and, whatever self-love might whisper, it was plain to any looker-on that the estate would soon be a wilderness, and its owner be begging his bread.

Most people have some love of order and comfort and decent appearance, and many have the love of information. Such a love of learning have they that if one fit of application would create a scholar for life, many would make up their minds and concentrate all their faculties in the studious paroxysm. Such a love of neatness have they that from time to time a furor seizes them, and they devote a whole day to the arrangement of their disordered apartments, or to the enactment of rigid regulations for their unmethodical households. And nothing can be finer, nothing can look more tranquil and friendly, than the entire establishment when this tempest of reformation has newly swept over it. And a very slight effort would

keep up the scholarship when fairly acquired; a very moderate exertion would maintain the symmetry and system which have succeeded to the reign of confusion. But usually it is precisely this slight though continuous effort which fails to be forthcoming. And as our houses are not shut up hermetically under glass shades; as the dust of the streets and the smoke of the city are constantly drifting over and through them; as furniture has no propensity to return to its proper place, nor do books when thrown down fly back to their station on the shelf; and as our minds, like furbished steel, are apt to lose their lustre; as facts grow dim; as foreign tongues grow rusty, it needs daily diligence to maintain the seemliness and comfort which you have already established in your home; it needs like diligence to refresh and perpetuate your mental acquisitions. And unless you are a temperate sleeper, and can shake off that lethargic coma which sleeps with its eyes open all day, you may have taken the castle by storm, but through your lack of vigilance the enemy will soon be again in possession. You may have exhausted yourself in that burst of early exertion, but mellow wisdom and the ripe results of knowledge will not crown the winter of your days. You may have trenched the orchard, and built the wall, and laboured hard in spring, but all owing to a sleep too much, a lounge too long, a rising too late, here comes the harvest, and the only crop is bills dishonoured, debts unpaid, writs, arrests, ejections, ruin—with want for the landlord and poverty as the only companion.

The Christian grace of self-control extends to favourite

pursuits and innocent pastimes. "If thy right hand offend thee," said the Saviour, "cut it off. If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out"—thereby declaring that when they interfere with our duty to God or hazard our soul's salvation we should forego anything in itself, however harmless or useful. . . .

The *Passions* also fall within the domain of Temperance. As far as they are implanted by the Creator, they are harmless, and it would be easy to show the important purposes subserved by anger, the love of approbation, and such like. But in the present disordered state of human nature, instead of moral indignation, anger is apt to become vindictiveness and malice and brutal violence; instead of satisfaction in virtuous sympathy the love of approbation is apt to become the lust of popularity, the greed of promiscuous and indiscriminate applause, and all the rest in like manner are apt to be falsely directed or unduly excited. But, temperate in all things, the manly Christian adds to his faith the control of his passions. He neither lets them fire up without a rightful occasion, nor in the outburst does he suffer his own soul, or interests which ought to be even more dear, to suffer damage. Angry, he sins not, and even in contending with the devil he would not bring against him any railing accusation. And however much he may like the good opinion of his neighbours, so much dearer is the approbation of God, that rather than be applauded for denying truth, or doing wrong, he would be the single Athanasius in a synod of heresiarchs—the solitary ark-builder in a world of scoffers.

Peter the Great and our own Marlborough were coevals, but there was one point in which the hero of Blenheim surpassed the victor of Pultowa, and to which he owed some of his greatest achievements. After passing a law that any noble who beat his serfs should be put under restraint, and treated as a minor or lunatic, one day Peter struck his own gardener, who so took the matter to heart that he went home and sickened, and in a few days died. "Alas!" cried the autocrat, "I have civilized my own subjects; I have conquered other nations, yet I have not been able to civilize or conquer myself." But in circumstances of great provocation, and when answered with gross rudeness by one of his own servants, it was the sensible remark of Marlborough, "I would not be of that fellow's temper for all the world"—an incident than which, when we remember the exploits of the speaker, we know no better comment on the saying—"He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."

Here again we are reminded of what we said in the outset: All have not the same need of temperance, for all have not the same temptations. From the leisurely life they lead, from the evenly flow of their spirits, from the felicitous state of their bodily sensations, they are seldom provoked, and therefore seldom in danger of such wrathful explosions. But the teacher with pupils slow or perverse, the manufacturer with hands careless or unskilled, the man of many occupations with as many interruptions, the man of responsibility with his own exertions foiled through obtuse or idle or oblivious coadjutors,—such a man has

need to add to his faith that kind of temperance which is near akin to the next named grace of "patience," and in striking the mean between splenetic exasperation and the softness which sanctions sin, in administering the righteous reproof which will neither break the receiver's head nor hurt the giver's conscience, there is the utmost occasion for the wisdom from above.

So is there in the last field for temperance which I shall this morning mention: I mean the flights of fancy; for although a rarer form of the evil, there is such a form,—there is an intellectual intemperance. And of this again there are several varieties. In the theological world we have it. We have those who, forsaking the simplicity that is in Christ, intrude into things which are not revealed, vainly puffed up by their fleshly mind. We have those who, not content with the "Happy Valley" of a limited revelation, spread ambitious wings in search of possibilities and peradventures beyond it. And we have those who, seizing on the slightest coincidence of name or circumstance, on the eve of every war or the outbreak of any revolution, map out the future with a precision as exact as if from some prophetic Pisgah they had surveyed the entire panorama. And in the world of imagination and letters we have it. We have those who, like Byron,

" With untrembling hand,  
 Impetuous foot, and fiery brand  
 Lit at the flames of hell,  
 Go down and search the human heart,  
 Till fiends from every corner start,  
 Their crimes and plagues to tell ;"

and who, by conjuring up greater enormities than ever



they themselves would perpetrate, put the foul suggestion into other minds, and thus make them more the children of perdition than themselves. And we have those who, for poetical purposes, use the names and the attributes of the Most High as freely as they use the clouds in the air, or the flowers on the field, and who seem no more impressed or reverential amidst the mysteries of the Light Inaccessible, than they would feel on the top of Olympus, or amidst the departed glooms of a Polynesian maree.

But, brethren, because our imagination is wild and strong, we are not to fly wherever it leads us; and there may be as much occasion at times to restrain the excursions of fancy, as there is to repress the explosions of passion. If the government of the tongue is difficult, much more difficult, and not less incumbent, is the government of the thoughts; and it is only a hypocritical peace, a hollow truce, which that man is maintaining, who keeps his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking guile, but his imagination, the great offender, is under no restraint—no effort is made to curb that hidden man of the heart who is the real and busiest rebel. Not that we are asked to forego our reason or extinguish the ideal faculty. But asked we assuredly are to keep our thoughts as well as our conduct within the limits of pious reverence and plain morality.

In the domains of appetite, passion, and imagination, we have need of temperance, and that man alone is temperate—thoroughly and consistently temperate—whose self-command keeps pace with every precept of Scripture; who, in eating and drinking, in sleeping, in rest and recreation, only

takes what exhausted nature demands, and what may fit him for longest and most effectively doing the work which God has given; who, temperate in his language, has the command of his spirit, and, slow to wrath, is not easily provoked; who, guarded in his very thoughts, stands aloof from perilous speculations, and starts back from irregular desires, fearing to profane the temple of the Holy Spirit, and praying that God would preserve his whole soul and body blameless to the coming of Jesus Christ.

For a grace so pervasive—so wide in its range and so large in its requirements—who does not feel that he must be beholden to a Power greater and holier than himself? In other words, if he is to get the mastery of a steed so hard-mouthed and high-mettled as is his own inferior nature—the “animal man” of the Bible—who does not feel that the spiritual man—the higher and nobler nature—must be continually strengthened from above? But you who have faith have every advantage for temperance. When assailed by those fleshly lusts which drown so many in perdition, the cry of your helplessness will bring to your succour the God of Joseph and of Daniel’s companions. When like to be swept off your feet by the fierce gusts of passion, as you cling to the Lamb of God your perturbed spirit will calm, and as Jesus says, “Peace, be still,” the swelling waves of resentment will subside, and reflect once more the lights of heaven. And when tempted to perverse excursions and proud imaginations, like those which landed Lucifer in the blackness of darkness, the God of all grace will stablish,

strengthen, settle you, and, moored once more by the meekness of wisdom, your faltering spirit will resume its orbit round the Sun of Righteousness. Contending for the mastery, you will be temperate in all things, and abounding in the fruit of the Spirit, which is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, meekness, *temperance*, you will crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts.

## V.

### PATIENCE.

“Add to your . . . temperance, Patience.”—2 PETER I. 6.

To those who really *live*, life is no holiday. It is a school, a gymnasium, a work-room. As an ordeal for testing principle, and as a discipline for improving character, nothing can be more admirable; but it is very plain that the scene of repose and conclusive enjoyment lies elsewhere. You engage in some new enterprise. You take in hand a class of Sunday scholars, or you bestow yourself on a few poor families. And at first the thing is new, and appearances are very promising. You see the best of your pupils or protégés, and perhaps they see the best of you. But on longer acquaintance faults are found out of which you had no suspicion; a deceit, an ingratitude, and many crooked ways at which you are utterly dismayed, and, exasperated at human nature, mortified at the amazing senselessness of some and the astounding wickedness of others, your experiences in “man-mending” render you almost misanthropic. Or you are mixed up with many others in the different relations of life,—but even there the march is not music. Your instructions are misunderstood; your de-

patches miscarry ; your correspondent is dilatory ; your deputy is wanting in energy, in vigilance, in honesty ; and betwixt the frustration of your plans and the waste of your substance, you wish that you had the hundred eyes of Argus, and the hundred arms of Briareus, so as never to depend on the activity or alertness of others. And to crown the whole, when you are just at the busiest or the brightest,—when you have matured your preparations and completed all your measures,—when the beaters who have been out so long are closing nearer and nearer, and about to bring within your range the glorious game,—when a few months more would make your fortune,—when, like Cuvier, you have collected materials for three great works, any one of which would be immortality,—when, like King David, you have saved up the treasure, or laid in the materials for building the house of the Lord,—when you have just got the appointment which formed the goal of your earthly ambition : just then, you find yourself fast by the heel ; you have set your foot on the trap of adversity, and are grasped in its jaws of trenchant iron ; your health is shattered ; you are summoned to rise and go hence ; or the child or the partner without whom the guerdon is a mournful mockery is torn from your embrace ; and if you are a man of the world, there is nothing for it but bitter rebellion or bootless sorrow—the bellowing and struggling of the wild bull in the net, or the silent despair of one who finds his heart stricken dead as a stone. And it is only the child of God—the man who to his “faith” adds “patience,”—who has a true theory of these trials, solid support under them, and peaceful fruit after them.

and who, neither fainting nor charging God foolishly, but looking to the cross-enduring, shame-despising Saviour, lifts up the drooping hands and the feeble knees, and obtains the full benefit of the painful experience.

For however various the forms in which they come, to the Christian afflictions are all God's angels. They minister to the holiness of the heir of salvation, and they make him more fit for his heavenly inheritance. Unless absolutely rebuffed or resented, they make the sufferer better; and even when entertained unawares—even when their true character and mission are hardly recognised,—they leave a blessing in the soul or the house where they sojourned. And though the mask which some of them wear is exceedingly frightful—in other words, though the medium through which these visitations arrive is often peculiarly painful,—they answer the Divine purpose none the less, and there is in them a Divine graciousness quite distinct from the ungracious animus of the human agent. What unkindness can be worse to bear than harsh usage from the hand of a brother? But to Joseph the hand of God was so evident in the dark deed which sent him to Egypt, that he could only say to his brethren, “Now, therefore, be not grieved that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save you by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God.” Or what can appear more remote from the righteousness of God—a wickedness more purely earthly or devilish than obloquy and unmerited reproach? But even in the cursing of Shimei, David could recognise the permission of a right-

eous God, and could promise himself some blessed result from this bad man's abuse. "Let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him. It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day."

Of patience there are three modifications, all of which are needful to those who would receive the promises. There is the patience which, in the prosecution of every undertaking, makes up its mind to difficulties and discouragements, and which, when these occur, is not daunted nor disheartened; in other words, perseverance. There is the patience which, amidst the trials coming directly from the hand of man, is not easily provoked—which, amidst the obtuseness, the ingratitude, the ill-usage of fellow-creatures, continues tranquil and unruffled; in other words, equanimity or magnanimity. And there is the patience which under afflictions immediately from the hand of God—in sickness, in bereavement, in adversity,—says, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth good in his sight;" in other words, resignation or submission.

1. Of most things God has made the first beginning easy and inviting—the next stages arduous, but the ulterior progress delightfully rewarding. Of this you have a familiar example in acquiring a language. It is the speech of old Rome which you wish to master, and the first lessons are abundantly amusing. There are a few words which are only English with new endings, and others are so sonorous and significant that it is charming to pronounce them. But the list of such easy or interesting words is quickly exhausted, and, finding himself forlorn in a wilderness of

vocables, all unfamiliar and unfriendly, and sentenced to travel by the rules of a syntax peculiar and perplexing, the scholar is apt to abandon the effort in despair, and conclude that he has no talent for languages. But should he by stern unflinching study once surmount this arduous interval, he will soon find himself on a landing-place where the polished wisdom of Tully and the shrewd ethics of Seneca are an instant repayment, and when a reward still richer awaits him in all the mighty theologians and jurists and sages who flashed forth with the revival of learning—an eminence too from which he can survey with a new delight his own vernacular, and make easy excursions into the several tongues of Romanized Europe. It is as in other ascents, when the grassy slope allures your inexperienced feet, and you fancy that one hearty burst will bear you to the summit; but soon the velvet sward is exchanged for jutting rocks and furzy thickets and a foot-hold of crumbling débris; and it is not till faint-hearted companions have gone back one by one, that late in the day you emerge on the cool and fragrant table-land where enamelling flowers and salubrious breezes render your further progress a path of pleasantness. So even in the Christian life: there is an alluring outset, followed by an arduous interval, and *that* once conquered, there comes the platform of evenly and straightforward discipleship, the life of faith, the walk with God. As, describing this gentle *glacis* followed by the rugged escarpment, George Herbert quaintly words it:

“When first thou didst entice to thee my heart,  
I thought the service brave: . . .



At first thou gav'st me milk and sweetnesses ;  
I had my wish and way :  
My days were strew'd with flowers and happiness ;  
There was no month but May.  
But with my years sorrow did twist and grow,  
And made a party unawares for woe."

And yet when describing the progress, it is plain that the sweet singer had reached the third and final stage of a calm, contented, and established piety ; and whilst he recalled with some pathos the brilliant hopes of his bright beginning, and the aspirations which were never realized, he could also review with thankfulness the discouragements which he had been enabled to surmount ; and his own consolidated principles and maturing experience left no room for saying, "The former days were better than these."

When the Son of God commenced His career of kindness, He was received in some places with a smile of welcome, in others with a shout of rapture. So gracious were His words that the common people heard Him gladly ; so beneficent His deeds that it would have been a loud Hosanna, though none had joined in it save those whose diseases He had healed, or whose sorrows He had gladdened. The ascent was easy, the turf was tender. But the slope soon roughened. Prejudice was hurt, bigotry was roused, and the generation of vipers hissed—the serpent bit the Son of Mary's heel. But strong in the strength of kindness, glowing with that love which He fetched from heaven, and intent on the work which His Father had given Him to do, Messiah still pressed on, till He reached a pass of peerless sorrow through which

no mortal man could struggle. Yet even there, with a world's guilt to carry, and the burning steep of Justice to scale, the Friend of Sinners, sublime in His sorrow, still persevered, till with the last gasp of life He crested the summit, and by the Captain of Salvation, the champion and representative of our poor ruined race, the kingdom of heaven was violently taken, and the new and living way opened up. Patience had its perfect work, and there was nothing more for it to do. The struggle was ended; the citadel was stormed, and the life that was lost on the last round of the scaling-ladder was found again on the rampart; whilst from these glory-tinted battlements, and the cloud of witnesses who hang anxiously over them, a voice speaks down to us, my brethren, "Lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset you, and run with *patience* the race set before you, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith; who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God."

That is the model. The course of the Saviour is the pattern which Church history and Christian biography usually repeat: the encouraging outset, followed by an arduous and struggling interval, and this last again passing off, the grace of perseverance be given in establishment and victory.

Was it not thus with the plantation of the gospel? When that gospel commenced its progress in the world, it promised to carry all before it. So true, so benevolent, so bliss-inspiring, so obviously Divine, no wonder it carried a prepossession, and counted its first

converts by thousands. But the brilliant burst was soon over, and the *éclat* of its outset was drowned in priestly execrations, and in the groans and murmurs of invaded bigotry. But the Guardian of that Gospel is One who fails not nor is ever discouraged, and who is pledged to persevere till He has set judgment in the earth, and till the islands wait for His law. And so, step by step, and stage by stage, enheartening His soldiers, and in their weakness perfecting His own strength, He has cheered them along, till the creed of the Upper Chamber has become a religion on which the sun never sets, and the joy of Pentecost has sensibly cleared the dim atmosphere of earth, and raised far above its old Pagan zero the winter of our world.

And looking back to that crisis in His own history with a vivid memory of His incarnate experience, Jesus who endured the cross, and is now set down at the right hand of God, with deep sympathy in the struggle, Jesus says to every disciple, "Take up the cross and follow Me. Hold fast. Press forward. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne." "As I also overcame : " before He got home, Jesus himself was a pilgrim. Before He conquered, Jesus himself was a combatant. He understands the case. He appreciates the difficulty. He knows what it is to endure hardness. And He knows what it is to overcome. He knows what it is to pass up through the ranks of acclaiming immortals and take possession of that mediatorial throne. He knows what it is to return to the bosom of the Father ; and,

anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows, He knows the bliss of that boundless complacency which puts at his disposal the gifts He has purchased for the rebels, and which for the cup that He drank once for all now gives Him a cup running over with pleasures evermore. And He knows the joy of finished work; Jesus hath ceased from that great work, and is entered into rest; and He knows the sweetness of such a Sabbath—the security and the triumph; no other wine-press to tread; no new Gethsemane; no second cross, but all wrought out, all finished, all fulfilled. And from that glorious high throne, with a perfect knowledge of the contest, and with what we so lack, a full knowledge of the glory unrevealed, the King of Martyrs and the cloud of witnesses keep cheering the Church still militant, and every several member, “Lay aside every weight, and more especially the sin that besets you, and run with patience the race set before you.”

“With patience.” At this very moment it is perhaps the dull or dispiriting stage of your own journey. When first you sought the Saviour it was a fresh and joyous period in the Church’s history. The Word was with power. Prayer-meetings were attractive. Christian friends were fervent, and those that loved the Lord spoke to one another. But now it is very different, or at least you have got into a sphere where the cares of this life are greater than care for the soul, and where you no longer find those with whom you may take sweet counsel. But the carnality or worldliness of others must not deaden your own spirit; and if the surrounding atmosphere is

cold, there is the more need that by plying the means of grace, and abounding in secret communion with God, you should try to keep your own soul from growing lukewarm. Or the labour of love in which you once embarked is now grown a labour of languor; and though you have not formally withdrawn from it, you feel that your heart has withdrawn. Most ominous, most anxious indication! This weariness in well-doing is a terrible symptom, and if you surrender, to say nothing of the good you undo, the other hands which you weaken, and the opportunities of service you forego, like sleep in a snow-drift, like a lounge on tainted ground and amidst the poisonous witchery of mephitic exhalations, this lethargy may prove the death of your soul. Or you are really able to bear up no longer against all the adverse influences—the gibes of companions, the disapproval of kindred, the serious loss of your worldly interests which constancy to Christ and His gospel entails. And yet, is not this the tribulation through which others have entered the kingdom? Is not this the minor martyrdom, which may be gladly hailed as identifying with the noble army, and as a light affliction compared with the bonds and imprisonment, the cruel mocking and scourging, which they took so joyfully? “For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds; ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.”

2. If patience be viewed as *equanimity*, it is near akin to that control of the temper of which we were discoursing last Sabbath, and there is no need to repeat what was

spoken so lately. Only there are one or two outlets for *long-suffering* patience which were not noticed then, and which it may be right to mention now. Some of you, in the Providence of God, may have relatives invalid or aged or infirm, and in ministering to them you have need of patience. They are dull of hearing, and you must raise your voice and make a great exertion to gratify their curiosity, and perhaps may have to repeat it all once and again before they catch it. Or they are very feeble and helpless, and you are often fatigued watching and tending them. Or their spirits are shattered, and they are apt to be peevish and querulous, and you find it hard work to make them happy—hard enough to keep up your own spirits in their society. But it is worth a trial. Your task is one which an angel would love, and if you succeed in achieving it, it will go far to fit yourself for the society of ministering spirits. To be the staff of decrepitude, and the substitute for faded faculties—to contrive gentle beguilement for the weary hours, and to fill the silent intervals with that cheerful *soul-shine* which is languor's sweetest solace—to meet melancholy with sunny looks, and murmurs with soft words—to use your talent of youth and health and vivacity for such a purpose as Gabriel would gladly use his own fund of immortal blessedness, so as to cheer into Heaven's antechamber the weary sufferer's sick-room—this were a work which would do more to exalt the doer than any patent of nobility, and it would leave on your character a loveliness which would survive all earthly beauty, and be still conspicuous even when this tabernacle is dissolved. And the other perfect work for

patience is yours who, unequally yoked with an unbeliever, or dwelling under the same roof with godless kindred, have hourly need for that union of prudence, principle, and patience which constitutes the meekness of wisdom. Ask it from God, and He will give it; and who knows but the season of your daily self-denial may at last soften those whom the sharp reproof or the angry lecture would only have hardened? who knows but the ornament of your meek and quiet spirit may at last arrest their heedless eye, and send them where you found it, whilst this trial of your spirit, being much more precious than of gold which perisheth, will purge away much dross, and make you at once brighter and more ductile—a finer metal, and fitter to take on the great Sovereign's impress.

3. Need I say what a field for patience, understood as *submission* to the will of God, or Christian resignation, there is in the trials of life! The Stoic is not patient, for he is past feeling; and where the pain is not perceived there is no need for patience. But the Christian is a man of feeling, and usually of feeling more acute than other people; and it is often with the tear of desolation in his eye, or the sweat of anguish on his brow, that he clasps his hands, and cries, Father, thy will be done! But this the believer, through grace, can do, and this some time or other in his history almost every believer has actually done. And though most have been so human that they were startled at the first,—beneath the stroke of bodily affliction, amidst the crash of fallen fortunes, at the edge of the closing grave—they have all, sooner or later, been

enabled to exclaim, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away : blessed be the name of the Lord."

"Patience is the daughter of Humility, and the sister of Contentment, whom she inseparably attends, and to both of whom she bears a near resemblance. She hath all the meekness of her mother and the sweetness of her sister. She is often afflicted, but never discomposed. Sorrow sits on her becomingly ; she gives a grace to her sufferings, and smiles in tears. Like the moon, she is ever calm and serene, and shines brightest in the night."—Mason's *Christian Morals*, i. 55.

"We are always thinking we should be better with or without such a thing ; but if we do not steal a little content in present circumstances, there is no hope in any other."—Adam, 199.



## VI.<sup>1</sup>

### GODLINESS.

“Add to your . . . patience, Godliness.”--2 PETER I. 6.

GODLINESS is a comprehensive grace which includes acquaintance with God, trust in Him, love to Him, and obedience to His preceptive and providential will; and we suppose that it is here named after patience, because the same season which calls for the exercise of submission is conducive to the growth of piety. In health and hilarity we may believe that there is a God; in sickness, in sorrow, we cannot do without Him. In ordinary existence we may read or repeat passages about the Omnipresent Deity; but in anguish and desolation it is life from the dead to remember that our Father in Heaven is also here. As a theological tenet, or as a saying of the Catechism, we may have often repeated that man's chief end is to glorify God; but it is seldom, until the flesh and heart do faint and fail, that any one realizes “God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.”

No coming to God but through pain. Strange reluctance! Yet man is not *incurious*. *Inquisitive*.--O astronomer, why all night sweeping starry plain? O geologist,

<sup>1</sup> The greater portion of this lecture has not been extended. In order to indicate the author's train of thought the memoranda are printed verbatim.

why descending into mine—dredging and diving in sea?  
O politician, why open that sheet so eagerly?

But do you know God? Have you found out the Almighty? Know His disposition? Know His character? What news from Heaven? Love or hate? Any intercourse? Acquainted with science?—with history? And are you then at peace?

There is much in the Almighty which no searching can ever ascertain; and it may be questioned if the most ancient denizen of glory has found out all those perfections which meet and are magnified in the great I AM. But they have all found out enough to keep their minds in perfect peace. By long experience they have learned that Omnipotence is identical with Holiness, and that God's great name is Love. And, strong in a twofold confidence, knowing that no invading evil can scale that high citadel where they have found their everlasting home, and knowing, too, that no shadow of caprice or coldness can ever cross the countenance of that enthroned Benevolence in whose beams their joys for ever ripen—God's changelessness is the sapphire pavement of their heaven, and God's might its wall of strong salvation; God's presence is its sunshine; God's holiness its atmosphere of immortal health, and God's thoughts of kindness and manifestations of grace and truth the fragrant pulses which come and go wafting delights that ever wave across the hills of Immortality.

Brethren, we are blind and cannot see afar off. But God does not hide Himself from dim humanity. May He this evening send forth His own light and truth, and bring us to Himself!

So benevolent is God that He desires to save us—so holy that He desires to save us *from our sins*; so benevolent that He gave His only Son to save us—so holy that even to His beloved Son, in the capacity of Surety or Mediator, He would not open heaven unless transgression were finished and an end were made of sin; so benevolent that to all this congregation the gates of the New Jerusalem would gladly open—so holy that on any one of us who accepts Christ's atonement the first blessing bestowed would be the Holy Spirit the Comforter, purifying our tastes, ennobling our affections, giving us a bias Godward, and preparing us for a world of purity.

When a man has learned to trust in God for his final heaven he will learn to trust Him for his present welfare. These roads divide. He knows not which to take. Both promise well, but the one may lead to a wealthy place, and the other may end in a fearful pit, or a land of emptiness. No creature can direct him which to take, and the writing on the finger-posts is a mere parable—a perfect rune or hieroglyph. But the believer commits his way to God. He knows that there is an eye which even now surveys either path from its doubtful bifurcation to its very close; and after inquiring at the Oracle he hears a voice behind him, "This is the way; walk thou in it"—and with a lightened heart he speeds him on his journey fearing no evil, for the Lord is with him. The mountain is invested. He is one and the assailants are fifty. But they are only at the foot of the mount, and betwixt him and them, to faith's open eye, there are horses of fire and chariots of fire; and, with a body-guard of God's own

angels, amidst the flying shafts of pestilence, amidst the swift missiles of war and violence, amidst the showering scoriae and volcanic projectiles of revolution and lawless anarchy, he can lay him down and take his quiet sleep—a host encamping against him, but hidden in the pavilion of his own protected sanctuary. The work he has to do is great—one preacher sent to a mighty Nineveh—a poor prophet of the Lord sent to a proud tyrant—Paul with his weak presence before haughty empurpled Nero. It is a great work, but it is God's work, and God says, Fear not; and when the moment comes no fear is felt. The mouth and wisdom are given. The message is delivered. The tyrant trembles. Nineveh repents. And saints start up in Cæsar's household. Strong in God's strength, and wise in God's wisdom, the believer is protected in God's presence, and is happy in God's happiness.

