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STUDIES
IN
LUKE'S GOSPEL.

FIRST SERIES.

BY
eymour
CHARLES S. ROBINSON, D. D.
(1829-1899)



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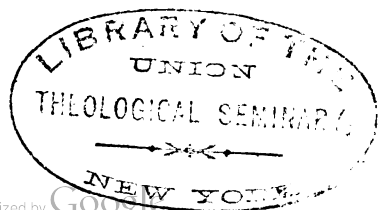
It would seem from the rapid distribution of the two series of discourses issued last season, that these expositions are used for helps in preparation of the International Lessons in their order.

Perhaps it might be as well to state, with a view to further usefulness in the same direction, that some portions of the third Gospel have received a homiletical notice in former publications. The personal history of the evangelist Luke has been treated in two chapters of "Sabbath Evening Sermons:" one entitled, "The Beloved Physician," the other, "Is Anything Certain?" In like manner, the "Magnificat," the "Gloria in Excelsis," the "Benedictus," and the "Nunc Dimittis" have been chosen as themes in "Sermons in Songs."

It is expected that in the course of the coming spring the second series of the studies in Luke will be given to the press.

CHARLES SEYMOUR ROBINSON.

First Union Church, New York City,
SEPTEMBER 15, 1889.



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OUR TOKENS OF LOVE ARE FOR THE MOST PART BARBAROUS—COLD AND LIFELESS, BECAUSE THEY DO NOT REPRESENT OUR LIFE. THE ONLY GIFT IS A PORTION OF THYSELF. THEREFORE LET THE FARMER GIVE HIS CORN; THE MINER, A GEM; THE SAILOR, CORAL AND SHELL; THE PAINTER, HIS PICTURE; AND THE POET, HIS SERMON.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON.



STUDIES IN

LUKE'S GOSPEL.

I.

THE FORERUNNER OF THE LORD.

"AND HE SHALL GO BEFORE HIM IN THE SPIRIT AND POWER OF ELIAS."—*Luke 1:17.*

"BEHOLD, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord : and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

These are the closing words of Malachi's prophecy which are suddenly repeated at the beginning of Luke's Gospel. They contain that expression which caused so much animadversion and roused so much curiosity along the progress of history; they seemed to say beyond any accident or possibility of mistake that the aged prophet Elijah was sure to return to the earth before the great day of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was certain therefore that the claims of the son of Mary, this carpenter's

son from Nazareth, to be the Messiah of the nation, would have a rigid test for their settlement: Had Elijah appeared before his birth? Was there known to be any public man whose coming answered to the prophecy?

I. In resuming the consideration of this passage, standing alone upon the very edge of the Old Testament, and yet kindled up by a dawn-light shining from the New, it is hardly necessary to argue for the identification of John the Baptist as the Elijah who was to be sent before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord; for our Saviour himself said all that was needful to make this clear: "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias which was for to come." We might just consider the picture of his life and its lessons.

1. We say his picture, for there is no biography in the New Testament more romantic and picturesque than his. There is a glamour of poetic weirdness, mystery, pathos, all in one, upon which the artists of many ages have loved to dwell. It cannot be denied that this "Messiah's messenger" made his mark in the world's history. Sacred and legendary art has dealt conspicuously with him along the lapse of these eighteen hundred years. We are told that no more striking or commanding figure faces us in the highest galleries of painting beyond the ocean; his has been the form that the masters loved the most and treated the oftenest. What is the notion that the world has of this man?

In most early devotional effigies, and especially

in his characters of messenger and forerunner, of preacher and witness, of baptizer and martyr, the personal appearance of this wilderness prophet varies little. He is a tall, meagre figure, sunburned and haggard, as one wasted with vigils and fasting and desert life, his hair and beard roughly dishevelled, and (in the Greek pictures) with black elf-locks literally standing on end. He is covered only with a leathern girdle, with his limbs and chest exposed—the hand uplifted to warn or to testify. He is generally represented standing, holding the baptismal cup or the reed cross, his mouth half open, his eye dilated and inspired. Oftenest he holds a scroll on which is inscribed, *Vox clamantis in deserto*, or, added by some artists more frequently still, *Ecce Agnus Dei*. Such has always been the world's highest conception of this strange being.

The history of John the Baptist, who came to this world as the forerunner of Christ, is full of dramatic picturesqueness from its beginning to its end. It is a rare thing even in the Bible that a man's biography commences before he is born. But as this story now opens, so it continues; it has in it not so much as one tame chapter. Our divine Saviour bore remarkable testimony to his excellence and his power. He said that among all those born of women there had not arisen one greater than this preacher now shut in the prison by Herod; at the lowest point in his earthly fortune for a season, he was, after all, the mightiest man the world ever knew. Still, he added, any one who was surely in actual enrolment as a subject of the kingdom of

heaven was greater in that particular than John in all his acknowledged supremacy as a ruler of his race and a leader in his generation, soon about to die.

2. But now what were the lessons which this life left behind it for the world to learn? What he said to that generation, he says just the same to this of ours. What he says to the generation, he says directly to each man, woman, and child in it. There are two things especially which he left vibrating in the air. John the Baptist was no reed shaken by the wind; the wind was shaken by the reed, and grew agitated and tremulous. Why, it is marvellous to think what just a voice can do to make the world tremble or rejoice! That haggard preacher by the Jordan said in his trenchant way only two things: what were they?

The first was this: "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." That shook the earth; men listened: why do not men listen now?

The next thing John said was this: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" And then he pointed, with his finger quivering passionately in his eagerness—pointed straight to Jesus Christ, who was at the moment moving along the bank of the stream. After that he decreased, Christ increased; the voice now is Christ's.

II. But we turn next from the Old Testament to the New. The fragment of Luke's Gospel now under our study contains a startling and somewhat obscure prediction concerning this wonderful man's errand. These awestruck parents are told, among

other most astonishing things, that he should go before Jesus the Messiah "in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children." The angel who brought such a message added for an asseveration: "I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God."

1. Now let us observe, in the outset, that this announcement is not put forth here as an original prediction. For the language refers us instantly to the final utterance of the Old Testament. "Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

2. Then, next to this, we must observe that this quotation reiterates a promise that one of the Old Testament prophets should reappear in the New. Elijah was to be sent, and that too for a definite purpose, before the second dispensation of mercy should be closed. The Jews kept looking for this leader. For these four hundred years Heaven had been silent. No voice from above had broken the stillness. The nation, like poor

distracted Saul, asked pitifully of the Lord, but the Lord answered neither by dreams nor by Urim nor by prophets. They clung to the promise they had. Never did Portuguese patriot sigh with stronger faith and desire for the return of good King Sebastian—never did British confidence press with serener trust the engagement that the wise King Arthur should come back again—than did those faithful few among the wandering many of God's people hold to this hope that Elijah would once more make his voice heard for the truth, and bring the land to peace.

3. In the third place we must observe that Gabriel identifies this child here promised directly with Elijah. That is to say, this prediction at the beginning of the New Testament is in so many words the answer to that at the close of the Old. If anything more is needed than the formal adoption of the phraseology, it will be found in the language of our Lord Jesus Christ. This was after John had been martyred in prison; but our Lord had said almost the same thing before, when John had sent his disciples to him on a mission of inquiry:

“And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed: likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.”

We are not able to state how clearly Zacharias and Elisabeth understood the majesty of this particular part of the angel's prediction; but we have every reason to believe they were intelligent in the Scriptures. If anybody wishes to know the depth of melancholy which overshadowed all those years of silence, let him attempt to read the old book, "Prideaux's Connection." No message further had Jehovah to send; his people had offended him. Justice comes fiercely forth and bars the gate of revelation for four centuries. History wanders sadly in confusion among the captivities and Maccabæan usurpations. Only an infant can join these two dispensations. Luke is the next man to Malachi. The sternest of all Israel's prophets reappears in the sternest of all heralds to the church. Elisabeth learns that the promised Elijah is John.

4. So we reach a fourth matter of observation: This child was to go before Christ as his herald "in the spirit of Elijah." The history of that old Tishbite prophet would come in here for a most extensive illustration. His was a ministry of denunciation and of conflict with sin entrenched in high places. There must be a law-work before the gospel work; and John the Baptist was coming to do it. After his mission should be accomplished, then the Master who should follow would introduce the milder and more merciful manner of dealing. This is the explanation of the passage found in Luke later on. These disciples, provoked by what they deemed a cruel slight put upon their Lord, desired to punish the refractory villagers as Elijah punished the sol-

diers of Ahab sent to apprehend him: "And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, even as Elias did?" They would have brought fire from heaven to destroy the whole town. Our Lord replied, in the words often misquoted: "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." By mistake that word "spirit" is printed without a capital letter; it seems certain that it means the Holy Ghost. What Christ seeks to say is, not that they did not understand how mean the disposition or temper was which they were cherishing, but that they were forgetting what dispensation of the Spirit they belonged to: "For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." We catch the full force of these words that Gabriel spoke to Elisabeth, therefore, when we compare John's ministry with that of Jesus as a whole. It was the Baptist's business to rouse the dull people to repentance, and stir them up out of their weak conceit of pharisaical perfectness before the law.

5. So next to this we learn from the prediction of Gabriel that this wonderful child was to have the "power of Elijah," also, when he should go forward as the herald of the Messiah. We shall gladly go over the history of this great preacher by-and-by. All we need now is to remember so much of it as will illustrate the announcement made to Elisabeth and Zacharias about this child. His success was amazing; the language intimates that the entire country was moved to excitement, and actually

gathered into assemblages around him: "Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judæa, and all the region round about Jordan." These multitudes instinctively began talking about Elijah the moment they saw John. Once they asked him plainly, "Art thou Elias?" For he looked like him, as the description appeared in the ancient record. He wore the same uncouth dress; he came out suddenly from the same weird neighborhood; he made the wilderness echo with the same uncompromising denunciations of sin; his eye was wild, his hair was long, his meat was meagre, his girdle was of leather; and above everything else his errand was revolutionary and unconventional. He was the most uncompromising preacher the world ever knew with the single exception of Elijah. And so far as power is concerned, he had force enough to move the whole nation into penitence and tears; and even after he was dead, he frightened the king and roused his conscience into trembling.

6. In the sixth place, this announcement of John the Baptist to his parents declares that the special errand of Elijah, which he should come to discharge, was the bringing back of "the hearts of the fathers to the children." In the prophecy of Malachi, the prediction adds also the bringing back of "the hearts of the children to their fathers." We can draw no less an inference from this intimation of divine purpose than that one vast reason why the voice of God had been silent for these four hundred years was to be found in the neglect of children's instruction and training in the family,

and in their wandering away from the old faith of the fathers.

As to bringing the heart of the children back to their fathers, the portion of Malachi's prophecy which Gabriel leaves out, it does seem a little significant when we remember that Elijah was rather a failure with the young, though he deserved much at their hands. Both he and his immediate successor had the experience of raising a child to life by miraculous power. Elijah gave back her son to the widow of Zarephath. Elisha gave back hers to the mother in Shunem. But all the recognition of their kindness from the children as a class these ancient seers gained, seems to have been put in one historic exclamation from some of them at Bethel addressed to Elisha: "Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head!"

But John had better success. No one can fail to notice that when the nation was awakened by his voice, and enlightened consciences gave them their alarm, children began to come to the attention of their parents again. John stirred the hearts which afterwards "brought young children to Jesus." Thus the stern preacher drew the curse away from the old denunciation.

In the bitter end, however, they had their way with this daringly faithful preacher. He was soon thrown into prison, and before long Herod crowned him with the martyrdom his Lord sent him as his seal.

II.

KING DAVID THE SECOND.

"HE SHALL BE GREAT, AND SHALL BE CALLED THE SON OF THE HIGHEST; AND THE LORD GOD SHALL GIVE UNTO HIM THE THRONE OF HIS FATHER DAVID."—*Luke 1: 32.*

ALREADY we have considered the closing prophecy of the Old Testament so far as its bearing upon the coming of John the Baptist as the forerunner of Jesus is concerned. But it was divinely ordered in each instance that John should decrease and Jesus should increase. The opening message should yield to that which was of infinitely more grandeur and importance, sure in its order to follow on at once after it.

We are not surprised, therefore, that this final fragment of the Old Testament revelation turns, with infinite grace and directness of utterance, from Messiah's messenger to the Messiah himself. A comprehensive and swift presentation of a few characteristic offices that Christ is to exercise when he comes is here made, and then this voice from heaven is solemnly silent for the space of four hundred years. A personage called the "messenger of the covenant" is announced, and now it is Jesus, the son of Mary, of whom the prophet is speaking.

I. But here as we go on with the exposition, it is necessary that we perfectly understand what we read. So we rehearse the verses as we find them in

the revised version; this will forestall further exegesis:

“Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in, behold, he cometh, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap; and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver; and they shall offer unto the Lord offerings in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in ancient years. And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers; and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts. For I the Lord change not; therefore ye, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.”

I. *He is to be a refiner.* The figure is exceedingly imaginative and familiar. As a silversmith sits beside the crucible, looking with careful gaze upon the molten metal before him, observant that it shall not be left too crude or unmelted, but still more cautious lest in the severity of the fire it shall be burned, and watching for that intense moment when his own face shall be reflected in the now

glittering mass—so the Christ of God is pictured as sitting, and so he is to discriminate and purify the children he chooses, until he can “offer unto the Lord . . . in righteousness” those who “may abide the day of his coming.”

2. *He is to be a witness.* What he discovers, he is afterwards to testify. So anywhere and everywhere the Messiah is to stand committed irrevocably against sin in the high and the low, against sin of every sort and every degree, against sin as the abominable thing God hates.

3. *He is to be a judge.* There is now the announcement of a date, somewhere in the distance, when all that do wickedly shall be as stubble burning in an oven. This is called “the great and dreadful day of the Lord.” Then those who fear God’s name shall tread down the wicked as ashes under the soles of their feet. There will be a quick reversal of present history and experience. The earth is full of injustice and foul with crime; power is entrenched on the side of wrong. But in the day of the Lord oppression shall end and truth shall triumph.

Thus the record ends: the most that can be said of it is that in some of the phrases may be found a mingling of hope with the presages. The “day of the Lord” is at hand: but who can tell what it will bring? Oriental scholars declare that some Eastern nations use this passage with the greatest confidence and fear strangely striving in their minds for pre-eminence. They call us to notice even the words of the False Prophet in the Koran:

“On that day (the day of Allah) the heaven shall be shaken and shall reel; and the mountains shall walk and pass away. And on that day woe be unto those who accused God’s apostles of imposture; who amused themselves in wading in vain disputes. On that day shall they be driven and thrust into the fire of hell; and it shall be said unto them, This is the fire which ye denied as a fiction. Is this a magic illusion? Or do ye not see? Enter the fire to be scorched. Whether ye bear your torments patiently or impatiently, it will be equal unto you: ye shall surely receive the reward of that which ye have wrought. But the pious shall dwell amid gardens and pleasures, delighting themselves in what their Lord shall have given them.” And again: “When the earth shall be shaken by an earthquake, and the earth shall cast forth her burdens [the dead], and man shall say, What aileth her? On that day will the earth declare her message. On that day men shall go forth in distinct classes, that they may behold their works. And whoever shall have wrought good of the weight of an ant shall behold the same. And whoever shall have wrought evil of the weight of an ant shall behold the same.”

II. From all this we now turn to the answer to the prediction in the New Testament. We go across from the desolate melancholy of those awful years, just at the time when heaven was shutting the doors which had always been open for the angels of prayer and the angels of blessing to pass and repass to and from the presence of God. We come

sadly out of a darkened history into the light of a summer sunshine. It appears as if we must have entered a new world. The air is full of carols, and men's hearts are full of joy. Everybody is singing. Mary is giving us the *Magnificat*, and Zacharias is composing the *Benedictus*; a glorious morning is breaking over the hills, and all eyes are looking.

1. King David the second has come to his throne. There is unusual exultation in the music of Zacharias, as he sings in this new song what the church has kept singing ever since: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us, in the house of his servant David." But our hearts are touched quite as much with the pathos of his notes, as, bearing the ancient prediction in mind, he says to his little boy: "And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest, for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people, by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us." Thus he returns anew on the old strain, praising God for his tender mercy, whereby "the day-spring from on high" had visited his people "to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

2. Reflect a moment upon this, as a new name for the Lord Jesus: "the Sun of Righteousness hath risen with healing in his wings." Wait patiently

to enter upon a generous analysis of the figurative emblems.

The Sun of Righteousness gives light. We remember the ignorance that was hanging over all the world at the time when Christ really did come. Think how sad and groping we should ourselves be now, if we had to keep up the foolish custom as the Jews do, with the veil still over their minds; they are waiting yet for Elijah to arrive, they are looking still for the Messiah to come! When they bring their children before the priests, they place a seat for the old prophet; they open the door wide at Passover, hoping, hoping he may happen in! If one has a question that no one can answer, if goods are found and no owner comes to claim them, they say, "Put them by now until Elijah shall be here!"

The Sun of Righteousness rises with swiftness and strength "in his wings." Perhaps all the commentaries are correct in divesting this expression instantly of its poetry, and saying that wings symbolize beams or rays; but some of us have seen all over the East, from Egypt to Babylon, the figure of a globe with wings sculptured on either side of it; this is the symbol of Deity, the sign of the Great God; it is meant to suggest swiftness, omnipresence, beneficence, strength. A fine Orientalist has called our attention to this in a public comment. One of the most ancient religious symbols in the world is the winged sun, of which the most familiar form is the Winged Disc of the Egyptians. In this symbol, the solar disc is portrayed with two great expanded wings, typifying the might and protecting care of

the divinity. On some of the monuments rays are seen, descending from the sun on the heads of the suppliants below. These rays terminate in hands which are stretched forth as if to bless; and in certain instances the hand is seen conveying to some favored individual the ansate cross, the symbol of life. When Malachi spoke, therefore, of the Sun of Righteousness arising with healing in his wings, he referred, in all probability, to a symbol with which the Jews must have been familiar. It was as if he had said: "You have seen the sculptures of the winged sun and of the sun sending down ray-hands filled with the gift of life. These are a symbol of what is to be. The Sun of Righteousness shall indeed arise, bearing gifts of healing in his outspread wings."

The Sun of Righteousness brings healing in his wings. The Israelites have a saying which has almost become a proverb: "As the sun arises, infirmities decrease." One of the most ancient names of God recorded in the Bible is *Jehovah-rophi*; and this is said to mean in English words "The Lord that healeth." The best things in all this world for health and vigor, for exhilaration and comfort, are plenty of warm bright sunshine and the refreshment of clear pure air driving away fog. Flowers open when the day-star comes up over the hills. Invalids wake with new hope when the night is gone and the birds begin their matins. It was Simon Peter, an old fisherman on the Sea of Galilee, who understood very well what he was talking about when he said: "We have also a more

sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts." Every morning, all over Judæa, even to this time, there blows a sweet fresh wind at sunrise which the natives call "the doctor;" for it purifies the infected air and clears away the mists; and then from the tops of the hills, oh, how far away one sees! It makes one think of the prophet's promise: "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off."

The Sun of Righteousness discloses perennial glory.