Man of St. Kilda: "You may forget God, but a St. Kilda man never can." Elevated on his rock, suspended over a precipice, tossed on the wild ocean, he never can forget his God, he hangs continually on His **arm**.

Our artificial abundance apt to become atheistic self-sufficiency. Hungry—send to the baker for a loaf. Sick—send to the apothecary for medicine. Wish to take a journey—throw ourselves into a commodious conveyance.

Israelites, Manna.

"My power hath gotten me this wealth."

"God giveth thee power," Deut. viii. 18. If we doubt this, He soon undeceives us.

Is God trustworthy?

Never become a blank—a land of barrenness—know, and then you will believe.

Faith creates nothing—apprehends that which really exists—admits that which already exuberates.

*Eye* first directed to a lovely landscape—you have given me a new sense.

*Window* opened.

A child's confidence. My Father won't give me a stone or a serpent. But that looks very like one. Rather believe that it is bread in this fantastic figure—a blessing in disguise.

The fruit was in a thorny bush—but pleasant.

The present in a dusky and unpromising package—but very precious.

God is Love.

But what is love? It is excellence in a forthgoing and forthgiving state. Goodness overflowing and desirous to communicate of its own abundant blessedness.

The ever-blessed God lets out a beam of His own beauty, and the response is that flower of the forest—that gem of the sea—a pulse of power—and Sirius or some new sun is blazing in giant grandeur, and spheres marching obsequious round it; a gleam of His own gladness, and there dances up a summer day with all its choir of happy creatures—the mazy insect cloud—the finny playmates of the multitudinous main—the . . .—or heaven itself keeps holiday.

He lets out all his Name: The Lord, The Lord God, etc., and a world's redemption is the issue.

Every intelligent and immortal creature, except where

God has forgotten to be gracious, floats in an ocean of Divine benevolence—is surrounded by the love and holiness and entreating kindness of the Lord; and one might really say, it requires some power of opposition, some force of enmity, some strength of unbelief, to keep it out; be passive and be saved. Yield to the force of truth, *i.e.*, be not faithless, but believing—and let the ambient goodness enter.

Godless creature shut up in its own *self-sufficiency*—cut off from Life-fountain.

Faith lets in saying by saying—Blood cleanseth—ever liveth—intercession.

Believing what God says, we become what God desires.

LOVE—Needs to be partaker of Divine nature.

*Siphon*—filled from fountain but won't exhaust him. Gratitude for mercies, too often confined to creatures—thank-offerings—physician—brave swimmer. Leave it to God himself to carry on His work.

“ Nor I, nor angels round the throne,  
Can love to what's Thy due ;  
Beauties divine to them unknown,  
Pass all they have in view.

Yet they for ever wonder on,  
And gaze with high delight ;  
And love the Infinite Unknown  
With all their mind and might.

I too would lift mine eyes to see  
What angels can't explore ;  
With fixed attention gaze at Thee,  
And wonder and adore.”

Accept his friendship—Faith made Abraham God's *friend*. So God counted on him. Complacency—con-

cealed nothing from him—Compliance. Thought of him in danger—Because his trustee and his children's guardian—Remember his presence—Fear—Boyle—Joseph—Mind came to be in unison—keep step with His providence—beat time to His—cultivate communion—word—ordinances—Lord's Supper—Guest of God—prayer.

## VII.

### BROTHERLY KINDNESS AND CHARITY.

“ Add . . . to godliness, Brotherly Kindness ; and to brotherly kindness, Charity.”—2 PETER I. 7.

LAST Sabbath evening we discoursed on godliness, or the right affection and the right deportment towards our Creator and Governor, our Father in heaven. To-day we shall try to say something on the way in which we ought to feel and to act towards those around us ; and in order to exhaust the subject we join together “ brotherly kindness and charity.” Of each, love is the essence ; the difference lies in the objects. Brotherly kindness is love to brethren ; it is a specific affection—to brethren in the flesh, and brethren in the Lord, and it at once suggests a relationship so close that it may always be felt, and cannot easily be forgotten. Charity is a larger love. It has in it less of instinct and more of principle. For it is that affection to the common humanity, or the common Christianity, which makes us feel kindly to the man or the disciple of the Saviour, as such. In expressive Greek, the affections would be distinguished as *φιλαδελφία* and *φιλανθρωπία*, brotherly love, and love to man.

As in the other graces of this series, we think that here too there is, in point of time, a natural sequence. All the



modifications and varieties of brotherly kindness and charity, if they do not date from the cradle, should at least commence very early, and be first developed in the home; and from the infant lesson of generosity and kindness our Heavenly Father would educate us up to those feats of self-sacrifice which we admire in the patriot, and survey with distant reverence in the Prince of Philanthropists.

Man is a fallen creature, and his nature is now a mournful medley of good and evil. There are traces of the original excellencies which once awakened his Creator's complacency, and there are tendencies which, if not arrested, must banish him for ever from that Creator's presence. When a child is born into the world there are ushered into our earthly sphere, as it were, two natures, the one good and hopeful, but weak and mortally wounded; the other young, infantine, and feeble, but desperately wicked: a dying angel alongside of an infant fiend. And miraculously restored, divinely strengthened, the good angel sometimes comes to life again; and under the influence of good instruction, and with the blessed promptings of God's holy Spirit, even a child sometimes grows up kind, merciful, and tender-hearted. On the other hand, things are often left to take their natural course. Nothing is done to foster noble feelings or draw forth kindly affections; and if bad temper and cruelty are occasionally dealt with, the efforts to repress them, so violent and so vindictive, often aggravate the evil, and, like the man who tramples on the weed he should eradicate, the root of bitterness soon springs up stronger than

ever. The little selfist of the nursery goes forth into life a shrewd but sordid spirit, with a constant eye to his own interest, and with a convenient exemption from chivalrous delicacy or generous impulse; close-fisted, hard-hearted, unscrupulous, mighty in all meanness, and with that bastard humility which has no care for character, and no shame amidst good men's contempt. And the little tyrant of the playground, the tormentor of his sisters, and the bully of his playmates, the torturer of inoffensive animals and the taskmaster of the little boys around him,—he grows up the despot of some domestic circle or the oppressor of some far-off Indian province, or in long years of penal servitude, mayhap the scaffold, expiates the deed of red-handed fury in which ungoverned passions found at once their climax and their close. A lesson to us all, that if we would augment our world's little store of brotherly kindness and charity we must begin betimes. In our houses and our schools we must try to cherish affections kind and generous, and we must strive to make selfishness and cruelty and tyranny appear exceeding hateful and sinful. In other words, before the good angel breathes his last, and the growing fiend has it all his own way, we must come to the succour of the better nature, and by pouring in wine and oil must seek to stanch its gaping wounds and restore its ebbing strength. And who can tell but the Good Physician will smile upon their effort, and as the house of David waxes stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul grows weaker and weaker, there may emerge from the conflict once so unequal an ascendant Benevolence, an angelic goodness

which will bless the world with its kind deeds, and pass away to the better country preceded and followed by many converts, the happy captives of its own transcendent loveliness?

But whilst we speak of the importance of an early beginning, whilst we would enforce the repression in the opening mind of envy and malice and cruelty, and whilst we hold that, with its "trust and truth," its mutual confidence and its countless endearments, the home is the great focus of the social charities—the great factory from which the outer world must be supplied with feeling hearts and friendly benefactors—we must not forget the source from which the home is fed—we must not forget that all true humanity has its source in heaven, and that the brotherly kindness and charity which alone are equal to our world's requirements are the brotherly kindness and the charity which believers add to "godliness."

How this should be—how it comes that godliness is the great source of kindness—will be evident if you consider these two things. Godliness is happiness, and peace with God is the beginning of the blessed life: it is that which changes natural gloom into a lively hope, and which ennobles natural mirth into a pure immortal joy. And happiness is kind. Sorrow—especially when it is a guilty sorrow—makes us silent and sullen. It strikes the heart dead as a stone, and takes away the inclination and the ability for doing good to others. But just as sorrow is selfish, so joy is kind and generous. The lost piece of silver is found, and the happy finder calls the neighbourhood to a festival. An absent one, much desired, returns, and instantly the

householder calls his friends and neighbours to a merry-making. Guilt is taken off the conscience—the closed lips of the penitent are opened—God's praises are published, and sinners are converted. Happiness is kind; and as there is no happiness like the joy of salvation, so there is no kindness like the kindness of the Christian. Of all creatures here below he is likest to that most blessed of all Beings who, because the most blessed, is withal the most benevolent, and whose holy gladness overflows in tender mercies to all His works—in clothing lilies and feeding ravens, in creating worlds and inspiring angels, in pardoning sins and saving souls. And like Him who is most blessed for evermore, the gospel makes a man loving from the excess of an unwonted gladness, and he feels to mankind at large a goodwill which it seems as if no fault of theirs could impair, and his first impulse is to share with them those unsearchable riches which have proved at once the renovation and rejoicing of his own soul.

But more than that—godliness is unison with God. It is our will, our way of thinking and feeling, brought into harmony with God's will and God's way of thinking. And it is God Himself who is the great Philanthropist. It is He who saw in this race of ours a case so piteous, and capabilities, if restored, so glorious, that notwithstanding all the provoking rebellion and repulsive wickedness which met His immediate eye, God loved the world, and loved it so that He gave His own Son to save it. And the Christian, the child of God, is a fellow-feeler and a fellow-worker with God. Himself forgiven much, he enters into the Divine compassion, and sees an object for

merciful regard and magnanimous exertion in those races which proud philosophy or hardened worldliness is apt to regard as the rubbish of existence and the refuse of mankind. He sympathizes with the Saviour, who quenches not the smoking flax, and who in the most bruised disciple sees an object for His affectionate solicitude. He sympathizes with the blessed Spirit the Comforter, whose charity covers a multitude of sins, and who commencing His gracious process on the heir of salvation whilst still dead in trespasses and desperately wicked, perseveres, and, daunted by no dulness, disheartened by no relapses, driven away by no ingratitude, still adding line upon line to the lesson, and impulse to impulse in the ennobling, purifying process, at last makes the subject of His kind interposition fit for a world of truth and uprightness and unending devotion.

\* \* \* \* \*

The brotherly kindness based on godliness is the best—the most efficacious, enduring—Takes hold on God—So moves the world—Manifestations or expressions—Humanity—World-embracing benevolence—Kind offices—Happy whose business is beneficence—Alexander—courtesy—considerateness—delicate attention—Dauphin—Health and enjoyment—of servants—House of mourning—“Ray of comfort”—Worldly courtesy—an arctic soil, surface thawed—Cordiality—Manliness and majesty—Rise superior to—Want of worth—Sense—Gratitude—So conquer and is requited—Rich recompense the creation of kindness—Nursed back to health—Led on to goodness—Evangelization—Fearful pit—Near enough to lift out—

Isolation of selfishness—Ice-bergs—Pillar of salt—Lonely Tadmor in wilderness—Seek pre-eminence here.

The world is much beholden to powerful intellects—to the Newtons and Davys, the Beccarias and Adam Smiths, whose lantern has shed a clear, revealing light on some of our earthly problems ; to the Calvins and the Edwardses, who, mounting with the strong wing and the unblinding eye of the eagle above the fogs and clouds of a misty theology, have seen things in God's clearest light and told what like they looked.

But still more do we owe to the big, loving hearts in the human sphere, to men like the Man of Ross and John Howard ; in the spiritual, like Whitefield and M'Cheyne—like Eliot and John Williams and Dr. Malan—Fénélon—men of mighty charity and hopeful goodwill to man, whose genius, like a gulf-stream from a warmer zone, brings summer to our northern isles, and pushes back the realms of frost wherever it flows.

## VIII.

### THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION.

“And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”—2 PETER I. 5-8.

FEW things are poorer than an artificial paradox; and nothing can be easier than by the juxtaposition of opposing words to create a verbal antithesis. And yet God's glorious universe owes half its beauty and all its steadfastness to the conciliation of things opposed and the harmony of things contrasted. A planet seeks with all its might to rush straight on through space, and with all its might it seeks to dart into the sun; and the result of the equal earnestness is not a zigzag wriggling path, but an orbit evenly constant and ever self-renewing. An airy ocean clasps the earth, so exciting, so fierce and feverish, that were it all alone one spark would set the sphere on fire, and melt earth's elements in fervent heat. Another ocean clasps it, so torpid, so stifling and inert, that a day of its supremacy would suffocate the millions of mankind, and leave the silent globe a mighty sepulchre; but the harmonious diffusion of the two is the breath of every

living thing, and the source of health and elasticity and joyful exultation. So is there day and night; so is there frost and summer. Night is not a dimmer day; day is not night somewhat relieved and lightened. Summer is not "winter painted green;" January is not June with a powdering of snow. Each is itself, and the more intense the better: black night and golden day; dead winter to rest the weary soil, and summer warm and wakeful to call out its recruited powers. And thus by intensest opposites the Creator secures the steadfast order of the moving universe,—the cycle of the seasons, the circuit of the spheres; just as by blended contrasts he secures the music of voices and the music of visions,—the coloured harmony of the field or the firmament,—the vocal harmony of the cathedral choir or the tuneful forest.

So in the Bible there are paradoxes, not apparent but real. On the one side it is true that the gospel call is addressed in good faith, and indiscriminately, to all men; on the other side it is true that only those who are ordained to everlasting life believe that call. On the one side it is true that without holiness no man shall see the Lord; on the other side it is just as true that a dying thief, if he believe in Jesus, will be that same evening with Him in Paradise. Yet these opposite statements form one self-consistent truth: a promiscuous gospel and a personal election; the Saviour's sufficiency and the need of a personal sanctity. That gospel is so free that, would all embrace it, all would be saved; but man is so unbelieving and so bad, that without a forth-putting of God's gracious power there would be no believers. The Saviour's merits are so



ample that however wicked or worthless a man may have been, the moment he receives the atonement he has a right to a heavenly inheritance; but such a holy place is heaven, that, unless he were withal and in the self-same act receiving from the Spirit of God pure and holy tastes, he would not be happy there.

These remarks we are led to make because of their twofold bearing on this passage. Knowing that faith is the gift of God, and remembering that every grace is the gift of the self-same Spirit, some have felt that in the acquisition of faith or any Christian excellence there is no need and no use for personal exertion. But the Bible doctrine is very different. Asserting that faith is the gift of God, it at the same time bids people "believe" as strenuously as if believing were entirely their own business. And asserting that the fruit of the Spirit—the effect and the index of His indwelling—is love, temperance, etc., it at the same time bids men give all their diligence, so as to add love, temperance, etc., to their faith. Then again, many pietists have resolved all true religion into some single attribute, such as godliness or benevolence, or faith or knowledge; and others have felt, and by their practice they have confessed, that certain excellences were inconsistent with one another. They have said that "Ignorance is the mother of Devotion," and in order to believe they have burned their books or shut their eyes. They have fancied that in order to live godly they must not live in this present evil world; and in order to fulfil their obligations to their Maker, they have taken farewell of their brethren, and in idle seclusion or misanthropic

isolation they have sought a lonely pathway to the skies ; whilst some again have deemed charity inconsistent with orthodoxy, and have felt that they were traitors to truth unless upon its shrine they sacrificed their temper, their patience, their brotherly kindness. But in contrariety to this exaggerating and one-sided tendency, the Word of God urges every excellence with even-handed impartiality. It bids the orthodox be temperate, and it says to the courageous, "Be calm." It bids the godly be brotherly, and it requires of believers to be well-informed and intelligent. To knowledge must be added temperance, and to godliness brotherly-kindness. And the same man from whom the graces so valiant and so vigorous are demanded,—faith, courage, knowledge,—is asked to exhibit graces as mild and meek as patience, brotherly kindness, and charity. And whilst admitting that the greatest of all is love, it refuses to tell which is the least important, but plainly intimates that the absence of any will be a deplorable defect, and render the professor so far barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

And what is the right inference? When we are told that man must leave nothing undone, and yet that it is God who does it all,—what is the right practical conclusion? Is it not that devotion should be diligent, and diligence devout? Is it not that it is individual dutifulness, along with dependence on God, which constitute practical Christianity and experimental religion?—the joyful conviction that our labour will not be in vain, for it is labour in the Lord? an intentness to secure that sanctification which is already the will of God; the blessed consciousness that

we are pursuing, not an object to which God is opposed, but one which He is approving and promoting? And then again, when we are told to build up a character of which faith is the foundation and charity the keystone,—when we are not told which course in all the masonry, which tier in all the structure, can best be wanting,—is it not the right inference that we should leave out none? and if we give all our diligence to our faith, and all our diligence to our knowledge, and all our diligence to our love—is it not likely that whilst faith and knowledge and love will grow exceedingly, they will also grow symmetrically, and, in no danger of monstrous exaggeration, will escape the real danger of a dwarfish development and a stunted insignificance?

In the practical application of this subject we do not hesitate—in the spirit of that passage which says, “Give all diligence, and make your calling and election sure: for it is God that worketh in you,”—we do not hesitate to say, Seeing it is God who worketh in you faith, give all diligence to attain it; and seeing it is God who worketh in you courage, knowledge, temperance, and suchlike, give all diligence, and add them to your faith.

1. Be diligent, and believe. In other words, find out the truth, and hold it fast. You want a soil into which your spirit may strike its roots and grow stronger year by year: a foundation on which you may build your hope of immortality, and fear no storm that shall ever beat, no flood that shall ever come. And this foundation you have in the Word of God, and more especially in the person and work of His incarnate Son. You want to know God.

You want to come into a state of friendship with God, and to know that whatever you have been in the past, you are now forgiven, accepted, and loved. This desire God graciously meets ; and in consideration of the satisfaction which has been rendered to His law and justice by a dear Friend of His, and a kind Friend of yours, he declares that from this time forward you are welcome to call Him your Father, and are allowed to count on heaven as your home.

Such is the purport of the gospel revelation ; and if there be in your spirit aught that is ingenuous or aspiring—if your soul does not cleave so entirely to the dust but that you sometimes lift wistful glances upward and away, when you glimpse such a star you must surely rejoice with exceeding great joy, and when you find God so condescending, when you find heaven thus coming to the earth, it must surely be your impulse to open your treasures, and give Him the gold of your property, the incense of your devotion, and the myrrh of your immortal faculties.

And yet, on the part of some, to get this faith needs diligence. To get a full assurance that the Bible is God's Word, or that Jesus is God's Son, or that salvation is God's gift, not a reluctant dole or an easy bargain, but the absolute *gift* of God,—to come to this conclusion may not be the work of a magical moment, but it may be the result of weary days and vexing thoughts and anxious struggles. Still, give prayerful diligence, and that result is sure. Like the astronomer who makes his calculations, or goes by the reckoning of his brother sage, and he be-

believes that some new orb may be discovered in a given region of the sky, and night after night he sweeps the likely region, and espies nothing which he has not often seen before, till in some bright and ever-memorable hour his eye fixes on a lustre soft and lambent, and as he gazes it smiles on its discoverer with grateful recognition. So it may not be till you have thought and revolved and reasoned long, till you have done battle with many doubts and fears and difficulties, till you have read many books of evidence or many guides to inquirers, that at last, taking heed to some sure word of prophecy, the day-star arises on your heart, and in the very spot where, according to theory, you ought to have found it, you hail at last the Star of Bethlehem. Your anxieties are ended, and your search is rewarded; for you too rejoice at last in God your Saviour.

Yes, brethren, give diligence to the full assurance of faith. There are some things which won't stand inquiry; they cannot abide the daylight. The carnal mind, the unconverted soul, is one of these; and so is unbelief. Few irreligious men dare venture on self-acquaintance, few of them dare open the shutters which would reveal them to themselves. And few infidels dare frankly own their reason for unbelief. They will put it on the inconsistency of Christians; they will ascribe it to some mistake which they fancy they have found in the Bible. Or they will allege that in pure theism they have found something more rational, more spiritual, more sublime, than Christianity. But few will confess that it is because they cannot bear a religion which insists on our

denying all ungodliness and every worldly lust; which demands purity of thought, speech, and behaviour; which begins and ends in self-denial and devotedness to God. But the gospel courts inquiry, and, like its Author, walking in the day it stumbleth not. The more conversant you become with it, the more conscious will you be that God's own goodness and truth are in it; and the more you cultivate its society and surrender to its influence, the more confident will you be that it comes forth from God, and is able to conduct you to the land of its own uprightness.

But should God have heard your prayer and prospered your pains—should He have blessed you with some confidence in the scheme of mercy, and some trust in the all-sufficient Saviour,—the way to strengthen this faith and find it really precious is to give diligence and add to it all kindred excellence. For, properly speaking, faith is the preparation and predisposition for ulterior excellence. It is the heart melted like wax and ready to receive God's seal; that departure from all iniquity by which the Lord knoweth them that are His. It is the soul touched over with that mystic mordant on which the sun-picture may be received, and on the susceptible surface there remains the image of One fairer than the children of men. And it is a sad presumption that the faith is wanting, that it is only a fancied faith, or what Scripture calls a dead faith, when it abideth alone, and when your only evidence for the man's Christianity is his own assertion.

But the cases are not unfrequent where there is a real faith with a most defective development. Just as you

may have noticed a pollard oak or willow with a sheaf of weak saplings or wands on its truncated summit, whilst beside it there stood a noble tree, with a bole nowise thicker, but with stately branches gracefully disparting and springing high into the firmament, so you may notice two men who make the same profession, and whose faith is to all appearance the same, but the one is a cedar of God, fully developed and fairly proportioned, and the other is a pollard, whose columnar robustness ends abruptly in a thicket of twigs—in indications and purposes and promises rather than in the outgoings of a vital and growthful godliness. And as it is always incongruous to see a mighty foundation with a trivial superstructure, a block of granite the basis and a mud wall the building, a foundation of jasper, and the remaining courses all brick; so where there really is precious faith to begin with, you grieve that there should not be added courage, knowledge, temperance; but wood, hay, stubble, trivial tastes, narrow notions, sectarian prejudices, a sour or censorious spirit, and manifold infirmities of the flesh and spirit.

Now, not to travel over ground on which you may think we have tarried too long, I would just add that it is every one's wisdom to give the most diligence to the grace in which he is chiefly lacking; and so far from this endangering other attributes of character by its reaction on his spiritual health, it is likely to foster and strengthen the whole.

For example, it may be courage in which you find yourself lacking; but if you have faith there is no

reason why you should not add to it fortitude. The thing which is apt to make men feeble and faltering is that they have nothing to maintain which deserves a good fight, or they have guilt on their conscience, or they expect no thanks for successful exertion. But the believer has truth and principle for which to contend; for the background of the battle he has a joyful immortality, and for applauding spectators he has the cloud of witnesses. And whether it be sin which he feels constrained to reprove in a brother, or an unpopular conviction which he is forced to avow, or a despised community with which he feels bound to cast in his lot—whether it be the sinful command of a superior which he is obliged to refuse, or some service grievous to his kinsfolk which he deems it his duty to undertake, he will find the need of fortitude.

But as sure as he exerts it, as sure as from a regard to God's will he speaks out the unwelcome truth, or refuses the sinful compliance or remonstrates against the evil practice, so sure will two things follow—so sure, for one thing, will his fortitude react upon his faith, and, vivifying the truth which he has thus defended, and endearing the Saviour for whose sake he did it or spoke it, it will make the next feat of Christian heroism more easy, and will give him confidence in his armour now that he has proved it. And so sure, for another thing, will it force forward other graces of the Christian character. Perhaps it will convince him that he has need of more knowledge, so that the next time a scoff is uttered or a truth assailed he may know better how to meet it. Perhaps it will teach



him withal his need of temperance ; for though a good fight, it would have been better had he kept calm and cool, and shot no coals of juniper, no sarcasms nor personal innuendoes, nor rankling retorts, and so, instead of simply silencing the adversary, had he by the meekness of wisdom convinced him and gained him over to the better side. And thus all through, like the consecutive rings of the oak, every layer added to the thickness of the bole tells in ascending vigour and more shadowy verdure along all the branches.

Or it is more knowledge of which you feel the need. You sit down to the study of Scripture. You try to get an extended view of God's dealings with mankind ; and as you perceive the connexion of successive dispensations, and as you see the processes which ushered in the last,—the prophecies on the one side and the singular providences on the other,—and as you begin to penetrate the genius of the gospel, and recognise the manifold wisdom of God in its all-embracing adaptations, it is no longer an isolated tenet on which your spirit rests, but, like a cast-away thankful for his rock of salvation, but who finds that instead of the solitary crag for which he took it in the dark, it is the seaward cliff of a far-stretching and fertile country,—it is no longer a single text or a disconnected tenet on which your spirit rests, but in the expanding dawn you find a whole continent of truth beneath your feet, and rejoice in the bright and boundless amplitude which has not only saved your lost soul, but which promises endless satisfaction to your craving spirit. Or you take to the history of departed worthies. Hoping to

find hints for your own guidance, you study the experience of pilgrim predecessors, and, fired by the self-spending ardour of one, and rebuked by the meek, uncomplaining patience of another, instructed by the frank attractiveness of one whose friendliness made him rich in friends, and whose tender kindness helped to make them the friends of Jesus, noting the delicate forethought of one, the dexterous adroitness of another, the accuracy, the order, the promptitude of a third, the happy sense of God's fatherliness which gladdened another,—your spirit imbibes the influence, and, as the heir of all this worth and wisdom, you grow wise in their experience, virtuous in their example, and happy in their happiness.

FOUR LECTURES

ON

PHILOSOPHY AND CHRISTIANITY.

THE following Lectures were delivered by Dr. Hamilton in  
Regent Square Church during the winter of 1863-4.

## I

### THE STOIC.

WHAT is God? What is man? What is the best use that can be made of the present life? And what as regards the life beyond? These are the great questions, questions to which the gospel gives such clear and sufficient answers that to a large extent the need of anxious thought is superseded.