For the everlasting noontide succeeds the dawn, and then there is "perfect day." This prediction, brought from prophecy over into history and thus completed with a double inspiration, links itself with all the rest which follows in due course through the subsequent revelation. In one passage of Martin Luther's commentary he likens the two men, whose picture we often see in old illustrated Bibles, bearing upon their shoulders an enormous cluster of grapes brought over from Eshcol, to the church which lives between the former and the present dispensations. These are his words: "The bunch of grapes was carried by the strong men upon a staff; he who marched before could not see them, but he who went behind could both see and eat them. So the fathers, patriarchs, and prophets, living under the Old Testament, did not see the Son of God made man as did they who came behind. The evangelists, apostles and disciples, living under

the New Testament, both saw and tasted it, after John had showed this one grape: Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!" The figure is quaint, but surely there is enough in it for us to remember. It was a grand thing for David to have Moses' Bible, but it was grander for Isaiah to have David's in addition, and for Luke to have Isaiah's, and for Paul to have Luke's and John's. But the grandest of all is for us who have the whole from Pentateuch to Apocalypse. No matter how the interpretations differ, the truth will stand for ever because it is God's. It is the Tamil Christians who say to each other in their proverb: "Calculations may fail, but never the stars!"

So, then, we reach the end of our exposition; a single reflection remains: Jesus the Son of Mary was literally King David the second, in style and in fact. The title on the cross, put there in derision, was his coronation sign. He was "The King of the Jews." Mary was "of the House of David;" he took rank from her; he was the "Seed of the woman." The angel Gabriel told his mother that the Lord God should give to him the throne of his father David; that he should reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and that of his kingdom there should be "no end."

This is the reason why he told John in the Apocalypse that, even in heaven, he wielded the sceptre: "These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth." This is the reason why he told

him again to tell the world always that he claimed the loyal obedience which was his due: "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star."

He has come! The Christ of God
 Left for us his glad abode;
 Stooping from his throne of bliss
 To this darksome wilderness.
 He has come! the Prince of Peace
 Come to bid our sorrows cease,
 Come to scatter with his light
 All the shadows of our night.

He the mighty King has come!
 Making this poor earth his home,
 Come to bear our sin's sad load:
 Son of David, Son of God!
 He has come, whose name of grace
 Speaks deliverance to our race,
 Left for us his glad abode:
 Son of Mary, Son of God!

Unto us a Child is born!
 Ne'er has earth beheld a morn,
 Among all the morns of time,
 Half so glorious in its prime.
 Unto us a Son is given!
 He has come from God's own heaven,
 Bringing with him from above
 Holy peace and holy love.

III.

THE DAY-SPRING FROM ON HIGH.

THE DAY-SPRING FROM ON HIGH HATH VISITED US.—*Luke 1:78.*

THE world has kept among its annals a few names of men famous in literature and holding a perennial reputation, each as the composer of one poem. This chapter tells the tale of a priest who became a prophet, a prophet who became a poet, a poet who gave to the church and the ages a single song, and in this insured a gladly bestowed remembrance.

In the course of the inspired narrative we are informed that the father of a young child was dumb for a considerable season, and that a wonderful return of speech was vouchsafed to him "immediately" when he had negatived the proposed naming of his baby after himself, as was in full prospect and purpose by some neighbors and cousins, and had written upon a tablet peremptorily that his name should be "John." For an angel of the Lord had visited him long previous to this, and foretelling the infant's birth, had also commanded what its name should be.

Now it would appear as if more importance might well be attached to this appellation, not only because of its significance, but also of the fact that another child, coming soon after, was given a name

which was explained openly, so that it should be understood as having been a prophecy in itself. "Jesus" as a word means "one who saves." "John," the old Jehohannan, means "Jehovah is gracious." And if we study such a designation carefully, we shall find that it gives the key to Zacharias' thought in the strain of elevated imagery he uses in his poem.

I. The early part of the great song of Zacharias, which the covenant church of God calls "The Benedictus," from its first word in the Latin version, is taken up with a rehearsal of those supreme blessings which the coming of Jesus as the Messiah would be sure to bring to the Jewish nation. Certainly one must revere the enthusiasm of such a patriot, even if he has no special share in the promised benedictions.

1. It was a fine thing to know that the "House of David" was soon to be in possession of its rightful sovereignty; that the nation might hope to be ransomed from all its enemies; that God would keep the covenant he made with Abraham so that Israel, being in holiness and grace of righteousness once more, might serve him without fear. These beautiful gleams of comfort were enough to make a priest a poet, enough to fill a devout Jew's mind and heart with glowing hope and fervent joy.

2. And yet we are not so much concerned with them as with those that would be universal and would profit the world. These Zacharias enumerates with a very direct form of address to his own little child, whom they had just presented to him.

John was to be "a prophet of the Highest," and as a forerunner he was to go before the face of the Lord "to prepare his ways." But the spiritual aim which this life, with its desert experience at the beginning and the tragic cruelty of martyrdom at its end, was to attain is pointed out explicitly at the close of the poem. The more we study this singular composition, the more clear does the fact become that the priest so suddenly inspired actually made up his prediction in the hours of his dumbness because of the pressure on his heart to announce the matchless benefits Jesus was coming to bring on the entire fallen race of humanity. The errand of John the Baptist would be to "give knowledge" of the way in which sinful souls could be made the objects of divine mercy by "the remission of their sins."

3. What was that "way"? It is indicated in the expression, "The day-spring from on high hath visited us." This introduces us to a new form of figurative speech, which we might consider as one of the swift reproductions of prophetic imagery. It is evidently founded upon Malachi's announcements of the Messiah; it is the same in sentiment as if he had actually quoted the promise of the rising of the "Sun of Righteousness with healing in his wings." The word "day-spring" is defined as "the dawn, the beginning of the day, or the first appearance of the light." It is found often in the New Testament, but it is rendered by the word "East." It is much like our term "Orient," which really signifies the place of sunrise. "We

have seen his star in the east" is a fresh form of saying, "We saw his star in the day-spring." Our version is very happy in the use of the syllable "spring." For in the land of Palestine there is almost no such thing as twilight; the sun comes out from behind the hills abruptly, and is all on hand at once for the ordinary day's work in flooding the entire world with illumination.

II. Thus much, then, for the song; what does it mean? It is best now to pick out the various lessons of doctrine and duty from the final verses of it, for there the admonition seems to have been lodged by Zacharias. Certain pictures of man's need and God's supply must be brought before our minds patiently and one at a time for our study.

1. To begin with, there is an implication here that the race had been lying in ignorance and ruin for ages before Christ came. In this song we are told that men were sitting "in darkness and in the shadow of death." Ignorance was brooding over all the world. There are some things which the mind of man cannot in any way reach without a revelation from heaven. This does not depend on a question as to superiority between ancients and moderns; it is a direct assertion that the human intellect is inadequate, even at its highest exercise, to communicate information it does not possess. From the nature of the case finite beings cannot attain to an acquaintance with what is infinite in God; men are all fettered by the same difficulties, and all limited by the same general bounds, although some may perhaps sport a little

more widely than others by reason of strength. So there is one depth in an ocean and one area of space that surrounds it to which, for certain usual purposes, the minnow is as adequate a swimmer as the whale; but a shore-line girds the vast reaches of distance, and solemn solitudes of storm and gloom lie out under the skies overhead; and there are "paths in the deep waters" as impassable to one ability as to another.

For instance, *souls must know God's true character in order to a full salvation.* They must understand his holiness, or they cannot ever possibly conceive of sin, or appreciate how odious in his sight the state is from which they are to be saved. If their notions of his purity fall short, they will never rightly register the degree of repentance he demands, nor will they keep in mind how spiritual is the service he is wont to claim from all the creatures of his hands.

Just so *men must understand God's law in order to salvation.* We all need to know its nature as grounded upon perfect justice, its penalty as fixedly punishing the transgressor with the pains of utter exclusion from the divine presence, and its reach as extending even unto the innermost being of each person. "For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes

of him with whom we have to do." Salvation is the deliverance of the soul from the curse of the law. We cannot repent until we know exactly what the wrong is that we have done; we cannot know this unless the standard is given us by which we are to be judged. All such needed information is a matter of necessary revelation from heaven.

But above everything else *men must become acquainted with divine grace in order to salvation.* Let me be informed that there is a Deity who made me; let me be instructed in his character; then let his whole law be exhibited to me article by article until I perceive how searching is its spirit and how unyielding are its sanctions, how perfect is the obedience it claims, and how overwhelming is the curse it denounces on them who fail to conform to it. Now let my information be forcibly arrested at precisely that point: can I possibly be saved by only such an amount of intelligence? 'Alas! I am simply thrown into a deeper depth of despair. I see as in one dazzling flash of light that the ruin of my soul is certain. I am myself a transgressor who has broken this law of my Maker; so I am among the culprits already condemned. I have not had thus far one single attribute of God's character which is going to take sides with me. If I cannot go farther on and learn more of God, I cannot be saved. So everything tantalizes me; I am petulant enough to cry out that I do not desire to have anything more to do ever with such a Being. "Are not my days few? cease then, and let me alone, that I may take comfort a

little, before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness, and the shadow of death; a land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness." That is to say, when one leads me up under the frowning ridge of Mt. Sinai, and forsakes me there where I need help the most—when I begin to hear the thunders of denunciation and discover the lightnings which give me light only to blast my eyes with wrath—I could wish that the decency of a deeper ignorance might have been granted me as the relief of my horror. For I dare not go away from God a single step; the reason why I am in peril is because I have already gone too far. Yet the worst of all my trouble is that I dare not come nearer, for God is now revealed to me only as he is pronounced in the Scriptures—"a consuming fire:" therefore I stand stunned and hopeless. You must direct my eyes over towards the lowlier mountain, and place Calvary beside Sinai. You must make grace abound where sin abounds. You must teach me God's plan by which he causes the transgressions of his creatures to rebound to his supreme glory by the favor he shows when he proffers sinners an absolutely free pardon. You must explain to me how this grace is wont to weave its brightest crowns of celestial splendor out of the flashes of extinguished wrath. Then I can hear, wonder, and draw nigher God.

2. Just here, therefore, we are met by that matchless song which the old priest Zacharias has furnished. He says that this "day-spring from on

high hath visited us." He announces that the light has dawned "through the tender mercy of God." There are two things in this: they deserve a separate mention in order to our perfect understanding.

New information has been given: that is the first of them. From heaven comes a message to men directly sent by the Son of God. Knowledge of salvation is now attainable. By the remission of our sins, it is proclaimed, we can be redeemed, and our feet can be guided into the way of peace. God waited long before he fulfilled his promise, but he did fulfil it in the end. He let men go on in their foolishness until their ingenious systems had become a laughing-stock. Cicero says that in his day no haruspex could look another haruspex in the face without smiling at the cheats they were putting off on the credulous people in their silly worships. The world grew worse all the time. The shadows of deepest night always come just before sunrise. And our race groped in the gloom longing wistfully for help: then the Helper came to men: "Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world; but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."

Then the other thing which the song of Zacharias says is that we have all that grows out of the rising of the Sun of Righteousness just because of God's sovereign mercy, "the tender mercy of

God." The universe is wide open to us, and we are as wise at cunningly devising fables as anybody; but what we must have now is some strong proof of divine benevolence, or we cannot love our Maker with all our hearts.

We turn to the world around us, which we are required to believe is entirely under God's control: oh, what a wild spectacle of misery a soul sees the moment it becomes sympathetic! Wrong is everywhere, and suffering crowds itself upon our notice. It is solemnly declared that the Almighty sends the plagues, the desolations, the diseases which on every hand fill its lazaretto and its graves. We count up the Waterloos and the Marathons, the Yorktowns and the Gettysburgs; here widows shriek amid the flames of the funeral pyres which consume the bodies of their husbands; there the children scream as they roast in the arms of a brazen image, or suffocate in the depths of the rivers that drown them. We mark how the simooms sweep away the caravans, how the oceans engulf the fleets, how the volcanoes sepulchre the cities. Does God in person govern all these things? Does he know when they happen? Could he restrain them? If he could not, is he omnipotent? If he could and yet will not, can he be kind? Who can ever answer such questions?

And if we have so poor an understanding of divine benevolence as this, how feeble is the hope that we can find any token of mercy shown to one who has been wilfully wicked! A law is broken, we will suppose for an example; and now men ask

God to forgive it, and he does. But a revelation of mercy has come to us. Imagine that we had never had any such communication from heaven. Where, without the Bible in his hands for a guide, did any one in all this wide world find an instance of an authentic pardon for the breaking of a law? The ocean never roared it over a shipwrecked vessel. The avalanche never thundered it beside an overwhelmed hamlet. No grave ever sent forth the assurance of it. No disease ever bore it on the breath of a pestilence. No storm ever uttered a hint of it upon the devastated hillsides it swept. Nature always speaks austere like Moses, without a sign of relenting—penalty follows transgression of law, "eye for eye, limb for limb."

But here revelation takes up the challenge: "The day-spring from on high hath visited us." The gospel reveals and exhibits the one attribute of the divine mercy. This is the interpretation of mysteries. When John Milton became in his old age so blind that he could not read the characters in his Hebrew Bible, his daughter said over aloud texts and chapters to him; and then he, in his turn, expounded their meaning to her and gave the spiritual truth they contained. So God's inspired Word aids in the explanation of providence. Nature speaks the hard lessons for the universe to hear, and then revelation makes them clear with divine explanation. Through a joyous and intelligent harmony between them God makes himself known to his bewildered creatures. Thus, with the vision of a pitying Face bending over us from the

sky, God is offering his only-begotten Son to the world, and the Son bears a glorious Book in his hand. Mercy and truth have met; grace has now become as familiar as power among the divine attributes, and has grown dearer to every troubled heart; and so all are at rest in his love. "Through the tender mercy of our God—the day-spring from on high hath visited us—to guide our feet into the way of peace."

From Sinai's cloud of darkness
 The vivid lightnings play;
 They serve the God of vengeance,
 The Lord who shall repay.
 Each fault must bring its penance,
 Each sin the avenging blade;
 For God upholds in justice
 The laws that he hath made.

But Calvary stands to ransom
 The earth from utter loss,
 In shade than light more glorious,
 The shadow of the Cross.
 To heal a sick world's trouble,
 To soothe its woe and pain,
 On Calvary's sacred summit
 The Paschal Lamb was slain.

Almighty God! direct us
 To keep thy perfect law!
 O blessed Saviour, help us
 Nearer to thee to draw;
 Let Sinai's thunders aid us
 To guard our feet from sin,
 And Calvary's light inspire us
 The love of God to win.

IV.

A VISIT TO BETHLEHEM.

"LET US NOW GO EVEN UNTO BETHLEHEM, AND SEE THIS THING WHICH IS COME TO PASS."—*Luke 2: 15.*

AUGUSTINE desired to have seen three things before he died—Rome in her imperial glory, Paul in the pulpit, Christ in the flesh. Cato is said to have repented of three errors—that he had ever spent a day idle, that he had ever revealed a secret, that he had ever journeyed by water rather than by land. Thales gives thanks for three things—that he was not born a beast, that he was born a man, that he drew his first breath in Greece. "And I, poor I," says quaint old Dyer, who quotes the words of these worthies, "desire to see three things also—Babylon's ruin, Satan's binding, and Immanuel's reign."

Thus everybody seems to have had his triple crown for a wishing-cap. And I once thought I had a right to cherish a most innocent longing of my own. But I went a step farther, and desired to see four things before I died. Yet all these four were embraced in one. I wanted to go to Bethlehem, in Syria; for there I should find the tomb of Rachel, the residence of Ruth, the sheep-cote of David, and the birthplace of Jesus.

They used to tell me that the village must be

quite insignificant now, and never was very notable either for size or beauty. I was prepared for that, for the prophet had said of it, many hundred years ago, that it was "little among the thousands of Judah." And none of these four localities can be fixed beyond scholarly dispute. I felt, however, that all the grand natural features of the region would have remained undisturbed.

The hills around which on one remembered night "the distant hallelujahs stole" could not be removed. Many of the harvest-plains where the Moabitish damsel gleaned for barley would be found, most likely, laden with their yearly yield. In some still evening I would go out under the stars, and strive to imagine how near I was to the spot where the good kinsman Boaz abode after he introduced his beautiful bride to his home. And I had a good deal of confidence in respect to the site of Jacob's great sorrow, when he buried by the wayside the mother of Joseph and Benjamin, that wife for whom he had toiled so loyally that the seven years of his service seemed but a few days for the love he bore her. And surely one could discover many a field, somewhere along the verdured slopes, now terraced for vines, figs, and olives, upon which he could picture the ruddy-cheeked son of Jesse, tending his father's flocks and gathering the exquisite images for future Psalms. But there is no reason for concealing that my main desire was to reach that elevated outlook where those nameless shepherds were watching in the night when Jesus was born.

Now, I have lived to have my wish four times already. For this I am unaffectedly humble and thankful. But the visits have dissipated and destroyed many of the sweet illusions of my life. Few persons there are who will find their way so far into the Orient as to see with their own eyes those hills of green, with yellowish quarries of stone along the ridges, those narrow, regular, steep streets, built up on either side with unornamented dwellings, flat-roofed and surmounted occasionally with modest domes.

And it may as well be admitted that something is saved in the loss. All of us can venture to visit the village in imagination. One may, perhaps, congratulate himself who attempts nothing beyond. For it is a somewhat humiliating fact that many a Biblical locality disappoints an enthusiastic traveller most cruelly when he reaches it, and rudely disenchant the really reverent mind of some of its pre-conceived notions most tenderly held.

It is not, therefore, an actual invitation to visit Bethlehem as a tourist that I bring to you to-day from the text. Go back with me a historic period of nearly nineteen hundred years in imagination, and I will be content to have you see this little city as it once was. Luke shall furnish us with a guide-book. He alone relates the story in the Gospel he wrote—just as Matthew alone tells about the visit of those “wise men” who saw the star in the east. Thus we “go now even to Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass.” We will study the shepherds' vision, then start on their errand.

I. The vision is singularly poetic and fascinating. A tradition which may possibly be true says that this physician Luke was a painter. His artistic picture of the Nativity will please us all more even than the faithful photograph of the town which I brought home with me.

The story that goes with it is happily familiar. Out on one of the hills—they point out the precise spot now, as fixed by tradition—some shepherds were tending their flocks. An angel appeared. He told them to go immediately into the town and look for an infant, who had been born that day. And even as he spoke, there came a great burst of music in the air. They knew the song was sung by a large celestial choir, but the words were what they noticed most. These were in their own tongue, and they remembered them afterwards: "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace, good-will toward men!"

With the direction was coupled this announcement: "Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." Every word here is full of meaning. Every conceivable question finds an answer in this one crowded sentence.

Whom were they going to see? A Saviour. Here occurs that wonderful word which means so much to each human soul that is lost. God promised long ago that he would send a Saviour into this wretched world; he even announced himself as coming to be one: "I am the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour." There are those at the pres-

ent day who cavil at the frequent mention of men's need. They say impatiently, "You preachers are always talking about sin, sin, sin, till everybody is tired." Very well: sin is the most notable thing in this universe. It is the one abominable thing that God hates. It lies directly between God and man all the time. Some disposal has to be made of it instantly, or not a soul on earth can be brought back to God with any hope of heaven. Just there the Almighty interferes; he says, with grace shining in his eyes: "Thou shalt know that I the Lord am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty one of Jacob." That very proclamation is what is fulfilled in this song of the angels at Bethlehem. It was Jesus they were talking about when they said that there was born a "Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." There is no other Saviour for us.