But these questions have propounded themselves to many people who never knew the gospel. By many they have been put aside amidst life's urgencies, and most have been content with the answers which contented their neighbours. But from time to time there have risen up exceptional men who were haunted by these questions, and who could not get rid of them. What am I? Whence came I? Whither am I going? And what is the thing which I ought meanwhile to be doing? Questions like these came to them moaning on the midnight blast, or whispered in their ear as they trode the noisy street, and in gallant struggles or earnest gropings after the answer life passed away; life wore away, and the marks of interrogation round the eye, and the bigger furrows on their brow, too plainly told that of asking questions there is no end, whilst wan cheeks and hollow

orbits seemed to confess that few answers had come as yet.

For these deep thinkers and earnest seekers we own a respectful sympathy. In a frivolous age so serious, amidst a luxurious society so simple and sequestered, some of them are a reproof to ourselves, who, with far greater advantages, make such feeble exertions, and who, in order to insure salvation, show far less diligence than they did in order to reach a hopeful peradventure. I own that I never read a history of human thought and opinion without being affected and humbled.

Zeno flourished 300 years before the apostle Paul, but their birthplaces were not far asunder. Cyprus, the rich and balmy island, where Zeno first saw the light, lies over against Tarsus on the neighbouring mainland, which was to become still more distinguished as the native town of the great apostle. When thirty years of age, having read many books of philosophy, he was seized with a desire to visit Athens, at that time the metropolis of mind, the centre where all that was beautiful in art and ingenious in thought found a temple and a home. So he freighted a ship with purple, and sailed away for the Piræus. Fortunately, however, he was wrecked; the sea swallowed up the ship with its precious cargo, and, like a true philosopher, Zeno arrived in Athens penniless.

Here the sage who attracted him most was Crates the cynic. A keen dry way of looking at men and things, and a caustic way he had of showing up affectations and shams, made him a very formidable censor in a city of glass houses, and, like the shrewd ruffian he was, his

clever hits were applauded, whilst the man himself was feared or detested. His doctrine that a good man, a wise man, should be self-sufficing, commended itself to Zeno, and for a long time he listened to his lectures, till the coarse manners and churlish humour of the professor completely disgusted the scholar. After spending twenty years in study he came forth himself as a teacher. His class-room was a beautiful piazza in the heart of the city, which had once been a sort of picture-gallery, and in this *στοαί* or portico he used to meet his disciples for forty years, expounding his views in lectures or conversational discussions. With his tall meagre form, with his twisted neck, and head to the one side leaning, with his swarthy countenance and somewhat foreign air, there was no personage better known to the Athenians, and none more popular. All knew his harmless life and simple habits, his daily repast of bread and figs or honey ; and although his look was somewhat severe (as it takes long time for the sunshine to get down into deep valleys), although it was seldom that a smile thoroughly irradiated his sunken cheeks and wrinkled brow, all knew him to be not only a wise but a kind and good old man. Once when the city was in danger they intrusted the key of the Acropolis, not to the chief magistrate, nor to the commander-in-chief, but to Zeno ; and considering that " for many years he has exhorted all men to honesty and frugality, in his own person setting a fair example before their eyes, by leading a life altogether conformed to his precepts," the Athenians awarded him a crown of gold as a recognition of his rare deserts, and decreed him

a monument in the midst of their heroes in the Kera-meikon—what answered to our Westminster Abbey.<sup>1</sup>

And what was his teaching? To the first and foremost of questions, what was the answer of this interesting Pagan? What is the chief end of man? How was it answered by one who had far more than ordinary Christian earnestness, but who had not a page of the Bible? Perhaps you may think his answer quite tame, but then you must remember how much poorer were the answers of the wise men before him. Zeno's answer was, VIRTUE. Our aim in existence should be not pleasure, but virtue: "nor does virtue consist in a life of speculation, but in a life of activity. For what is virtue? Virtue is manhood. And what are the attributes of a man? Are they not obviously the attributes of an *active* as well as a *speculative* being? and can that be virtue which excludes or neglects man's activity? Man, O Plato, O Aristotle, was not made for speculation only; wisdom is not his only pursuit. Man, O Epicurus, was not made for enjoyment only; he was made to *do* somewhat, and to be somewhat. Philosophy? It is a great thing, but it is not all. Pleasure? It is a slight thing, and even if it were greater, it could not embrace the whole of man's activity. The aim of man's existence is neither to be wise nor to enjoy, but to be virtuous—to realize his manhood."<sup>2</sup>

That was coming very near the mark: Man's chief end is to be virtuous. If I were allowed to clothe it in Scrip-

<sup>1</sup> Diogenes Laertius, Bk. vii.

<sup>2</sup> Lewes, *History of Philosophy* (1857), p. 238.



ture language, I could accept the answer: for "Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." "Fear God and keep his commandments; for this is the whole of man." "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever."

But here comes the breakdown, and if Paul and Zeno had met, as this day Paul and Zeno's followers meet, we might imagine such questions as these:—*P.* You say that man's chief aim in existence should be virtue: but what is virtue? *Z.* It is the knowledge of good; and that again is the knowledge of man and his relations to the universe. *P.* And have you this knowledge? *Z.* Not yet. *P.* And if you had, and could impart it, are you sure that the knowledge of good would insure the pursuit of virtue? There is that bee which has fallen into your jar of honey. Now that he is up to the antennæ he would fain be off to his hive on Hymettus, but he can never escape from that luscious sepulchre in which his own folly has drowned him. You see that his knowledge of the universe must have been imperfect, when he fell into this snare, and now all his knowledge cannot deliver him. *Z.* But I shall (says the sage), as with a crust he digs him out and deposits him on the table. *P.* No (says the preacher), he is not yet delivered. You see how he is tied and bound with a chain of nectar. Legs and wings alike are useless, and at this rate he will never more sip the thyme or the myrtle, nor visit his swarming comrades in the hollow oak. Let me sprinkle clean water upon you, poor misguided insect, and now that you

are washed you need not cleave to the dust: now that your wings are dry, spread them and seek the things above.

To that foremost question, What is man's chief end? what should be his foremost aim in existence? it was a noble answer which Zeno gave—the noblest ever given in the realms of heathendom; but it failed on trial (1.) because if the knowledge of good be the knowledge of man and his relations to the universe, who is to give this knowledge? (2.) With a depraved being the knowledge of good is not sufficient to insure the practice of goodness. Like a great many theories since—like a great many discoveries of a perpetual motion,—Zeno's theory made no allowance for friction. Even if you could set the machine agoing, the resisting surface over which it passes will soon bring it to a perfect stand-still. (3.) But you can't set it agoing. Man is in the fearful pit and miry clay of his own wickedness, with little desire of deliverance; and even if you could make him all right as regards the past, you cannot give him power for the future. This is the glory of the gospel. On behalf of Him who knows the universe and man's relations to it, that Gospel reveals a perfect rule. It not only calls us to virtue, but tells us authoritatively what virtue is. And it inspires the taste for what it thus reveals. Creating a clean heart and renewing a right spirit within, the Spirit of God enkindles devout desires and pure affections; and in the fountain opened washing away the sin that is past, the feet are set free to run the way of God's commandments—the wings that were dragged and glued

together open and mount upward. To glorify God and find happiness in Him, the end for which unfallen man was created, becomes again the end of man redeemed and forgiven.

If the first and foremost question be, What is man's chief end? the vastest and greatest is, What is God? On this subject Zeno expressed himself somewhat vaguely, and it would be difficult to show that he meant by God anything more than the supreme law of nature, or an unconditioned necessity, evermore evolving what is good, and using as the first minister of his decrees the element of fire. These views have been thrown into verse by his disciple Cleanthes, and as I do not know that antiquity has made any finer contribution to natural theology, I may read the lines:—

“ Eternal Power! Immortal God,  
 Conducting by thy sovereign nod  
     This universal frame:  
 Adored in every land, in every time,  
 Thy names have varied with the clime,  
     Thy deity the same.

Amidst the splendour of thy throne,  
 Accept the service of thine own—  
     The homage of mankind.  
 Of all thy creatures they possess  
 Alone the power by speech to express  
     The feelings of the mind.

While reason—glory of our race—  
 Enables man thy hand to trace  
     Thy various works among;  
 That wisdom everywhere displayed,  
 That power, that goodness, shall be made  
     The subject of my song.

While world revolves round world,  
 The power by which they first were hurled  
     They in their spheres obey ;  
 By thy great minister kept under,  
 The living, leaping, flaming thunder,  
     The sceptre of Thy sway.

This nature strikes with sacred awe,  
 With this, according to a law  
     Thou guid'st the mundane soul ;  
 Which gives the orb of day his light,  
 Which feeds the lamps that gild the night,  
     Pervades, sustains the whole. ”<sup>1</sup>

After all, however, the God of Zeno and Cleanthes was vague and impersonal, cold and remote. He was not the God of Isaiah and the Psalmist, “like as a father pitieth his children, pitying them that fear him,” saying, “Come now, let us reason together ; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow.” Least of all is He the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, condescending, close-coming, affectionately interested in His creatures ; nor can the sage sing in his devoutest frame, “The Lord is my shepherd.”

We are anxious to do justice to the system which theologically and ethically has the greatest claim to our respect among the Pagan philosophies ; and therefore we may add that some of its adherents were fine specimens of probity, fair-mindedness, and temperance, and that by the courage with which they endured adversity and their habitual scorn of mere bodily delights, some of them rose to a sublime elevation above the weak and selfish multi-

<sup>1</sup> Translated by my father, 1800. There is also a translation by R. West, *Anderson's Poets*, vol. ix.

tude around them. And amongst their literary remains are passages which it is hardly possible to read without fancying that a ray of purer light must have somehow glanced in obliquely on the darkness, and like home-recalling scents or sounds in a strange land, in the writings of the Stoics passages constantly occur which send the thoughts of the Christian scholar back to the Bible. Is it not so when you read such lines in the Emperor M. Antoninus: "Everything is harmonious with me which is harmonious to thee, O Universe! Nothing is for me too early or too late which is in due time for thee. Everything is fruit to me which thy seasons bring, O Nature: from thee are all things, in thee are all things, to thee all things return. The poet says, Dear city of Cecrops, and wilt not thou say, Dear city of God?"<sup>1</sup> "Make no friendship with an angry man," says King Solomon; and the Emperor Antoninus rejoins, "Wouldst thou wish to please a man who does not please himself?"<sup>2</sup> Says Seneca, much more a Stoic in his writings than in his conduct, "No man can be happy who does not stand firm against all contingencies, and who cannot say, I should have been content to have had it otherwise; but since it is thus, God's will be done!" "The contented mind wants nothing." "We are born subjects, and to obey God is perfect liberty." "Let us live in our bodies as if we were only to lodge in them this night, and leave them to-morrow. It is the frequent thought of death that must arm us against it. He that is armed against poverty may live in plenty; a man may strengthen himself against pain, and yet live

<sup>1</sup> M. Aurel. Ant. iv. 23.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* viii. 53.

in the enjoyment of health; but he who fortifies himself against the fear of death shall most certainly have occasion to employ *that* virtue. . . . To die sooner or later is not the matter, but to die well or ill—for death brings us to immortality.”

The followers of this school you would have thought somewhat prepared for Christianity; and yet, as far as I am aware, Christianity made few converts amongst the disciples of Zeno. Why should it have been so? With their simple and self-denying habits, why were they not attracted by the purer morals of the gospel, and with their superiority to the surrounding superstitions, why did they not hail that unknown God whom Cleanthes had sung and whom Paul now preached? The answer we fear is to be found in that little word *pride*—that little word which is still so great a hindrance to many wise men after the flesh. Amongst the Greeks and Romans the Stoics occupied the same place as the Pharisees amongst the Jews. The very foundation of their theory was to make the virtuous man self-sufficing, and usually they got so far as to make him self-sufficient. In cutting off all other vices, the Stoic, like the Cynic before him, fostered to enormous magnitude pride, or self-complacency, and “sought not so much to *please* the Deity as to be his equal,”<sup>1</sup> and when the Hebrew missionary arrived proclaiming a Saviour a double rancour was aroused. The Stoic was a sage, and it was beneath the dignity of a Greek philosopher to learn from a Hebrew babbling; and the Stoic was a virtuous man who had healed himself, and

<sup>1</sup> Archer Butler, *Ancient Philosophy*, ii. 447.

needed no physician—a man already so good that it was preposterous to urge on him a Saviour. With its twofold tap, its long bifurcate spindle, this pride of wisdom and pride of worth were the root of bitterness which held the Stoic firm and fast in nature's soil, refusing to be transplanted.

But although few of the Stoics came into the Church, a good deal of Stoicism found its way by and bye into Christianity. Not that Stoicism is an unmixed evil. There are nationalities in which it is a powerful element. The old Roman, without knowing it, was a Stoic; and so has been many a Scotchman with his few wants, his hardy ways, his homely habits. The wife of Pætus and the father of Lucretia would have done honour to this school; nor less John Knox's daughter when interceding for her banished husband, and when to King James's taunt, "Bid him submit to the bishops," she replied, "I'd rather keep his head in that apron." The old soldier was a Stoic when in the bivouac he kicked away the snowball from his son's head, "as if the effeminate rascal could not sleep without a pillow;" and in a far better sense, and a far more excellent way, so was the apostle when he kept under the body, and brought it into subjection, and when, for the elect's sake, he endured all privations and hardships.

Still, there are two stoical errors which have done much evil in the Christian Church, and which, so far as they exist, have been learned, not from Christ, but from Zeno.

The first is the attempt to extirpate the natural affections, and to keep down the no less natural emotions. In order to attain the perfection of his nature, or what he

called unanimity of life (*ὁμολογουμένως ζῆν*), the Stoic tried to resolve his whole nature into what he called right reason,<sup>1</sup> and just as Philip the Second tried to secure unanimity in his dominions by exterminating Jews and Protestants, so Antoninus and Epictetus tried to secure unanimity in the soul by exterminating joy and sorrow, love and hatred. And there have been stoical types of Christianity. There have been those who regarded patriotism and friendship and the domestic affections as so many dissident or hostile inmates so long as they were harboured in the mind, and who, from a childish misunderstanding of Christ's words, "If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke xiv. 26), have chilled or destroyed those instinctive attachments; and if they have not been remarkable for their allegiance to Christ have become tolerably exempt from competing affections.

Strange that any one should deem it the perfection of humanity to destroy its most precious ingredients. Strange that any one should deem it the perfection of piety to reach that point which the apostle pronounces the perfection of depravity—"past feeling." Strangest of all that any professed believer in Christianity should be so ignorant of its essence as to forget that far from reducing man to a mere calculating engine or intellectual machine, love is its mainspring and the fulfilling of its law. And with examples of love like St. John, and of fervid emotion like St. Paul, passing strange that any should dream of a religion

<sup>1</sup> Smith's *Dictionary of Biography*—"Zeno."



where joy should be no fruit of the Spirit, and where love should be the least of the graces. When the Dean of St. Patrick's looked at the tree with the blasted summit, with a sad presentiment of departing intellect, he exclaimed, "I am like that tree; I shall die first at top;" but sadder far is it to die first at heart, and, like the Stoic, walk the world void of natural affection—intellect without emotion, an observer but not a sharer of the social and domestic charities.

The first error of Stoicism was to take out the heart; the second, which has also found its way into some forms of Christianity, was to benumb or cauterize the sentient system. Then as they failed in this—as whatever name Diogenes or Zeno gave it, pain was still painful—their later disciples exalted pain into a positive virtue. And this error has been adopted by some who profess to follow Christ. They forget that virtue consists in conformity to a rule, and that although self-sacrifice is a valuable test of the strength of virtuous principle, it is not a necessary accompaniment of virtuous acts.<sup>1</sup> The highest style and the happiest is where duty is delight—where obedience is meat and drink; and although in a world like this obedience must often involve suffering, in vain shall we search the Scriptures for one sentence which enjoins pain for its own sake, or attaches intrinsic merit to any amount of agony. The Trappist, when he converts life into a long torture—Simeon Stylites, when he could say,

"Thrice ten years,  
Thrice multiplied by superhuman pangs,

---

<sup>1</sup> Butler, *Ancient Philosophy*, ii. 447.

In hungers and in thirsts, fevers and colds,  
 In coughs, aches, stitches, ulcerous throes and cramps,  
 A sign betwixt the meadow and the cloud,  
 Patient on this tall pillar I have borne  
 Rain, wind, frost, heat, hail, damp, and sleet, and snow ”

—that pillar of his was unawares borrowed from the *Στοὰ Ποικίλη*; <sup>1</sup> in thus trying to do God service he had learned not from Christ, but Zeno; and nothing could offer a more striking contrast than these purposeless and self-inflicted miseries to that memorable catalogue of hardships, which, through the constraining love of Christ, the apostle counted as nothing.

<sup>1</sup> [The *Stoa Poecilè* (“Painted Porch”), the porch or building in Athens, in which Zeno opened his school, and whence the origin of the name of the sect.]

## II.

### THE EPICUREAN.

WHEN the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. So to speak, the world *had* "wisdom." There was one nation especially noted for its bright spirits and deep thinkers; and numbers of its finest intellects grappled with the great questions, What is God? and What is the chief end of man? Every scholar in the Sunday-school can answer these questions; and therefore you may think it a waste of time to notice the answers which clever Pagans gave them. But it is well to know something on the subject. It will help us to see how much we owe to the gospel, and it will throw light on a great many passages of Scripture. When Paul preached at Athens, and when he wrote the epistles to the Corinthians, the Colossians, the Ephesians, he was addressing people whose minds were full of these notions. The late Dr. Adam, with the help of whose Grammar and Dictionary some of us learned Latin, was a very poor boy to begin with. He was intent on knowledge, but he could not purchase candles. In a peat-moss, however, near his father's house, were imbedded trunks of resinous timber. These logs had once been handsome trees, with

broad branches, adorning the forest and sheltering the traveller; but now that they were black logs, the shepherd boy split them up into long lathes and lit them for torches; and in the winter nights he read by their light his Greek Testament. These old philosophies are dead, but some of them are noble trunks, and others, which are not so imposing, we may at least use for pine fagots, and read with their aid a page of apostolic history.

Three hundred years before the Christian era it was a sad time in the history of Greece—confusion, convulsion, anarchy; and, as has been well remarked, “thinking men were led to seek that within them which they could not find without.”<sup>1</sup> One of these thinking men was Epicurus. His predecessors had asked, “What is truth?” but they had come so little speed with the answer that Epicurus thought it best to let the question alone. We shall give up asking, What is truth? and content ourselves with the question more manageable, What is happiness? To this question he replied, “Happiness is pleasure;” but it is only justice to observe that by pleasure Epicurus did not mean the coarse gratification of the moment. Happiness is not the enjoyment of the moment, but of the whole of life; and bodily pleasures are not for an instant to be compared with the enjoyments of mind—the pleasures of intelligence and virtuous self satisfaction. “Contentedness is a great good. Wealth consists not in having great possessions, but in having few wants.”<sup>2</sup>

By all accounts, Epicurus was himself a mild, gentle, likeable man; and great numbers of young Athenians

<sup>1</sup> Schmitz, in *Smith's Dictionary*.

<sup>2</sup> Lewes, *Hist. of Philosophy* (1857).

attached themselves to his teaching. His class-room was a garden—just as Zeno's was an old picture-gallery ; and as he and his disciples paced up and down the shady walks, or sat in the fragrant alcoves, they could forget the factions with which Greece was torn, and amid all the distractions of a troublous time could congratulate themselves on the possession of a personal panacea. At the same time, there was a great deal which tended to make the Epicureans personally popular. They were not supercilious and snappish like the Cynics, nor disdainful of the politer arts like the Stoics ; but, urbane, inoffensive, elegant, they accepted the surrounding conditions, and trying to appropriate what was pleasant, whilst shutting their eyes to all that was painful in the time and place, they did not pester society with efforts to improve it. There was no danger of any Epicurean sharing the fate of Socrates. None of them were likely to be put to death for intolerable virtues, or for disturbing men's minds with unwelcome questions. Anything but reformers, they were content to be refugees from a world not moving to their mind ; and, carrying out the maxim of their founder, "Live latent"—*λάθε βιώσας*—from noisy, factious, ungrateful Athens they were glad to escape away into that well-known garden, and in its scented shade, or under its laden boughs, would dream out the afternoon, or discuss art and literature with spirits as bright and unambitious as themselves.

What is God ? If there be any God, He is so infinitely great that we cannot imagine His taking the least interest in mortal affairs ; such was Epicurean theology. And

what is man? A short-lived creature, whose wisdom consists in making the most of his threescore years and ten—not wasting his body by excess, nor fatiguing his mind with hard questions and useless projects: such was Epicurean moral philosophy. The Stoic said, “Life is on the whole a hard allotment, so the best thing you can do is to harden yourself. It is usually rough weather, and it is a world in which blows and kicks are plentiful, and your true policy is to set them at defiance. If by any means you could indurate your epidermis into horn, or shell, or iron, you would find it an immense improvement; and the luckiest thing that could befall you would be the loss of your nervous system.” The Epicurean said, “On the whole it is rough weather, but there is no need to stir out of doors; or if you must go forth into the storm, there are water-proofs—put on your cloak, and keep warm and dry. It is rough weather, but there are sunny sheltered nooks, where all the year the rose and myrtle blossom: come into our garden and forget the world. The entire business will soon be over: so let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.” In the great struggle after a better style of existence, the Epicurean sought to develop himself into a butterfly—a sunny, airy creature, with painted wings, hovering over the flowers of life, and sipping only honey; the Stoic was content to be a beetle, attempting no great flights, and putting up with such sorry fare as life’s highway offers, but striving more and more to strengthen those shield-like elytra—those horny wing-sheaths which resist the foot of the passenger, and give some chance against a night of sudden frost.

Just as the Corinthians and as the Greeks in Asia generally were practical Epicureans, so the Romans of the Republic were ready-made Stoics : but for the fullest and most systematic exposition of the Garden Philosophy we are indebted to a real undegenerate Roman. If courage be the absence of fear, Lucretius is the most courageous of poets ; for not only does he come out with his conviction that man is a mere animal, and that belief in the supernatural is the source of all crime, but deriving his very inspiration from despair, his pen most glows whilst depicting the finality of death and man's annihilation in the grave :—

“ Ev'n could we life elongate, we should ne'er  
 Subtract one moment from the reign of death,  
 Nor the deep slumber of the grave curtail  
   Death  
 Remains eternal, nor of shorter date  
 To him who yesterday the light forsook,  
 Than him who died full many a year before.”

And in accordance with this stern conviction of man's nothingness, and in a tone very different from such truly Epicurean bards as Anacreon, Horace, and the Moores of later times, he upbraids those of his fellow-mortals who are loath to die :

“ Whence these useless fears ? For if the time elapsed  
 Have smiled propitious, and not all its gifts,  
 As though adventured in a leaky vase,  
 Been idly wasted,  
 Why quittest thou not, thou fool ! the feast of life,  
 Filled, and with mind all panting for repose ?”

“ Vile coward, dry thine eyes,  
 Hence with thy snivelling sorrows, and depart.”

III. 945, etc.

Truly the gay philosophy, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," was gloomy enough in the hands of this grave and unflinching interpreter.

The same philosophy, however, was taken up in a very different spirit by the Romans of the Empire—especially of the later Empire; and in citizens like Lucullus, in emperors like Heliogabalus, who interpreted happiness as mere sensual pleasure, the word "epicure" became for ever a name of infamy. And the revival of the same philosophy in France last century;—for when men closed their eyes as hard as possible against Providence and immortality and responsibility, and tried to carry to the utmost perfection the mere art of *living*, need we mention how frightful was the frenzy of blood and spoliation in which it issued, and into what a lake of fire a nation of pleasure-seekers soon found themselves plunged, rushing on with the shout, "No God! no God!" and as they leaped over the brink, still exclaiming, "Let us eat, drink, and be merry: for to-morrow we die."

On all this, in the early time, Christianity broke in, abrupt, unsparing, inexorable. To those who believed in no God, or only a Power vague, remote, indifferent, Paul proclaimed that God "in whom we live and move and have our being;" and so far from the threescore years and ten summing up the story and leaving every man free to make of his existence a plaything or a ploy, he announced in Heaven's name existence after death, and a world of retribution. "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent: because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that



man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."

In his notion of God and in his conception of man Epicurus was entirely wrong; and there is not one of the old philosophies to which Christianity was so fatal as it was to this system. Its theory of the Divine remoteness and indifference to human affairs was confuted by all the facts of the Old Testament, and the yet greater fact of the Incarnation; its idea of death as an eternal sleep vanished like a vapour before the life and immortality brought to light in the gospel; and its accommodating spirit, allowing every man to look out for himself and live in the way he likes best, quails before the announcement, "Ye are not your own. Let no man live to himself. Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

Still, it is wonderful how the spirit of the system survives, and how much of it is floating about in modern society. For indeed the system is older than Epicurus. When he planted gardens and orchards, and got together men-singers and women-singers, and said, It is comely to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all labour Solomon was an Epicurean long before Epicurus. Yet even Solomon was not original. The same experiment had been tried, and with singularly bad success—the experiment of living without God and making the most of the moment,—by that inquiring spirit who saw that the tree was pleasant, and who, in snatching at it, threw away the gift of immortality. And in the same way, at the

present day, there are many who do not call themselves philosophers and who do not speak Greek, but who encounter Paul in the spirit of the later Epicureans,—many who in that spirit oppose Christianity, or evade its distinctive requirements.

For example : The Epicurean maxim, “Live latent,” means, Live for yourself, and is in direct antagonism to the great Christian maxims, Live for your neighbour and for your God. The Epicurean is a unit—self-centred, self-contained : the Christian is a member of society, and the servant of Christ. The Epicurean has tastes ; the Christian has a conscience and a heart. And the moment you bring a man to love the Lord with all his soul, and his neighbour as himself, you convert him from the voluptuous or self-indulgent theory of living—you wither up the paradise of Epicurus.

For wherever in this world there is love, there is sorrow. In all true love there is pain, there is sorrow. A disciple loves his Saviour, and calls Him his chiefest joy. That affection involves hardship, self-denial. It has carried some away from home, it has landed some in prison, and even in our own day many are the bitter tears which some would never need to shed if it were not for allegiance to their Lord and Saviour. And a husband loves his wife, a father loves his children, and if the affection open many a well-spring of happiness, it also involves solitudes, anxieties, sorrows ; and just in proportion as it is genuine it shows its strength in the tasks it encounters, in the gratifications it foregoes, in the trials it endures.

People who like to have everything trim and tidy do not like swallows' nests beneath the eaves or in the angles of their windows, and you can prevent the birds from building by greasing the walls and lintels. This hinders them from getting a foundation for their fabrics; the mud or mortar won't adhere. And so the true Epicurean does not want to be incommoded with dependent neighbours, or even with friends overmuch attached. But he is not, like the Cynic, rude and repulsive. He does not poke down nests, for the sight of the distracted tenants and their dying offspring would pain his feelings; he would rather prevent them from building. So with oiled surface, with polished selfishness, he warns all and sundry—poor relatives and poor neighbours—that they must not look to him; he does not want to hurt them, but he is determined that none shall depend upon him; and he wonders at those good Christians who, like the people of Holland, provide platforms for the storks—who like the Levites in the Temple give asylum to the swallow—who are always entailing trouble on themselves, finding occupation for the unemployed, and refuges for the outcast, and homes for the orphan, and who cannot be happy unless they do their very best for every one who contrives to lay hold on their affection.

In the same way there is an Epicurean element which has crept into some people's religion. They want to be, not robust, growthful, useful, but they want to be happy; they want to be, not devout, holy, diligent, but they want to be kept in a certain state of pleasant self-complacency.

A cozy comfortable Christianity, which sits in its elbow-chair, and hopes to be wafted to heaven on the wings of sermons, without needing to put on its sandals and foot it on the rough road of the pilgrimage, is what they greatly prefer to the primitive method of taking up the cross and following Christ. As long as the joyful sound keeps chiming overhead, they are willing to sit still and mark time with their feet; but they have no notion of getting up and shouldering arms, and commencing the actual march.

“In brightness of Thy face, O Lord,  
They ever on shall go,”

is a very good sentiment, and it sings very well, but to sally forth bright-hearted, open-handed, in order to make known to others the saving Name—to battle with besetting sins, to show piety at home—needs self-conquest, self-denial.

An Epicurean is a counter-evangelist, and through the Divine arrangement, by shutting himself up and trying to be his own all-in-all, he shuts out the most sacred and heart-filling enjoyments, the friendship of God and the gratitude of man; whilst, contrariwise, he who seeks to be right and do right, in the very endeavour attains that happiness which, for its own sake, he vainly sought. “Live while you live” is the motto of the Doddridge family—sounding rather suspiciously, and suggesting Horace or Tibullus rather than David or Paul; but Dr. Doddridge rendered it into what Dr. Johnson pronounces “one of the finest epigrams in the English language:”—

“ Live while you live, the Epicure would say,  
And seize the pleasures of the present day ;  
Live while you live, the sacred preacher cries,  
And give to God each moment as it flies :  
Lord, in my views let both united be ;  
I live in pleasure when I live to Thee.”

It is safe sailing when the eye is on the pole-star, and the ship will come to port which is guided not by shore-lights but by the lamps of heaven. And although it does not look the most obvious plan, yet yours will be the fullest life who begin by giving yourselves to God, and then to the work which God is doing in this world. The time you spend in visiting the sick, in teaching your Sabbath scholars, in making garments for the poor, will shine out in recollection brighter and more pleasant than many an hour given to professed festivities ; and the money which with some effort you gave utterly away will come back into your bosom, will build up your better being in a way that no purchase or investment can. Soft lies the head which has watched over a sick friend's pillow, and in their hands God's angels upbear the man who has been feet to the lame, or who has removed the stumbling-block from before his blind brother. And those who this week keep festival will enter best into His spirit whose generosity made Him poor, and whose love made Him sorrowful, who in some little degree have been learning His lesson—who in the course of the year have been trying to warm themselves by heaping fire on the poor man's hearth, and to feast themselves by placing loaves on the poor man's table.

*Theology.*

Zeno : Fate reigns.

Epicurus : Chance reigns.

Christianity : God reigns—Grace reigns.

*Ethics.*

Zeno : Arm against Fortune.

Epicurus : Live latent.

Christianity : Love the Lord, and receive.

*Outgoings.*

Stoicism : Apathy, Hardness.

Epicureanism : Effeminacy, Cruelty.

Christianity : Entire devotion and benevolent activity.

### III.

#### PLATO.

“The Greeks seek after wisdom.”—1 COR. I. 22.

A MILE to the north-west of Athens was an enclosure like Kensington Gardens. A soft stream of water flowed through it, and it abounded in flowering plants, sculpture, and fountains. It was called the Academy, from the circumstance of its having once belonged to a citizen of the name of Academus. It was a delightful retreat, with grass under foot and the leafy plane-trees overhead, made for rest and retirement, and at a sufficient distance from the noisy disputatious city.

Two thousand two hundred years ago—a distant date, but there was such a time, and a time as living as our own,—just after Malachi, the last of the Hebrew prophets, fell silent, and when that long pause of expectation began which ended in the rise of the Sun of Righteousness—on any bright morning, if you had gone into this grove you might have found seated in some quiet nook a middle-aged man with a large group of hearers round him. These hearers or students had some of them come on purpose from distant countries, and many of them were afterwards famous—as you will allow when we mention Aristotle, Demosthenes, Dion. The professor himself was a broad-

browed, firm-built man, very grave and thoughtful-looking, often saying quaint and sarcastic things which made others smile, himself seldom smiling, and no man had ever heard him laugh. His voice was slender, but there was a wonderful fascination in his speech, and the saying went that when he was an infant in the cradle the bees of Hymettus had come and dropped honey on his lips. His grave look might be partly occasioned by the scenes he had witnessed : for instance, he had stood by his friend and master Socrates, when he was tried for his life, and had been obliged to fly from Athens in order to save his own. He had wandered through many lands in search of truth. He had spent a long time in Egypt, and doubtless had picked up a few particles of that knowledge supernaturally revealed to the chosen people, and which had oozed out wherever Hebrews had sojourned. And to these particles of truth, and to the Pythagorean or Eastern notion of the transmigration of souls, he had added many musings and speculations of his own ; and these he had a way of giving forth not peremptory or dogmatic, but with that suggestiveness of genius which set other minds a-thinking, with that excursive eloquence and those poetic illustrations which captivate some minds more than logic, and with such obvious goodness of heart that, whatever men might think of the doctrine, they saw that the man himself was true.

The name of this grave, fascinating Athenian gentleman was Plato ; and take him all in all—his comparatively pure and passionless nature, his intellectual majesty, his love of truth, his immense knowledge, and his



wonderful conceptive faculty,—he is one of the largest and most full-orbed minds with which we are acquainted among the sons of men, and may be quoted as an instance of a Greek who in a noble sense sought after wisdom. From his master Socrates he had learned not to take things upon trust, nor use words without realizing their meaning: but under pretence of being a seeker, Socrates was too often a simple *subverter*. If a man said that a treasure was hid under the corner-stone of his house, Socrates would show him that he was quite mistaken; but in order to do it he pulled down the house, and to the hapless owner, as he gazed on the ruin, it was small consolation to be told that he need not be sorry, for it was better that his body should be without a shelter than that an error should be lodging in his mind. To the less cheery and less social spirit of Plato, absolute truth or positive conviction was more needful than it was to Socrates; who, from the shadowy land of doubt and disputation, could always return into a very comfortable *actual* amongst his friends and neighbours: but Plato had no home except in the world of mind, and naturally he longed to have there some fixed and certain dwelling-place. The intellectual abode which he constructed may seem somewhat airy, but it was certainly beautiful; and as he sat in the gateway dispensing to the hungry crowd such morsels of wisdom as he had gleaned on his travels, or had grown on the home-farm of his own well-cultured imagination, the crumbs were welcome to those who like himself had kept a long fast on sceptic doubts and Socratic questions.

The Greeks sought after wisdom ; and to the question, "What is wisdom?" Plato answered, Knowledge. So far did he carry this, that he maintained that it was merely from want of knowledge that men are wicked : if they knew all the elements of the case, they would never choose evil : at all events, the soul brought away from its Divine Author an aspiration, an instinct, after the good ; and it was only from the maddening or darkening effect of the body to which it is joined that it is continually making mistakes and choosing evil rather than good. Wisdom is knowledge ; but what is knowledge ? And here came out a peculiar feature of the Platonic philosophy. Not only did Plato hold that the soul comes from God, but that it has been with Him, or with some superior race of beings a long while before it came hither ; and as our birth is "a sleep and a forgetting," it is the business of study and research to recall the lost knowledge, which is not so much a new acquisition as a resurrection of buried thought or feeling. Knowledge is *reminiscence* ; it is lost truth coming back again, and finding itself at home in the mind as with an old acquaintance. Of course Plato held that the soul is immortal ; indeed, a man who had so much mind, and who was so mainly mind, could hardly help feeling his own immortality : and there are in his dialogues many beautiful thoughts about God, and about man as a partaker of the Divine nature. At the same time it must be confessed that when he comes to the most important, because the practical, his philosophy is a failure. On the one hand, the God about whom he says so many eloquent things, is far off, indistinct, almost

impersonal—a God whom evidently Plato did not know, and whom he does not enable his disciples to love. On the other hand his ethics are impossible. Man is to conquer his own corruption, and this is to be done by stripping the disguises from vice, and by beholding the attractions of virtue. Alas for the patient who is told to be his own physician, and alas for that practice of physic which tries to cure consumption by lectures on oxygen,—which, by way of restoring a withered limb, exhibits the Apollo Belvidere, or in hope of taking up his bed shows to the sick of the palsy a regiment on the march, or a strong man carrying his burden.

To indicate the defects of Platonism, it is only needful to set it alongside of Christianity. Viewed in that light, and compared with the words of the Great Teacher, “it wanted authority, it wanted moral depth, it wanted reality and power.”<sup>1</sup> Socrates excepted, there is only one name outside the Holy Land which any one could venture to name without irreverence in presence of that great Teacher; but the comparison can only be suggested—it cannot be sustained for a moment. Plato was a mighty Thinker; he mused aloud, speculating ingeniously—his very guesses beautiful: but Jesus revealed. Never, like Plato, frivolous—never falling short of Himself—every utterance was an oracle; no need for searching after truth as long as He Himself, “The Truth,” was present. His one word, “Our Father,” “Your heavenly Father,” did more to make God known and bring Him into the homes of men than all the teaching of the schools. Plato

<sup>1</sup> *British and Foreign Evangelical Review*, Oct. 1863, pp. 870-873.

was dissatisfied with man as he is, but had no better remedy than the unrealizable dreams of his Utopian Republic. Going to the root of the disease, assuming that "what is born of the flesh is flesh," and taking a view of sin's turpitude such as had never struck the sage of the Academy, Christ at the same time offered a perfect extrication. Not only should the man never perish who took advantage of His help, but should rise to a new life, of which God communicated was the source, and God incarnate the pattern—"He that believeth in Me shall never die." "I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, who shall abide with you for ever—even the Spirit of Truth." "Plato, thou reasonest well, but, Lord Jesus, thou revealest. Thanks for life and immortality brought to light through the gospel! Plato, when we go to thee, thou hast words of beauty; but, Lord Jesus, when we come to Thee, Thou hast the words of everlasting life. Plato, thy God is vague and distant, inaccessible, unknown. Lord Jesus, Thou showest plainly of the Father, and in Thy company we find ourselves with the Father: for Thou art Thyself the Way, the Truth, the Life."

"Truth, not righteousness, is still the central, almost exclusive idea. . . . The idea of holiness and of a holy God, in the full Christian sense, is unknown. Hence there is no atonement, no cross, no foreshadowing presage even, however faint and dim, of a Lamb of God who should take away the sin of the world. Platonism has thus no balm for the soul's deepest disease, no exorcism for that dread spectre of guilt and fear which haunts the alienated

and sinful spirit of man evermore, but which the wisest of heathen sages never fairly confronts, or even seems to see."<sup>1</sup>

What might have happened had Plato lived four centuries later? What, may we venture to conceive, would have been the effect had he been permitted to hear for himself the words of Him who spake as never man spake, and in whose teaching, as authoritative as it was kind and assuring, such numbers found rest to their souls? Would he have been one of the few wise, one of the few mighty, to whom the saving truth is revealed, or with veiled heart, though with spectacled eyes, like so many other Greeks, would he have gone past the cross still seeking after wisdom? Hailing the Advocate with the Father, whose blood cleanseth from all sin, in adoration of the eternal Word, and in fellowship with God who is Light and is Love, would there have been added a twin-brother to John the Divine? or would it have been a new and mournful illustration of light shining in darkness, but closed out by the gorgeous screen, the golden shutter of proud philosophy?

The Lord alone can tell; meanwhile it is right to state that of all the philosophic sects Platonism alone furnished converts in any considerable number to Christianity.<sup>2</sup> It would appear as if the lofty thoughts and aspirations to which its disciples were introduced in the writings of their master, had so far prepared their minds for the still loftier thoughts and decisive teachings of the gospel;

<sup>1</sup> *British and Foreign Evangelical Review*, October 1863, p. 873. See also a note from Ackermann there quoted.

<sup>2</sup> *State of Man subsequent to Christianity*, p. 20.

although it must be noted as a more doubtful benefit, that a tendency soon arose in the Church to blend the systems together, trying on the one hand to make Plato a Christian, on the other hand trying to make the gospel Platonic. Not to mention Plotinus, and the other noted names of the Alexandrian school, we have this Platonizing tendency very strong in Clement of Alexandria, in Origen, and even in Augustine. It reappeared along with the Greek literature in Italy at the revival of letters. It gave its colour and complexion to the *Facry Quene* and is the pervading essence of Spenser's noble hymn to Heavenly Beauty. It is avowed by such English authors and thinkers as John Smith, Henry More, Sir Thomas Browne; it crops out continually in Jeremy Taylor, and even in Robert Leighton; and in modern times it has supplied a philosophy to such divines as Neander and Schleiermacher in Germany, to such poets as Wordsworth and Coleridge and Tennyson in England.

But there is no danger of its becoming greatly popular. The Greeks seek after wisdom, but there is no danger of this solid England soaring too high or quitting *terra firma* for any super-sensual sphere. Indeed, Plato himself is more a beautiful object to look at than a powerful influence to lift us up and away. There are in his writings large districts exceeding dreary and dry, and if it were not the musical pomp of his rhythmical prose which sends you along, and the fine lightsome atmosphere which blows round the reader, you would be apt to turn back in disgust, or drop down in despair; and even his most important and original passages are often hard to be

understood, whilst the absence of the peremptory and passionate is irksome to those who love earnest and conclusive writing. Like a large comet he arrests and detains the eye, but what seemed at first a solid nucleus grows thin and vaporous when you have looked long or brought a high power to bear, and it neither stirs the tide nor sheds warm healing from its wings.

No! we are not the people to be much injured by Plato; and without becoming a worse Christian, any one of you, with his Bible in his hand, might take a turn in the grove of Academus.

To instance in only one thing: The very basis of the Platonic philosophy is the distinction between the true and the apparent. The things seen come foremost, and meet our outward sense—*phenomena* or appearances; but it is the province of faith and reason to ascertain the unchanging truths which lie behind these ever-shifting phenomena. To the same purport says the apostle, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which do appear (*φαινομένων*)"—a doctrine which gives immense importance to holy principle standing out against the seductions of sense—which gives new import to the saying, "Surely each man walketh in a vain show"—and if that be possible, a further emphasis to the solemn question, "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

In the spirit of that doctrine, Norris of Bemerton,

George Herbert's successor, and a Christian Platonist, sings :

“ How long, Great God, how long must I  
 Immured in this dark prison lie ?  
 Where, at the grates and avenues of sense,  
 My soul must wait to have intelligence.  
 Where but faint gleams of Thee salute my sight,  
 Like doubtful moonshine in a cloudy night,  
 When shall I leave this magic sphere,  
 And be all mind, all eye, all ear ?

How cold this clime ! and yet my sense  
 Perceives even here thy influence ;  
 Even here thy strong magnetic charms I feel,  
 And pant and tremble like the impatient steel.  
 To lower good and beauties less divine  
 Sometimes my erring needle does decline ;  
 But yet, so strong the sympathy,  
 It turns, and points again to Thee.”

To Plato we are all indebted for lines of thought and forms of expression which are now familiar to all Christendom ; more especially for that distinction between the actual and the ideal which we are so often compelled to make, and which, recognised as it is by Revelation, has such an important bearing on Christian hope and Christian character. Nor is it a small service which is rendered to the species by the mere appearance amongst us of such a mind. With its intellectual vastitude and moral grandeur, it elevates our notion of humanity, and helps us to understand—if he had not immersed himself in sense and sin—what man might have been ; and when fully washed from defilement, and reinstated in light and purity, it helps us to understand what the redeemed of the Lord will become.



You remember Lady Jane Grey and Roger Ascham—how, when the scholar visited her father's seat in Leicestershire, he found the family and their guests out hunting, but the girl of fourteen in her apartment reading the *Phædon* in the original Greek. "I wist all their sport is but a shadow to that pleasure I find in Plato." But there was another book which she learned to value still more—that Testament which prepared her for her early and tragic end, and which has made multitudes wise to life everlasting who could find no pleasure and no sense in Plato. On the same table with his lofty wisdom lies the four-page history of "Matt, the Idiot Boy." He was thirteen years of age, when a lady found him seated on the shore, gazing up to an opening in the clouds, and asked what he was looking at. "Matt is looking for God. Matt wants to see God." And as the clouds closed, he added, "Matt shall see God some day." But a minister called at the house of his grandfather, and read the story of "the king who took account of his servants." He explained it to the weak-minded child as well as he could—how the man who owed thousands and thousands of pounds, and who had no money, was to be put into prison. Soon after his lady friend found him in his usual place on the beach, under the shelter of a boat, looking very dejected. He had been speaking aloud, and she asked what he was saying. He looked up, and putting his hands together, said, "Good God, Matt has no money to pay." He then told as well as he could what had been told him, and that he was going to prison—God was going to put him in prison. The lady told him, "Jesus

Christ has paid for poor Matt. God will not put you in prison *now*. Jesus Christ has paid all." For long he sat silent; then looking up and stretching his arms towards heaven, he called out, "Man that paid! Man that paid! Matt says, Thank you, thank you." His grandfather soon after died, and he was told that God might soon send for him also. This took great possession of his mind, and he would be continually washing his hands and asking for his new cap that he might be ready when God sent for him. At last, on a snowy morning he was found in a cave benumbed with frost, and dying; and among his last words were—"Matt shall see God some day. Matt will never be cold any more. God! God! and Man that paid, take poor Matt away."

"Father, I thank Thee! who hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes!"

## IV.

### PHILOSOPHY AND CHRISTIANITY.

WHEN the apostles went into the world to preach the gospel, they nowhere found the field quite clear and open. They fell in with scarcely a single individual who was in a state of preparation and expectancy; but before they could gain reception for their message they had to rouse the conscience, convince the understanding, remove ever so many mistakes and prejudices. People have compared the mind to a sheet of blank paper; but, like modern missionaries, the apostles seldom found the paper blank. It was already scrawled over with talmudical traditions and cabalistic symbols; or it was painted with images of Fame, Glory, Earthly Distinction, or so blurred and blackened by vicious and degrading habits that there was hardly a corner left large enough to contain the faithful saying. They stood at a public fountain and cried, "Ho, every one that thirsteth," but few regarded, for few were thirsty; and of those who paid some attention, most had their pitchers filled already. One man was ambitious: his mind was filled with self-aggrandizing projects, and he would not embrace a creed which imperilled his

worldly promotion. Another was religious: his mind was filled with self-righteous notions, and he could not enter into life by the same door with publicans and sinners. A third was a deep thinker: his mind was filled with philosophical self-complacency; he had been born a sage, and even for the sake of entering the kingdom of heaven he could not brook to become what he had never been—even in his babyhood—"a little child."

Amongst these pre-occupants of the ground and rivals of the gospel it is well to know something about the Greek Philosophy; and in three discourses we have explained the systems of Zeno, of Epicurus, of Plato. We might have added a fourth—the system of Aristotle,—and then you would have had an answer to the first question of our Catechism as given by the master minds of Greece. As it is, enough has been given by way of specimen,—enough to show what the apostles found already filling the most cultured minds of Corinth, Athens, Rome,—and enough to throw light on a good many passages in their preaching and their epistles.

I trust we have treated the subject fairly. We have no wish to disparage these ancient sages. For two of them in particular we acknowledge unbounded admiration; and if the view be limited to their mental stature, their mere intellectual dimensions, we question if there have arisen among the sons of men any greater than Plato and his wonderful pupil Aristotle. Just as Greek architecture has anticipated all the orders, and Greek poetry all the varieties of song, so Greek philosophy has forestalled all the systems, and left small scope for modern originality:

Nominalists and Realists, the Transcendental School and the Positive, are equally Greek ; and if Fichte be Plato—Plato himself somewhat nebulous—shining through a German fog, so Comte is the Stagirite—Aristotle made down into French *mots*—the Peripatetic prelecting the students of the Polytechnique and in the drawing-rooms of Paris.

And as we do not underrate the men, so neither do we despise their contribution to the fund of human thought. To quote the words of Calvin: “Since God alone is the source of all good, you must not doubt that whatever truth you anywhere meet with proceeds from Him. It is sinful to treat God’s gifts with contempt, and philosophy is the gift of God—the noble gift of God ; and those learned men who have striven after it in all ages have been incited thereto by God Himself.”

Not only do we concede the beauty of many of their thoughts and the force of many of their sayings, but we confess the service they have rendered more or less directly to the truth as it is in Jesus. One of the greatest obstructions to the gospel is stupidity, and the men we speak of did much to stir up thought and to brighten the minds of their brethren ; and some of them, like Plato, awakened a wistfulness which they could not appease—they pointed out paths which evidently went far higher, but up which they could neither climb themselves nor carry others. And now that the True Light shineth, it does not show everything to be error which was considered truth before ; but with that Divine catholicity which is so different from both the intolerance and the latitudinarianism of fallen

man, Christianity accepts and consecrates to its own purposes whatsoever things are true and whatsoever things are lovely, whosoever may have been the first promulgator, and wheresoever it finds them.

But as practical conclusions from what has preceded, we have two things to say :—1. That as a substitute for Christianity you will find Philosophy a failure. 2. In adopting Christianity you must take care and not ascribe to itself those adjuncts which it owes to men and their systems.

1. As a substitute for Christianity, as a means of solving the problem of man's peculiar existence on earth, as a means of satisfying the requirements of his multifarious nature, Philosophy is a total failure.

We may as well be candid. We are not now speaking to Plato and Zeno, but to all whom it concerns, and who, either through doubts as to Divine revelation or dislike to its distinctive truths, are trying to stop short in some merely human system. Depend upon it you will be disappointed. You are only trying to do what others have been trying with no success for two thousand years. The bed is too short, the blanket too narrow. There is that in your nature as God has made it, which can only be satisfied with provision of God's own supplying, with truth of His own revealing, with strength and joy of His own imparting.

The covering is too short. Take Stoicism—and we prefer using the old names rather than any modern nicknames, Rationalism, Secularism, Positivism ; for unless it be a few feathers furtively appropriated from the nest of

Christianity, we are not aware of anything in the modern moral philosophies which may not be found to all intents in the ancient. Take Stoicism, by far the highest in its standard of the whole, by far the stateliest in its practice—the system which made Cato of Utica, and Zeno himself, the system which was anticipated in the severe and hardy Roman—the system which, in reading *Sandford and Merton*, our boyhood admired so much, and a dash of which, like iron in the blood, is good for a sturdy heroic manhood.

But famous as it is for travellers, soldiers, and all whose business is to bear wounds without wincing and hunger without complaining, this stony doctrine is cold comfort to the crushed in spirit, to the aged, the dying. What is the use of saying to the crushed moth, or trampled worm, You should not be so sensitive, you should not have been in a world like this; or else you should have worn armour like that beetle, a shell like that snail? Or to the poor Polynesian whose canoe is shattered by a shot, where is the kindness of saying, You should not have put to sea in that shallop; you should have worn plates six inches thick? Alas, O Zeno, we have not all strong nerves. We see the superiority of iron-clads amongst ships—amongst creatures who must creep we see the advantage of crustaceans and other hard-coated animals; but we have not got this armour, and were not made for wearing it. And so when it came to Zeno's own turn, when it came to the turn of Cato of Utica, all refuge failed them. In pain, in extremity, their philosophy could serve them no further, and by an ignominious flight from existence, by that self-

destruction which has been so often the goal of the Stoic, they confessed that they were weak as other men, and fain to escape, they knew not whither, from miseries which they had often blamed others for not bearing more bravely.

Yes, in fine genial weather the self-sufficiency of virtue is a proud and pleasant doctrine; but when the frost sets in, when adversity comes, or bereavement, or prostration of spirit, that blanket is found too narrow. With nothing better to cover him, Zeno caught cold, and he died with the threadbare rag round his shoulders; and so did Cato and Seneca. "Christianity alone is the religion of the sorrowful," and as sorrow awaits all people at some time or other, it is the religion for all mankind. The tears which draw forth the contempt or rouse the indignation of Zeno awaken the compassion of Jesus; and if in answer to His inquiry, "Wherefore weepst thou?" the mourner confide the cause of his sorrow, there is not a grief but Jesus can heal it. For instance, is it sorrow from a source which was never dreamed of in that philosophy—from a sense of guilt and unworthiness in the sight of God? It is Jesus alone who can say, "Be of good cheer; thy sins, which are many, be forgiven thee." Is it the grief of bereavement—grief for the loveliness which is seen no more, for the old companionship which has gone into silence? It is Jesus who says—even that same Jesus who wept,—“Thy brother shall live again. I am the Resurrection and the Life; he who believeth in me shall never die.” Is it the sense of solitude—the sense of personal imperfection, and the utter inadequacy for high service of this dim and distant sphere, this land of exile? It is Jesus who answers,



“ Because I said, I go away, sorrow hath filled your hearts ; but I shall see you again, and your heart shall rejoice.”

Besides, O Philosophy, where is your motive ? and where your quickening power ? In the hour of temptation to talk to poor feeble humanity about the beauty of virtue and the deformity of vice, about self-respect and conformity to nature, is poor and pitiful prating, and as likely to arrest the whirlwind of passion as the leaves swept by the blast are likely to rein in the tempest—as the child’s rampart of sand is likely to beat back the surges of ocean. If you would persuade men to toss from them the accursed thing, the burning brand which kindles perdition in the soul, you must know the terrors of the Lord ; if with feet swift as hind’s feet you would climb the steep of duty, and, released from the gravitation of flesh and blood, soar to those pinnacles of holy performance which have been reached by the men of whom the world was not worthy, the love of Christ must constrain you, and you must rise on wings of faith and fervour, such as God alone can give.