What was the name of this Saviour? The question turns us back to that marvellous old prophecy of Isaiah: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace!" Out of all these names the angels selected this, "Christ the Lord." The Greek and the Hebrew are put together. Nowhere else in the Bible do these august titles meet on one head—Messiah and Jehovah, Christ the Lord.

Where was the babe born? In the city of David, where, seven hundred years before, it had fixedly been settled in the counsels of God he should appear "in the fulness of time." So at

once we perceive how needful it was for the angel to tell these men what were the signs by which they should be able to recognize the singular infant when they should see it. For they would be looking for a striking appearance of some sort, some transcendent token of conspicuousness by which it would be distinguished from all other children, of the same nature perhaps as that which artists in many famous paintings are wont to picture around the head of Jesus—some nimbus or aureole. But the angel told these simple-minded shepherds that they should look in the instance of this babe, not for halos of golden glory or shining splendors of star-mist, but for its swaddling clothes and its manger.

II. Thus much concerning the vision which these inquirers had at the outset; now we turn to go with them on their errand of search.

Experience is always to be succeeded by duty; it was valuable to have seen the angels, it was invaluable to see Jesus. Doubtless they only waited to hear the music out, then hurried upon their way into the inn where travellers were wont to go for shelter. The child was not there. Some of them then must have remembered they were to seek a manger.

They obeyed the command. They found the outhouse of the inn. Alas, this wicked world seems always to have thought it had no room for a Redeemer to be born in! But when they reached the spot, what did they see? Only a little infant, without any nimbus of glory, without any aureole

of light around his head. But that babe was a Father; not yet twenty-four hours old, but everlasting; a Jewish maiden's son, but the mighty God! Poor and weak, perhaps wailing, that child was the hope of the race. "Ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day God created man upon the earth; and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it!"

Still, let us cling closely to the exact account. No words ever can add to the picturesque beauty of the inspired description of Jesus Christ's nativity. But I call your attention briefly to a single suggestion concerning two particulars which claim notice just here. What was the true import of such a spectacle as this, and who were the witnesses chosen to proclaim this infant as the real Messiah of Israel?

The witnesses were mere laboring men. A nameless and unhistoric company of herdsmen were made the recipients of one of the earliest as well as one of the highest honors of the New Testament. These men, it is likely, were poor and uneducated, but industrious and honest in the calling they followed, "diligent in business," and, as one can readily believe, were "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." It might be presumed that they were Jews, as was the good Simeon and the aged Anna in the temple later on, devoutly "waiting for the consolation of Israel."

Remember the simplicity of their occupation at the time, the serene tranquillity of the midnight,

the grand display overhead. Possibly they were beguiling the tedious hours away with singing the songs or repeating the precepts of their fathers. Perhaps they were thinking with grave converse among themselves of the coming of the King who would restore the glory of their nation. The significance of this incident in the history is disclosed in one reflection: that, even at the first unfolding of God's plan in his purpose of redemption, did Christ Jesus of his own accord become identified with the humble and lowly of this world, and not with the rich or lofty in high stations. It might have been expected that a disclosure so magnificent and majestic would seek the audience of a high priest or some of the most erudite doctors of the law in Israel. At all events, some one high in authority, eminent in rank, or advantageous in point of influence as a patron, would be carefully sought as a witness of so august a transaction. Marquises and dukes and earls ought to be in the antechamber when a prince of the blood is born, to attest his place in the family of the sovereign.

Indeed, the lack of this indorsement was the reproach urged upon the people as against the claim of the son of Mary from Nazareth to be the Jewish Messiah. Sycophants and parasites of fashion and power put the question with a sneer upon their lips: "Have any of the rulers believed on him?" No, not one; so much the worse for the rulers.

Here the wisdom of the omniscient God baffled the anticipations, and in some particulars hindered the machinations, of mere worldly address. The

poor should have the gospel preached to them, and the common people would hear Jesus gladly. This was the true import of these proceedings. God chose the weak things of this world to confound the things which were mighty, that no flesh should glory in his presence.

But we must move along for ourselves. I am less concerned about their visit than about ours. All they went for they found; and indeed so shall we find all we go for, for that is the unvarying rule in true religious experience: he has who seeks. "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us." Enter with me one moment the inclosure in which this child is lying in the stall of those hospitable beasts at the inn. Let our imaginations have full play, for we shall not be able to use our eyes of sense.

Look on the scene for yourself. Seem to take the small fingers in yours; how curiously an infant's fingers are always fashioned. Oh, who would dare to call this "the right hand of the Most High"? Open the twisted, working little palm; do you see any sign of Habakkuk's vision? Are any "horns coming out of his hand"? Can you conceive that there is "the hiding of his power"?

Wait but thirty years, and you will behold fine sights, when that child is grown up. That hand is the one which will lift Peter up from sinking in the water, in a wild night on Gennesaret. That foot will one day tread on living billows, and the fluid floor shall become rock beneath its omnipotent pressure.

Oh, believe me, things are not what they seem !
That city is very quiet, and the world is unmoved,
but a new realm has begun its establishment, a new
monarch is born. Peacefully there in his mother's
arms, while herald angels are singing, while Herod
is agitated and the chief priests have their untold
alarms, lies the King of Israel, the true Christ of
God.

He is here whom seers in old time
Chanted of, while ages ran,
Whom the writings of the prophets
Promised since the world began :
Then foretold, now manifested
To receive the praise of man,
Evermore and evermore !

He is found in human fashion,
Death and sorrow here to know,
That the race of Adam's children,
Doomed by law to endless woe,
May not henceforth die and perish
In the dreadful gulf below,
Evermore and evermore !

Of the Father's love begotten,
Ere the worlds began to be,
He, the Alpha and Omega,
He the source, the ending he,
Of the things that are, that have been,
And that future years shall see,
Evermore and evermore !

V.

THE OLD MAN SIMEON.

"AND BEHOLD THERE WAS A MAN IN JERUSALEM WHOSE NAME WAS SIMEON; AND THE SAME MAN WAS JUST AND DEVOUT, WAITING FOR THE CONSOLATION OF ISRAEL: AND THE HOLY GHOST WAS UPON HIM."—*Luke 2:25.*

WE are not told in the inspired narrative who this Simeon was. Brought suddenly into the midst of the history of the young child Jesus, his part in the stirring drama is brief, and not calculated to draw from the cursory reader much particular attention. He stands before us unattended and unannounced. There is a tradition among the Jews that he was a man of great note at that day; to him was first given the title of Rabban—the highest they ever bestowed upon their doctors of sacred learning, and never received except by seven persons; they even say he was father to Gamaliel, at whose feet sat the apostle Paul. But there are serious objections to so specific an identification, and the story is not generally trusted.

And indeed, it might well be said of Simeon, as of every other man, it matters less *who* he was than *what* he was. It will be of profit for us to dwell, for a brief period, upon what is told us just here in the one verse of his biography, without any reference to mere outside conjecture. A vivid portrait has been struck out upon the historic canvas with a

few bold lines of a master artist. If we look at it carefully, we may catch the expression.

I. To begin with, we remark that Simeon must have been an aged believer.

It is possible some of you may be surprised to learn that nowhere is this good man spoken of explicitly as advanced in years. Our familiar impression comes from a few inferences, easily drawn from the account given of his behavior and words. He is represented as waiting under a promise that he should behold the Messiah of his nation before he died. "It was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ." And when he has taken the infant Jesus in his arms, he quickly signifies his readiness and expectation to depart, as if he had been lingering a great while, and now knew that his final earthly wish was granted and his last work done.

There is something very affecting in the manner of speech which the sacred penmen adopt when they are talking of the aged. They never allow themselves to say, "Go up, thou bald head," to any one advanced in years. They deal with such people tenderly and respectfully. The Bible always reverences its own precept, "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man." And especially when anybody has occasion to speak of pious men, he does it most kindly. We are compelled to revere the feeble form of Isaac in despite of his indecision, blindness, and trembling. Even the deaf, dull old Barzillai is shown

in so pleasant a light of contentment and repose that we admire him without at all thinking of his churlishness, and unconsciously turn over a few pages of the history to see what became of him. One expression there is, used frequently in the Scriptures, yet passed over often without notice, or at least remembered without appreciation—"Worship the Lord in the *beauty* of holiness." One of the kings of ancient Israel actually appointed a band of trained singers, "that they might praise the *beauty* of holiness." Perhaps beauty in a man is not a thing to be much talked about; but it is certainly interesting to discover that this particular expression has its repeated application to the presence of the aged. "The glory of young men is their strength; the beauty of old men is the gray head; the hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness." That is, religion is as lovely as it is needful in old age.

II. But now add to this a second particular: this old man Simeon was a spiritually-minded believer.

He is called here a "devout" disciple. That word *devout* is exceedingly significant, wherever we meet it in the history of the early church. "Devout men carried Stephen to his burial." "There were dwelling at Jerusalem devout men out of every nation under heaven." The term is explained in the case of Cornelius: "A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway." The reference seems to be to a

class of people who were looking and waiting for the promised Messiah, and who readily received him when he came. Of these, Simeon was one. There is an old age of peace and content in which, as in the land of Bunyan's Beulah, the ear of each true child of God seems to hear the bells of the celestial city constantly ringing, as he lingers for the summons to enter. Cheerful and charitable, he is at peace with all the world. Amiable to those around him, welcome in the youngest circle, revered in the oldest, he sees the sun of his life going down, and knows that at evening time it will be light.

III. We remark, again, that this good old Israelite must have been an unusually consistent believer.

The inspired writer calls him in this verse a "just" man. Full integrity of every-day life and demeanor is pictured at once, and this aged saint rises on our imagination with all the dignity of Aristides of ancient fame, to whom they gave the cognomen of "the just." Several times in the Word of God is this characteristic mentioned, but never of any but the best of men. Job and Cornelius—the Hebrew and the Gentile—separated in period for thousands of years, yet meet in the inspired encomium as consistent men. The Bible is very rigid in one particular; it makes little of that style of piety which makes little of commonplace duty. It puts no faith in professions unless conduct carries them out. When you read, "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations," you are not sur-

prised to be told, "Noah walked with God." So here: "just and devout" are linked together.

We are impressed with the observations that primitive believers used to think more of open life and behavior than of mere inward experience. They all admit that religion resides in the heart; but then they demanded that the conduct should be taken in evidence of the heart. They looked, not at the hidden wheels of the timepiece, to see what o'clock it was, but at the dial-plate out in front. They insisted that grace was known by graces. "Deny ungodliness," said they, "and worldly lusts; live soberly, righteously, and godly in this *present* world."

We have occasion sometimes to question Christian character, and especially that of old men whose long record is written in memory of the community where they have lived. We ought to be careful; but we need not be rebuked if we talk about usury and back-biting, telling the truth, and keeping books honestly. Petty meanness of penurious dealing, shifty expedients and hard bargains, are remembered when public prayers and costly benefactions and long exhortations are likely to be forgotten. Men of the world are ribald and coarse; and what they say is not always kind, not always charitable; but when they claim consistency as a jewel they are right.

The fifteenth Psalm is always profitable reading for men in active life, laying out their plan for old age. It starts with a most interesting inquiry: "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle, who

shall dwell in thy holy hill?" We might expect the immediate reply to be, He who has had a change of heart; he who has experienced religion; he who is a member of the church in good and regular standing. Not so: this is the answer: "He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbor, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoreth them that fear the Lord. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not. He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved." Such an enumeration seems commonplace to many people. They would rather be off on the search for something more subtle or experimental. But God's law requires of us plain duties—"to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God."

IV. So we move forward a step, and remark that Simeon, this good old man, was a Jerusalem believer.

He dwelt in the sacred city of his nation. Some may attach little importance to this fact. But really it makes a great difference in our prospects and in our character where our home may be cast. Lot abode in Sodom, and grew in anything but grace under the influences around him. It did not even profit him to vex his righteous soul all the time he was there. He ought to have got out of the neighborhood a score of years before. Daniel

was surrounded with all the luxurious splendors of the court of Nebuchadnezzar; yet even his prayers were made the excuse for his persecutions. Down by the rivers of great Babylon itself sat the sad band of Hebrew exiles, hanging their harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. It was hard work for them when, uninterested by the vain gayeties around, unallured by voluptuous vice from their early allegiance, they sang their old songs of home: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning; if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth."

It is never easy to be, and to live, a true child of God; but even in this gainsaying world there are places and associations less unfavorable than others. No doubt it was a source of the greatest joy to aged Simeon that his residence was providentially assigned him close by all he held dearest and all that was most helpful to his heart. God gives us our lot in life; and happy is he whose tranquil old age may be passed among true church privileges and religious associations. We are called again to notice the exquisite beauty of this life, now in its decline, so favored and so devout. Simeon could see the temple every day, hear the grand old Psalms of service, look upon the priesthood ministering at the altar, and behold the tribes coming up to the annual feasts. And he is not a wise man now who thinks lightly of being a Jerusalem disciple. If he be within the reach of the sanctuary, and can enjoy all the means of grace without fatigue or infirmity,

truly the lines are drawn to him in pleasant places and his heritage is goodly. .

V. Once more, we remark that this old man Simeon must have been a keenly watchful believer.

We are told that he was "waiting for the consolation of Israel." Our lives are moulded, our innermost character fashioned, under the full pressure of things around us, to be sure; but a Christian's future is fixed by the future he sees. Our family altars, our closets of communion, our homes of plenty, our training in this land of schools and churches, our open sanctuaries, our unprohibited Bibles, are mighty means of improvement. We are in the midst of all which is calculated to influence us powerfully to good. Ringing bells and children's anthems and a free, pure gospel are the most forceful of all benedictions of God, and ought to crowd us up to duty. Something worth having is here; but there is something better to come. In all the world there is no finer picture for old men to look upon than this of Simeon—a happy-hearted, devout believer, with the twilight of life and dawn-light of eternity shining on his face!

VI. Finally, we remark that this aged man Simeon was at last a perfectly satisfied believer.

It had been distinctly revealed to Simeon that he should live to see the Saviour of his nation, the Messiah of God. Now he found him the moment Joseph and Mary came into the temple with their child. Simeon lingered only long enough to be decorous; then he advanced and took the infant in his own arms, and blessed God for the fulfilment of

the promise He had made to him. It was at this supreme moment that the venerable believer became inspired to sing his song. And so the church along the ages received the "Nunc Dimittis" which it has cherished as one of its supreme treasures:

"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."

It may seem to the young who listen to-day that there is no lesson for them at all this morning. But how do people come to be old? What do old men say when they have got on in years? Was it not an aged as well as a wise preacher who counselled, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them"? Old men are the work and product of many summers and winters. They began early to be what now they are.

Simeon died positively contented, as a happy-hearted guest retires from the table at a feast. He had had all his soul wanted, and now he was ready to go. One who is unprepared to depart is apt to be peevish when the solemn hour comes. I have seen one who was reared under the influence of prayer and within the circle of Christian associations. Day by day he grew old in sin, turned off admonition, resisted help, maturing in habits of irreligious indulgence with every advancing season.

At threescore years and ten his locks were whitened, his friends were buried, his forehead was wrinkled. He grew harder and harder. A hill of granite was his fitting symbol. The rains of blessing never produced a flower there; the sunshine of mercy never warmed into being one thought of better things; even storms of discipline seemed only to blast and splinter, never to soften, the rock on which they fell. And by-and-by he just died, and made no sign.

When the dragoons attacked a band of Covenanters once in Scotland, and all were like to be put to the sword, the old minister prayed, "O God of pity and love, spare the unready! save the green tree; take only the ripe!"

One thinks of this when a pestilence is raging, when a storm upon the sea sends the vessel wreck, when a famine wears out the people in a siege, when a flood is pouring devastation across the land. Then some must die, and these must take their chances for the great mystery beyond the veil. One thinks just the same when he looks over an audience like this. Who will be living on the next Lord's day? Some will be dead: who will have even one more Sabbath? O God of pity and love, spare the unready! Give souls the chance to repent and live! Fit all of us, young and old, to be meet and prepared for thy coming!

VI.

"MY FATHER'S BUSINESS."

"WIST YE NOT THAT I MUST BE ABOUT MY FATHER'S BUSINESS?"—

Luke 2: 49.

JOSEPH and Mary had been up as usual to the Passover feast at Jerusalem. Jesus, then a lad about twelve years of age, had accompanied them thither, and was to go home with them when they went; they missed him, however, at the end of the first day's journey, and returned anxiously and sorrowfully to the city seeking him. The youth was found a few hours after sitting with some of the educated Jews in the temple.

Nothing can be discovered in the sacred narrative to give countenance to the preposterous title affixed to many ancient paintings that try to reproduce the scene, "Jesus Disputing with the Doctors." There is no sign of dispute; the words cannot be made to mean it. He probably asked and answered questions as any amiable and bright young peasant boy would be likely to do. It is possible that his inquiries were put with a keenness of penetration and a far-reach of thought which in spite of their superciliousness would surprise those erudite men whose company he had in some way entered; but he was not disputing them.

Mary was overjoyed when she found her boy once more; but she began to chide him for the solic-

itude he had caused: “Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us?” To this question Jesus returned the quiet reply: “How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” The new Revision renders this language thus: “Wist ye not that I must be in my Father’s house?” In the margin there is added the literal translation of the Greek text: “Wist ye not that I must be in the things of my Father?” We are not willing to accept this very commonplace turn of the thought. It does not seem natural to think that Jesus then said only that: “How did it happen that you went around the city to find me? Did you not know that I would be here in the temple?” Such an answer would not explain his remaining behind in Jerusalem after the others had left; nor would it explain the verse which follows: “And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.” No; we prefer to cling to the old formula of speech as being by far the best.

I. For we think that in this single sentence Jesus Christ openly stated *the entire secret of true Christian life*. To be a child of God is to be about the things of our Father as the one principle of piety.

We have heard of a custom, kept up by some good men, of choosing, each New Year’s morning, a word or a sentence which should be their motto for the twelvemonth they had commenced. But Jesus of Nazareth seems to have made this choice once for all early in his career. He has recorded it; and we now ought to give it a full recognition as the

pervading and controlling principle of his wonderful life: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

This concerns ourselves only so far as we admit him to be the Master and Model of our existence. If it be true, as we so often assert, that the Christian life is merely Christ's life imitated and reproduced, then his motto is ours also. We write it up over our doorway; we make it the seal of our correspondence; we emblazon it upon our carriage-panels; we engrave it on our plate; we stamp it upon our coin; even the ring on our finger, and the buckle on our shoe's latchet, bears the same inscription and device. That is to say, each devout and true Christian gives himself and signs himself over unto God, writing on his gift this symbol of clear consecration, "Henceforth I am to be about my Father's business."