The covering too narrow. Philosophy does not meet the case. There is much in man for which it makes no provision. The very noblest aspirations of his nature it leaves out utterly, and his best wishes it gives no power to perform. It knows not of any Holy Spirit—any influence of God Himself on the mind of man ; but just as it leaves the sinner to be his own saviour, so it leaves the slave of lust and passion to be his own emancipator—the man dead in trespasses to be his own sanctifier. It knows no language like that of Fénelon, “ Lord, take my heart,

since I know not how to give it to Thee. Pity me in spite of myself." It utters no such prayers as the Psalmist, "Wash me, and I shall be clean: sprinkle me, and I shall be whiter than the snow:" and thus, though amongst its proud pedants it may have yielded an occasional hero, it never by any chance turned out a saint; and never having sighed with the apostle, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?" it has never exclaimed with the emerging conqueror and exulting believer, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The covering too narrow. Take the opposite system. Zeno made a merit of pain, Epicurus made a God of pleasure. Enjoyment is the great end of existence—intellectual as well as sensational enjoyment. If ever there was an Epicurean age and nation, it was the France of last century. At the close of life hear the Frenchman who carried the experiment as far as any: "I now find myself in the decline of life, a prey to tormenting maladies,—at the close of my career without once having tasted the sublime pleasures after which my spirit panted. Why is it that with a soul naturally expansive, whose very existence is benevolence, I have never found one single friend with feelings like my own? A prey to cravings which have never been satisfied, I have arrived at the confines of old age, and am dying ere I have begun to **live**. I consider destiny as in my debt, for promises which she has never realized, and I revenge myself on my fate by shedding tears for its injustice."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rousseau, quoted in Shuttleworth's Sermons (1829), p. 520.

In other words, self-indulgence has failed to do for you, Jean Jacques, any more than his austere self-denial did for Zeno. And you put the blame on destiny! Did it never strike you that you should rather blame your own pig-philosophy? You *had* a higher nature, and you were not unconscious of its cravings; but how did you treat them? You drowned them in sensuality and maudlin sentiment. The religious instinct—that aspiration which ought to have carried you as on eagle wings towards the source of all goodness, you curbed—you shored to the quick its pinions—you kept it in the dark and in your own foul den, till vulture-wise it has turned upon you, and with talons in your ribs is striking at your vitals. With a soul formed for friendship, happy they who fled the farthest from it! nor need you wonder that such as came within its contact soon lost their loveliness. There are plagues which turn comeliness into corruption, and it is the superfine of sentiment to find the walking pestilence sitting down and shedding tears because so many refuse its friendship, and all whom it has succeeded in clutching hold of have on the instant exchanged their previous beauty for its own contagious ugliness.

2. Christ is the supreme philosophy. He is the revealer of man, just as He is the revealer of God. He has taught us what all our nature needs in order to its well-being, and not only does He teach it but He gives it: He is not only the great Revealer, but the one Redeemer and Restorer. In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, needful to enlighten our darkness and rectify our errors, but in Him dwelleth all the fulness of

the Godhead bodily—even that Divine fulness which is needful to supply our vast emptiness. And the more simply, the more personally, the more directly we deal with the Saviour Himself, the purer, the completer, the more lifesome is our Christianity likely to be.

As it falls from the firmament, or as it is distilled from the alembic, water is clear and colourless, and if it were intercepted in a marble tank or crystal basin, clear and colourless it would still continue. But in point of fact we seldom find it perfectly pure. Percolating through rocks of iron or lime, it springs up a fountain, bright enough, but astringent or bitter; infusing the roots of the smilax in the forests of Brazil, it takes the sweet taste of the sarsaparilla; amongst the marble hills of Carrara it flows a river of milk, and in the copper regions of Russia it spreads out in lakes of molten malachite,—a beautiful poison, and, whilst from the granite slopes of the Highlands it leaps in crystal and snow, here along our London streets it runs so turbid that, parched and panting as they are, the over-driven cattle are afraid to drink.

Simple in its sayings, and faithful, the gospel runs pellucid in the Word of God; and wise and happy is the man who drinks the revelation at the fountain-head, the truth as it is in Jesus, the truth which, clear as crystal, comes from the Source on high. But in point of fact that truth is always modified more or less by the mind which takes it in, and the outcoming Christianity assumes a complexion serious or sprightly, anxious or hopeful, severe or gentle, from antecedent elements in the receiving mind—from surviving features of the original man;

and if you were forming your impression, not from its own inspired records, but from individual professors or Christian communities, your impression of the Christian faith might exceedingly vary. Meek and lowly in the bruised reed—loud and boastful in the noisy antinomian—with doctrines distinct and definite in the clear-eyed Calvinist; a dim and somewhat hazy diffusion in the German pietist; in the Puritan austere, introspective, self-jealous; in the Wesleyan practical, cheerful, forth-going; in the God-fearing Scotchman grave, silent, and exercised about high matters; in the converted negro all emotion and impulse, with verses of hymns for a confession of faith, and with hallelujahs ready to answer every hard question.

Not an unmixed evil. Christianity—whose object is to restore in man the human by bringing to his help the Divine—Christianity spares the individual and the nation, the natural characteristics of the race, and it spares whatsoever is innocent or useful in acquired tastes and habits. Were Italy yielding to the gospel it would not lose its love of art, and the likeliest thing to restore to Spain the best features of its olden chivalry would be to let it read the Bible. Nor are we sure that in every case we should improve either a people or its piety by expelling all the elements it owes to Greek philosophy,—by purging the Platonic element out of Germany—the Platonism which came in with Melancthon, and has been revived by Tholuck and Stier, and Schleiermacher and Neander—by purging the Aristotelian element out of Scotland—the systematic divinity and the theological dialectics which came from the Lyceum at Athens to the halls of St. An-

drews by way of Padua and the Sorbonne and Geneva. In the comprehensiveness of Christianity there is room for both, and in the Church universal there are splendid results from both. But in as far as we believe that Christianity is better than the Christian, we would refer all seekers after truth to the fountain-head. Even our Christian philosophies are apt to have a show of wisdom—"traditions of men and rudiments of the world"—intermingled with the truth as it is in Jesus; but go you direct to the Master. In Him you are complete. You cannot err in believing what He says; and in becoming what He is able to make you, you will come out a character fairer, nobler, truer than aught ever known to this world's wisdom.

*Zeno—*

Bed too short—Take off your feet—Take off your feelings—Don't let your affections get entangled—have none.

*Plato—*

Covering of gossamer—Too fine, and for ordinary purposes too flimsy—The soul now living alone immortal—These people have no souls, must go off into annihilation.

*The Gospel—*

Gives a soul, a heart, a mind.

THE ETHICS OF THE GOSPEL

BEING

EIGHT LECTURES ON PHILIPPIANS IV. 8.

Delivered by Dr. Hamilton in the Winter of 1865-6.



## I.

### TRUTH.<sup>1</sup>

“Whatsoever things are True.”—PHIL. IV. 8.

CHRISTIANITY is a creed come alive and coming out—coming out, when needful, in the words of explicit and hearty confession—coming out habitually in the language, universally intelligible and still more impressive, of consistent character.

Our text is addressed to the leal-hearted and loving. On quarrelsome conceited Corinthians, on fickle Galatians going back from the gospel, such exhortations would have been expended in vain; but the apostle had full confidence in his Philippian correspondents. He thanked his God on every remembrance of them; he was assured that He who had begun a good work in them would perfect it; and so fresh and true was their faith, so generous their devotion to Christ, that he could with all hopefulness pray that their love might abound yet more and more, and that, like trees richly laden, they might be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

<sup>1</sup> This lecture is dated at Quarter, Stirlingshire, where he was detained by the illness of his son. Dr. Hamilton has prefixed a note, “Finished in the train between Larbert and London.”

To the kindred spirits here present we address ourselves this morning; to those who, loving Christ, and believing in the Holy Spirit, have at once the incentive to excellence and the hope of attaining it. As followers of that Captain of Salvation who summons you to glory and virtue, you have entered on a long and arduous career—long as life, and in its landing-place as lofty as the abode of spirits made perfect; and far from blaspheming as “dry morality” a text like the present, you bless God that its heaven-taught ethics can be torn from the heart of the gospel no more than His sceptre of righteousness can be wrenched from the hand of Immanuel. Regretting that to many readers the Sermon on the Mount should be more of a sealed book than the darkest prophecy, and the Beatitudes in their belly more bitter than the woes of the Apocalypse, to you the gospel is God-like because it is the holiest thing on earth, and the Saviour is precious, because He saves His people from their sins. With the love you have to that Saviour, although at forlorn and almost despairing distance, you fain would follow in His track. If there be any virtue, if there be any praise, you see it embodied all in Him, and every time you glimpse that Fairest of all Men you long to be like Him. You bless God that in that Saviour whom He has taught you to love, you have an absolute ideal—the pattern of every excellence; and you rejoice to know that so comprehensive is Christianity, that wherever things true, sublime, attractive, are found, you are invited to admire and emulate, till all the virtue and praise of others become your own.

If by "whatsoever things are true," are meant verities or true statements, they include the Bible and all its faithful sayings; nor will they exclude the facts of history and the legitimate conclusions of philosophy. Truth is the pasture which the Good Shepherd has prepared for the minds of men, and although in different specimens there may be all degrees of sap and sweetness, and some may be very dry or actually distasteful, there is none which is altogether useless. In order, however, that any truth may nourish or improve the mind, it must be pondered. It must be thought upon till it gives out its strangeness or its glory, and so enters as a corrective or ennobling element into your own existence. For want of this there are men whose memory holds the knowledge as the paper holds the print, uninfluenced, unquickened; and whilst the man of a few facts may be a sage, whilst the man of a few texts may be a Christian, the head which holds the circle of the sciences may be only a cyclopædia, —the head which holds a Bible may be only a concordance.

We have little doubt, however, that it is not to truth in the sense of accurate knowledge, but to truth as an attribute of character, that the apostle is here referring. Whatsoever traits or dispositions, whatsoever features of character we perceive in others noble or endearing, let us think of these things and do them.

It would seem as if the subtle venom of that old serpent had gone very deep into the system; for certainly since the race was led away from the God of Truth by the Father of Lies, a tendency to falsehood and finesse is almost uni-

versal, and an out-and-out veracity it is most difficult to maintain. Pleasant truths and popular it is easy to utter, and the most unpleasant we can proclaim in moments of excitement or revenge; but a very precious gift of God and a rare one is that tenderness of conscience, that transparency of spirit to which even concealment is uncomfortable, and from which accuracy in narrations and faithfulness in promises flow forth as inevitably as clear waters from a crystal spring;—that veracity which is not coarseness in the garb of candour,—a cheap and vulgar plain-spokenness claiming the credit due to a Christian virtue,—but the genuine outcome of an upright and earnest nature, and which, associated with benevolence and controlled by delicacy, is likely to give none offence.

There are questions of casuistry on which we need not enter. Is every stratagem a falsehood? When the lunatic wanted Sir Thomas More to jump down from the roof of his house in Chelsea, and the shrewd Chancellor suggested that it would be much more wonderful if he would let him go down and watch till he jumped up again: was it a wicked lie or a justifiable *ruse*? Is it yea, yea, and nay, nay, if a cup or platter is not through and through the precious metal, but only a bright amalgam or iron coated over with a pellicle of silver? Is it honest to paint the plaster front of a house so that the squares shall pass for blocks of polished freestone? Questions of this class may admit of solution, but in the present state of society there are others more urgent. When a camel has been drowned in the wine-vat, to fetch a filter for straining out gnats is very like affectation. True: the wine would be all the better

without the gnats, but our first concern lies with the camel; and even although we should not quote those monstrous frauds and astounding falsehoods which burst on us so often, who is there that looks at our modern ways—the way in which much business is transacted, the way in which the talk of neighbours is carried on, the way in which controversy is conducted, and in which some newspapers are written—without feeling that a habit of general insincerity or unscrupulousness has to be unlearned, and a tone of stricter accuracy and integrity established? In other words, there is still a frightful amount of the first falsehood, the fatal deceitfulness, still lingering in Christendom, and the effort which the good Quakers made in vain to secure truth in all things has still to be tried in a more excellent way. Instead of merely straining out gnats in the flagon, we have need to go to the tank and draw out the drowned camel.

It has been said by a late distinguished surgeon, President of the Royal Society, “The first thing that a young person should be made to understand is the value of truth; not only that he should never deviate from the rule of telling the truth, but that he should on all occasions desire to learn the truth, and that without considering whether the result will be agreeable and convenient or otherwise.” The principle is admirable, but with the utmost desire to learn the truth, it is often very difficult. To tell it is more easy, and if all were telling truly what they already know, it would be more possible to make a fresh advance and go on unto perfection.

This suggests a thought: might we not make it easier

to children—yes, and to one another—to tell the truth? What is the most frequent cause of concealment or prevarication? A boy flings a stone, and breaks a window. He tries his new axe, or knife, on your young cherry-tree, and kills it. There was no malice in either case, and if the young delinquent could make you exactly understand how it came to pass, in all likelihood the cloud on your brow would scatter; but so angry is that cloud that the temptation to conceal is terrible, and it would need the courage of a Washington to incur the risk and avow the crime. So with all dependants. A brave man, or a man whose fear of God swallows up all other fear, will tell the truth at any cost; but there are a great many people who are not wilfully or habitually false, but who, not having the courage of confessors or the faith of martyrs, find it a terrible temptation to equivocate when a good appointment or some great advantage is in peril. But you who are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak—in other words, you not only should put no temptation in the way of feeble faith or precarious principle, but you should do what you can to make it stronger. You should give those around you such an impression of your candour and considerateness, you should have such a good report for calmness, and fair and patient dealing, that the accused or suspected will readily put you in full possession of the case, and after that, if you adjudicate, your decision is likely to be so fair that even the offender must acquiesce; or if it should result in a full and cordial exoneration, it will be an encouraging experience, giving boldness in subsequent emergencies for like frank and faithful dealing.

Not only is it our duty to protect the principles of others by putting no temptation in their way, but if they fall into temptation we should do what we can to help them out of the snare of the devil. If you corner a man, and insist on a categorical answer—"No roundabout—no rigmareole—a straightforward answer if you please—Yes or No"—very likely you are forcing him into a reluctant falsehood: for there are a great many questions to which the true answer would not be *Yes*, and nevertheless *No* would be the greater lie.

With all his warm-heartedness Peter was weak. Like most of ourselves he wanted self-knowledge. Of his zeal for his Master he had no idea how much sprang from prejudice and pre-occupation; and so when their Lord hinted that a trial was coming in which most of them would be disheartened and driven off, with perfect sincerity the sanguine apostle could declare, "Though all men should be offended in Thee, yet will not I;" and when Jesus said, "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation," Peter saw no need. Accordingly, when he found his expected King in the hands of His enemies he was stunned and stupefied, and when the question was put, "Are not you one of them?" in that manacled captive unable any longer to recognise Messiah, he answered with an agitated "No;" and then in consistent cowardice adhered to his denial. But what Peter failed to do for himself, his Lord had done for him. He had prayed that his faith might not fail utterly, and the door of escape which the fore-thoughtful love of the Intercessor had provided, the tender wisdom of the Good Shepherd now opened.

Faltering on the very verge of apostasy, a slight further shove might have hurled him over cursing and swearing and protesting, "I know not the man"—had he been arrested, "Come now, thou art a Galilean, and knowest him well: we want witnesses: if thou wouldst save thyself, just say that thou hast heard him claim to be a king, and we will let thee go"—in that hour and power of darkness the favoured apostle might have turned approver, and the treachery of Judas been crowned by a more hideous crime in Peter. But at this crisis, a look silent and ineffable from his much-wronged Master saved the soul by breaking the heart of the weak disciple. So dastardly and disgraceful, any mere man would have been apt to turn away disgusted from such a craven, or with a scorning glance have petrified the liar, and taken farewell for ever; but with a look which, recalling all the past, and revealing Peter to himself, let out the infinite compassion which already had forgiven—the Lord Jesus gave Peter a new and affecting reason for his old avowal, and enabled him in after days to preach with fresh pathos the same Jesus as the Bestower of repentance and the remission of sins.

A lesson for us in our treatment of the tempted—a lesson not to let the trial be too terrible; and a lesson for us in our treatment of the weak and fallen—a lesson not to fix the crime and make it final by a swift and irretrievable severity, as long as there is the possibility of restoration into the paths of righteousness. "Whatsoever things are true, etc., think on these things." It was to bear witness of the truth that Jesus came into the world, and



it was for this witness that His enemies sought to drive Him out of the world, and fancied that they had at last succeeded. The truths to which he testified are all-important: the holiness, the love, the fatherliness of God; the comprehensive and all-embracing care of a personal Providence; the pre-eminence of the moral above the material—consequently the power of faith and the efficacy of prayer. Strange duties or enjoyments also He revealed: the forgiveness of injuries, the happiness of meekness and humility, the wisdom that there is in being careful for nothing. And He brought life and immortality to light. Coming from a world of life into a world of death, He acquainted Himself with those anomalies, sickness, pain, dissolution. He found them at home with us, but they were alien to Him, and having life in Himself abundantly, the virtue oftentimes went out and healed the sick, or even reanimated the dead. And as it proved that over Himself death had no dominion, so in like manner He offered to guide through the solemn and mysterious portals, and receive into eternal habitations all who could trust Him.

These are great truths, and there is something to think of in the way that He taught them—so calmly, so noiselessly, so secure of their ultimate reception and triumph; not caring whether at the moment any of earth's mighty ones were present to hear, well knowing that in due time they would be known to earth's greatest and wisest.

So if we think long enough, deeply enough, on the things that are true, we shall find ourselves at last thinking on Jesus—the great Revealer and the great Revelation.

If there be lies that have in them the subtlety of Satan, let us be thankful that truth has in it the strength of God ; if there be falsehoods which have had a long life of it, let us be thankful that none of them can live for ever : the toughest, hardiest lie will be dead some day : the truth alone is immortal. And in a world where there is much uncertain—where in speculation, in science, in popular opinion, what is established to-day is upset to-morrow—let us be thankful that on the most momentous of all inquiries we have in Christ Jesus God's *Yea* and God's *Amen*. Of God I desire no image more express than His own beloved Son ; of oracles I expect none more absolute or more final than that which shines forth when I look into the face of Jesus, and which tells me " God is Light : God is Love."

## II.

### NOBLENES.

“Whatsoever things are Honest.”—PHIL IV. 8.

“HONEST,” as it is used in modern English, is a homely word, falling far short of its Latin ancestor, “honestus,” and giving no notion whatever of the word employed by St. Paul. That word comes from a root which means to worship, to venerate, to stand in awe; and although it may not be easy to find an epithet in our language the exact equivalent of the apostle’s *σεμνία*, there can be no difficulty as to his meaning.

Occasionally, actions are performed, so heroic, so brilliant, so self-devoting, that you cannot help regarding them, at least for the moment, as superhuman. Like the people of Lystra, when Paul preached so eloquently, and he and Barnabas made the lame man leap up, the feeling will be, “The gods are come down;” or, under the influence of a clearer faith, God is with them: His gift is this eloquence, His mercy is in this miracle. And as it is with certain incidents, so is it now and then with some person or other. Occasionally men are raised up whose entire character towers above their fellows. Their walk through the world is on so high a level, their whole

history is so sublime and separate, their stature so colossal, the strides they take in their progress from life to immortality so amazing, that it is no wonder you feel as if there were in them something above the range of mortality. Except on viewless pinions—except on wings not the less real because invisible—it would be impossible for flesh and blood to soar so high or sustain a flight so arduous; and as you view the marvellous career of men like Xavier, Vincent de Paul, John Howard; as you view the long miracle of such a life as Elijah, Daniel, Paul, you feel that to raise and sustain them so long above the selfishness and ordinary frailties of humanity needed better than the wings of eagles; and although you do not bow the knee or burn incense, you magnify in them the grace of God, and are grateful for examples which nobilitate our nature, and send your thoughts to heaven.

Such are the patterns, such the traits of character which the apostle bids us ponder. Whatsoever things are so lofty, so heroic, that they call up the religious sentiment—whatssoever things are so grand as to be well-nigh worshipful—these things he bids us think upon.

1. Of deeds so heroic that we feel them sublime, the first class which we would specify is the *Dutiful*. The instance is often adduced of the soldier at the gate of Pompeii. The city was destroyed by an outburst of Vesuvius, but most of the inhabitants escaped. And this man had every advantage for saving himself: already at the gate, with no goods nor household to look after, with nothing more to do than run away. But he was a Roman, and he was a soldier and a sentinel. At that gate he had

been posted, and there it was his duty to abide; and though thousands swept past him in their flight, there he stood, amid the deepening darkness and the stifling dust-storm, there he stood, till no more stragglers passed, and till a Mightier than any earthly commander spoke the word of release, and there he lies with helmet and spear, a monument of soldierly steadfastness.

Happily this spirit did not die out with the Romans, and any one who remembers the battle of Rocroy, after which an entire Spanish regiment was found prostrate on the field, every man in his order, and, expiring at their head, their colonel, the old Count de Fuentes, who, too sick to stand, had been carried to his post in a chair; any one who remembers the wreck of the "Birkenhead," where on the sinking deck stood 500 gallant warriors silently awaiting their watery grave, whilst the boats with the women and children went away, will be proud to believe that, more precious than brilliant outbursts of valour, there still survive the calm instincts of duty and the courage which is ever prepared to obey.

In the Revelation of John and the Epistles of Paul, the language is frequently martial; and it is a great point for us to remember the continual conflict raging around. Even the members of the Peace Society must take some side. *He is no saint who is not a soldier*; and although in the great contest there may be room for dash and for feats of daring, there is more habitual need for duteousness. The charm of discipline is this, that by moulding a multitude, and making them all one will, it makes them to every intent one weapon—a weapon, like the cherub

sword, all edge, all flame, turning every way, and in the hand of a mighty man irresistible. But discipline means obedience, and in Christ's army they are the best soldiers who most entirely merge their will in His wisest will, and who watch the most attentively the great Captain's sign. If the myriads enlisted were now doing this, it would immensely shorten the campaign. If it were the one anxiety of Christians to be and to do exactly what their Lord desires, long as the feud has raged between light and darkness, right and wrong, we should soon see tokens of the end. But even as it is, marvels might be wrought by a Gideon's handful—a sifted company—true “volunteers,” as the Psalmist calls them, willing people, a people whose will is the best possible, for it is Christ's will, a will intent on God's glory and the world's welfare, and wise enough to know that the best thing for either is to do the great Master's bidding.

Apart, however, from mighty movements and grand engagements, a good soldier may render important service in a lowly post, or on a lonely enterprise ; and he may do it, not by seeking it out, but simply because it comes to his hand. The Captain says, Go : go on this errand, and at once you set out : come, take this station, and you take it. But you have not been long there till, like the sentinel at Pompeii, the volcano bursts ; till, like Antipas and Pergamos, Satan's seat rises in fury, and there comes the unsought but unevaded martyrdom. It is needful to be upright, and for telling the truth you lose your appointment. Your acquaintance does wrong and you remonstrate, and your faithfulness loses your friend. The

deadly sickness enters your dwelling, and, ministering to the plague-stricken inmate, you lose your health or your life. But if a good deal is thus lost, much more is gained—gained to the cause, gained to the martyr—to the martyr who for Christ's sake losing one life finds a better, to the cause in which no good soldier ever dies, and in which every duteous deed itself is a conquest.

2. Apart from such deeds there is a class still more striking. For although some acts of simple duteousness cannot be surpassed in moral sublimity, and although in the widest sense duteousness takes in the utmost that any man ever did—for the best servant feels that he has done no more than it was his duty to do,—yet there are acts which rise so far above the average of conscientious performance that fellow-servants, at least, are bound to applaud them; they are “virtues” which we ought to “praise.” When Arnold von Winkelried threw himself on the Austrian spears, and opened a passage for the patriots, he only did his duty to his country, and he only obeyed the impulse of his own brave heart; but the heart capable of such an impulse is so rare that for six centuries history has rehearsed the deed as the very type of heroic *Self-devotement*, and we justly feel that such a way of doing duty soars far above the daily level. Like a vein of porphyry, or a granite peak, such a deed shooting high into a nation's annals tilts up the tameness of a thousand years, and the slow sedimentary formations from the sleepy ages which went before, it carries with it towards the sky. The nations which never had such noble men, or which have allowed too long an interval to pass without repeating

them, are table-land, dreary swamps, or brackish Sunderbunds, impressive with no names of renown, and summoned to noble deeds by no majestic memories.

Hence in all great contests, in fights for freedom or nationality, in fights for the altar or the hearth, the value of magic names and rallying-cries; such memories as were Marathon to Greece, and Lake Regillus to Rome; such memories as to Switzerland are Sempach and Morgarten, to England the Spanish Armada; such names as to the later Hebrews were the Maccabees, to the Scots Bruce and Wallace, to the Dutch William of Orange, and such as to the Americans ever will be Washington. Hence to the Christian Church the mighty spell of its glorious martyrs. Not that one in a thousand ever dreams that he will lay his head on the block, or go up in a fiery chariot; but every one who has fair information knows how cheerfully for Christ some of earth's best and wisest gave life away, and even those whose information is the scantiest derive their best ideas and inspiration from a book which thrills throughout with the genius of martyrdom, and in every page of which the paramount presence is One whose self-devotement was peerless, and whose transcendent sacrifice has encouraged and sustained and sanctified, and made effectual a multitude besides which no man can number; martyrs not only for the faith once delivered to the saints, but martyrs for the best feelings originally stamped on humanity; martyrs of the sick-room as well as of the scaffold; martyrs on behalf of the social affections as well as in the cause of religious freedom; martyrs for patriotism, martyrs for friendship, martyrs for truth;



but in as far as they were cheered by His pattern, and upheld by His Spirit, the martyrs, all of them, of Jesus Christ.

It was this feeling of self-devotement which made so noble the conduct of Gustavus Adolphus. With no ambition to impel, with no aggrandizement, personal or national, to make it worth his while, and already wearied with successive wars, he took up the cause of the German Protestants, because there was no one else to do it, and sorrowfully exclaiming, "Henceforth there remains no rest for me save that which is eternal," threw himself into that campaign which saved the Continental Reformation, but left his own lifeless body on the field of Lützen. Hence all honour be to those who, to gratify no natural taste, to earn no riches or renown, at the summons of the gospel, or of some of the gospel's great subordinates, give themselves to the tedious, perhaps the life-long, task, and, educating, evangelizing, urging forward the social reform, spend the years and exhaust their vigour with scarcely a taste of those joys for which high culture or warm hearts fit them beyond their fellows. All honour to Henry Martyn and Reginald Heber, not only for what they took to India, but for what they left in going. All honour to the like of David Sandeman for the heritage he was content to forfeit in order to preach Christ among the heathen; and all honour to the like of Miss Baxter, leaving the best society and the attractions of a refined and Christian home, in order to carry, self-sustained, to the daughters of China the pearl of great price. All honour to the like of Michael Thomas Sadler, who, impor-

tunate to irksomeness, urged his monomania till the noble madness spread, and to please an excited people a hesitating Parliament set free the factory children. And all honour to the agitator, the best whom Ireland has ever yielded, the patriotic Father Mathew, who revealed to his countrymen a greater danger than heresy, and a sorer oppressor than the Saxon, and who, in banishing strong drink, brought sense and thrift, intelligence and industry, into what till then had been dens of squalor and abodes of cruelty.

Our text is a *cartoon*. In a few bold emphatic strokes the artist dashes off an outline, and invites our careful contemplation. Every word a feature : truth, nobleness, equity, purity, warm affection, winsome grace—the whole comes out THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER. Half a stroke—for we cannot call it one feature—has taken up this morning ; and—“ think on these things ”—we have been thinking on the things lofty and venerable. We have dwelt a little on *the sublime in duteousness*, and *the sublime in self-devotement* ; but there are many other details from which, for fear of bewildering attention or burdening memory, we must for the present pass away.

Ere doing so, however, I may be allowed one or two remarks, which may not so conveniently come in another time.

Says the apostle, “ Add to your truth nobleness.” Be not only sterling, but stately—so disdainful of the wrong and so devoted to the good as to stand out sublimely separate. Think on the things true till you yourself are genuine ; think on the things majestic till you yourself, seeking the things above, grow lofty.

This implies a certain solidity and seriousness in the aspirant himself; and indeed without this there can be no excellence whatsoever. A frivolous character can be neither impressive nor attractive, and without sincerity, without truth in the inward parts, to say nothing of the grander elements, you will be neither endearing nor respected, you will lack both the loveliness and the good report.

But on the basis of truth, sound belief and sincere endeavour, go on and build the upward structure. Nor is it bidding you repeat a tower of Babel, whose top shall reach unto heaven, when we point your regard to such instances as we have viewed this morning. True: all Babel-building, all proud and self-exalting effort, is sure to be confounded; but to a lowly self-consciousness there is sometimes united a generous aspiration, enkindled by God's own Spirit—a gracious disposition which results in gracious attainment. And as there is no presumption in the tree when, atom by atom and cell by cell, it builds up its timber,—and as the Californian pine overtops, and the cedar of Lebanon outlasts, the tower of Shinar,—so utterly remote from the idolatrous aspiration, which, seeking to make a name for itself in the earth, goes to, and with bricks of slime builds up its own pagoda, is that instinct of life, that appetency for air and sun, which carries upward, and still upward, the tree of righteousness, adding grace to grace, and carrying its honours as meekly when it surmounts the forest as when it added the first cubit to its stature.

And a means of growth is meditation. “Think.”

Dwell on the great patterns. The greatest are in the Bible, and although you do not hope to repeat the men, it does you good to ponder their noble deeds. "Hills draw like hands, and help you up towards heaven," and so do great examples; those mountains on the plains of history, great examples, whether noble men or glorious incidents. If tempted to keep back what God demands, think of Abraham's awful ordeal and the recompense which crowned his matchless obedience; and if tempted to weary in well-doing, think of Noah's prodigious persistency and the saved world which resulted from his 120 years of ark-building. If gone to the far country, and tempted to forget the God of your fathers, or conceal your faith, remember Daniel in Babylon praying with his window open towards Jerusalem; and if tempted to retaliate on a fallen enemy or a helpless adversary, remember David at Saul's pillow, remember Joseph's magnificent revenge on his ruthless brethren. So fortunate as to have your home within near sight of those everlasting ranges, all different but all magnificent, such models of magnanimity and patience, and courage and self-devotion as you there will find, all flanking and taking something of their mould from their centre and monarch whose top reacheth unto heaven, your immediate homestead of thought and occupation may be lowly enough, but if a step to the door or a glance through the window recall such realities, surroundings so stately and splendid should make your life sublime.

### III.

#### NOBLENESS.

“Whatsoever things are Honest.”—PHIL. IV. 8.

3. SELF-PRESERVATION is an instinct so profound, so primary, that it needs a mighty motive to suspend or supersede it. When such a motive is present, and the love of life or the dread of pain is set aside by some nobler impulse, we cannot help a thrill of admiration, and in our turn we receive an impulse which makes us so much braver than our usual, that in the strength of it we could repeat the “golden deed,” or go on and do some other gallant action.

When the bear comes trotting down the glen, self-preservation cries, “Flee;” but when instead of scampering off the young shepherd leaps forward, and throwing himself between his flock and the danger, compels the ruffian to drop the lamb which that instant he was clutching, and as ramping on his haunches, growling and slavering, the monster threatens to squeeze out his breath with a grisly hug, or cranch through his spine with those terrible tusks, the stripling closes in, and with blows of his bludgeon smashes the skull of the caitiff, we hail the good shepherd who risks his life for the sheep, and we bless God who crowns his *Courage* with victory. So when

the *länmergeier* swoops on the hay-field, and carries up to the crag the babe from the cradle, when instead of swooning in despair, or shrieking in unavailing agony, we see the mother give chase, and up the cliff like a cat of the mountain, till to look makes you dizzy, climbing, still climbing, till the nest is reached, and in rage and terror the old vultures are screaming around her, you admire the holy love which, absorbed in its object, never thought of danger, and you trust that in the future of her boy she will have ample repayment for this feat of maternal affection.

And there follows a good result. Great actions, deeds of heroism and self-devotement, come from Him from whom all goodness comes, and they are wonderfully reproductive, or perhaps we should rather say, they are wonderfully growthful and vital. Like a mighty tree, which becomes a landmark and monument to the country-side, talked of by travellers, remembered by natives in the far land of their exile, and shedding down from its shadow over children's sports and old men's musings a sort of dignity—a heroic deed becomes a public benefaction. As in Rome in the nights of winter,

“When the goodman repaired his armour,  
And trimmed his helmet's plume ;  
When the goodwife's shuttle merrily  
Went flashing through the loom,  
With weeping and with laughter,  
Oft was the story told,  
How well Horatius kept the bridge  
In the brave days of old.”

So a deed of heroism becomes an enduring presence and

a powerful influence. It was not only David's own sheep which he rescued from danger, but there was not a lad in the Holy Land who did not afterwards learn the story—a story enough to stir up the hireling and make him a good shepherd, and enough to make the good shepherd still braver; and thus, ages after his own arm had withered, that "staff" of his was still protecting the flocks of Palestine. And by the admiration it drew forth, as in the case of Joan of Arc and Agostina of Zaragosa and our own Grace Darling, the daring of that Swiss mother helped to make all her sisters heroines, and taught them that there are times when woman's passive endurance may overstep its wonted limits, and gloriously assume the form of active courage.

There are times, however, when, if not a sorer peril, it is a fight for a greater prize. There are times when interests are at stake more important than a peasant's babe or a few sheep in the wilderness, and when the enemy is far more formidable than the bear or Alpine eagle. In other words, there are times when on a single champion, or some small band of which he is the inspiration, depends the fate of a town or kingdom, or, what is more important, the fate for the time being of some great truth or principle. More awful than any bear or lion is the Goliath who comes forth day by day to defy the armies of the living God, and correspondingly great is his service who, going against him in the name of Jehovah, lays low the insulting colossus. And more frightful even than he, is the braggart who casts his big black shadow over the minds of men, and who by great swelling words

keeps countries in awe, with abject populations crouching at his feet ; and proportionally great is his service who slings the smooth stone straight through his forehead : the Wickliffe or Huss who gives the deadly wound to the Papacy, the Tell who shoots his arrow straight through the brow of Austrian despotism, the Wilberforce who runs up and with its own sword cuts off the head of West Indian slavery.

For such times and services great courage is needful. To be the mound at Marathon—the embanked ten thousand who kept back the Persian million, saving Europe from submergence beneath a stupid stagnant eastern ocean—to be the living barrier betwixt the sacred and the secular, like Ambrose at the church gates of Milan, making his own weak arm the bolt to hold out the blood-stained emperor—to be the Horatius who kept the bridge, as Alexander Henderson kept it against Court and bishops in the brave days of the Glasgow Assembly—to be the David whose single staff smote the monster as Hampden smote and slew ship-money and unconstitutional monarchy—feats like these need courage ; but He who gives the courage gives the guerdon. They scarcely ever fail. In their success we see “God reigneth,” and, irrespective of success, we rejoice that such faith and self-devotion should enter the minds of men. Like the voice of the archangel, they are a trump of God. They break into our earthliness and lethargy, and rouse us to the value of those great objects for which such lives were risked, and when the need returns they call us to repeat them.

4. Duteousness, self-devotion, courage, may be called



forth in such circumstances, or may be carried to such a height as to make them sublime. So even with the gentle grace *Beneficence*—as when, soldier and saint, Martin of Tours took off his cloak, and with his sword ripped it in two to give half to the beggar—as when Le Pelletier, after giving his fortune to the poor, commenced begging on their behalf from his rich friends in Orleans, and receiving a blow in the face from an acquaintance whom he pressed too urgently, carried his point by exclaiming: “Well, that’s for me; but now for the poor! what for the poor?”—as when Howard, finishing his long work of beneficence, repaired to the infected bedside, comforted the sufferer, took fever into his own bosom, and died. But like the planet Mercury, so near the sun as to be seldom visible, deeds of this description bring us so near the Man of mercies as to lose in the greater light their separate distinctness. Whilst we gaze, and before we can well cry—“How beautiful!” we are conscious of a more effulgent luminary, and, losing the borrowed beams, ceasing to praise the creature, are dazzled by God’s own charity.

5. So with *Generosity*—a grace very godlike, and always loveable, sometimes exerted in a way which makes it pathetic or sublime. If

“Nothing is more blameful to a knight,  
 However strong and fortunate in fight,  
 Than the reproach of pride and cruelty;  
 In vain he seeketh others to suppress,  
 Who hath not learned himself first to subdue,”<sup>1</sup>

the great victory is self-conquest. If the aim of many a

<sup>1</sup> *Faery Queene*, B. VI. Canto i. 41

warrior has been to win a name in the earth, it is a pity that so many have passed by this open path. The most famous now are those who were in their time the most magnanimous. The passage through his kingdom accorded to Charles by Francis the First, though ill repaid, eclipses all the exploits of the astute but unscrupulous emperor. Sir Philip Sidney's cup of cold water surrendered in favour of a dying soldier has done more for his memory than the friendship of his queen, than the genius which penned the "Arcadia." And when David spared his dark, relentless foe, he rose to a higher pinnacle, and walked off a truer hero than when carrying in his hand the head of the giant amidst the shouts of the multitude, "Saul hath slain his thousands, David his ten thousands."

Whatsoever things are impressive and august—whatsoever things send the thrill of admiration through you, and well-nigh extort your worship,—think on these things. Ponder the great examples, and to each feat of generosity, kindness, courage, self-devotion, duteousness, accord a heartfelt homage.

With an eye to such noble traits read the page of history. Our own chronicles contain them in large numbers, and happily they are plentiful in the annals of all Europe. Nor can we avoid saying that this is one of the chief advantages to be derived from a literature now less appreciated than once it was,—I mean the classical. Foster may have been right when he denounced Homer as bloody and vindictive, and the Greek dramatists as dark and dreary fatalists, still there is something grand in the way that the ills of life are faced and fortitude is taught by these un-

flinching and often terrible tragedians; and it is only saying that the grass is green to say that Homer is heroic. And surely these qualities are precious. We have no wish to exaggerate or overrate, and we know what a measureless advance on the classical is the Christian. But although it is hopeless to pour the new wine of the Gospel out of the old bottles of heathenism; although the *Offices* of Cicero would be as poor a substitute for the Sermon on the Mount as would be the *Odes* of Pindar for the Psalms of David; and although we pity the man who has no cosier homestead for his affections, no warmer temple for his worship, than these forsaken Pagan shrines, very much as we would pity the man who chose a tomb for his dwelling or an ice-cave for his church,—yet surely there are lessons in that ancient lore. In the tale of early Rome there is a lesson of patriotism and severe simplicity which can never lose its value as long as commonwealths need to rise on the virtues of their citizens, and as long as the citizen needs reminding that better than an abundant estate is an abundant possessor. In the still earlier tales of Thebes and Troy, if sometimes images pass before us which make the hair on our flesh stand up, there also flit before us forms of godlike beauty and superhuman majesty, and our imagination gets peopled with impersonations of power and grandeur, intrepidity and fortitude, which even on the Bible cast their useful cross light. And whilst to soft and self-indulgent spirits we would recommend a draught from the cold chalybeate of Marcus Antoninus, and to dull presers and croakers a sparkling cup from the Horatian

well,—we set great store by the music amidst which the cure is pursued, and to the strains of which the frequenters of the fountain promenade. So solemn and stately, so martial and stirring, or so fitful with mysterious echoes and suggestions of the superhuman, you lift your feet lightly or plant them firmly, as the case may be; and in a time like ours, so flippant, so materialistic, and so vulgar, you will find it excellent regimen to visit regions where much is severe and some things are sad, but where much is sublime and where most things are lofty and noble.

Most freely, however, do we confess that they are only the noble images which you will find there, and the lofty ideas—for the inspiration which will make them live over again you must either bring in yourself, or in search of it you must go elsewhither. The moon is free from frosts and tempests, yet he would be a foolish nurseryman who, even if he could get the lease of it, would choose it for his conservatory,—for it affords neither rain nor dew, nor, so far as can be seen, a particle of air; and you may sow the rarest seeds and plant the choicest bulbs, but without oxygen and water they will never grow—no golden or crimson flame will relieve the grimness of that darksome ball—no mellifluous blossom attract humming-bird or bee.

Thus, like a far-off satellite, as a sort of tender to the gospel, we have got the classic moon—an old world in which there were once grand doings, but in which the earthquakes have gone to sleep and the volcanoes burn no more. The scenery is still awful and sublime, but everything is dead. O Pulci, O Politian, it is of no use

holding your torch to that cold crater, you will kindle there no heroisms. O Cosmo, O Lorenzo, you need not prophesy to *these* dry bones, for into the calcined ribs of that dead world never again shall spirit enter: where the breath of heaven never comes there cannot leap up a living army.

The true fountain of honour is God, and of deeds so valiant, so generous, so disinterested, that they soar high above the level of human selfishness, the Author and Prompter is God's own Spirit. The names and exploits of many such heroes have been brought together; but "the time would fail to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mockings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonments: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins: being destitute, afflicted, tormented (of whom the world was not worthy): they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth—having all obtained a good report [a glorious renown] through faith."

In thinking of the things noble, let us think of them, and in following their pattern, let us seek their inspiration. They were men of faith. They had found a friend

in God, and whosoever was against them, they knew that God was for them. Nor has any man such right to be courageous as the Christian. The guilty conscience is timid, and tries to scare away its terrors by bluster and big talk and mere animal excitement; but you believe in the forgiveness of sins, and have hope in God's mercy. The atheist knows of no existence beyond the present, and has every inducement to prolong that present, even at the cost of truth and honour; but believing in a better life beyond, when God and duty call you can afford to give this lesser life away, so as to obtain a better resurrection. And the worldling knows of no spectators except those whom he himself beholds, and his gallant deeds are done only to be seen of men: whilst within the uniform, interior to the polite and courteous gentleman, there is sometimes a churl, with maxims exceedingly mean, and notions coarse and common: but as a servant of God, your Sovereign never is absent, and under the great Captain's eye you can find no more place for paltry thoughts than you should find for abject fear or paralysing despondency.

Hence for the things august—for that superlative of goodness to which life is not dear, and to which the praise of man is not needful—for that superlative of goodness which needs God to sustain it, and Heaven to receive it, the only sphere is the Church of Christ. Follow Christ, and the more that for Him you renounce, the more shall you truly possess and enjoy. Follow Him, and the more genuine that your character becomes, the more elevated and impressive will be your walk through the world.

Follow Him, till the next best thing to seeing *Him* as he is, will be to see *you* as you are—till arrested by Christ in the Christian, as the spectator gazes if he lose sight of the latter, it will be from his luminously fading into the Sun of Righteousness : the planet has melted, but the day-star has risen : the disciple is gone, but ere he departed he had drawn to the Master another.

## IV.

### JUSTICE.

“Whatsoever things are Just.”—PHIL. IV. 8.

THE power, the wisdom, the benevolence of the Supreme are attributes so obvious that no man seriously denies them—you open your eyes and you see them. We may go further, and say that such attributes are popular. Not only is there no difficulty in believing them, but it is delightful to dwell upon them. The vastness of creation, the resources lavished on an insect’s wing, the bounty which fills a summer day with balm, or a cottage home with happiness, are themes on which it is pleasant to expatiate, and on which few minds refuse to meditate.

But there is a perfection no less essential to the welfare of the universe, which to many minds has no attraction, and regarding which some devout and earnest spirits have felt great difficulties; I mean the Divine justice. Not only do wicked men cavil at it, charging God as a hard taskmaster—reaping where He has not sown, and exacting service which it is not possible to perform—not only do wicked men resent that rectitude which rewards every man according to his work, as soon as it meets their evil works and repays their wickedness with punishment



—but there are mysteries in providence, and perplexing things in the revealed plan of the Divine procedure which have tried the faith, and proved for a time too painful for many who did not wish to be resistful and rebellious. As in the case of Asaph, there are anomalies which go far to overturn their faith: their feet are almost gone, their steps have well-nigh slipped. As in the case of Jeremiah, it is not so much faith that is tried, as loyalty which is at a loss,—that love which cannot doubt, but which longs to be supplied with the materials for a thorough vindication: “Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments.”

Nevertheless, painful as are the perplexities of faith, and still more painful as are the antipathies of rebellion, there is no conviction which returns on the mind more irresistible than the absolute rectitude of the Most High, and the utter impossibility, as well as impiety, of any alternative; nor are we bold if to every honest seeker we promise, as regards this momentous matter, the satisfaction of a moral repose, as well as intellectual conviction. Let the wicked man forsake his way and return to the Lord, and as soon as he has tasted God’s mercy, he will cease to speak of God’s severity. And when he finds any matter too hard for him, either in the realm of speculation or in the narrow field of fact, let the believer go into the sanctuary.<sup>1</sup> Let him draw near the living God—the God of the gospel revelation. Let him commune the briefest space with his Father in heaven. Let him sit at the feet

<sup>1</sup> Psalm lxxiii. 17.

of Jesus, imbibing the grace and listening to the truth, till he is pervaded by a kindred confidence in God, and rises to the adoring level which in prayer begins, "O *righteous* Father." Let him go into the sanctuary, even into its holy of holies, and as in the Cross of Christ he sees mercy and truth met together, sin punished and yet by Love's costliest sacrifice the sinner saved, gratitude will conquer doubt, and the reign of grace will reconcile him to the reign of rectitude.

Yes! "clouds and darkness are round about Him," and clouds and darkness of a very different kind are around ourselves. These last the bellows of logic cannot blow aside, and though sentiment may inflate its balloon and soar for a little while above them, in glimpsing heaven it loses sight of earth, and with air so thin and the cold so keen it cannot tarry long. But the clouds which we can neither tunnel nor surmount the sun can melt, the breeze can scatter. The guilt-gloom, the habitual atmosphere of distrust or dislike which exhales from the sinning spirit, and which condenses opaquely around the awakened conscience, mere reasoning cannot dissipate; or if the fog should somewhat abate, they are the red rays only which come through. "God is a consuming fire." His justice is retributive. It turns the wicked into hell, and from what it sees of God the spirit is still more troubled: till the light breeze, a wholesome gale, sets in to dissipate the dimness, and, shining in a clear sky, the sun is no longer red and lurid, but a glorious orb, with light and healing filling all the photosphere. "I beheld God, and was troubled" may well be the lan-

guage of one viewing God through the cloud of its own transgressions ; for in that case the strong ray of justice comes through red and alone, proclaiming wrath and tribulation to every soul that doeth evil : but when in a happy moment the north wind comes and blows aside the preconceptions of guilt and ignorance, self-revealed, and in His own purest light, God is love. The red ray—the rectitude, the justice—still is there ; but there are others with which it blends, and so it hurts, it affrights no more.

And this God so seen draws towards himself the soul's confiding adoring homage. True in what He has promised to the Saviour as well as in what He threatens to the sinner, He is the just God in justifying the ungodly for Jesus' sake ; and when He burned from off the soil the foul cities of the plain, if the Judge of all the earth did right, He does right no less when receiving into His unsullied kingdom souls redeemed with atoning blood and renewed by the transforming Spirit.

It is then—when reconciled to God and all that He is, through the Cross of His Son—that the Divine character comes out so glorious and self-commanding ; and with nothing hostile in God's holiness, with everything assuring in His justice and truth, the believer is prepared to join worshippers more exalted as they cry, "Hallelujah, Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, be unto the Lord our God : for *true and righteous* are his *judgments*." Then it is that without quitting the earth you see the heaven, and even though you may not be able to accompany a Milton in his majestic effort to vindicate the ways

of God, or a Leibnitz in his severe Theodicy, faith forestalls the conclusion, and with equal fervour exclaims, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty: *just and true thy ways*, thou King of Saints." Then it is, when the thick cloud of transgression has melted, and through the clouds and darkness which surround the Eternal, a cleft, a rent, sometimes opens, and gives a glimpse of the great white throne—that throne from which never issued arbitrary decree nor unrighteous sentence, but which with justice and judgment for its platform or pavement, has truth for its pillar, and for its canopy the rainbow of emerald melting in mercy,—then it is that, emboldened by the Song of the Lamb, you get courage for the Song of Moses, and shout, "He is the rock; his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity, *just and right is He.*" He is the rock—Himself the ultimate truth, the eternal rectitude—"just and right;" and based on that rock, His work is perfection: the fabric is fair, and among all the disorders which have come into it, His wisdom shines out more wonderful: His ways are judgment.

The Lord is a rock. His justice and truth are the reliance of the universe—the stronghold of all its loyal inhabitants. The Most High is the Most Holy, and although contingencies may occur unforeseen by all creatures, the throne of righteousness can never be subverted: the Lord sitteth King, and shall reign for ever and for ever. He cannot be deceived, He cannot change, and He cannot be defeated.

As an image or imitation of this higher rectitude, there

is pleasure in beholding any earthly government which, "whatsoever things are just," seeks to embody them in its legislation and conduct. Any king who reigns in righteousness shines out on the page of history bright beyond the conqueror—English Alfred, Saracen Caliph, Haroun al Raschid, France's Henry the Fourth; and the nation is envied which, whatsoever things are fair and equal, strives to bring them together in its laws,—just as that nation could hardly fail to become the world's premier people which should be the first to prove itself the "righteous nation"—renouncing all wages of iniquity, and all oppressions however gainful, and valuing might chiefly as a means of more gracefully and effectually doing right.

But it is delightful when, even in private life, in the less prominent places, there is found the rectitude which seeks to give value for value, and to give to every man his due; the probity which is at once suggested when we read that Cornelius was "just"—that Joseph of Arimathea was a "just and good man"—that Simeon was "just and devout." Rigid and unrelieved as it is, we admire the stern integrity of Cato, and are drawn closer to the kindlier and no less incorruptible virtue which has for ever associated with justice the name of Aristides; and most of us are thankful to have among our friends men whose eye is single, and whose sense of right and wrong is quick and true, who hate

"leasing and base flattery,  
And love simple truth and steadfast honesty."

According to the schoolmen there are two divisions of justice—the one commutative or commercial, the other

what they call distributive, the first having mainly to do with commodities, the other as mainly with persons ; the one giving value for value, the other assigning praise or blame, reward or punishment, according to the deserts of its objects. The first, or justice in *dealing*, might as well be called honesty ; the second, or justice in *deciding*, is that judicial attribute to which the appeal is made when we are warned not to be respecters of persons, and are exhorted to judge righteous judgment.

Neither form is at all times easy. Even where the fear of God is before the eyes, and where there is a general desire to be fair and equitable, there may be failures in justice from various causes, a few of which we venture to indicate. And please to remember that the lesson is one of wide application and continual urgency. If conscience is the rectorial faculty, if conscience is the king of the inner world, the judgment or comparing faculty is the chancellor ; and though you may never wear an inch of ermine, though you may know nothing of writs and forms, there is not a day in your life but you are called to be "a judge and a divider." You must be it every time that your children come with a complaint against one another, at least every time that you deem it worth adjudicating ; and you cannot always follow Gallio's plan and drive them from the judgment-seat. You must mount the tribunal every time that a character comes before you seeking your indorsement or awakening your suspicion. You must sit in judgment every time that two courses of conduct or two sides of a question compete for your approval, or that two versions of a fact strive together for

your verdict ; and in order to leave no rankling in other minds, no regrets in your own, not only must you seek wisdom from the Father of Lights, but must avoid the influence which causeth to err.

1. For instance, in order to be just you must be considerate. When Robert the Third was crowned at Scone there was a great concourse of people, so that the ripening corn in many fields was trampled and destroyed. It was hardly the monarch's blame ; but by paying for it he won the hearts of the proprietors, and gave promise of a just and gentle reign.<sup>1</sup> So wherever trouble is given or loss is entailed a fair and thoughtful man will make compensation, even in those cases where it cannot be enforced by legal compulsitors, and, where an equivalent cannot be rendered in kind, heartburning or a sense of wrong would often be saved by a word of grateful recognition.

2. In order to be just you must be calm. There are balances so exquisitely constructed that they will turn at the thousandth part of a grain ; but when you use such a balance you must be very careful : for a flake of dust falling on one scale, a film of vapour from your breath, a gentle puff of air will make all the difference. And so when analysing his little particle of a gem or his little morsel of some mysterious substance, and when he requires his balance the chemist puts it under a glass shade, and so protects it from all outward interference. Such an instrument is the comparing faculty in the mind of man. The *Judgment* is a beautiful balance, capable of weighing matters far more subtle and minute than the pounded

<sup>1</sup> Boethius, lib. xvi. ; Beyerlinsh, iv. 490.

atoms of the laboratory; and if your mind is sound, and you give your judgment fair play it will always be true: it will turn to the side on which there is the largest amount of reason or evidence. But in order to this you need to be calm. Not only must you be conscientious—in other words, not only must your mind be a balance of the sanctuary, scales, weights, and all submitted to God's inspection,—but in making up your mind you must try to keep free from prejudice and passion. You need not think to come to a right conclusion when you are angry or excited; but quit the gusty corner, leave the open thoroughfare, with its drift and currents and manifold disturbance, and enter into thy closet, and shut to the door, and when the mind is tranquillized by prayer, and the balance made even by the remembrance of the truth-loving, all-seeing God, if you have really the whole case in possession the scale will turn the right way. Your judgment will be in accordance with truth, and is not likely to be reversed by a higher tribunal.

3. To which we just add, You must be candid. Some say, You must be just before you are generous. We would venture to change it, and say, Unless you are generous you cannot be just. The egotist is in his very essence false and unfair. According to his theory of the universe it is a very little world with an enormous I, a mighty Me, at the centre, and it is very wrong if praise, promotion, good bargains, fall to any other than himself: all blue-bottles were created for his web, and it is a nasty dung-hill fly which refuses to come into his meshes. Egotism sooner or later is sure to grow sour, and then it is envy,



and the envious man is from his very nature a false witness and an unjust judge. He is harsh in his criticisms, unkind in his construction of motives, unfair in his conducting of controversy. The scale of the balance which contains himself and his belongings—his party, his politics, his interests—is nailed to the table, and whatever you put into the opposite side, sense, experience, the Bible, is a mere bagatelle.