II. Hence, here is *a test of the genuineness of our religion*. Really, now, it is worth something to remember this, in a world where there is so much sham and hypocrisy. It is not a welcome experience to be called false to the standard which others have set up for us. Yet have we one relief when thus reproached. We can always plead a want of jurisdiction, and declare against the judgment. But to be found false to our own standard is a misfortune without any possible alleviation; for it is then our own tongue which tells the world we lie. The ancient knight could ever abide slander unmoved, for a clear way was open for him to vindicate his honor by courage. But a real blot on his escutcheon

was beyond remedy, for he was obliged to meet his own confession of a failure and a shame.

Outward correctness can do no more for any individual than it did for that moral young ruler who came running to Jesus with professions of a true life. The Saviour certainly admired all his amiable attributes, and yet told him frankly, “One thing thou lackest.” The most that can be said of him, whose case we have now under our analysis, is that he is passing his days in a more creditable manner, earning his money in a more unexceptionable way. He is a worldly-minded, not a heavenly-minded man. He may even join the church, but he is not yet a true child of God by grace, an heir of heaven.

III. Again: there is an employment for such a motto in *the interpreting of one’s occupation in life*. Take a plain, correct business man, who thinks his integrity in trade is irreproachable, and sometimes goes so far as to imagine it is rather, on the whole, religious. Do what you will to lead the single idea of Christian consecration in upon his mind, and you will not move him. It is not the love of a divine Redeemer by which his action is constrained. Tell him his neighbor has made a large subscription in money to a charitable object, and he will generously put his name down on the paper. But mention that Christ demands a portion of his wealth, and he is apt to heed you very poorly. He is an excellent listener in church, not because he loves to learn more of his duty, but often because he is fond of good speaking in public. He bears with

dull preaching, too, because he is gentlemanly, and believes in being decorous in the house of God. He sings, not so much because he loves the Saviour as because he loves music. Address him directly about his soul's salvation, and he may reply, as one is said to have replied to the evangelist Moody, "That is *my* business, and I can attend to it!"

Now, nobody ever doubted that such a man would attend to his own business; but there is a "Father's business;" does he attend to that? Run across the line of his daily thinking that keen and clear enunciation of our Lord himself concerning the peril of loving father and mother, son and daughter, horses and lands and merchandise, more than him, and you will awake no anxiety. The fact is, many a man works in his vocation without looking on it as a "calling" at all.

IV. This motto likewise will serve admirably to exhibit what is *the earliest need of a soul disturbed with the discovery of its sins and exposure*. Generally this is thought to be a reformation of manners, an immediate and radical change of conduct. Honesty is better than cheating; it is better to stop swearing, even if one is not going to pray. But now write across any merely moral and correct life this saying of Jesus Christ. It will make you think of the line in red ink merchants sometimes print on their cards when they have changed their address; it is *on* the card, but it is not *in* it. It looks odd, and raises a question. It tells us that the same old business is kept up under another number of the street.

This mistake consists in supposing that all a worldly life demands to render it religious is regulation. Whereas, the fact is, it demands regeneration. The change must be radical; inspiration calls it a new birth. Through all such a man’s process of conversion, as yet, there has not passed a single thread of true devotion to Christ as an atoning Saviour who delivers from sins. So he may go on weaving and weaving, and he will never do any more than this. The pattern of one’s life cannot avail to change the life. It is not the *twist* of the threads, but the *threads*, which make the fabric of his character wrong. The purpose is the same it was before. It is enough to say that the first step for the man is to look away to Christ, to begin prayer for the Holy Ghost to change his heart.

V. Once more: this motto will settle *what are one’s safe relations to the world around him*. Many people think that the intertwined associations of the Christian life and the world life are to be newly adjusted, when one elects to bear the name of Jesus Christ, but not to be broken off wholly, least of all suddenly. We must be sure to let our moderation be known to all men; there is such a mistake as being righteous overmuch; singularity is not separateness.

There is just truth enough in this notion to save it and render it popular, and just error enough in it to ruin the individual who rests in it. Social duties do not interfere with religious duties, for no duties clash under God’s wise government. But what is duty anywhere? Order is heaven’s earliest law;

and so there is unusual force in the ordinal adverb in the familiar text: "Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness." The world is not a friend to God. And one may live with the world, and enjoy what it has to offer, just so far, and no farther. The line is drawn at the point where the world yields wholly to the "Father's business."

VI. Right here comes the decision, also, concerning *the propriety of quoting church members for patterns*. Let us take an illustration to make the application of the motto clear. A merchant begins life with no great amount of capital. He thinks he has a common right to gain a competency; he will even be rich, if he can be. The first dime, or the first eagle, he makes in sheer profit, kindles an honest congratulation of his own thrift and genius, and at the same time imparts a new desire for more. From that moment he advances in skill and redoubles his energy. Of course, he comes into contact with those whom he sees at communion at the church he attends. If one should soberly tell him to make such Christians a pattern for himself, he would laugh at the folly of an imitation.

But now, after some seasons of toil and prosperity, it is to be remarked that he has grown a little easier in virtue; he yields scruples, adopts maxims, and drives bargains which eventually put him on a level with other business men who are no better than they should be. You are not asked to draw here a dark picture of vice. This man is respectable; his habits are good; he is always courteous, and sometimes quite neighborly; he is kind in his

own home; he is public-spirited in the community; he has a pew in the sanctuary. A few peccadilloes we must admit. He has no family altar; he is not known to give himself to prayer. Now and then he will plan a trade in the midst of a prosy sermon. He will post his ledger when summer weather is too warm for him to dress decorously for service or winter weather is too cold for an outing. He is not a liar; but as he buys and sells he does and says what others do and say. He is not indecently profane; but he owns he uses strong words sometimes when he gets excited. In a word, he is just an average business man; he is as good as they run; and in many notable respects that class of people run well. Now you challenge him to be a Christian.

To your utter bewilderment and surprise, he begins to quote the imperfections of church members for his apology! Where is the logic of a thing like this? Does being a Christian consist in proving other people to be hypocrites? Does this motto of Jesus tell him to be about church members’ business, or about his Father’s?

He is not a Christian. It is simple candor to say that. He freely admits that. He is just an intelligent, honest, diligent, thrifty business man as the world goes. So time runs on; he is prospered, and is rich. He has reached middle life, perhaps has gone beyond.

Suddenly there falls a change upon his history. No matter how it comes about. His wife dies; one of his sons becomes dissipated; his only daughter flies away with a villain; his property goes awreck

through the dishonesty of a partner. In some effectual way he is mortified, wounded, humbled, afflicted sorely. He has been human all this time; now the humanity cries out under the fierce pain. Ministerial faithfulness or fraternal counsel turns his thoughts Godward and opens a vein of religious and devotional meditation. He sees his error in living thus without God in the world. He makes up his mind to turn in his career and lead a better life.

Mark you well here, for the whole force of the illustration turns upon it, he says—a better life. But the gospel says—a new life. “If any man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creature.” So a most ruinous mistake begins here at the period of critical change. He commences his process of reform. He retrenches at one point and restrains himself at another. He gives up certain suspicious practices in dealing. He thinks he pays better attention on the Sabbath, and he certainly is more liberal in money. He sets up family devotion, and really feels a sort of reverence when he has been rehearsing his prayers. He rules his remaining household discreetly. Now everybody notices the change; and, commenting on it, pronounces him an altered man.

Yes, that he is; but he is not a new man, he is not a Christian man yet, for all this. He is not yet about his Father's business; only an honest man about his own.

VII. This motto will show, in like manner, *the reason for such sore disappointments as we some-*

times experience when those who promise well for a while fall away suddenly into sin. They have only been living a surface life of dependence on self. Their purpose has gone no higher than mere conduct. Whereas, the end of Christian life in all its outgoings is Jesus Christ himself. Wealth is gained that the owner may use it for Christ. Learning is acquired in order to teach our fellow-men about Christ. Out from the plane of human history springs one mysterious Life, the model of all worthy existence. There it stands in the Scriptures out against the clear sky, visible to a hundred generations. The pattern of our life is found in the characteristics of that; the motive of our life is to be found in the love we bear for that; the corrective of our life is to be found in laying it alongside of that; and the stability of our Christian life is to be found in the unfailing help it receives from that. We are held up from falling, not by our hold upon Jesus’ hand, but by his hold upon ours; we love him because he first loved us; united to him, we can be sure he will sustain us in temptation.

VIII. So, finally, this saying of our Lord when a child will *aid us in establishing open issues wherever we are*. Here is a person bearing Christ’s name. But to him that name, which is “above every other name” on earth or in heaven, means nothing more than the mere *visa* of a passport; he anticipates that this profession of religion will take him unquestioned and unhindered through the criticisms of a somewhat impertinent world.

Now what is it that he needs more than this? Plainly he needs a new element in his character different from anything he has. He wants all he ever wanted. He has made no advance whatever as yet. For this is not a question of refinement or rudeness, nor of cultivation or ignorance, nor of niggardliness or generosity; neither of these makes any man a Christian. It is a question of purpose—the grand purpose a soul cherishes at its highest and best—the masterful motive within.

Whether any human being is a real follower of Jesus Christ, such as Christ himself knows and accepts, depends upon the decision whether he is about "the Father's business" or not—whether the business he is about is his Father's or his own. And this in turn depends upon the way in which he set out in that early hour when he began to assert that he had become a spiritual believer. There are, therefore, yet to be considered these two critical questions for each individual to put: Did he begin in the right way? and is he in that right way still?

If he began in the right way, he began with an honest repentance for his sins and an utter renunciation of himself and his merits as a moral and righteous man. If he began in the right way, he began slowly and patiently to examine God's Word so as to see in the light of it whether he accepted as the only basis of his hope the atoning work offered by Jesus the Saviour when he died on Calvary. Virtue is in every case of course always more acceptable to a holy God than vice; that does

not need to be discussed. But works of mere virtue in this process of salvation do not count. No man will ever reach heaven unless he is borne upon the wings of another merit than his own. By faith he accepts that which another person, not himself, has done—and in that he rests evermore. The Almighty God has given us no point of personal contact with himself save through his Son. Jesus said as plainly as a divine being with authority could say, “No man cometh unto the Father but by me.” To all intents and purposes under the plan of redemption, Christ, the second Person in the adorable Trinity, is our only God. A guilty soul belonging to our rebel and lost race treats with its Maker only through his Son, the mediator whom he sent for that purpose. Thus we conclude that there can be no other ground for one’s hoping himself to be a Christian than that found in his coming to Jesus for pardon.

So the other question is answered swiftly: if one began in early experience by surrender at the cross, he will continue as he began; he will know whether he is in the right way now, by giving himself the only test required of any man: Is he now “about his Father’s business”?

We are dwelling in these latter days, friends, in the midst of a series of bewildering confusions. A period of history is over us that is full of meaning. Never was there a moment in which it was more necessary for a calm definition to be given to every honest life. Truly all over the world, in every nation and community, discussions are intensely

pushed concerning governmental science and political economies which demand solution at the hands of the wisest of men. But over and above every one of these, one awful inquiry swells with trumpet tone, growing more momentous with some serious signs of the times, whose tumult threatens to drown it—an inquiry of more vital importance to you and to me than all this clash of empires or the shock of worlds: “Am I about my Father’s business?” It once overrode even filial obligations in the mind of the best child that ever lived. And now down through a hundred generations nearly it has come from that strange lad there before our imagination conversing with the doctors in the temple.

Many years ago I saw it stated in an old volume of classic history that when Perseus was monarch in the peninsula of Greece, a high stone pillar was put up on the slender isthmus to fix the boundary between two provinces. The inscription upon the one side read: “This is not Peloponnesus, but Ionia;” and on the other side: “This is not Ionia, but Peloponnesus.” Just such spiritual stones ought to be lifted along the line between the Christian life and that of the world. Compromises are an invention of the devil. Keep up the boundaries between good and evil. On the one side is right, on the other is wrong; on the one side is peril, on the other side is safety; on the one side is truth, on the other side is falsehood; on the one side stand those who are of the world, worldly; on the other side, those who are about the “Father’s business.”

VII.

GRACE BETTER THAN POWER.

"THE WORD OF GOD CAME UNTO JOHN, THE SON OF ZACHARIAS, IN THE WILDERNESS."—*Luke 3: 2.*

JOHN the Baptist comes into history with a train of notabilities around him like the retinue of an Oriental sovereign doing him honor. The names of an emperor and a proconsul, two tetrarchs and two priests of the supreme rank, are ranged about his name, as if they took lustre from his entrance into the record and shone with his wonderful light: "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judæa, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituræa and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness."

This, on the whole, seems quite fitting: for this strange creature was a king of men by the truest of divine right, that of forcefulness, worthiness, and self-sacrifice. Our Saviour once gave the highest testimony to his supremacy as well as his brilliancy. He told his disciples one day when they were discussing his work, that John was "a burning and a shining light." And on another occasion he pro-

nounced a fine eulogium upon his fidelity as the greatest man that ever lived.

Meantime we cannot help observing that the first ministries that John discharged were those of introducing his divine successor for the sake of whom he was out in the field as a forerunner. One of our modern orators has called this desert preacher "*Laudatus a Laudato*:" this he follows with a new translation, characteristically quaint: "a great man praised by a praised great man." It is not possible that these ably constituted preachers were seeking to curry favor with each other, or trying to bandy words of empty compliment before the people. There is a lesson of deep meaning to be gained from careful study here. The proper way in which to reach that is to note first what John did really say concerning Jesus, and then what Jesus said concerning John; out of the comparison we shall find the principle will show itself easily.

I. What did John say? Two or three distinct utterances of moral precept and doctrine are recorded by all the evangelists, very commonplace, but at that period very much needed as between man and man.

1. He preached generosity, for one thing: "And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise." He preached justice, for another thing, and an audience was before him who had need of such truth: "Then came also publicans to be baptized, and

said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you." He preached consideration for others and cheerful content for one's self: "And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages."

2. But the main work of John was put forth as a forerunner whose voice was intended to speak concerning another soon to follow him: "As the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not, John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire; whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable." The supremacy of Jesus is here admitted; he was mightier than John; he was worthier than John; he had more gifts for men than John; he was to be able to baptize with a better baptism; he was to judge men with the severity of God, relentlessly separating wheat from chaff, gathering a garner-full of what was valuable, burning the rest in flame of wrath.

3. And then John followed these testimonies by some that were even more forcible and revolutionary. He acknowledged that he was only in temporary office; he must decrease and Jesus would

increase. On an eventful morning for him, John saw Jesus coming along by the margin of the Jordan River where he had been administering the rite of baptism a long while, thronged by the people who came to him from the north over across the country as far as Gennesaret, from Jerusalem and Judæa, and all the regions round about. He pointed him out to his adherents with a gesture of immediate self-renunciation: "Behold the Lamb of God!" A single sentence of explanation told how he came to recognize his superior to whom now he was going to yield place; he said that when beside the water he was baptizing this Jesus, he had seen the Holy Ghost visibly descending upon his head, and that had been the sign promised. So hereafter it was to be understood that Jesus was the nation's Messiah.

II. Thus now we are ready to ask, on the other hand, What was in substance the testimony Jesus offered as to the rank and worth of this man John? One quite familiar verse sufficiently answers the question: "Verily, I say unto you, Among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

1. Here evidently is the utterance of a very striking principle. Of course Jesus does not mean to intimate in these words that John the Baptist was not of the kingdom of heaven. He institutes this comparison in order to declare that even John's greatness lay in his piety as a true child of God.

The grace in him was worth more as a force in awakening men than the intellect in him. He was to be rated not for an extraordinary royalty as a king of men, but for his supereminent loyalty as one of the faithfullest subjects of the spiritual kingdom of God.

2. To make this general now as a statement of doctrine, and thus put it into a propositional form which can easily be remembered, is no formidable task. This is the principle enunciated in the utterance of our Lord concerning John: *grace is better than power*. In the language just one expression needs to be particularly noticed, for in it we can find a fine antithesis of thought. The words "born of women" are logically intended to be set over against the words "born of God." These phrases are designed to be quite open and plain in their references to the nature of John and that of Jesus. Jesus was divine and human, John was human only; so John's nature would have to be changed by the power of the Holy Ghost, or even its gifts would in the end be valueless.

3. Grace is better than power: it will not do to leave this dogmatical announcement just so without some illustration and enforcement to commend it to our consideration; for alas! it is a principle unpopular in the extreme. I go about my work feeling that I have no right in common prudence to expect much sympathy in that which to most human beings is so unusual and unwelcome a theme of thought. So accustomed are men to look at life and at history only on its earthward side, and

always to rate greatness by its most conspicuous results rather than any measurement of future value which is yet unseen, that it is an arduous labor to make them patient enough to look at any worth upon the heaven side. To tell a man whose lappel is all glistening with gilt decorations from societies and princes, that really he has gained nothing as yet unless he has been inwardly converted to Christ and born again as a genuine believer, so that he lives the new life by the cross, has an air of cant or unsubstantial mysticism about it that seems like mockery. To insist, in the presence of a successful millionaire or a lauded prince or a victorious soldier or a medalled artist, that the veriest infant in the class of a Sunday-school who has intelligently learned a lesson in the articulate language of love to the Saviour is better now than he is—is a brave thing to do, of course. But whether the courage will be rewarded with any prosperity in making him believe it, the ordinary observer does not imagine is worth a discussion to settle. A single authoritative declaration of Christ himself ought to settle it: "At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily, I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me."

When an older son in our household is prodigal and foolish, we are apt to say with some feeling: "Do you propose to make anything of yourself in this world? will you never be anything?" And perhaps with a quiver of petulance in his answer he will ask in reply: "What would you think I ought to be?" Then you would say: "Be a man." And out of the heavens would come the calm voice of God: "No! be only a little child!"

III. So then, in the third place, we move on to consider the doctrine which underlies this proposition that grace is better than power, and gives it its force as a principle of spiritual and holy living.

I. Begin with the statement that *power without grace is godless*. The grand argument in this case centres at one point: if a human being bears any relation whatsoever to the divine Being who created him, his greatness will be justly registered only when that relation is brought into view. If any one studiously keeps out of sight the fact that God is still in existence and yet remains on the throne; if he insists in his wilfulness that no account is to be taken of the circumstance that Jehovah is reigning over men as his subjects on the earth; then as an observable result there may be of course any kind or any degree of open assumption of grandeur and assertion of it in our flatteries.

Now the fact is that there was a God who made this world, and a blind observer could see that there is now a God who owns it and rules it. Then it is a fact, likewise, that men have sinned and been judged as culprits and consequently are al-

ready condemned: "Death hath passed upon all men, for all have sinned." Here then is one bond of unity or levelling pressure among us; we are alike and together under a sentence of capital punishment. It is not a pleasant thing to think of, and it is likely that some persons will assiduously reject it, and some proud magnates will deny it, and some get very angry when reminded of it.

Hence their policy is wise in a worldly sense just to ignore the posture of affairs, and lay themselves out to keep up appearances. It remains as a fact, however, unaltered. There are only two classes recognized by God on this planet: those who are cursed by his law, concealing it or owning it, and those who are delivered from the curse of his law through the atonement made by Jesus Christ, received by faith, on repentance of their sins. And the humblest one in the latter class is better off than the highest in the former; for the one is condemned and the other is pardoned; the one is dead—the other is alive.