But a candid mind is generous. You are not my enemy because your tastes are so different from mine, or because on many points we have come to opposite conclusions. I fancy that I have truth on my side in this particular instance, but I must own that on your side—that is, in yourself—there is always goodness, amiableness, nobleness; and if I had grown up amidst your surroundings, or viewed things from your stand-point, I might have been of your opinion.

Christianity may have been fruitful of controversy, but let us remember that Christ Himself was the great apostle of equity and candour—"Judge not—"

"Thou hypocrite, cast forth—"

And the more that we can catch of His spirit the happier will it be for ourselves. In feeling kindly towards Samaritans there is no need to apostatize from Judaism.

Absence of passion, not popular.

Macaulay a partisan.

Hallam a judge.

Macaulay prejudiced and passionate.

Hume free from passion, but full of prejudice.

Hallam with neither passion nor prejudice.

Candour : Stewart's *Active Powers*, ii. 295.

Aristides: "Nothing could be more advantageous, but nothing could be more unjust."

120 years' suit. Percy *An.* "Justice," 110.

Dr. Livingstone on mutual misunderstandings.

Straight line the shortest line between two points.

Paid ready money for everything. If a path through a field would never deviate from it, or follow the footsteps of those who had traced a more agreeable parallel.

*Life of W. Roberts*, 361.

## V.

### PURITY.

“Whatsoever things are Pure.”—PHIL. IV. 8.

DESCRIBING Eastern Africa, Dr. Livingstone remarks:—“At the end of the hot season everything is dry and dusty; the atmosphere is loaded with blue haze, and very sultry. After the rains begin the face of the country changes with surprising rapidity for the better. Fresh green herbage quickly springs up over the hills and dales so lately parched and brown. The air becomes cleared of the smoky-looking haze, and one sees to great distances; the landscape is bathed in a perfect flood of light, and a delightful sense of freshness is given from everything. On asking one of the Bechuanas once, what he understood by the word used for ‘holiness’ (*boitsépho*)? he answered, ‘When copious showers have descended during the night, and all the earth, and leaves, and cattle are washed clean, and the sun-rising shows a drop of dew on every blade of grass, and the air breathes fresh—that is holiness.’”<sup>1</sup>

With the natural mind, yes, and with the renewed mind after a long season of deadness, matters are very much in

<sup>1</sup> *The Zambezi*, p. 64.

the state in which, after long drought, the traveller found life within the tropics. The atmosphere is dim. A hot and sickly haze shuts out the heavens, and God, the Saviour, immortality, are almost forgotten; and not only has a sultry worldliness struck deep into the soul, drinking up natural affections and kindly feelings, but the very surface is soiled and sordid. The mind and conscience get defiled, and just as the sand and dust from passing footsteps settle down on every object till the pastures are powder, till the grass itself is grey, so the very images which come into the mind, and which in happier circumstances would be simply bright and beautiful—bright as sun-birds, beautiful as rosy blossom—they come begrimed with sense or besprinkled with the abounding secularity, till in gracious visitation, answering the feeble cry of expiring life, or coming to the rescue of a soul too dead to bewail its own depravity, the Father of mercies “pours water on him that is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground.” The descending God is the Holy Spirit, and as in His pure and plenteous outpouring Heaven comes down into the soul, the face of the inner world is renewed. In Sechuana phrase, the very thoughts “are washed clean,” and the air breathes fresh. Through the transparent firmament the stars shine down. God is good, and God is near. The promises are true, Christ is precious, one thing is needful. The fountains of goodwill and affection are filled, and flow over, and like the flowers which spring up among the grass, like the bright songsters which from the willows by the water-courses<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xlv. 2-4.

shake the dew into the stream, and fill the morning with their music, the fancies which come and go, and the meditations which abide, are clean and pure as the commands of God, and in their charming freshness is realized how beautiful is holiness, and how blessed.

He who thus reneweth the face of the inner world, and who alone can make our spirit holy, is the Holy Spirit of God; and "blessed are they who are thus made pure in heart: they shall see God." If there were no depravity there would be no darkness. To eyes that are open the sun needs no argument; from souls that can see the living God is never absent; but if we thoroughly obfuscate the surrounding medium, it has the same effect as if we had extinguished the organ of sight. This obfuscation of the surrounding medium may be variously effected. There may be a few who by abstract speculations have got so befogged and bewildered that at last they have puzzled themselves out of all piety—a few like Comte and Spinoza, who, as is the case with the cuttle-fish, rich in its treasury of darkness, have shed around them so much evil that at last the beatific vision fades, and it is of no use to look up any longer. But more usually the surrounding medium is darkened and heaven shut out by causes more ignoble. The mind grows secular. Material objects and interests are all-engrossing. Lofty thoughts and elevating contemplations are rare, and by and bye cease altogether. Having thrown off its wings, and worm-like returned to the dust once more, the grovelling spirit is content with such poor joys as sense supplies. A withering blight is in all the air—heaven is veiled—God is forgotten—and

having lost the faculty for things above, it is the next and easy step to deny that such things exist ; and even though he should not subside into the simple swinishness of Helio-gabalus, or repeat the more elegant orgies of Mirabeau, to his degraded embruted nature it is not difficult first to forget and then to deny that a higher nature exists. The voluptuary becomes the Sadducee, and saying that there is neither angel nor spirit, goes on to add, No, nor life beyond—no, nor life above : “ Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.”<sup>1</sup>

This is the most frightful effect of sensuality. It kills the soul. It extinguishes the most precious susceptibilities and the finest perceptions of the immortal mind, and long before the pampered body dissolves in kindred clay, the soul, smothered and buried in the flesh is carried through the remaining years in its living tomb, its locomotive sepulchre—living in pleasure, and so dead while it liveth.

Contrariwise, the great victory of faith is the conquest it effects over mere materialism. Purifying the heart, it gives the sight of God, and, restoring to the soul its pinions, bids it seek its native clime. To be carnally-minded is death ; but to be spiritually-minded is life and peace. Blessed and holy is he who hath part in that first resurrection, and who, quickened by God’s own Spirit, has opened his eyes on supersensual realities—on the life above and the life beyond—on God and immortality ; and who, having begun his higher life already, has

<sup>1</sup> See extract, Dr. Darwin in *Life of Mrs. Schimmelpenninck*, pp. 127, 129, 149, 202.

meat to eat which the world knows not, and pleasures which augment in using.

We would not like to adopt a definition which we have somewhere read, and say that "Man is half-beast, half-devil;" but, fallen as man now is, we believe that there are appetites and affections in both the animal and spiritual departments of his nature, which if indulged would so encroach as to destroy all of the angel that is left. To one division of these, namely, to those "lusts of the flesh which war against the soul," the opposing grace is purity, and believers are here exhorted to study those things which will strengthen the higher nature and foster that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.

How is this to be done? We have unfeigned respect for those early devotees who, taking by violence the kingdom of heaven, burst away from the coarse convivial world by which they were surrounded, and, imitating the Baptist with his locusts and honey, lived in a hollow tree or a cavern, and, slaking their thirst at the fountain, subsisted on the figs or the filberts which they had gathered in autumn. But though it was a noble scorn of the body, it was zeal without knowledge, and the palfrey thus starved and maltreated was sure to play pranks with his rider; he grew nervous, and shied at unreal danger, or sank down exhausted under his burden, or, worst of all, took the bit in his teeth and in wild despair rushed off to forbidden pastures. No longer dwelling in a healthy frame, the mind itself ceased to be natural. The solitude was peopled with evil spirits, and, instead of peacefully walking with God, the recluse was compelled day by day to renew the conflict with

fiends, from their populous pandemonium issuing in ever fresh and spiteful battalions, and in his warfare with spiritual wickednesses suspected an ambush in every tree, and heard the howl of the prince of the air in every tempest. In the attempt "to wind itself too high" the mainspring not unseldom broke, and where there went away a man who might have served his generation well, all that remained was a weird unearthly maniac, or on the wintry moor a rag of serge rotting over the wizened skeleton. Or, fate still sadder, with will too weak for the long and terrible conflict, nature carried the day, and, returning to the flesh-pots of Egypt, the holy hermit sat in the chair of the scornful—the grief of the godly, the song of the drunkard.

In this composite existence of ours the way to exalt the spirit is not to annihilate the body, but to bring it under, and keep it in subjection. Not only will he be for life's great purposes the most expedite who takes no thought what he shall eat, and who, content with a cake from the barrel of meal, is not tempted to transgress by royal dainties; but in clear thoughts, firm nerves, cheerful spirits he will have his continual feast, and in many compunctions saved, in a habitual readiness for any work required, and in the power of passing unscathed where others are enticed and ensnared, he will have another rich reward. Not only is it a life of full effectiveness passing off in a gentle exit which requites the abstemious liver—like the perspicacious Black, whose keen eye was the first to see so many things, and who—fit close to his calm career—was found dead in his study-chair with the por-



ringer of milk, his most exciting beverage, held on his knee in his relaxing hand, and not so much as a single drop spilled,—but other virtues are made easier to the man of sobriety and self-control. To the Roman general or our own Andrew Marvel the practice of patriotism is facilitated by the fewness of his wants, and the messenger with his corrupting bribe arrives at the wrong moment when he finds him at his frugal meal. To Marcus Cato, with his stern disdain of every indulgence, for whom neither the luxury of Corinth nor the vintage of Cyprus has the least attraction, it is easy to give good account of his stewardship, and bring home to the treasury the revenues of realms ; just as to Joseph, with his cool judgment and noble self-mastery, it is possible to govern wisely the whole of Egypt. To a man like Grimshaw, dining on a slice of bread and an onion, and slaking his thirst at the first brook by the way, it is not so arduous to evangelize the Yorkshire wolds ; even as to a man like the Baptist, strong in that life which nothing can destroy, rich in that wealth which knows no wants, and richer in that friendship which no calumny can alienate, no prison walls exclude, it was easy to rebuke kings and face the rage of Pharisees.

“Whatsoever things are pure.” For attaining purity the great helps are, *high pursuits, hallowed affections, simple pleasures.* (a) With his noble aim Paul brought under the body, and kept it in subjection. He not only wished to enter heaven free of earthly taint, and fit for his Master’s presence, but in the interval he wished to do as much in that Master’s service and in the way of proclaiming the

gospel as the limits would permit. And if you have anything like his ambition, you won't grudge like effort. Even aims less lofty may go a long way towards it; and although there are sad exceptions, men have often escaped the pollutions in the world through devotion to their calling. The crab and conger and such scavengers frequent the shallows and devour the garbage in the silt and ooze, whilst the poet's dolphin strikes out on the highest path of the ocean, and can chase the flying fish. Laziness is luxurious, and whilst indolence is the mother of intemperance and daintiness and gluttony, and almost every other work of the flesh, to the zest and energy with which they pursued an honourable avocation many men have owed it that they kept their garments clean, and never needed to go down among the grovellers. ( $\beta$ ) And hallowed affections. As King Arthur says of knightly love—

“ Indeed I know  
Of no more subtle master under heaven,  
Not only to keep down the base in man,  
But teach high thought and amiable words,  
And comeliness, and the desire of fame,  
And love of truth, and all that makes a man.”

To which we would just add, ( $\gamma$ ) And simple pleasures. By simple, I mean those which are not drugged with strong ingredients and coarse stimulants; or which, harmless in themselves, are carried to such an exhausting extreme as to be naturally followed by excess. But the book, the garden, the country walk, the ride, the row, music, the microscope, the popular reading, the friendly circle, the creatures wild and tame, the children great and

small, are not only the lawful beguilement of the leisure hour, but they help to blow off the day's dust and dreariness, and in a certain sense "restoring the soul," leave it healthier and stronger, and better able to pursue the paths of righteousness.

Still, these are only helps, and we must not forget that the true source and secret of purity is "a clean heart, a right spirit." Sincerely as we wish success to their effort who are striving to diminish the drinking usages of Britain, and success to their effort also who are seeking to clear our streets of enormities so dangerous to many, so disgraceful to us all, we know full well, and the wisest friends of such movements know, that for any moral plague the only sure and lasting remedy is the spread of real religion. Without this, warnings go for little. We may speak what we know, and to the youth for the first time entering the tavern, the theatre, the casino, may tell what we have so often seen to be the upshot—the broken constitution and the broken character, the forfeited situation, the ever-downward path of deepening degradation, and the finish in the workhouse-infirmary or Parkhurst prison. Such warnings have been uttered in this place in seasons past, and in the hearing of those who have repeated the same career, with precisely the same result; and our only hope is in those who have the fear of God before their eyes, and that self-knowledge which keeps them devout and humble. In your way through the world you may fall into manifold temptations, but if the Lord hold you up you will not fall by them. "The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes :

the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever ;” and with the quick discernment of a tender conscience, and the instant recoil of a loyal spirit, you will perceive and escape the snare of the wicked. “The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger.” From one act of self-denial gathering strength for another, the very consciousness of having chosen the right and refused the evil will prepare you for farther conquests ; and as along that way of holiness which the unclean shall not pass over you continue to advance, the ransomed of the Lord shall not be ashamed of your companionship ; and by that first essential of true manhood, self-mastery, enabled to influence others for their good, even as by that first essential of true piety, a devout dependence on the grace and strength of Christ, you have attained to this self-mastering manliness, you will be withal prepared to join and find congenial that company who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.

## VI.

### LOVEABLENESS.

“Whatsoever things are Lovely.”—PHIL. IV. 8.

STERLING and stately, just and pure, in order to its completeness, Christian character should also be lovely. Along with those attributes which compel the veneration of the beholder, there should be those others which win his affection. Now, I wonder what these are. I wonder if, before this sermon is ended, we shall have gained any insight to those elements of excellence which find favour for their possessor, and which, besides being well pleasing in God's sight, go far to secure for goodness a certain measure of popularity in the world at large. There is an “offence of the Cross.” There are truths which a Christian must maintain, sins he must reprove, duties he must discharge, the natural tendency of which is to make the Christian formidable to some, distasteful to others. How is it, then, that on the whole he may so walk as not only to please God, but gain the grateful suffrage of society—beloved whilst living, followed with tender regret when gone?

To begin: the very basis of an attractive character is benevolence. In order to be loved, there is need of loving-kindness—a gracious, forthgoing disposition.

And indeed goodness of the highest order is always giving off; goodness like that of God is perpetually radiating and imparting of itself. As the flower gives off its fragrance, as the sun gives off its light and heat, so the Eternal gives forth His glory, and a universe springs into being; He gives out from His blessedness, and that universe is filled with kindred joy—warms and brightens up with holy happiness. Nay, though sin repels the Divine sanctity, though depravity must enkindle the Divine displeasure, there is a benevolence in the Ever-Blessed, which, more exhaustless than the “strange work” of judgment, exuberates in compassion, and in its tidal overflow bursts the barriers of our enmity and drowns the great mountains of our transgressions. Grace reigns through Jesus Christ, and the door which his own delinquencies had closed on the offender, Mercy opens of her own accord; if the prodigal has any wish to return, the arms of fatherly forgiveness still wait to be gracious.

Then, on the other hand, when this amazing goodness of God is rightly perceived and realized, it awakens a reciprocal feeling. We love Him who hath first loved us, and, conquered by Divine compassion, the soul returns to its rightful allegiance, and commencing in gratitude, gratitude for a great forgiveness, love goes on and ripens into adoring complacency, the complacency which finds in God its chiefest joy, and in seeing Him its truest freedom.

God is glorious in Himself; but although the far-off contemplation of His perfections might well awaken praise and worship through a loyal creation, they are

these perfections in their benevolent and gracious overflow which fill immensity with rapture, and which, by the cords of love, bind to the throne of the Eternal a consenting and joyful creation ; and whether he be the seraph soaring far above all sense of evil, or the sinner newly snatched from the miry clay, it is love which has awakened love ; it is the forthgiving, home-coming love of God which has caught them, and which, in willing bonds, holds them captive ; it is in basking in the beams of Divine benevolence that the heart of Gabriel is conscious of a warmer glow, and it is in the balmy atmosphere of heaven opened, it is in the inbreathing of the Holy Ghost the Comforter, that, with a falter at the first, the forgiven penitent, the reinstated child, is enabled to cry, " Abba, Father."

Thus is it with God ; but if our principle is right, we may venture to descend with it, and apply it to the creature. And in this application we are aided by the example of God's beloved Son, bringing the lessons nearer to our level. " Grace came by Jesus Christ." Grace came—Heaven giving *out* and giving *off* its goodness in daily inevitable profusion. Even before the moment for miracles arrived—that moment when, swelling up beyond the bounds of the simply human, the glory was manifested—it had been a life of pure loveliness which Jesus had lived ; so blameless, that from all the thirty years not an incident could be afterwards recalled to cast the faintest shadow over the path of His brightness : so beneficent, that when miracles of mercy did begin, as far as the actuating motive went, they seemed only the appropriate

sequel and carrying forth of dispositions which He had all along displayed.<sup>1</sup> And loving-kindness draws back goodwill. Jesus increased in favour with God and with man. Not yet in collision with hypocrisy and such hostile elements, His gracious, unselfish, beneficent spirit gained for Him the people's love.

This is the prime requisite. Paul says to the Romans, "I am persuaded that ye are full of goodness,"<sup>2</sup> and to be full of goodness is the first requisite towards gaining any affection which is worth possessing.

Yet there is a worth which is not particularly winsome. Some people are correct and conscientious; but owing to the coldness of their temperament, or the contractedness of their understanding, the utmost you can do is to wish them well. Or their minds are so utterly insipid—"Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? or is there any taste in the white of an egg?"—to avow any particular fondness for them would be to pretend a passion for simple albumen; without flavour, without seasoning of any sort, let alone loveable, they are scarcely likeable; whilst others, of no scanty worth, have no attraction, their very virtues are austere, and much as you may admire their incorruptible integrity, their unflinching courage, their iron strength of will, they hold out no hand, there is nothing on which the kindlier feelings can lay hold. Therefore in order to be endearing there must not only be sincere and solid worth, but it must be of a kindly and communicative complexion. The goodness must be gracious.

<sup>1</sup> See John ii. 5, 11.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. xv. 14: ἀγαθωσύνης.



In following after the things which have made others lovely, the first hint is, Be *bountiful*. It is the boast of the city of Bristol that it has been the home or the birth-place of many men of renown; but of all its celebrities none filled his sphere so sunnily nor did so much to set hearts a-singing as Richard Reynolds. He was a plain unlettered trader, and could not philosophize like Foster, nor preach like Robert Hall, nor weave the wondrous lay like Chatterton and Southey; nor was it even his honour to invent a new thing in philanthropy, like the originator of Sunday-schools, his fellow-townsmen, Robert Raikes. But he had one talent—wealth; and he had a grace from God—the gift of large but wise and well-directed giving. Often anonymously, sometimes five hundred or a thousand pounds at once, he would give away as much as twenty thousand pounds in a single year; and having no cares about himself, for he had long learned to depend simply on the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, neither had he any cares for survivors, to whom he felt assured that the Lord would continue His loving-kindness; and so, taking up every case which established its claim, fitting out or apprenticing the orphan, relieving from debt and difficulty the artisan who had been long laid aside in sickness, sustaining schools, dispensaries, hospitals, his life was a continual festival of loving-kindness, and his death a bright fulfilment of the promise, “Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will strengthen him on the bed of languishing,” as in sweet faith of God’s mercy, a mercy which it was not hard for him to realize, with his hand in the hand of his daughter

he passed peacefully away, and left the chamber of death so hushed and holy that it was long before even sobs durst break the silence. And though fifty years have passed, the memory of the mighty sorrow which filled the city has not yet passed away ; for in hundreds of homes that death made a difference, and the wailings of the poor, the widow, and the fatherless told far better than the monument now tells it how truly they loved him.<sup>1</sup>

Although there are not many who can thus melt away in money, wherever they tread leaving the footprint golden, yet how blessed for ourselves and for the world if there were more of this Heaven-kindled charity ! Nor is it the material amount, the mere substantial sum. There are doles which it is distressing to receive. Like fruit on a rain-drenched tree, you pluck the apple, but from the shaken branch receive into your face and bosom such a sleety shower as makes you shudder ; or like Dante, when he tore off the twig from the suicidal tree, and from the wound there issued shrieks and blood,<sup>2</sup> as in terror you let it drop you determine never more to rend asunder the miser and his money. Contrariwise, a little gift goes far if cordially conveyed, if he be a son of consolation who gives it, and a glance of fellow-feeling goes with it. Says the Egyptian proverb, " The presents of our friends come on leaves of myrtle,"<sup>3</sup> so that even after the dates or other dainty is consumed, the fragrance lingers. Ye are God's stewards. Let your benefactions be Christlike. Let the virtue which goes with them add to their value,

<sup>1</sup> Leitchild's *Remarkable Facts*, p. 124.

<sup>2</sup> *Inferno*, canto 13.

<sup>3</sup> Rather on "leaves of rue."

ennobling the receiver, endearing the giver; like those bounties of His which not only relieved for the moment, but which by commencing a lifelong friendship with Himself elevated all the future lot of the suppliant.

2. Be *considerate*. In some well-known lines there is a singularly instructive prayer:

“ I ask Thee for a *thoughtful love*,  
 Through constant watching wise,  
 To meet the glad with joyful smiles,  
 And to wipe the weeping eyes;  
 And a heart *at leisure from itself*,  
 To soothe and sympathize.”

“A heart at leisure from itself.” A guilty conscience is taken up about itself: it can think of little else but its sins and what is to become of it; but if you would believe in Christ even the conscience would cease to be troubled. And a vain man is taken up about himself: he is anxious that he should make a good impression, and is nervous about any error or awkwardness, any failure in tact or etiquette. And a morbid spirit is taken up about itself, and in the anxiety for self-preservation is constantly dreading the cold or the contagion; swallowed up in its own sorrow, whilst refusing to be comforted, is insatiable in its demand for condolence. But the new and heaven-born nature is healthy and outgoing, and there are few things lovelier than its habitual self-forgetting sympathy. You burst in upon it with glad tidings—so lucky as you have been, such a sudden turn of fortune, such unexpected promotion,—and in the hearty gratulation, in the bright beaming of clear responsive eyes, you would never guess the aching head or the very different tidings

unfolded in the letter of which you have interrupted the perusal. Or here is a great sorrow, and like Samuel Johnson, glorious moralist, picking up on the dark street a poor creature diseased and dying-like, and carrying her on his back to his own door,<sup>1</sup> with swift and gallant instinct true humanity does not hesitate a moment, but kicking over the conventional, holds straight on in the tract of the All-Merciful. And so with the still rarer grace, a true and tender sympathy. Never thinking of itself, nor too much concerned about other people's thinkings, at the call of suffering or sorrow it puts aside its own grief or care, and with freshened features and anointed head hies away to tend the couch of sickness, or carry the oil of gladness into the house of mourning.

From what has been said it will be gathered that a great element of loveableness is unselfishness; and this suggests two dangers which we need to guard against.

The first of these is egotism. To the metaphysician or ontologist, the *Me* or self-conscious ego may be a very interesting and important personage; but socially there is none less respectable, and although it would be a poor consideration to urge, we might say to such a one, If you wish to stand well with your neighbours, keep silence about yourself. Let another praise thee, and not thine own lips; for so perverse are people, that all the tales you tell of Number One, instead of crediting to the prowess of that hero, they set down to the conceit of the narrator.

Of course there are times and circumstances when

<sup>1</sup> Croker's Boswell, vol. viii. p. 323.

absolute silence about self would be unnatural or ungenerous, but we are speaking of that garrulous egotism which is alike fatal to admiration and affection, because alike inconsistent with whatsoever things are lofty and whatsoever things are lovely. Not only is there a self-repression which is a true sign of Christian manliness, but there is a salutary silence, a silence which is conducive to self-acquaintance and true humility. What we utter into the ear of God is not likely to be boastful, and taking the form of prayer it may result in our obtaining that ornament which, though never seen by the wearer, in the eyes which best can judge, is priceless—the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit: whereas he who is always going over to his neighbour the story of his good deeds, or the longer story of his grievances, or that longest story of all, his bodily ailments, is not likely to get from his fellows in the way of sympathy as much as will make up for the loss of that grace which God gives to the lowly.

“Whatsoever things are lovely.” But it is time that we were leaving off. When the shade is removed the alabaster soils, and the gathered snowdrop soon droops and dies in our hot handling. Themes like these suit better for quiet converse than for noisy declamation.

Therefore, by way of closing, we can only say in general terms, In order to have some image of things lovely, recall those who have exhibited a lovely character. Think of Jonathan, think of Daniel. Think of Mary at the Master's feet, think of the beloved disciple. And as it may be of some assistance, and bring it nearer home, think of those who since Bible times have gained a good report by their

gracious and endearing attributes. Think of Melancthon in Germany and Fénelon in France. Think of holy Herbert and the devout and gentle Ken—of the Morning and Evening Hymn. Think of the bright-hearted Wilberforce, and Alexander Waugh in his meek and sagacious goodness, and Robert M'Cheyne in his lowly tender walk with God ; and whatsoever may have been the beauty of holiness which gave a fascination to their lives, and has left a halo round their memory, think on that thing. And try. Repeat the experiment again and again till you can do it as well as the original ; till you too are affable without egotism, and tolerant without temporizing ; till you too can be witty without malice, and wronged without feeling revengeful ; till in health and high spirits you can pick your steps so skilfully, and move about so gracefully, as not to wound the sensibilities of any, and when health and spirits fail, with high-born fortitude you can so command your own spirit as not only not to murmur but give patient audience to those croakers whose luxury is a good listener, whose conversational staple is the world's ill-usage. Try, still try. Pray and pray again till you learn the happy art of conferring kindnesses with cheerfulness and receiving them with thankfulness—nay more, till you acquire in perfection that memory of the heart which never forgets a favour or a friend. Pray and practise, try and pray again, till you acquire that Christ-like grace which suffereth long and still is kind, which has no envy, no vainglory, no conceit, which, neither self-seeking nor suspicious, rejoiceth in the progress and prosperity of others, and, bearing all things, believing all things, hoping

all things, enduring all things, is visibly bound for that Better Country which is the home of true love, and where will be seen "face to face" the express image of the Father—God is Love: that Better Country where now abideth the Perfection of Beauty, that infinite Loveliness which once dwelt amongst us, Jesus Christ the exponent and messenger of God's own charity

## VII.

### THINGS REPUTABLE.

“Whatsoever things are of good report.”—PHIL. IV. 8.