2. This is our second consideration: *Power without grace is dead in trespasses and in sins.* Samuel Taylor Coleridge, whose gifted mind was certainly able to offer testimony, said once: "All the products of mere understanding partake of death." Just as in the Garden of Eden a tree of knowledge was not a tree of life, so in the garden of the soul of man intellectuality is not spirituality—nor is it like it.

Let us suppose a company of criminals already condemned and only waiting for the day of their

execution. Let us imagine that the shallow philanthropy of this age of ours has offered these prisoners within the walls of the prison a Christmas entertainment—nobody knows to what extreme of absurdity sentimental people will yet come. The manacles and fetters are off; flowers are scattered around the room; music is ringing in the air from a comfortable band; in the centre of the open space stands a noble evergreen around which the crowd has been already dancing. Unfortunately for the peace of the women, jealousies of each other's pretensions have arisen, and aristocracies are in process of formation and rapid development. For the high-born culprit will in no case associate with a common law-breaker, and some supercilious behavior of the *elite* has offended the sensitive feeling of the *parvenus*, who are now resenting it with ordinary fashionable spite. They are at variance, and the party is going to be a failure. The general tone of feeling is unhappy. Meantime, there sits one truly penitent man whose spirits are low because he is sorry he committed his crime and must be punished for it. He takes no part in the conversation; and because he seems to have no private grievance the company crowd around him to ask what moves him to such tears. And he answers: "O ye partners and comrades of mine in exposure and shame, you are at strife with each other over a ball-room slight; you leave out of account the fact that we are condemned before a just and relentless law; you have been trying imperiously to forget the scaffold and the rope; you are full of rivalries and suspicions.

But please listen a moment—do you hear the old sound coming through the grating? That small boy blowing his Christmas horn outside of this—oh, outside of this—is better than the best of us; for he is free, and he is alive, and he has another chance, while poor creatures like us are dead—all dying—dying, and all dead !”

This illustration may seem strange, but it is not strained, I do soberly declare. When any man is under God's wrath this moment in retribution for his sin, and is wild in his estimates of his aristocracy or his wealth or his social position, you cannot make him great with a mere ribbon in his button-hole or a piece of gold lace on his arm.

3. But finally, let us remember that grace is better than power, because *power without grace is simply a failure*. It is a pity that we cannot get and hold the power we pay for. We lose the fame and wealth and position we sell our souls for. Think of the unfortunate individual who planned the architecture of Cologne Cathedral; after centuries of delay the edifice is finished, but even the architect's name is already forgotten. Most singular fate of genius—nobody on all this adoring world of ours could furnish an architect to worship. When a musician tried to make an anthem for the dedication he could find no one to mention in memory of whose merits he could inscribe his sheet. So John Keats left for his tombstone in Rome the somewhat violent epitaph as his repudiation of all value of fame: “Here lies one whose name was writ in water.” Why cannot one hope that it was written

in the Lamb's book of life? It is exceedingly interesting to find the jealous Turner's beautiful landscapes between the other two of Claude in the British Gallery; for we are glad to know that neither of the great canvases suffers from the comparison. But then who can help putting a quiet question: What difference does it make to those painters now which of them is considered the better artist? And where is Turner to-day, and where is Claude Lorraine—and really who cares very much anyway?

Grace settles the long mysterious future, but gift is not grace. Socrates was a great man; but some say he sold his wife at a price one day to a neighbor. Alexander was a great monarch; but he died in camp in a drunken debauch. Lord Byron was a great poet; but his statue put up in Trinity College has on its front look the divinity of a genius; on its profile one side is the leer of a lecher. It would be bold for us even to try to prove that these famous people had power; but let us remember that what we are attempting to prove is that grace is in each instance better than power, for power without grace ends in failure.

Oh, when that single serious instant arrives in which the spirit of a man is to enter its future—that supreme moment when the stately tread of the mourners is checked at the grave, and the man himself, at the portal of another life, now on his own responsible feet walks into the undisclosed scenes of that existence which comes after this—then will the question of true greatness be answered

once for all. Then it shall be that the high advantage is to be felt for one who, even actually unknown on the earth, finds he is sure in the kingdom of God. It is certain that there will come one day when the simple fact that love divine has pardoned us through grace—the fact that we are Christ's, and Christ is God's—will seem more to us than all the world can give to even the noblest and the best of those born only of women.

I ask not now for gold to gild,
 With mocking shine, an aching frame;
 The yearning of the mind is stilled—
 I ask not now for fame:

But, bowed in lowliness of mind,
 I make my humble wishes known:
 I only ask a will resigned,
 O Father, to thine own.

In vain I task my aching brain,
 In vain the sage's thoughts I scan;
 I only feel how weak I am,
 How poor and blind is man.

And now my spirit sighs for home,
 And longs for light whereby to see;
 And, like a weary child, would come,
 O Father, unto thee.

VIII.

THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST.

“AND JESUS BEING FULL OF THE HOLY GHOST, RETURNED FROM JORDAN, AND WAS LED BY THE SPIRIT INTO THE WILDERNESS, BEING FORTY DAYS TEMPTED OF THE DEVIL.”—*Luke 4:1.*

HERE comes to light a fact of the greatest interest and most vital importance, namely, that the Lord Jesus Christ—your divine Lord and mine—was actually tempted by the devil in person.

I pass by many of the difficulties which beset us in this portion of the sacred history. I have no time to discuss them now in a presence like this. And moreover, I do not know that I can give the explanation of some of them which would satisfy you. Commentators all admit that this is one of the most obscure passages to be found in the Bible. It is fortunate that no great doctrine of the gospel rests upon it by itself; for then we should have trouble indeed. We can gain a great many lessons from the story, however. We want the fact I have stated; for out of this may come by inference certain other facts of wonderful interest and available comfort.

I. For example, this: if our Lord Jesus Christ was led “by the Spirit” into the wilderness to be tempted, then this story is not a mere tale of something that happened; it had a *purpose* in it.

“The Spirit” was, of course, the Holy Spirit;

for Luke has added that Jesus was "full of the Holy Ghost." Just here I must ask you to observe particularly the connection of this verse which I have called the text with what goes before. The chapters are divided, to be sure, but the sense runs right on. The temptation is found next to the baptism: "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." There is great emphasis to be laid upon that word "then." These incidents are closely connected. At the baptism the Holy Ghost descended in the fashion of a dove, and "lighted upon" Christ. He was thus filled with the Spirit, and was then led by the Spirit.

Now observe, again, that Mark says that Jesus was "driven" by the Spirit. I wish you to go far enough into the force of such expressions to see that this was not a mere chance thing to our Saviour. He was pressed to go out into that wilderness, and in some respects constrained: no doubt of that. There was a decided intelligible purpose in his errand. This term "driven" is what is employed in the description of Christ's "casting out" of the shop-keepers in the temple; and then he beat them with a whip of small cords. But I do not wish you to go so far as to suppose that violence

was used in order to make our Lord take the journey. For the same common word is found in the passage which says that the good shepherd "putteth forth" his sheep. Everything is gentle, but there must be no mistake in your minds as to the almighty purpose in the act. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

I pause upon this point only long enough for me to remark, for the sake of practical good, that there is always more peril of sudden temptation to any man just after the loftiest privileges. For Jesus moved up from Jordan's banks into the company of wild beasts. The great words he had just heard were these: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And, so far as we can read, the very next words he heard were these: "If thou be the Son of God." From height to depth in a moment! God's testimony—Satan's doubt. Men are in most danger when God has just blessed them.

II. Let us put with this another lesson: if the Lord Jesus was led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, then there must certainly be such a being in the world as the devil.

This story seems quite real. I do not believe that what has been meant by it, for all these years since the Bible was given to men, is simply that Jesus Christ saw a vision or dreamed a dream about

setting up a kingdom. The chapters do not read so; nobody of common sense would ever imagine such a thing, unless some captious critic told him so. Such a conception would destroy all the force of the verses we are accustomed to quote as showing what our Lord had in view in being tempted when on the earth. Listen to this: "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren; that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." Now if such words mean only that Christ had a dream or saw a phantom or heard a secret whisper, then you and I have nothing to do with it. We do not have our temptations in that way, and his history is as far away from human experience as the wilderness is from human homes. If he is able to succor them who are tempted because he suffered, being tempted, then he certainly must have been tempted in the way in which they are tempted; and we are not tempted by images out in the air or dreams in the night season—nor was he.

Perhaps I had better say just here that on the whole it is a more profitable thing for us all to do, to take God's Word precisely as it stands, than to seek for explanations which would confuse our notions of what constitutes inspiration. The Bible was handed down to us for the good we can get out

of it, not for the exercise of an unhallowed curiosity concerning its mysteries. These wonderful parts of Jesus' history will all be made plain to us by-and-by. That was a wise remark of the pious old Bengel, when he told a student of theology once: "Eat in peace the bread of Scripture, without troubling thyself about any particle of sand that may have gotten mixed with it from the millstone."

III. In the third place, if our Lord Jesus Christ was tempted in the wilderness by the devil, then it must be the lot of each good and true follower of his to be tempted in his turn.

It is a wonderful comfort for those of us who are fighting so severely against sin to remember that "the disciple is not above his Master, and the servant is not above his Lord." It is enough for the servant if he be as his Master, and the disciple if he be as his Lord. It is possible for any human being to be tempted for years. It belongs to his nature. It is part of the discipline of life. He can no more hinder it than he can hinder being hungry as Jesus was after forty days' fast. Nor need he be frightened under the trial. There is one special promise given for such occasions: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."

Oftentimes, when in the midst of truest and noblest life, we are menaced by a sudden and insidious attack from Satan. There is no denying it; our hearts are sore and disturbed. There come to a man before he knows it thoughts of envy and

feelings of spite, repinings under some fancied or real neglect, resentments at some injury inflicted, pride by reason of some unexpected success. Quickly perceived, they may be sharply rejected. But in despite of his resolutions they return again. You all know what I mean. It may be now you begin to say to yourself, "Is it possible I have been deceiving myself, and I am not a regenerate person after all?"

Understand plainly: Satan is tempting you; and then he is endeavoring to force you to believe that you are wicked, or else you would not be so distressed. Whereas, the truth is, you would never be disturbed at all if only you were as wicked as he wants you to be. Satan does not really tempt a drunkard: he has him anyway. No drunkard shall enter through the gates of the New Jerusalem. Surely it would be lost time to waste strength on a liar; all liars inevitably have their part in the lake that burns with fire. The devil attacks good men and true women in the hope to unsettle faith, to destroy character, and defile imagination; he would like to render them undecided and uncertain. He chooses, as death does, some bright and shining mark for his missiles. You may have read of an awful bullet with which some fire-arms used in modern warfare are loaded; the enemy hopes that although the shot may not kill when it enters, the explosion it makes afterwards will tear the man all to pieces. Just so the great adversary believes that if he is only able to lodge a bad thought in a Christian man's heart, it will instantly rend him into

fragments; and then he can say the *thought which he was concealing* was what killed the old hypocrite!

So all excellent people sooner or later feel his power. A foolish thing indeed it is to try to escape temptation; that is everywhere the common lot of poor humanity. The great question must be how to meet the temptation bravely, and how to come off victorious. In this we have the grandest promise of aid from high heaven, as well as a new admonition worth heeding, and a fresh counsel too: "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

IV. And so I remark, finally, that if our Lord Jesus Christ was tempted of the devil, then having temptations is not of itself a sin; it is only a yielding to them that makes the hurtful wrong.

Lest we should ever make a mistake, let us remember that the Scriptures tell us that our divine Redeemer, though he was tempted in all points, like as we are, was yet *without sin*. The devil never was able to put one wicked desire into his infinitely pure soul. Christ was tempted, yet he did not sin. So it follows, as a matter of course, that being tempted is not of itself committing sin.

And then remember that, lest there should be any possibility of doubt as to ourselves, an exceedingly instructive passage of a most comforting sig-

nificance has been given us in James' Epistle: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

There is one dreadful foe of ours, a fallen angel, here on the earth to-day. He "goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." That same adversary who tempted Jesus is at work, as malignant in spirit, as industrious in wiles, as vigilant in attack, as ever. Nay, he is fiercer and far shrewder now than when a divine antagonist offered to resist him in the wilderness. He has been educating himself all the while since our first parents fell before his onsets. You know how in the war, a few years ago, those who went forth as raw troops became soldiers after even a summer's campaign. They learned as they fought. Now Satan has been at war for six thousand years, and always growing in stratagem and in venomous spite. Oh, it makes a thoughtful man afraid to remember how near he may be at any moment, and how irresistible he is! Who is daring enough to meet him in a fight, unless led by the Spirit!

The point to be marked here is, that temptation begins at the moment when lust entices; but sin does not begin until lust "hath conceived, and bringeth forth" its baleful progeny of wickedness.

To be tempted, therefore, is not necessarily to sin; but the yielding to it is what constitutes the wrong. To welcome, to play with, to receive, to indulge lust of any sort, is sure to open the way to evil in the end. And just there lodges your responsibility. That was a quaint remark of Martin Luther, which you will remember the longer by reason of the queer figure of speech used: "You may not be to blame," said he, "if unclean birds light on your head; but you are to blame if you let them build nests in your hair."

As oft with worn and weary feet
We tread earth's rugged valley o'er,
The thought how comforting and sweet,
Christ trod this very path before!
Our wants and weaknesses he knows,
From life's first dawning till its close.

If Satan tempt our hearts to stray,
And whisper evil things within,
So did he in the desert way
Assail our Lord with thoughts of sin;
When worn and in a feeble hour,
The tempter came with all his power.

Just such as I this earth he trod,
With every human ill but sin;
And though indeed the very God,
As I am now, so he has been.
My God, my Saviour, look on me
With pity, love, and sympathy!

• IX.

HOME HEATHEN.

“THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE HATH ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR.”—*Luke* 4: 18.

JOHN began his public life in the solitudes down by the river Jordan; he was therefore always more or less a mystery to the human beings who heard him. He seemed like one of the old prophets, haggard, recluse, ascetic. He may have gained in force, but he lost in sympathy. On the other hand, Jesus undertook the work of his life at once in the very midst of the people whom he came to save. He went to the centres of influence and devotion where he would be likeliest to meet the worst opposition and yet would certainly find large audiences prepared in some measure to listen.

The synagogues were long rooms, square-cornered and narrow; at one end of them stood a raised seat for the reader. Two lessons on ordinary occasions were given, one from Moses and the other from one of the prophets. Then opportunity was offered for any one to speak. There were benches provided in the area along one side for the men; and behind the lattice, with veils over their heads, sat the women.

“And he came to Nazareth, where he had been

brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised: to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.”

Here among the old friends of his family, in what was called his native town, it appears to have been Jesus' custom to take part in these public expositions on the Sabbath as a young man of ability and evident grace. A swift journey brought him home from the banks of the Jordan, and he lost no time in commencing his former addresses. The entrance upon his official work was signalled by the passage he chose from the prophecy of Isaiah for that day; it was the proclamation of himself. The custom was to stand up to read, and sit again before beginning to teach. The first word he uttered was modest, but very plain: “This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.”

Paul once wrote, "Esaias is very bold:" so was Jesus Christ when he quoted him and in unmistakable language declared that Isaiah openly referred to *him*—to the young villager who sat there authoritatively addressing Jews who had known him familiarly all his life. A single phrase of this speech is all I purpose now to dwell upon; our Lord told those people and the whole world along the ages that he in particular had been anointed by the Spirit of the Lord "to preach the gospel to the poor."

That is my theme in this discourse. It is my wish to prove that if Christians follow Christ, they must see to it that the poor and broken-hearted, the captives, the bruised and the blind, learn that this is now for all men "the acceptable year of the Lord."

I. Home heathen do not give, as subjects of appeal, a popular theme. Choose any city, and you will find that the mission Sunday-schools are sustained by only a meagre moiety of the evangelical churches. Do you ask why this is so? There are two reasons for it, at least.

i. One of them is the *nearness of the objects of benevolence*. Distance lends enchantment to foreign missions. Patriotism makes some allowance for even the closeness of Western churches and colleges in our own land. But the poor are here under our very eye. Descriptions of degradation and suffering are spiritless, because we meet the destitute constantly and contiguously. We fairly touch them as we pass. Business men ought to know this, and yet it rather injures the cause to tell them of it.

Eyes look out upon them as they hurry down town, or pour over the North River and East River, from windows behind which there is what no pen can describe. Immortal souls jostle them on the pavement, crowd them on the street cars, throng them at the ferries, and stare at them from all the corners: a great mass of living, sentient humanity, each individual with his own circle surrounding, purpose urging, and destiny coming.

Here they are; and the question is, How shall we help them? They are within reach, and even now accessible to any effort—the vicious and the depraved close by the intelligent and the moral, the ignorant almost housed with the educated, the foreign with the home-born. And they are increasing with rapidity unparalleled all the time. But every pastor will bear me witness how difficult it is to move Christian people towards them.

The dramatic power of poverty and vice in a picture is lost in a fact. I have seen men stand suffused and weeping before the painting of a Beggar Boy, who passed a hundred boys begging, on their way to the exhibition, and never thought of tears. Now a hook through a man's back, as he whirls on a lofty post in Hindostan, has a weird horror in it that makes even the purse-strings shudder. But when a man, with the iron in his soul, his heart wrung for his children that starve or that swear, that are naked or are thieves, presents himself, want becomes tame and commonplace. It loses romance when we find he lives down by the Ferries, over by the Navy Yard, or across by the Dry Dock.

2. Another reason for the unpopularity of this cause is found in the *inveterate repugnance of the human heart to admit the poor and wretched to brotherhood under any system of things*. Many of our noblest Christians find themselves turning away to work more agreeable than that among the destitute and the vicious; and indeed it does seem unwelcome. These people do grow presuming, sometimes, when you are kind to them. They get so little sympathy that they hardly know how to treat it, and there is much that shocks one's sensibilities in the beginning of the effort. I can go from where I now sit in my study writing, and in half an hour can lead you into houses where neither the air nor the sunshine of heaven ever comes. Scores of families are under almost the same roof, not one of which ever hears a prayer. No Bible is there, no Sabbath there, no Christian instruction there. The whole duty of the day is done happily when poor squalid existence has been prolonged, by protracted ingenuities of labor and crime, through its hungry hours. Vice is fostered, sin is strengthened in its power over every new generation that grows up in the infamy.

What a school is this for a child! Two of our mission school children sat out on the dark, rickety stairs, the other night, till two o'clock, waiting for their drunken father to go to bed, so that they might creep securely into their corner, from which he had driven them with missiles. Think of that little ten-year-old boy and seven-year-old girl in the gangway six hours in a January night, here in a city of churches! Human beings live and die

in filth, drunkenness, ignorance, and misery untold and indescribable. And I live, and so do you, within ear-shot of their wailing, and never know who it is that cries !

I ask again, what are we going to do with these home heathen? They are ready to meet the ministrations of the gospel. They will take anything you will give them kindly, from the loaves and fishes of a little lad up to the sermon of a disciple. It may seem to you hopeless to labor for them, but you have no right to despair of the truth.

I have knelt to pray by a bedside when the awful reek of the floor fairly disturbed me at devotion. I have ministered at the burial of the dead when men sat in the same room, with covered heads, curiously wondering what I was trying to do. I have read and prayed and exhorted at the funeral of a child, and then taken the coffin in my own hands and borne it from the room. I have said my hurried words of instruction to one who was dying, amid the vilest clatter from the streets and the rankest odors from the alleys; and spoken of Jesus and the cross to those who, I had every reason to believe, never had heard his name except in an oath. And then I have fallen back, single-handed, on my faith, and implored a good, merciful Father, who made these creatures, that he would interpose, even in the depth of their ignorance and hardness, for the salvation of a soul that I knew was just crossing the dark river alone. And yet I am not a city missionary, only a pastor, and my experience is not very strange nor unusual.

What will you do for these people? Oh, for the sake of your brother's soul, and for the sake of a great common humanity, answer this question for me! Look at these men, women, and children, one by one. Take every soul up, as you would take jewels up, if you were crown-making. Christ *is* crown-making; are not you? Look at its flaws, not to censure or reject, but to help and restore. No man is lost utterly, no matter how burned or how bronzed or how blackened, no man can be lost, while there is but one fair line across his forehead on which the name of Jesus can be written! Gather him up in your arms like a bruised child. Say in your heart, "O my God! I might be here but for thy grace!"

Ah me! men and brethren, I call to mind those finest words of great commendation which Eliphaz gave to the suffering Job; I want to hear such, if by-and-by I must suffer: "Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands; thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees."

Here are the poor and the vicious, the homeless and the hunted children of misfortune. God is asking us the world over, What shall the strong do for the weak? The earth rocks. Institutions are breaking. Life seems a breath. Fortunes fail. Over all sits God calmly, saying, "Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain!"

II. The question of doing good among all the miscellaneous masses of every great community is

embarrassed with three complications. And so every scheme has to move loosely and have room to yield and distend almost at pleasure. What seems exceedingly plain work requires all the genius of a master to compass even the least success in doing.

1. One of these is *poverty*: mere want of food, want of fire, want of garments, want of everything that helps to make humanity human. It does very little good to pray with a man or to read to him about Bartimæus, or tell him the story of Bethany or Bethlehem, while he is gaunt with famine or desperate under the cries of his barefooted children. I know a family that, last evening when it began to rain, had no coal to burn nor food to eat, and did not know a living source of help. If you have nothing but tracts, my impression is that you need not go there to-day. You will have to do something very like giving money or work long before that man or any of his family will be ready for baptism.

Now I know this is commonplace. I suppose some will hardly listen to me as I talk of dollars and cents in this connection. I cannot reason coolly with a Christian who rails out against the eternal call for practical help. Let him go and reason with the men themselves. Come, I will invite you. I had a man here in my study the other day. He had been sick a month. He was a furrier by trade. He had four children living. I buried one for him once; that is the way he came to know me. He could live in ordinary times.

His sickness, however, had thrown him in arrears. He was not able to rise or stand. He halted twice on the stairway. I heard him and opened the door. He came in to tell me his trouble. His furniture was on the sidewalk. He could not remove it from there without paying his rent, four dollars. He had found another house, but he could not go in without paying in advance two dollars. And he could not move his little store of goods without paying a drayman one dollar more. He was a Roman-catholic.

Ah, now, what a chance for conversion! He had come unsolicited to my study and I had him fairly. Now, if you had been within reach, how I would have invited you to reason with him! For, you see, I had "Kirwan's Letters" close by; somebody once gave me a "Key to Heaven;" Cummings has a fine chapter on antichrist, I remember; what an argument we might have had with him! Oh, it is too serious to be sarcastic about! Christian brother, you know better than this. The first thing to do for that poor fellow was to lend him seven dollars. Lend him? Yes, better than give under such circumstances, for it saves his self-respect. If he can, he will return it—and you can lend it to the next man; if not, it is only giving, you see, after all—and he hopes to be able yet.

2. Another complication is found in the fact that *very many who are to be reckoned in these mixed multitudes are not vicious*. In one day's visit you will find quite likely a goodly number of old-country people, and many of them are members of

Christian churches abroad; yet in this land, finding no spiritual home at first, they have fallen away into neglect of all ordinances and institutions of the gospel. Business life and laborious toil hurry them through the week amid the vast throngs and vigorous competitions of this crowded metropolis, and on the Sabbath they clamor for rest and recreation. Families even from Puritan New England are found likewise, who, reared in the circles of strictest and most virtuous associations, come here into closest seclusion. They discover that the social lines are drawn tensely, the rates of pew rent are in all acceptable congregations exceedingly high, and, compared with all their previous village congeniality and neighborliness, the general welcome is cold and uninviting to any further intimacy. For a while they make a compromise; but little by little they glide away from their former habits and convictions, become worldly like all the rest, and at last they are lost in the obscurity of the throng—lost to usefulness, if not to faith.

Bear in mind, these persons may be poor or may not. Quite likely they are. At any rate, they live among the poor. They find their homes on less fashionable streets. They go to the common amusements; they put the music of the Central Park in the place of the Philharmonic Concerts; they seek the cemeteries instead of the sanctuary on the Lord's day. They mark the hurrying thousands of all classes in the community, and yet feel that they must fight their own battles. So they grow on fighting.

You imagine perhaps that conversation will have great benefits to reach in their case. You would like to talk with them. You may be very ingenious and subtle and profound; but I warn you they will give you defeat in the argument. They have thought these matters over a great while, and that too when every faculty of their minds was quickened and excited under the pressure of scenes of starvation and sickness and degradation that they have experienced or witnessed. Social forms and conventional restrictions have vanished in their estimation into thin air before the great humanity that agitates and sways them. They have their theories, not vaguely defined, as you will discover yours are, but hard, clear, sharply-cut, and thrusting.

Above all, they will worry you with the "*Tu quoque*" argument. It is a favorite with them. You will say, "You ought to do this or that;" they will answer, "And *you*?" They think you are human; they know they are. And they assert most recklessly their equality before God and freedom from social estimates of every form.

They will quote Scripture at you and give it strange turns of sentiment. You rebuke them for breaking the Sabbath; they will point to you a feeble little child, fairly gaunt for air, and tell you they want to have her go to Greenwood alive a few times before they take her there in a coffin. You tell them that decency requires them to cling to the faith of their fathers; and they will reply it is difficult to sing even the Lord's song in Babylon. You complain because they are not seen in the

sanctuary; and they will ask you if it is wise for a poor widow to run hopelessly in debt just to put her two mites in the treasury.

• Are these people all right? No, not half of them. Are they amiable or proper-tempered? I suspect not. I am afraid you would not be if you were to argue with them. You must soothe. Ah, I tell you beforehand, you will hear more bold heterodoxy than ever you heard before if you attempt to argue with many of the mixed multitude. And now I tell you likewise, upon my faith and with a rebuked and humble heart, you will hear more truth too.

3. The other complication to which I alluded is *the entangled condition of all laws concerning the relations of the poor and vicious to the opulent and strong.* Men will complain passionately to you that they cannot be good and honest if they would; but they ask you to help them. They implore you to interfere between them and what seems a great impending hammer of society that simply beats and beats them down. And it is when talking about this that they grow wildest. They handle things rather loosely. They say "God" in a way that makes you shudder sometimes and sometimes weep. They believe he is on their side. They think he is their fast friend. If you press them with the fact that they do not serve him, they will either deny it and turn their appeal away from you to high heaven, or they will stand at bay suddenly and retort on you the almost savagely abrupt question, "If *you* never had food nor father, school nor Bible, church

nor home, where would you have been better than I am?"

They charge much of their vice on others, and in many cases you will be saddened with the plausibleness of the plea. When a man is drunken and violent and you shame him and reproach him, and then he tells you in reply that he is weak there, and he knows it; and then he swears with oaths that make the earth and air almost tremble how he went forth in the morning with a determined heart to be sober, and a friend, licensed by the laws you live under and the administrators of which you yourself helped to elect, tempted him with a taunt on the corner, and rung a glass in his ear because he knew the week's wages had just come in, and so, poor fellow, he fell again; and then, when he says it is no use for him to try to be honest and decent, for all the powers that be are leagued against him, and the whole world would be willing to ruin him body and soul in the hell of liquor for the sake of the money he would need to spend getting as drunk as he is now—what are *you* going to say?

Pity the poor rather than shun them. Be considerate. Thoughtlessness kills them by scores. One of Dr. Spencer's parishioners met him hurriedly urging his way down the street one day; his lips were set and there was something strange in that gray eye. "How are you to-day, doctor?" he said pleasantly. He waked as from a dream and replied soberly, "I am *mad!*" It was a new word for a mild, true-hearted Christian; but he

waited, and with a deep, earnest voice went on: "I found a widow standing by her goods thrown in the street; she could not pay the month's rent; the landlord turned her out, and one of her children is going to die; and that man is a member of my church! I told her to take her things back again. I am on my way to see him!" I think I should like to have been present at that interview. It would have been worth seeing, that Christian rebuke from the indignant pastor.

My purpose is gained in this appeal if it only leads my fellow-workers to greater zeal. I do not here propose policies, but I pray you read my text over again: "Ye have the poor with you always; *whensoever ye will* ye may do them good." I cannot be at rest while the blessed faith seems backward or apathetic. The "cry of the human" forces itself in upon me.

While I sat here in my quiet study, the upper room of my home, many months ago—my sermon just completed at the close of a day, folded nicely, laid labelled away, the evening coming on with long, beautiful shadows, tracing weird shapes on the carpet—suddenly my serene hour of rest was broken in upon by the slow step of an unknown person climbing the stairs. I waited quite a while, the sound nearing the door as if some one was timid or hesitated or lame. Then there fell a heavy burden against the panels. I was startled and went immediately to ascertain the meaning of the intrusion. There on the landing lay the form of one I had known in far-gone years—a broken,

sick, worn inebriate, evidently sober, but exhausted even to fainting. He was in the last stages of a decline. His strength failed on the very threshold of my apartment. I took the poor, thin, light burden up in my hands, and brought him in and laid him down on my sofa. He panted so painfully for breath that I was actually frightened. I thought he might die there with me alone. I gave him water and fanned him with my sermon—surely it never did a better service than that.

By-and-by he got his breath and his utterance, but spoke painfully as he did his errand:

"I have come up here—very much troubled—I want—you to take me—by the hand—and just lead me—like a little child—to Jesus!"

Do I need to tell you how I tried my best with the poor fellow that remembered hour? But this is not my point. What I want to say is that since then I have never been at rest. The great, tried, feeble, dying world keeps driving in through every crevice of my study the wistful request, Will you lead me, like a little child, to Jesus!

X.

A FIGHT WITH A DEMON.

"AND HE, REBUKING THEM, SUFFERED THEM NOT TO SPEAK: FOR THEY KNEW THAT HE WAS CHRIST."—*Luke 4:41.*

As might have been expected, the practical experience of Luke as a professional physician renders his account more interesting whenever he comes to describe such miracles as involved disease and deprivation like blindness and dumbness, or fever and palsy. But if any one imagines that he will find aid from the study of this particular narrative because of the skill of the man who was its author, he will be baffled and disappointed especially in the matter of demoniacal possession. A single characteristic discoverable in all the Gospels alike shows that no one of the evangelists ever took it upon himself to make an apology for his confessed ignorance upon the whole subject, much less to offer an explanation of its strangeness, its cause, its nature, or its cure.

It so happens now that our studies lead us up to the first occasion upon which our Lord Jesus performs the special miracle of healing one who in the popular language was possessed of the devil. We do not venture to say that we know very much that is calculated to bring help in the exposition, but we can find some lessons of practical teaching.

I. Let us begin with noting some few peculiari-

ties of this fight with a demon there in the town of Capernaum. It appears that a man in the synagogue during service broke the peace of the congregation by an awful cry, a sort of shriek of spite or anguish. Jesus instantly gave himself to the call of humanity, took his part in a mysterious conversation with the devil, and ended by working a miracle of full cure.

1. We may admit frankly that we are unable to relieve these stories of their element of mystery. We cannot answer the question which arises earliest: we do not know what it was to be possessed of a devil as people were in those days. It is not certain that we have any such infliction in these times of ours. It was not insanity, nor epilepsy, nor lunacy in any of its recognizable forms. Some symptoms there were resembling some of the symptoms of these diseases: the falling down on the ground wallowing, the stumbling into water and fire, the delirious cries, the reckless destructiveness, tearing clothing and flesh. It has to be admitted that these look like fits or some kind of frantic forms of dementia or convulsions from cerebral disturbance. But nothing can be given in our modern times as a proper professional explanation that satisfies the necessities of an expositor who is studying the chapters containing the various accounts of this infliction and its cure.

2. But this is by no means all which confronts us in the inquiry for help. The mystery of the sufferer's behavior is obscure, but what our Lord does and says is equally inexplicable. He makes a

discrimination between the man and the devil inside of him. He speaks to a being who talks back and reasons, and sometimes asks favors and obsequiously deprecates destruction. In one case the demon craves permission to go out of the man into some swine feeding near by; he gains consent, and then down the steep rushes the herd, only to be drowned in the sea.

3. The attempts offered by rationalistic commentators only blind us the more. It is not enough to say that Jesus gave in to the delusions of the one who was possessed, bearing with him and humoring him a little in a harmless deceit for the purpose of controlling him easily, and so rendering him less dangerous to those around him. This does by no means explain why Jesus, when he was alone with his disciples and in the midst of conversation positively confidential, talked about the insidious and difficult conflict with demons as if it were the one thing above all others they ought to admit and understand, that these phenomena in human disease were owing to a satanic influence—these imps of hell, these demons under the direction of the “prince of the powers of the air,” were suffered to enter into and distress certain persons for the inscrutable purposes of divine discipline. But they were to be amenable to the force of prayer and God’s merciful interpositions in any given case. His language is unmistakable; he says plainly that the demons are in the man; one kind is worse than another; so one case has to be treated as worse to deal with than another: “This kind goeth not out but



by prayer and fasting." Such a statement is inconceivable upon any other basis of candor and honesty than the acceptance of such a theory of actual possession as would meet the needs of the narrative.

4. Our conviction therefore is reached that, for his own purposes, God has permitted Satan to match himself openly with Christ under a new dispensation. Jesus can work miracles, and Satan can use the forces of the whole world of darkness; so the conflict is in progress to-day. But while Jesus was on the earth a certain form of demonstration seems to have been acknowledged as legitimate. Celestial prowess came to be matched against diabolical. Miracles fought with magic. We are not afflicted now with demoniacal possession; nor do we have power now to work miracles. The circumstances of the campaign are changed. But the war is exactly the same, and the leaders in it are the same. When storms rage and drown the sailors, when pestilence flies through these summer airs that appear so refreshing, when war thunders with mouth of brass and tongue of fire, it is Satan lashing this sin-cursed world a degree more violently in his impotent wrath. And when divine interposition makes itself felt in our behalf it is because grace, sovereign grace, amazing grace, abounding grace—means to save the race at last with a complete deliverance of all the children of the living God.

II. Does the devil understand this? That leads us forward still further in an investigation of this strange story. In the second lesson we have to

learn from it we shall need to mark the disclosures abruptly and perhaps unwittingly made by these demons themselves. Their conversations are exceedingly instructive. How strange it seems, while the wild creatures from hell are tearing and strangling the poor beings they have possessed, to hear them talking to Jesus! They admit in this story alone that they know his nature, his purpose, and his power.

1. As to his nature, it appears that devils like these knew Jesus in person; they called him by name, they stated where he was reared as a boy. As soon as they saw him there in the synagogue, without even a moment's delay, without waiting to be challenged, they began the fight with a bold and impudent call: "What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth?" Thus they admitted their knowledge of his human nature. And then, when our Lord turned to listen, one of them, possibly the chief of them all, cried out: "I know thee who thou art—the Holy One of God." Thus he admitted full knowledge of Jesus' divine nature. Hence it becomes an easy inference from this confession, and there can be no lack of charity in our assertion of it, that if any one declares that Jesus was not a real man, or declares that he was not verily God, in making such a statement he must be more ignorant than the devil is.

2. But not only the nature of Jesus as human and divine; in this conversation these spirits showed they had knowledge of the purpose of our Lord. They must have been familiarly acquainted with

his offices as our prophet, priest, and king. "Art thou come to destroy us?" thus the question was thrust at him. They were right; that was exactly the aim of the incarnation: "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." Especially he came to check disease and relieve human suffering. There is a verse in the Gospel of Matthew which makes very much of this, as if even the lowest and commonest of men's pains were cared for in the plan of redemption: "And when even was come, they brought unto him many possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our diseases." These demons understood that God had sent his Son into the world for an immediate attack upon the whole system of curse, deterioration, poverty, wretchedness, sin, and woe. He came to make common cause with each one whom the devil was holding captive. His voice once rang through a startled town like the blast of an avenging trumpet, when he cried in his passionate sympathy, "Ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?" So here in the very words of our text, chosen for their intense significance, he declared instant and eternal war with such minions of hell. The demons shrieked as they came forth from the poor creatures they were torturing. They recognized his true

office; they said, "Thou art Christ, the Son of God." And that was the reason why he would not let them speak another word, "for they knew he was Christ." There was no room for further discussion or appeal.

3. For if they knew that, let us note again, they knew the power he came to wield. Observe how they deprecate his wrath and dread more than anything else his slightest interference: "Let us alone." His appearance on the scene was full of consternation to them: "What have we to do with thee?" Observe also their reverence. Just as he once said to the billows in the storm, "Be still," and there was a great calm on the whole sea, so now he says, "Hold thy peace," and there is silence. Observe then their obedience. Jesus said, "Come out of him." One cry of pain as the demon tore him and threw him on the ground was all that any one of the bystanders noticed, but they picked the sufferer up and found he was not hurt after all. Thus we learn plainly that "the devils also believe and tremble."

III. So much, therefore, for the exposition of the narrative; we have nothing more to do now than simply to gather the lessons for real use in our own lives. We leave the people wondering, the devils quitting the scene and vanishing in defeat, the poor demoniac in his right mind and hopeful for a fair future, and the Lord Christ standing tranquilly on the field, victor over the whole legions of hate and hell. What is there for us, in these days of Christian life, to learn?

I. For one thing, surely, *we know now whom to resist*. We are to drop all folly of discussing whether there is a personal devil or not. Why! if there be no devil, what do such passages as this mean: "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you"? What does the apostle mean when he warns believers to be forgiving, "lest Satan should get an advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices"? If there be no demons in existence, why are the names of them used? Who is "Leviathan, the piercing and crooked serpent"? Who is "Abaddon, Apollyon, the old serpent, devil, and Satan"? Once in the city of New York a newspaper, famous for its foolish romances, published a story of a lion that tore open its cage in a menagerie and escaped; it declared that this creature was out now loose in the Park, and might be in the streets any moment. Do I need to say that the whole town was alive and alert? Some ladies who had ordered their carriages stopped them in the stables; an excited merchant, reaching his store, turned instantly back to his home, in order to protect his children from starting for school. The police sprang their rattles for help; bells were rung; fear was in every mind and soul. How to avoid this beast, how to destroy him, was the question on every lip. Just so we might heed Peter's words: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."