A GOOD man must sometimes go in the face of opinion. You may have something to tell which your contemporaries do not wish to hear, and as you urge them to a course of action which goes against the grain, they may regard you as a very disagreeable personage, and may denounce your doctrine as utterly detestable. So was it with many of the Hebrew prophets. They were patriotic, they were eloquent, they were inspired, and yet they were not popular. Few believed their report. They stretched out their hands to a gainsaying people; and just because they were in advance of their time, because all the words which God gave them they uttered in the name of Jehovah, denouncing the idolatry, the impiety, the prevailing immorality of the day, they were hooted in the streets, they were pelted with stones, the very children shouted nicknames after them, they were cast into dungeons, they were slain with the sword.

Still, their teaching triumphed. Truth is a tremendous warrior—not only a match for every enemy, but wearing out ever so many armour-bearers, surviving all the chargers



which are shot beneath him—himself immortal, invulnerable. So the age of resistance is inevitably followed by an age of conquest and acquiescence ; and then by and bye, when the old idols have long been abolished, and the once obnoxious doctrine has long been established, new proclaimers, new prophets, arise, and as they denounce the error, the evil of their day, and for some neglected truth or duty lift up a voice like a trumpet, the very men who are strewing garlands on the graves of dead prophets turn round on the living ones, and with stones from the martyrs' cairn, with the very materials wherewith they are building the tombs of those whom their fathers slew, they assail the prophets whom God sends to themselves.

In the Latin Church it is the rule to let a hundred years pass over before any name, however saintly, is added to the calendar. Like the dolphin and his kindred, which must be dead before they become even phosphorescent, the sanctity of some was never surmised whilst living ; and even in the clearest cases it takes a long time for the halo to acquire sufficient breadth and brilliancy. And free from prejudice as are Protestants, and rapid as is our era, it may be questioned whether less than the century suffices to canonize the man bold enough to proclaim all truth and denounce all wrong. In other words, there are few communities whose attitude is such open receptivity, such preparedness for prompt compliance—"Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth"—as would secure instant acclamation for any course of conduct simply because it is right, or for any doctrine simply because it is scriptural.

However, whilst it is needful to remember this—that

popularity is no test of truth (there are many things of which the majority are incompetent to judge, because they do not understand them, and other things of which they are not fair judges, because their interests or feelings are involved),—it is also right to remember that betwixt the light still left in the mind of man, and the progress which truth has made in the world, there are many excellences which all have agreed to “praise”—many “virtues” which carry with them a “good report.” Generally speaking, the things honest, the things just, the things pure, are popular; and it ought in fairness to be added that there are other things which do not rise up to the highest order of excellence, and the want of which may involve no flagrant transgression of God’s law, but which are in themselves so fit, so seemly, so convenient, so fairly deducible from higher law, that they have received the suffrage of society; and such things—call them minor morals, social ethics, or by whatsoever name you please—these things respectable or reputable should have a place in Christian thought and Christian conduct. “Whatever things are of good report—think on these things.”

The rule is simple. We must please God rather than men; and he who merely seeks to please man cannot be the servant of Christ. Woe unto you when all speak well of you. It is a miserable suppleness or subserviency which is always of the humour of those around; and there must be an entire absence of the things true and honest when the man is a mere echo, and when, in order to stand well with the present company, he assents by turns to all opinions, and says Amen to opposing prayers. But

“blessed are ye when persecuted for righteousness’ sake.” Woe to the temporizer who wants all men to speak well of him, and so trims his sail to every wind; but blessed is the man who, if he foregoes an appointment or forfeits a friendship, if he incurs reproach or loss or suffering, does it not from rashness or wrong-headedness, much less from his own fault or negligence, but from loyalty to truth, from steadfastness of principle, from obedience to God.

This on the one side—*God and our own conscience first*. Then, on the other hand, if we are to love our neighbour as ourself, we will wish our neighbour to love us; and this he will be apt to do, if we do not make ourselves needlessly disagreeable; and there are a few things which it is found by experience tend to make members of society agreeable to one another, such as affability, pleasantness, good-breeding; accurate information, neither churlishly withheld nor ostentatiously exhibited; a delicate perception of times and seasons; the kindliness which encourages the timid, and the dignity which represses the petulant or profane; the good sense which does not assume that the aged are necessarily dotards, or that all young heads are empty; the good-feeling which is at once in sympathy with the mourner, which is respectful to illustrious rank or more illustrious service, and which treads softly on holy ground. Contrariwise, there are some things which are of bad report, and which go far to make their owner unpopular: such things as coarseness and boorishness, that cold-hearted or ill-natured kind of wit called sarcasm, affectations of every

kind, as well as that melancholy sort of openness which discloses nothing except a general want of worth or wisdom within.

I do not know that it would be wrong to enlarge on these things. It would be easy to find texts for them in the Book which says, "Be pitiful; be courteous; be kindly affectioned one to another;" nay, we might find texts for them all in the once well-conned but now prohibited "Proverbs;" in the book which tells us—"A soft answer turneth away wrath;" "A cheerful countenance doeth good like a medicine;" "A fool, if he keep silence, is counted wise;" but "a word in due season"—well-turned and well-timed—"how good is it! It is like apples of gold in a basket of silver." But if we forbear it is not because the theme is unimportant or useless, far less unscriptural; but because it needs a light touch and deft handling to which we cannot lay claim; and for what is lacking in our sermon, we would refer to a series of works in which our British literature is almost unique, and which constitute the most charming of the legacies of last century—I mean those essays in which Steele, Addison, Hawkesworth, and Johnson did so much to polish the manners and even purify the morals of an age which the pulpit did so little to spiritualize or sanctify.

Perhaps, for the sake of younger hearers, and to aid the "thoughts" of others, I may be allowed to indicate a few examples in a very extensive class—one or two of those dead flies which destroy much excellence, and which not only damage the character, but which in the case of religious professors bring an evil report on the gospel.

1. The first which I venture to mention is a fault which I fear you will say this sermon exemplifies—*censoriousness*. It is a cunning sin ; for it begins by conceding to the censor his own superiority. You are throwing stones at the Sabbath-breaker : thereby you prove that you are yourself in the Spirit on the Lord's day. You hold up to reprobation the narrowness of evangelicals, and at once demonstrate your own catholicity. You knock together the heads of contending sectaries, and repeat to yourself, "Blessed are the peacemakers." You look over a subscription-list, and find it the cheapest way of doing charity to throw it down, exclaiming, "What paltry contributions!" It is a cunning sin, for not only does it foster self-complacency, but it puts an end to self-improvement. The fault-finder has no need to "give diligence, and add to his faith virtue:" for there are a dozen crimes which he has never committed, and every time that he turns his disdainful look on extortioners or publicans, he as much as says, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men:" and so, with scarce an atom of personal worth, from the ruins of other reputations, he goes on building for his own bust a pedestal ; at last fancying that his top reacheth unto heaven, he stoops a little, and looks down on us all : for fear his head should strike the ceiling, he puts up his hand, and fends off the firmament.

The fault-finder can never be a favourite ; and he who has so little good to say of others must not wonder if at last he comes to have a bad report of all men. Not only is *he* incomparably happier, but he is far nearer the mark, who is alive to the good qualities of his friends and

quickly responsive, but his is a far nobler nature who can concede to others the motives which he claims for himself. Even as regards an opponent—of course he needs more light or enlargement of some sort, otherwise he would never deny your self-evident propositions, or withstand your irresistible arguments; but he may be a good man notwithstanding; and if you admired his profile whilst you walked side by side, now that he turns round and meets you full face, it is absurd to call him ugly.

2. The tendency to disparage others suggests a kindred infirmity—the vanity or vainglorious tendency.

“ Very boastful was Iagoo ;  
 Never heard he an adventure  
 But himself had met a greater ;  
 Never any deed of daring  
 But himself had done a bolder ;  
 Never any marvellous story  
 But himself could tell a stranger.

Would you listen to his boasting,  
 Would you only give him credence,  
 No one ever shot an arrow  
 Half so far and high as he had ;  
 Ever caught so many fishes,  
 Ever killed so many reindeer,  
 Ever trapped so many beaver.

None could run so fast as he could,  
 None could dive so deep as he could ;  
 None could swim as far as he could ;  
 None had made so many journeys,  
 None had seen so many wonders,  
 As this wonderful Iagoo,  
 As this marvellous story-teller.”<sup>1</sup>

“ Let another praise thee, and not thine own lips.” Be-

<sup>1</sup> *Song of Hiawatha* : The Wedding-feast.

fore honour is humility. Now that thou art called to this feast of existence, be content with a lower place, remembering that the head of the table is not down here at all, but out of sight altogether; and if those servants of the Lord, the emergencies of life, or the events of Providence, should bring a message from the Master as the festival goes forward, "Come up higher," then shalt thou have honour of the guests—then shalt thou be followed to thy place of promotion with admiring eyes by those amongst whom you have hitherto been seated, but who in their neighbour did not suspect a notable.

3. Again, a thing of good report is thrift, with all its independence; and just as much the opposite is *improvidence*, with all its complications. No doubt we lay heavy burdens on one another, and of all the "coming men" no one is more wanted than the hero who, with faith enough to do it, and with force of character sufficient to command a following, shall be the first to break through our cruel conventionalities, and show at how small a money cost a happy home can be constructed and maintained. But even as it is, and whilst the effort to provide things honest in the sight of men calls forth many of the noblest traits in those who fight life's battle, much fatigue might be saved, and much anxiety, if we had it fully fixed in our minds, and when needful could fall back on it, what the Bible so constantly inculcates, that as regards things external, food and raiment are sufficient, and that with pure tastes, warm affections, exalted friendships, and the blessed hope, the loftiest, largest life may be lived out on the scantiest resources, and in the lowliest sphere.

Amongst the things of bad report, we have mentioned censoriousness and boastfulness. We have also named improvidence — that profusion or dealing with a slack hand which leads to embarrassments and all sorts of financial complication. We ought to mention the opposite evil—the narrowness which withholdeth more than is meet; for very different from the courageous economy which faces the actual requirement, and denies itself, is the avarice which defrauds the hireling of his wages, and which, provided that the store accumulates, does not care how sordid is the saving. Amongst the things of bad report, and which in life's outset, when wrong habits still are curable, you would do well to resist and conquer, is every sort of negligence and disorder. A man of method, a person who remembers his engagements and fulfils them punctually, has always some good qualities besides: very usually this one attribute is the index of a mind well regulated, and of a conduct in other things correct; and whilst the accurate correspondent, the school-boy always exact and always ready, the tidy and time-keeping servant, the orderly companion, is such a joy as the punctual sunrise or the promise-keeping seasons—scarcely wondered at, and too seldom thanked—you know the misery of mess and confusion, and how, like the havoc wrought by a boar from the forest in a flower-bed or vineyard, a day may be devastated or the comfort of a household may be turned into chaos by one of those unfortunate spirits who have no pegs in their memory, no music in their fingers, no rhythm in their frame—whose promise is kept neither to the ear nor the hope, and who usually



living apart from time and space occasionally drop into yours, like a meteor through the sky-light, leaving you much confusion to clear away, much loss and damage to repair.

As a rule for maintaining a good report, it ought to be added, "Abstain from all appearance of evil." (The old gentleman and the three coachmen.)

A good name is better than precious ointment, and it is worth while taking some pains for its preservation. The prime requisite is to possess the good qualities. When Dr. Waugh heard any one saying angrily, "I must be respected; respect I must have and shall have;" his answer was, "Deserve it, and you'll get it." So with a good name. It is not to be got by pretence or puffing; it must be earned by worth and well-doing; and usually the best protection to it is to go on adding to the attributes.

Sometimes a vindication may be needful; but as a general rule the best defence is to be above suspicion.

No doubt in the mysterious providence of God it sometimes happens that a fair fame is darkened and remains under long, perhaps a life-long, eclipse. It is hard to conceive a greater trial. Next to conscious guilt, and in one respect more bitter, must it be to pursue life's journey under the cloud of calumny—cast off by former friends, shunned by the virtuous, pitied by the noble-minded. Hence the wickedness of commencing or carelessly circulating an evil report.<sup>1</sup> Hence the high service rendered by minds acute and accustomed to evidence, in searching out

<sup>1</sup> Macaulay's want of manliness in not retracting his exploded charge against William Penn.

facts, and clearing from cruel aspersion either living reputations, or the memories of those who are gone.<sup>1</sup> Hence the happiness of a Christian under calumny. He has One Friend at least who even now believes in his innocence; who, if expedient, has the means of clearing his character even now, and who will assuredly do him right in that day when the tables shall be turned, and the mistakes of of dim mortality shall be rectified—when some who perhaps have been respected or renowned in their day shall be covered with shame and contempt, and when, the occultation ended, the righteous shall shine forth like stars in their Father's kingdom.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. M'Crie and Alex. Henderson.

## VIII.

### THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

#### PHIL. IV. 8.

“Fro hennis forth, britheren, what evere thingis ben sothe, what evere thingis chast, what evere thingis iust, what eure thingis hooli, what eure thingis able to be louyd, what eure thingis of good fame, if any vertu, if any presing of discipline, thinke ye these thingis.”—WYCLIFFE (Forshall and Madden's Edit. 1850).

“Those same have ye in your minde.”—TYNDALE.

TAKING leave of a text which has occupied the mornings of so many Sabbaths, we may be allowed one or two general remarks.

1. We are impressed with the *comprehensiveness* of the Christian character. In human systems there have been fine hints and noble efforts; but the tendency of human systems is to concentrate all excellence into some single attribute. The virtue of the Roman was valour, the virtue of the Chinese is politeness. With the Stoic it was a stern independence, a sturdy self-containedness, and with the Epicurean a voluptuous indifferentism. And even in the Christian Church, with those who fix on a single point a too exclusive eye, or who come too entirely under a single set of influences, there is sure to be a great practical extremeness. With the dogmatist the cardinal virtue is orthodoxy, with the ritualist it is agreement in outward observances. The Quaker gives his vote

for the mild and gentle virtues, the Covenanter for the manly and heroic. With the Romish ascetic perfection consists in what he calls "purity," and with the old-fashioned Englishman in what he calls "honesty," or what "The Whole Duty of Man" calls, in a vague way, morality. And whilst Paul says, "Whatsoever things are true, noble, just, and pure, do you ponder and practise," and whilst Peter says, "Give diligence, and add to your faith virtue, knowledge, temperance," soaring far above Peter and Paul, and such purblind apostles, the antinomian scorns these beggarly elements. He protests for a gospel unmixed with morality, and maintaining that spiritual-mindedness is all in all, from the airy elevation where he floats he calls down to us wingless pigmies, "Drop these Ten Commandments. If you wish to rise and know true liberty, let go these two tables of stone. Throw off the legal crust, the Mosaic shell, and 'hatch the cherubim.'"

We grant that Christianity includes a great deal more than morality. It is a life, a new creation, a coming of God Himself into the soul of man; but still, it is a life which comes out in conduct, a new creation, which amongst other things new-creates the character, an indwelling of God which manifests itself in the beauty of holiness, and what we now say is, That in as far as Christianity includes morality, *it includes the whole of it*. To the things homely it adds the things heroic, to the things lovely, the things majestic. And when its own language is rightly understood—comparing Scripture with Scripture and studying the lesson in the light of the Great Pattern, when we know the full force of the terms, we

shall find that there is room in the same character, because room in the same Christianity, for attributes seemingly opposite, and for graces of finer texture and brighter lustre than those can show who most pride them in the practice : room for a temperance and self-control compared with which the austerities of the Trappist are a poor substitute for purity : room for a sincerity and candour compared with which a mere verbal veracity may look as grey as our city marble looks in driven snow : room for a loving-kindness compared with which even Moravian brotherhood shall seem formal and mechanical : room for a heavenly-mindedness compared with which the rapture of the antinomian is like the rising of the soap-blown bubble in the wake of the bird of Paradise—both for the moment bright, but the hollow film soon bursting in a turbid drop, whilst, strengthened with manna gathered on this lower ground, and buoyed up, not by intrinsic emptiness but vital energy, from the golden feathers of the other the sunshine comes back more brilliant, and, facing the sudden blast, fearless of the fiery beam, it continues free of all the firmament.

2. The *thoroughness* of evangelical morality. In the time of our Lord there were some people who took great pains with their character. “Whatsoever things are of good report” you would be apt to say were the things of which they were continually thinking. They liked the reputation of being very religious, and if it was Lent, or a season of abstinence, their face was so long and their whole look so lamentable that you were sure they had not tasted a morsel. Whilst the fig-tree shade and the calm

retreat suited Israelites indeed, like Nathanael, and whilst the like of Isaac would go out into the lonely field to meditate, such places did not suit the Pharisee doing his devotions—he would be seized with a praying fit in the public thoroughfare, and would only leave off when through lids sily opened he saw that there were none to see. And what means this blast of the bugle? Are there barracks close by? “Oh no; it is only my neighbour Simon doing his alms. He is sounding a trumpet to gather to his gate the poor people who come for his mites and farthings; and he is not only very charitable, but he is so open in all his ways that he would not like to be doing any good without letting his fellow-citizens know it.”

By bringing God near, bringing the Father who seeth in secret from the temple into the street, and from the street into the house—the closet,—by showing that God’s eye is on our hand, our heart, our thoughts, our inmost wishes, Christ laid the axe at the root of affectation and hypocrisy, and by rendering so impressive the all-pervasiveness of the Divine Presence He gave to His followers a high aim in action as well as a strong comfort in sorrow. Whatever else the religion of Jesus may be, it is the religion of reality, the religion of sincerity. The sharpest note in all that preaching, the nearest to a discord, was the denunciation of false appearances: “Woe unto you actors or pretenders, who paint the charnel-house, who wash outside the chalice;” with long prayers and ostentatious alms, with punctilious sticklings and strainings cloaking over the inward corruption. And if anything is prerequisite to a character truly Christian, it is that “guilelessness”

so praised in Nathanael—that open unsophisticated attitude of soul which lets the living God come nearest—that hospitality towards the heavenly which does not hold the door jealously and anxiously ajar, but which flings it wide open, and lets the glory enter—that true candour which the Holy Spirit imparts to the crooked, prejudiced, self-justifying mind of man—that purity of heart which sees God, which in the filialness of Jesus sees the Fatherhood of God, and falls down on His forgiveness, which in the sinlessness of Jesus sees the holiness of God, and longs to be changed into the same image, which in the invitations of Jesus feels the enclaspings arms of God, and surrenders to pardoning grace and protecting care, which in the teaching of Jesus hears the voice of God, and with all the surrounding lie shut out rejoices in the truth—that truth which like sunlight supplants the darkness, and by dint of its own self-demonstration supersedes all need for further evidence.

In completest keeping, therefore, with the genius of Christianity, and mindful of its author, the Amen, the True Witness, the Light of men, the first thing on which the apostle bids the Philippians think is “the things true.” Be sincere, be genuine; be explicit, open, candid, and from this root of truthfulness will grow all things lofty and lovely—whatsoever things are just and pure and reputable.

The oracle of elegance last century was Lord Chesterfield, and in the fashionable world his Letters were more studied than the Bible. Writing to his son, we constantly encounter maxims and exhortations like the following:—

“Mankind is more governed by appearances than by realities. An air, a tone of voice, a countenance composed to mildness and softness, which are all easily acquired, will do the business. . . . Do not therefore trust to appearances, but pay other people with them.” “Your great point at present in Paris, to which all other considerations must give way, is to become entirely a man of fashion; to be well bred without ceremony, easy without negligence, steady and intrepid with modesty, genteel without affectation, frank without indiscretion, and secret without mysteriousness.” “Your sole business now is to shine, not to weigh. Weight without lustre is lead. . . . Manner is all, in everything; it is by manner only that you can please, and consequently rise.”<sup>1</sup> We quote such sayings as a specimen of worldly Pharisaism, Pharisaism not in a religious professor, but in a man who scoffed at religion, and who had the best reasons for wishing that revelation might not be true. You see how beginning with the things true, Paul at last comes down to the things of good report; and you see how commencing with the things of good report Lord Chesterfield never gets up to the things noble. Christianity begins at the heart, and from its abundant vitality the outcome is a life noble and strenuous, active and useful, generous, gallant, beautiful. Chesterfieldism, or the Pharisaism of mere fashion, begins by making a suit of clothes, and hopes that by and bye they will come to life, and make a sensation in society. Ought it to be any wonder if, as in the case of the younger Stanhope, into the coat of many colours no Joseph ever comes?—any

<sup>1</sup> *Chesterfield's Letters*, vol. ii. pp. 143, 86, 121 (Dublin: 1774).!



wonder if, like the trick which Michal played on Saul's messengers, those who go up expecting a man of mark are chagrined to find only a lay figure instead of a king or a captain, only a pillow of goat's hair and an image ?

3. So a third thing which strikes us is the *vitality*, the *inspiration* which animates Christian morality. Paul puts foremost "truth," Peter begins with "believing"—"Whatsoever things are true," says the one; "Add to your faith virtue," says the other. And both are right. Christian character has truth for its nucleus and faith for its mainspring. There can be no better example than this very epistle, all aglow with love to an unseen Saviour: "To me to live is Christ;" "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." And this ardent affection is anxious. It seeks to please its much-loved Master. "Let your conversation be such as becometh the gospel." "If there be any consolation in Christ, fulfil ye my joy: be like-minded, lowly, kind to one another. Nay, let the mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." "Our conversation is in heaven, whence also we look for the Saviour." And this makes all the difference. Two years ago our Mission Committee lost a good member, Sir John Login; and two weeks ago, seized with a sudden spasm, his daughter caught her mother's hand. "It can't be death!" her mother murmured. "No, not death," was the answer, "but life eternal," as from the midst of abundant life she passed forward to still more. This makes the difference. The believer *lives*. To him Christ is so alive and so endeared that it may be said Christ lives in him.

Love to Christ is life to his soul—a life which is capable of shaping itself into all forms of strength and loveliness, and which, under favourable conditions, comes out so ample, so spontaneous, so exuberant, that the believer radiates around him a holy blessedness, a perceptible immortality, making you feel at once that such a life can never end, and that the better life can be only a life like this expanded and prolonged.

That makes the difference—the difference between a dry morality and an evangelized ethics, or those graces of character which are created and fostered by the life-giving Spirit. If love to Christ be your motive, you will not be lacking in morality, nor will that morality be dry. If love to Christ constrain you, taking His maxims for your rule and His walk for your model, your own life will come out natural and noble, just and pure, beautiful and blameless, and incomparably more powerful and effective than any character merely self-moulded can ever be. And although the annals of the faith already sparkle with many brilliant names, names to which the constraining love of Christ gave lustre; men whom it made Christian heroes, like Zuingli and Coligny and Gustavus Adolphus; men whom it made preachers of righteousness, like Savonarola and Calvin and Luther, and Whitefield and Wesley; men whom it made noble martyrs, like Stephen and Polycarp, and Huss and Hamilton and Cranmer; and other men whom, by making them missionaries, it made martyrs in purpose, like Martyn and Judson and John Williams; men whom it made just judges, like Hale; and upright, high-minded traders, like Hard-

castle and Thornton; and good physicians, like Boerhaave and Haller; and men—yes, and women too—to whom it gave a good report, and whom it invested with loveliness unspeakable in toilsome lives and lowly spheres,—the potency of that master motive and the might of the new-moulding Spirit are exhaustless as ever. And although thousands of thousands, yea, ten thousand times ten thousand, should join the ranks of the redeemed, there is no need that any one should be the repetition or facsimile of his fellow; but whilst “Worthy the Lamb” reveals the hidden life, the inspiring strength of all, individual grace and distinctive excellence in every one, may bespangle with different glories that upper firmament, may beautify that better Eden with as many trees of righteousness as there are saints of God.

Think on these things. If it is worth while to study German or geometry or anything else, surely it is worth while to make a study of goodness. Philopœmen was one of the most skilful generals whom Greece ever yielded, and his skill in choosing ground and handling armies has been ascribed to a peculiar forecast which he possessed. In times of peace as well as war he was continually pondering all combinations and contingencies, so that at last nothing occurred which he had not considered, and for which he was not somewhat prepared.<sup>1</sup> The same is told of our Havelock. He was so well read in military memoirs that there was no great battle but he knew how it had been lost or won, and in the exalted moment of conflict could turn his knowledge to account.

<sup>1</sup> *Quarterly Review*, vol. civ. p. 477.

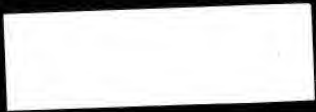
And, O my friends, there is need for some thoughtfulness. The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the skill and valour which through loop-holed walls and volleying flame forced their passage into Lucknow, are but an emblem of the great fight of temptations through which some good soldiers have fought their way to glory, honour, and immortality. But there are many who are destroyed for want of wisdom. They will not take a thought. So frivolous are some natures—so completely bent on self-indulgence—so entirely at the mercy of the moment, that to warn them against their present course of life is like reasoning with a moth as it whisks and whirls around the flame: you may drive him off for once or twice, but his escape only shows how clever he is, and how needless your fears: so here's another dash, but this time he's caught, with scorched wings quivering in helpless agony, and the smoke of his torment ascending. If you ever saw a lunatic on the edge of a cliff with a watch or a purse in his hand, making grimaces, and showing that he meant to hurl it away—you run up, but the very effort to prevent it consummates the catastrophe, for with a glare of fiendish triumph it is spinning through the air, and next instant disappears in the abyss,—you have an emblem of what often wrings the heart of ministers and teachers. We see the youth with a price in his hand—what we call opportunity—a whole life-time which he may fill up so happily—a whole eternity which if he pleases he may win,—but the devil hath entered into him, and he shows plainly that he is going to fling it all away. You run up; you remonstrate; you warn;

you weep; but after all, the thing is in his own hand, not yours; and whilst you are helplessly looking on, away it goes. The character is lost, the constitution broken, the soul is lost, and the life-chance too. The golden opportunity is vilely cast away, and will never come back into that hand again. "In vain is a price put into the hand of a fool," for he will not buy wisdom with it. *Think*. Without solidity there can be no worth, without seriousness no happiness.

And those who are thoughtful, make a study of excellence. Survey your own character with a view to ascertaining its deficiencies; look into the law of liberty in order to see what attainments in holiness and usefulness are open to men like yourselves. And take hints and helps wherever they offer—in the excellences of friends, in the experiences of departed worthies whose history you peruse. And all such serviceable suggestions at once turn to account. Try and try over again. Be not merely hearers of the Word, but doers of the same. The things which you have seen in any servant of God do; and if you not only ponder and practise but pray, you may soon improve on any earthly pattern; for "the God of peace" is with those who tread the paths of righteousness, and there need be no limit to the progress where God is the guide, where the goal is perfection.

12





2644YB

LFC

03-31-05 32180

150

MC







Princeton Theological Seminary Libraries



1 1012 01307 4689