2. Then again: *we see who is our unfailing Surety.* We can trust our Lord Jesus Christ always; we cannot trust any one else. For years after Jesus went away to heaven the gift was left with the apostles to cast out these demons by miracle. The devil feared them, but he would fear nobody besides. Luke has given one instance of this in the Acts: "Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits, the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was, leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded."

Ah, it is of no use to look for help from men in fighting the devil in this difficult life of ours; trust in Jesus Christ; he is enough.

3. Once more: we see *what is our special duty* for all time while we are on the earth sharing with others the common exposure. We press forward in the very footsteps of the Captain of our salvation. Christ Jesus our Leader came to cast out devils, and we are to spend our time in casting out devils likewise. It is true that there is nothing just now that answers to demoniacal possession; but there are the same vile hosts of sin loose all around us in the hearts of our fellow-men. You see one of your neighbors growing harder and harder in disposition

every day he lives; he is grasping and mean and close; and you cry out, "It seems as if the devil were in him!" You are right; he has a devil in him—the devil of Avarice. Another man is deceitful and plausible in political life, or even church life; he is seeking office, and every one knows he is tricky and intriguing; and you say—"He acts as if he were possessed with the devil!" He is; the devil's name is already known—the devil of Ambition. Then there is another; he gambles with money or stocks, with cards or dice or tickers: there is another; this man is drunk and bloated and beastly: there is another; he is vile and obscene. You do not know why these persons behave so; you say, "There is a devil in each one of them!" You are right; the demons are in the heart of them now—the demons of Passion, Appetite, and Lust. But it is not enough for you simply to stand there and make ingenious remarks about such things; you and I are to go about getting rid of these recognized devils in the name of Jesus, Immanuel, the Son of God!

4. So, finally, we reach our lesson most important of all: *it is possible that each one of us here is possessed of the devil himself in despite of his ignorance.* Knowledge of Jesus Christ is not everything that is needed. These demons knew the Holy One, the Son of God, thoroughly; but it only frightened them to hear his name. We need love to him as a Saviour and faith in him as our Surety. We must not say for our sweet consolation that Jesus has cast out our devils once; often a demon returns to attack

the heart of the same man. It is always these old devils that come back first; they want to try the fight again; and they usually bring worse devils by sevenfold than themselves; then the man's last state is more hopeless than ever. Take your stand valiantly. Set yourself against all sorts of evil; the devil is in them. It is sometimes a law, sometimes an institution, sometimes a habit, sometimes a corporation, sometimes a public sentiment; no matter what form it takes, if it be wrong, the devil is in it. So your warning is this: "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

XI.

FISHERS OF MEN.

"AND JESUS SAID UNTO SIMON, FEAR NOT: FROM HENCEFORTH THOU SHALT CATCH MEN."—*Luke 5:10.*

THE scene to which we now come in our study is quite familiar to us all. It does not exactly address one's cool intellectual consideration, but rather his imagination, for it is a vivid and real picture. Modern travellers agree that the main features of that country, as well as the ancient customs of the villagers at their trades, continue much the same at the present day. One can witness all the processes of the fishermen at Lake Gennesaret now. This little inland sea is as famous as it ever was for its crystal clearness and for its extraordinary affluence in fruitfulness of spoil for rods and nets. When the boats go out or come in, the lively spectacle is very suggestive of the beautiful autumn morning when our Saviour presented himself upon the landing where the disciples were moodily rinsing their seines. It was not far from the highly-exalted city of Capernaum that the interview occurred. Either just before this or just after, the household of Simon had been set up within the town precincts instead of at Bethsaida, farther north.

We choose to dwell upon this incident only for our investigation on the present occasion, for fear

we shall become burdened with matter if we try to comment on the miracle or the official commission, for a confirmation of which the miracle was wrought. Our simple purpose will be to follow with a running exposition the verses as they are written in the Gospel of Luke, putting with them, however, whatever the other evangelists seem also to have remembered in harmony.

Possibly it may be reckoned as fortunate here that no expositor is compelled to suggest anything that is either original or ingenious. Some preachers there are that are considered experts in the piscatory art. They make it their summer amusement and recreation; perhaps they find in it a sympathetic relationship to their calling. Such persons—having some gift that way and much taste, having read Izaak Walton, and so knowing the parlance—might proffer graphic descriptions of the ways in which the shy creatures of the water are taken, as helps in explaining the processes of securing souls for Christ. But there are others among us whose vocabulary is not extensive in such directions. We rarely enter upon an intricate ocean story, and we skip technics in the presence of the masters of any art. Still, though we may not be able to enumerate all the elements of character which would render one a good fisher of fish, we really think that we could say something about what, in the judgment of charity, would help one in becoming a hopefully successful fisher of men, which, after all, seems the great thing.

I. The first thing we notice in the story is this:

Simon is bidden to do what crosses his entire professional experience, and yet instantly obeys his Lord's command. Jesus tells him to push out from any hope of fishing-ground, and at an hour that forbids any expectation of fish. For fish do not run in that lake in the forenoon, and are never to be caught in the deep water away from shore. But this man, with only a faint protest in that little speech of his, says cheerfully and modestly, "Nevertheless, at thy word I will let down the net." He offers a new principle for our imitation—obedience without questioning.

What revolutions this will make in our faint-hearted service of Jesus, if we evermore bear it in mind! Let us suggest some few points at which it would come in contact with our ordinary tasks.

Some say when seeking for mission scholars, "It will never do any good to go to such and such a neighborhood; it is hard, unruly, and wretched; it is not proper fishing-ground in this deep water!" But if Jesus says, "Launch out," it will be for the Christian to obey him. And his motto is, "Nevertheless, at thy word I will let down the net!" Some say when they are trying to gather money for Christ's poor, and stand in front of a rich man's house, "I shall get nothing here; he is cold and hard; the family are reputed worldly; it is too deep water for any prospect of success in my fishing!" But if the good Lord has issued the order for an experiment to be made, each true Christian's answer to it should be, "Nevertheless, at thy word I will let down the net!"

It would seem that this principle has full application everywhere in the round of Christian evangelical effort. There comes a panic, a pestilence, a famine; we go forth in behalf of the Lord's suffering ones. Popular sentiment is against us. We pause in the presence of those with whom the wealth of the world is lying. Oh, never was there such a lonely time as this; it is worse than going out fishing in the sunshine; nevertheless, at the Master's word we will let down the net! And thus we reach the highest experiment a human faith can attempt. Here is a vast city with throngs of home heathen; what can one voice do? What can a tent service do? What can mere sermons accomplish among the depraved masses? "Nevertheless, at the Master's word we will let down the gospel net!"

With Jesus the miracle worker in the lead, no Christian is allowed to doubt. Here is a nation of barbarians; can they be converted? We will let down the net. Here is a great convention of infidels; can the Bible save such philosophical souls? "Nevertheless, at the Lord's command, we will let down the net."

II. The next thing we notice in the story is the surprise of one of the most astonishing miracles Simon had ever seen. He thought that he knew fishing, but he never had such an experience as this upon that lake: "For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken." He must have understood instantly that Christ Jesus his Master meant

something beyond giving him a fine haul for the market. And indeed he did; he was teaching this man a new profession. The kingdom of providence was working into the kingdom of grace. Thus Peter learned that what God did was the same as what God said. So the miracles were wonderful sermons to him—as they are to all men now.

But furthermore, the miracles of Jesus Christ were parables. There will be found in each of these great wonders a special adaptation to the specific end in view at the moment. It is as if the very bell which is rung had some kind of curious premonition as to what the discourse was likely to be. No one can understand either the relevancy or the force of this miraculous draught of fishes in the Sea of Tiberias that morning, unless he enters deeply into the purpose of the action and catches the spirit of the occasion.

When Jesus was twelve years old he discoursed to the learned doctors in the temple. And he was doubtless very profound, for he had an audience of certainly prejudiced, and perhaps scholarly, Rabbins to argue with him. But by the time he was thirty years of age the doctors had all disowned him, and the common people alone heard him gladly. Still, while we admire his exquisite simplicity, we are not to forget that he was no less profound than before. In these later discourses he always endeavored to interest the imagination, and so reach the consciences of those who listened to him.

This he did often by figures of speech and by

familiar home stories. And quite as often he reached the same end by some symbolic action—some apparently unpremeditated disclosure or behavior—most adroitly calculated to rivet the attention of those who were watching him and fix his instruction deeply in their minds.

Hence, it may be said as well here as elsewhere, that in rehearsing the records of our Lord's earthly history we are ever to keep on the alert to discover hidden meaning and hints of meaning in all he is doing as well as in all he is saying. His gestures have a voice; his actions are full of doctrine. Well and wisely has it been remarked by one of the best thinkers of any age: "Every Bible narrative bears the image of a man; has a body, which is ashes and worthless—that is the outward letter. And besides that it has a soul—the life and the light, that shines in the dark and cannot be comprehended by the darkness. Because the Lord Jesus is himself the WORD, each deed of the Word is word."

III. The third thing we notice here in the story is this: in the midst of all this confusion among the partners, with the fishes swarming and wallowing in the boats, Simon suddenly relinquishes the traditions of his boyhood, turns from the Jewish faith, and becomes a genuine Christian for all time to come. For he calls Jesus "Lord" and applies to him that one ineffable name which it was blasphemy for one of his nation to give to any being in the universe save Jehovah himself.

Peter was not the only one of the apostles that

went over into Christianity from Judaism upon a single word; Paul did the same thing and employed exactly the same word. Out on the road to Damascus he was thrown off his horse and blinded with the light in the air overhead; he looked up and saw a Form like unto the Son of Man. In one intense word of ascription he gave up the fight that a hard career of persecution had conducted; he said, "Who art thou, Lord?" That surrendered his soul at discretion. And he followed this with a new enlistment on the opposite side: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" When this intelligent and bigoted Jew voluntarily addressed the Nazarene preacher as Jehovah, he bent his own knee to a fresh allegiance and became a Christian man.

We shall think less of some other words of Simon Peter's exclamation in the vessel that day; but before we treat this portion of it lightly, let us remember that Sarah got her place on the wonderful roll-call in the eleventh of Hebrews just for calling Abraham her human "lord." It showed the loyalty of a heart. And we must mark reverently the supreme loyalty of a heart for time and eternity too when we find this Jewish fisherman applying to Jesus, the Galilean carpenter's son, the name of his divine Lord. For in this instance the title bore in it a rich glory of celestial meaning which Sarah would never have dared to employ in her speech to even the Father of the Faithful on peril of her soul!

IV. In the fourth place, we notice in this story that Simon fell into the depth of a most poignant

conviction of sin while he was looking at this miracle of Jesus. There seems nothing more illogical than this sudden outcry, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

Just here comes out a principle of human nature which it is of the utmost value for us all to know and remember. It is always the full disclosure of God which fully discloses the heart of man. He sets our secret sins in the light of his countenance.

We see this also in the story of Manoah, Samson's father. A promise was made to him: he was visited by an angel. Up to this time he bore his honors bravely. But now, when he made a meat-offering upon the rock and the flame went up towards heaven, in an excited instant the celestial Visitor stepped into the fire and rose with the ascending smoke out of his sight. Then he perceived that the Angel of the Lord had been his company. But instead of rejoicing he was alarmed. The disclosure of the divine presence filled him with a sense of utter unworthiness and awoke in his soul premonitions of judgment for his sin. He was overwhelmed with penitence and consternation. His wife also was frightened. They both fell on their faces to the ground. And he said to her, "We shall surely die, because we have seen God!"

It seems to be a growing policy of these modern times to continue the talk altogether about the sweet love of Jesus and the amazing, inexhaustible grace of a forgiving God. So it is forgotten that such teachings are only soporifics to each person

who has not yet seen his guilt as a lost sinner before divine law. For it is the office of the true gifts of God, like his goodness, to lead to repentance. What is wanted in all our conversions at the present day more than anything else is a greater measure of thorough conviction of personal ill-desert before the tribunal of God's holiness. Men are never so near Christ as when they feel farthest away. Simon Peter never was closer to Christ than when he cried in his extremity, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

Indeed, that most extraordinary form of expression itself affords the finest illustration that can be given of one's true process of mind. For this man never would have attained that exalted height of the ascription "Lord," unless he had first felt the intense horrors of that depth from which he started in the imploration, "Depart." That is to say, he never would have had the daring faith to call Jesus Jehovah if it had not been made clear to him that in his lonely and awful ruin he must have a Saviour who was really God. That sentence, so explosively uttered, was like a life-boat line flung across the "great gulf fixed." It reached from that eternal world of the lost—of which the word "depart" must be for ever the symbol—to the eternal world of the redeemed, where the "Lord" reigns in glory. Simon Peter's consecration to Christ grew straight up out of his conviction of sin.

Elsewhere we are bidden to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling." Jehovah is not always and to everybody indiscriminately

just "dear Jesus." Men are exhorted to pray for grace whereby they may serve God acceptably, "with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire." The careful Psalmist confesses, "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments."

Sure we may be of this fact: it is solemn business to join one's self to the Lord Jesus Christ for time and eternity. Of all things ever for any mortal on the earth bound to the bar of judgment and irrevocable destiny, there is only one thing conceivable more serious and awful than to be a Christian, and that one other thing is, not to be one.

Where four roads met an ancient sign-post stood,
Its wizened arms all lichened o'er and gray,
Half fallen from their sockets through decay
That daily triumphed o'er the crumbling wood;
And though it lingered on in hardihood,
'T was but a relic of a bygone day,
For all its guiding words were worn away,
With long neglect had vanished former good.
So, stationed at the cross-roads of the heart,
Is that true sign-post, Conscience, clear and bright,
Which, cherished, ever points our way aright;
From which, neglected, day by day depart
All grace and virtue, till at length it stands
A dull, dead sign, with empty, nerveless hands.

XII.

ENTIRE CONSECRATION.

"AND WHEN THEY HAD BROUGHT THEIR SHIPS TO LAND, THEY FOR-
SOOK ALL, AND FOLLOWED HIM."—*Luke 5:11.*

SOME Arabs in the East stamp upon their lozenges of opium, which they purpose to use in smoking themselves to sleep, the words in their own tongue *Mash Allah*—the gift of God. Too many of our family homilies, too many of our eloquent sermons, too many of our conversations, too many of our Sunday-school recitations, too many of our counsels to inquirers, all of which we somewhat ostentatiously call "God's gifts," ought to be stamped as spiritual opiates for those who receive them at our hands. If taken as prescribed, they lull the soul into far riskier and far lower satisfactions than God ever intended them to serve.

It is time to have done with the great part of these soft lozenges of soothing address. Men are lost souls, bound to an awful eternity of woe, unless redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. If any one is not yet ready to accept his Saviour on that basis, then the greatest kindness to him would be to let him go on bearing the hungers of the siege, and counting the cost of surrender, until he will be. Sinners need not be soothed till they have reached that experience of anxious alarm which offers something to be soothed: "They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick."

The choice lesson for our spiritual good to be learned from this story so far is concerning the temper in which we are to set about the requirements of a religious life. There may be volatile dispositions, much resembling that of Simon Peter, which seriously need the same discipline and instruction he received. The spirit of a true faith should be a very cheerful spirit. But it must not be lacking in dignity. God is a great God, and greatly to be feared in the assemblies of his saints. He has never commanded sanctimoniousness, but he has commanded sanctity. We cannot treat these themes of the gospel with lightness or triviality. The Monarch of heaven himself never trifles. Trembling before him is a duty; for real positive fear is one element in all genuine piety. He says, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."

Of course, we are met here with the counter quotation, "Perfect love casteth out fear." We admit, on the instant, the force of that passage. But it refers only to a cringing, slavish, grovelling fear—an alarm lest God should suddenly shine forth and inflict retribution upon us for sins. It is not true even in ordinary life that love casts out fear. No child filially regards his father who does not fear him. No wife lives, loyal to her husband, who does not fear him. All subordination, even in slightest degree, involves fear. What we call respect is fear, if we analyze it; it is a proper and becoming anxiety lest we should transgress our own line of privilege or cross another's line of rights. Hence

there is given the counsel: "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling." The service of our divine Master is a most grave and reverent undertaking for even the most affectionate man.

It is to be feared that much of our modern teaching on these important points is too slight. Such attributes as divine justice and power are dwelt upon less than those of mercy, peace, and love. Hence, no words of warning can be more impressive than these which are addressed to us by Simon Peter himself: "Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." The man who penned this admonition learned his lesson out on the waters of Lake Gennesaret that forenoon when he exclaimed, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" A great experience of salutary alarm had convulsed his entire being. He had seen God in man incarnate with power, and he could never forget it.

If we read through carefully the two epistles which this disciple afterwards wrote, we shall not fail to be struck with the repetitions of the one counsel that he seems most anxious to impress: "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." He felt how serious a business it was to consecrate himself to the work of following such a Master. So he urges intelligence as well: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." He thoroughly apprehended the source

from which the most dangerous attacks would be likely to come; Satan had desired to sift him too. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." Remember it was this very man who also asked the solemn question: "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" He lived always in view of his final account. He told the world about the new heavens and the new earth, and that changes were near: "But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." In each of these heavy admonitions we detect the lingering results of that forgotten interview out upon the Sea of Galilee.

It cannot be doubted that the force of the fact that such a miracle was wrought out upon the water in the presence of Simon Peter was designed to give him some specific prominence, and at the same time a specific awe and alarm to keep him from undue elation. And it is noticeable that in the speech he here makes we have very singular phraseology to prove his humility. It has often been stated that the old Romans showed their debased ideas by taking the ordinary name of man—*homo*—from *humus*, the ground; but the Greeks, more buoyant in spirit, derived *anthropos* from what means an "up-looker." Now, in the record before us, Simon Peter calls himself by a title which is

not of the highest but the lowest grade. When he speaks he tells the Lord he is a sinful "man"—a mere human being; he does not employ the usual word; he is not an "up-looker" at all. He does not lift his eyes in the presence of Christ.

The secret of the choice made of such an individual is found in his thorough loyalty to his Master, his unquestioning obedience, his unwavering faith, his venturesome energy. Simon was not a man to be distinguished for gifts. But what he did he did "straightway." He did not pause for the calculation of chances of success. He was an enthusiast by temperament, and all that was necessary in his case was to direct his forces. He might have taken for a motto "*bis dat qui cito dat*"—he gives twice who gives straightway. It is worth while to look up that word *straightway* in a concordance. The Philippian jailer was baptized *straightway*. Saul arose and preached Christ *straightway*. The father of the lad which had a dumb spirit went crying out to Jesus *straightway*. So always the Lord seemed looking for men who would do things *straightway*.

Did these men understand what they were going to do? No: in all likelihood they had notions most diminutive and inadequate of the conquest of the world. If they rose even so high as to consider themselves deliverers of their country and Christ as the coming King, that was not very high; Palestine was only a little province scarcely larger than the State of Vermont; and Galilee was only about half the size of Delaware. These fishermen never saw

any sea larger than the Mediterranean, and had no ideas of a world stretched out beyond it. Their thought was local; but their consecration was thorough, and their surrender of themselves "straight-way."

Now about ourselves: such consecrations are not common in our day. Piety is profitable and measurably popular in these easier opportunities. But the principle, so splendidly illustrated in an incident like this, is abiding and unalterable for all the ages.

To any man personal religion is nothing or it is everything: "From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Christianity is a religion of sacrifice, its victories are gained by surrenders; the soldier who is vanquished wears the crown.

When we see so much that is worthy, so much that ravishes the soul—the rest, the peace, the hope of the gospel, the walking in spiritual communion with Jesus here, and the dwelling with him beyond the veil—it appears strange that any earthly considerations should for a moment stand in the way of its attainment. And we almost make haste to say that he who will not be a hero for the sake of Christ's cross and Christ's covenant never will be a hero at all.

It was at this point that Simon Peter with the rest received the promise upon which all along we have been dwelling: they should have a new calling, and hereafter become fishers of men. This miracle told them the secret of success; in swift

obedience and entire consecration lay all their hopes. They must make a business of this new work. The life which now stretched out before their imagination seemed full of a peculiar mingling of hope and precariousness: indeed, it was strangely like fishing for fish. One might catch something, one might fail. It was a profession requiring attention that would amount to an exclusive absorption of time and energy, ingenuity and force. They must put off the past and put on the future. The model for them was to be the Master himself. They had been with him long enough to understand his fidelity, his tenderness, his patience, his tact, wisdom, gentleness, and industry. They believed they could follow him with a grateful heart.

So without a word more they all surrendered: "And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him."

Now if any one chooses to search ribald books for grains of cutting irony almost witty, he will find more than one gibe at the amount of the "all" that those pauper fishermen left. Something has been said in comment upon the condition of these sons of Jonas and of Zebedee already; it is not necessary to repeat it; they had not come up into middle life absolutely poor, however. Never mind how little their surrendered wealth was, it was their all. Everything they knew and loved and cherished went from them the moment they committed their fortunes to the leadership of that Galilean Teacher. Nor must we pass by the enumeration in detail: Luke says they left their boats; Matthew says they

left their nets; and Mark, who spoke for Peter, says they left their parents.

This last statement is worth a little explanation by itself. John and James were in the ship with their father Zebedee, mending the meshes in the seines which this tremendous haul of fishes had broken. Matthew and Mark both say in so many words: "And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him."

Furthermore: when, some weeks subsequent to this, Christ was in his ordinary counsels to them speaking of the fulness of consecration his service demanded, and which every one must make in order to enter the kingdom of God, Simon Peter recalled the sacrifices they had cheerfully undertaken on this unforgotten day beside the Sea of Galilee, and ventured to suggest: "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?"

To this our Lord made direct answer in its own terms; he did not at all rebuke the intimation of a reward expected for this so-called "all" which his followers had surrendered; but he replied as if he quite appreciated the offering and its cost to them: "And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come, eternal life."

Matthew does not seem to have remembered in his Gospel this singular and somewhat startling expression which Luke introduces among the promised rewards—"with persecutions"—but there need be no doubt as to its having been spoken by our Lord; and this was calculated to stir the apprehensions of ordinary men. When Christ bade them follow him, they knew that he was not going along a wide and pleasant way; they would have to meet trouble everywhere.

It was, therefore, a trying, solemn hour for those disciples there by the lake when they heard such a call. It came with fresh meaning as they remembered the divine majesty Jesus had just exhibited in the miracle. He had not meant to overawe nor crush them by this disclosure of his Godhead, but to inspire them with heroic and sublime emotions. He did not think lightly of their surrender—nor did they. But no instant of hesitancy is recorded. Quietly in that one tranquil hour they closed all of that old peaceful life of comparative rest, and entered the new life of homeless service for the world with one who had not where to lay his head.

Everybody must have noticed how unconsciously attached to local surroundings those people do become who live in rural neighborhoods and are familiar with natural objects conspicuous or striking. That little inland hamlet was to those fishermen all that we mean when we speak of home. Every cove and creek on that lake was beloved by them. They knew each shoal and shallow, each depth and eddy in it, each rock and ravine around

it. Night after night on its bosom had they spent in their work, cheered as they caught now and then glimpses of the glimmer in their huts along the shore.

Here then, in one serious moment, they were called to decide the grand question of their lives. They must forsake the scenes of youthful memory, the work and gains of forty years of toil and affection.

They went, and all the world felt their power. They shook those communities they touched. Men said of them, wherever they appeared in the frightened synagogues of Israel, "These that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also."

A gentle boy, with soft and silken locks,
A dreamy boy, with brown and tender eyes,
A castle-builder, with his wooden blocks
And towers that touch imaginary skies.

A fearless rider on his father's knee,
An eager listener unto stories told
At the Round Table of the nursery,
Of heroes and adventures manifold.

There will be other towers for thee to build;
There will be other steeds for thee to ride;
There will be other legends, and all filled
With greater marvels and more glorified.

Build on, and make thy castles high and fair,
Rising and reaching upward to the skies;
Listen to voices in the upper air,
Nor lose thy simple faith in mysteries.

XIII.

PALSY, SIN, AND PARDON.

"WHO CAN FORGIVE SINS BUT GOD ALONE?"—*Luke 5:21.*

IT is evident that this cure of a paralytic has in it more force as a parable than as a miracle. That is to say, the purpose of Jesus, in his action on this occasion, is really more spiritual than physical in its character and results. The early part of the story needs to be taken up in detail only as introducing us to that which follows.

I. It is not necessary that we should think or speak slightingly of this restoration of a sick man to his health. Indeed, this is, without reckoning some instances of raising one from the dead, the greatest cure conceivable, the very greatest that our Lord ever wrought.

i. Paralysis is the next thing to death itself; it is a likeness of death in appearance and a neighbor of death in experience. It has always been considered one of the most mysterious afflictions known to physicians. I have seen a man open his eye with his fingers, lift his right hand with his left across the chair from which he could not rise alone; and his flesh was soft and pliable, fresh and fair, but destitute of sensibility and all possible use. He had to handle himself as if he were another being. He would gaze piteously at his own limbs.

Of course such a disease becomes a source of indescribable vexation and chagrin. It humiliates a man and makes him seem ridiculously awkward and stupid. I remember a friend who once sent for me early in the morning. He had waked from sleep and noticed that one side of his body was numb; the use of it was gone from him. When I came in he began to tell me with a joke what had happened; he actually laughed till the room rang at his performances in trying to shake hands, as if such fun never was known before. But as his face turned up to mine it grew wet with honest and manly tears. He knew his best days were all over.

For, as we are aware, palsy cannot be cured. The prospect looks hopeless. Slight attacks are sometimes parried; generally however the strength gives way and the man becomes a cripple for all the years after. This is what renders the work of Jesus in his miraculous healing so wonderful. It must have been done by his power as the Son of God.

Think how this paralytic had to be helped by his friends. There were four of them who lifted him up on the roof and then let him down into the area where Jesus stood. Some people never could get to Jesus unless some one else brought them there. We are all more or less truly dependent on each other, but palsied souls are the most helpless.

Paralysis is the only disease that actually welcomes pain as one of its encouraging symptoms. When there is feeling there is chance of recovery. It is the heavy dullness which shows all hope has

gone out. This is what the apostle Paul uses once as a figure of speech in talking about hardened wicked people; he speaks of them as "past feeling;" he means that they have lost all interest in having their souls saved. There is a moment when just a keen dissatisfaction with one's self has a comfort in it. I knew a young woman once who burst into tears of elation and joy when she found she really *cared* to become a Christian.

2. Now this terrible disease of palsy was what our Lord cured on this occasion. He restored the man absolutely, so that he took up the rug he was lying on and walked away with it in his arms. The bystanders spoke out in amazement when they witnessed this matchless sight of a palsied creature getting up alone, walking away to his own house, and carrying his couch on his shoulder. They cried, "We have seen strange things to-day." Those who best knew what paralysis meant brought testimony that Jesus had just wrought the greatest cure conceivable.

II. But there was that day wrought a cure greater than this; it was the greatest cure inconceivable—the cure of a sinner from sin.

It grows perfectly clear now from what has been said that all of this extraordinary scene must be taken together. It was not the first thing Jesus did, to put life into the palsied man's limbs. The earliest word he said was about his sin: "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." Out of this came the reproach and the accusation of blasphemy. Pharisees there were who witnessed the scene, but saw

in it nothing but an impious assumption of the divine prerogative; they cried out: "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Then it was that our Lord turned to this paralytic and healed him. He had pardoned him, now he restored him.

We see plainly, therefore, that what our Saviour was doing especially on that occasion was this: he was showing that sickness was always a symbol of sin, that sin must somehow be discharged of its curse and pollution, and that this was what he had come into the world to do.

It is quite logical and proper that we drop the story and study the theme of it for the remainder of this discourse. Sin is the chief thing under consideration in the universe just now. There is an unusual necessity that we should have right views concerning it. For what is the gospel anyway? It is the plan of redemption from sin. Theology, therefore, is determined by our theory of sin. No sin, of course no redemption: sin perilous and heinous, redemption imperative and indispensable; sin slight, redemption insignificant; no possible necessity of the death of the Son of God for an atonement to be made. Then religion also is determined by one's theory of sin: if no account must be taken of sin, religion is mere routine and consists in conduct; and if sin be considered easy to control or counteract, no helplessness is felt, no need of succor. If specific sins are not recognized, specific relief is not sought, and even suggestion of it seems impertinent.

Now the present popular notion of sin is some-

what peculiar. Out of one of the daily secular newspapers I have cut this suggestive paragraph. It quotes the well-known name of a so-called liberal preacher, and goes on to repeat a story which he has been credited with telling.

“In early life I happened to meet one morning with the distinguished author, Sylvester Judd, just after we had both heard a great preacher, a man of much rhetorical power and remarkable ‘religiosity,’ speak on the text, ‘The whole creation groaneth in pain together until now.’ I asked Mr. Judd how he liked the sermon. ‘I stood it, though with difficulty,’ he said in a sort of agony. ‘I stood it till he came to that place where he abused God’s ocean. But when he said that that was roaring in pain, was howling with agony as convinced of sin, I had to leave my seat and leave the church. I crowded by the good woman at the door of the pew. Excuse me, madam, but it makes me sick, I said. I was not myself till I stood under God’s clear stars in his still night. They were not in anguish; they were not howling in pain. And I could not hear that man defaming them.’ And then more seriously Mr. Judd went on: ‘Is there nothing better to preach about than sin? Always sin! sin! sin! Is not virtue better to talk of than vice? Is it not better to think of the pure than the impure? Are not love and truth and beauty subjects better fitted for God’s children than always sin, sin, sin?’ ”

It is most likely that the text which this preacher selected was the familiar passage in the Epistle

to the Romans, "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." We are not concerned to defend the rhetoric of the sermon, assuming it to be fairly represented. We cannot say we enjoy these painful pictures. We remember a discourse founded upon the words, "The hypocrite's hope shall perish; whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider's web." It did not please us to listen to the orator as he presented a disconsolate spider attached to his slender fibre and hanging down from a mantelpiece directly over the fire on the hearth. We twinged by instinct when the poor thing was described as falling among the red coals the moment its support was cut off, and flashing into a flame in an instant. As a matter of taste, we quietly withdrew into our own opinion. Men must preach according to their own standard, otherwise what shall they do with pulpits on their hands?

But we take up the question in solemn earnest when we are asked, "Must it be always sin, sin, sin?"

For the present we cannot see any very bright outlook. Sin is what makes all the trouble in this world, and we have persuaded ourselves that the purpose of real preaching was to get rid of it. But sin is not gone in our neighborhood nor very perceptibly lessened. It does not appear morbid nor ill-bred to try to make men see what is giving them pain, if our aim in so doing is to aid them in finding relief.

Some years ago we visited the life-saving estab-

ishment at Seabright, and really enjoyed an examination of the boats, the ropes, the swivels, and all the ingenious apparatus for helping wrecked vessels and bringing the sailors ashore. We never fancied a moment while we were there that those gentlemanly officers were unclean in their imaginations or diseased in their tastes because they kept talking of wrecks and disasters. Forsooth, what were they on that beach for?

So in these stations for engines close by our homes, we do not blame the stalwart men wearing their uniform because they sit conversing about fires. The buildings do burn in our neighborhood sometimes.

Thus with our pulpits; what is the Christian church? We have always looked upon it as a sort of cross between a school and a hospital. It certainly is a soul-saving organization, and has no purpose if there are not souls yet to be saved. And sin is the one abominable thing God hates. The gospel is the remedy for sin. The New Testament begins with repentance and ends with invitation, and seems to have been written about sin.

And we feel inclined to add that hitherto we had supposed that ministers were preaching about virtue as well as vice; the pure as well as the impure; love and truth and beauty as well as "always sin, sin, sin."

What is the exact nature of sin? The word used by one of the New Testament writers signifies etymologically *lawlessness*. A sinner is called an *outlaw*. Sin is to be reckoned only by a standard,

and that standard is the immutable enactment of God's will. Sin may be best defined as "any want of conformity unto or transgression of the law of God." That law is clearly revealed.

We call to mind an exquisite statue of Law as we once saw it in the area out before an Eastern court of justice. Fair and majestic the figure rose in stone out of its lofty pedestal! Her head was covered with a helmet, to show she was shielded when attacked. In one hand she held a sharpened sword, to make known she had power to punish. But with the other she scattered gifts among the people; and her kind eye was always on the horn of plenty rather than on the edge of her weapon. And oh, what gifts were these for human enjoyment and need! peace and prosperity, arts and learning, commerce and manufactures, truth to men and purity to women and shelter to children. Under her reign all was beneficence and quiet; life was tranquil, joyous, and noble.

Even this was beautiful—wondrously beautiful—only human law, gentle and just to all. But what marble could befit the image of divine law, or what skill could fashion the figure of its benignant majesty—heaven come down bodily, with its serene order and peace on the earth, wearing the regalia of God! "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever;

the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether." "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord."

Into this vision of celestial peace come the rush and tumult of war. Sin is defiance of divine law. Sin covets the sword rather than the horn of plenty. If each sin had its first wish and legitimate result, it would overthrow the order of the universe, raise insurrection, destroy government, and introduce anarchy through all the ranks of intelligent existence. It would debase truth, debauch honor, fire baleful passion, lash forward reinless desire, and kindle the world with the flames of hell. Hence sin is serious business. To mock at it is to trifle with life and death, time and eternity; it is to jest with things highest and holiest, things deepest and grandest. Let sailors look over the ship's side and laugh at the mischievous insects which bore holes in the planks between them and the waves. Let miners smile at the children who pluck away the strands of the cable by which they hang over the unfathomable abyss of the shaft. But he that mocks when sinners defy the law of God is a fool. "Fools make a mock at sin."

Do you remember that most impressive scene in Jewish annals, when Jehu, having cut off the heads of seventy of Saul's descendants, at evenfall brought the bloody trophies in baskets to the gates at Jezreel? Seventy faces, skulls, necks, all foul and scowling, matted hair, clotted cheeks, must have been an awfully repulsive burden to carry. There they lay in one tremendous and horrible heap till the morn-

ing. Then unexpectedly in the clear early sunrise he let the people come forth in thousands to look on that ghastly spectacle with one sudden sweep of horror-struck vision. And as they shudderingly gazed on the sickening sight, he put the searching question, "Who slew all these?"

Ah, if with an equal stroke of skill and surprise one could pile up the dark, dreadful woes of this world together—all the wars and the wailings; all the lies, the thefts, and the murders; broken covenants and broken hearts; pains and penalties; cruelties and crosses—if these vices and victims were spread right out under the sweet shining of the sun, would he need to ask us, "Who is it that has slain all these?" It is *Sin*.

To smile at sin, to jest about wickedness, to think it so funny to be caught in committing it, is simply to trifle with six thousand years of misery and wretchedness and wreck and ruin.

When once under the ancient dispensation Jehovah wished to restrain his people from a meditated wrong, he sent by the prophet Jeremiah the beseeching words: "Oh, do not this abominable thing which I hate!" Think for a moment seriously of such a form of description. Sin is the one abominable thing God hates.

The Royal Preacher gives us a sermon from that text; note his divisions: "These six things doth the Lord hate; yea, seven are an abomination unto him: a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood; a heart that deviseth wicked imaginations; feet that be swift in running

to mischief; a false witness that speaketh lies; and him that soweth discord among brethren." Strange is it to find that the catalogue embraces also what some persons term quite venial sins. Here is pride put exactly alongside of murder. Here are bad thoughts enumerated with bad acts. And all this is perfectly consistent in all its details with that New Testament declaration: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."

Thinking lightly of sin is just thinking lightly of God's hatred of sin. It is trifling with his anger, tempting his forbearance, defying his uttermost wrath; and that with a pleasant playfulness, as if indeed it were only amusing.

Remember that just this thing was done once; Satan defied God in heaven. But he did not mock even then. He did it with dignity. With solemn desperation and diligent comparison of resources for the unequal conflict he uttered his challenge. He was heard calmly. Nobody laughed. The un-fallen angels shuddered at the blasphemy; and hell, as a new creation, was suddenly flashed luridly into being, for an abode of such as indulged thereafter in defiance.

But is there no remedy for all this disaster and wreck and ruin? Yes; sin can be cured by miracle just as palsy can—a miracle of divine grace. Who can forgive sin but God? No one. What does any human being desire besides God? The gospel has been made known; the ministry has been organized to proclaim it; and the plea we are to urge has a

word for the past and a word for the future. For the past there is an unconditional pardon; come and ask for it and it shall be given. For the future there is one entreaty: "Howbeit, I sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate."

And what we are to do is to go on speaking the truth about sin and pardon, and living true lives before men. A Christian student in one of our colleges was brought into contact with one who was an avowed unbeliever. He was anxious to bring him back from the dreary waste of skepticism, but the other resisted every attempt to lead him into argument. Seeing this, the Christian changed his plan; he associated with him as before, but contented himself, whenever the subject of religion was introduced, with confessing his own confidence in Christ, and indirectly contrasting it with the uncertainty of unbelief. Soon his companion began to show some anxiety regarding religion; at last one day he came and said, "Your way of speaking showed me the superiority of faith over doubt. I have been privately studying Christianity, and I come to tell you that I have laid all my doubts at the feet of Christ."

XIV.

CHRIST'S LAW OF LOVE.

"FORGIVE, AND YE SHALL BE FORGIVEN."—*Luke 6: 37.*

ONE sentence there is in the Lord's Prayer in which our interest is heightened because of the fact that Jesus singled it out distinctively for further enforcement: "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." He told his disciples that if they did not forgive others God certainly would not forgive them: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." The same careful statement is repeated in the lesson we are to study now: "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven."

So, just as the apostle Paul calls attention to that precept in the Decalogue which requires a child to honor his father and mother, because it is the "first commandment with promise," it is surely befitting that we call attention to the one request in the Prayer, because it is the only petition with comment.

I. Let us, in the first place, enter upon an intelligent exposition of the verses just as they stand. It will be quite as necessary for us to be sure what

they do not mean as what they do mean; for the declaration has been somewhat abused.

1. It is easy to show what our Lord does not teach in his repeated counsels on this point. The new Revision gives a very interesting turn to the form of expression by throwing the verb into the past tense: "forgive us our debts, as we also *have forgiven* our debtors." This intensifies the admonition, and enforces the condition that insures success in our praying; for it demands that our pardon of injuries shall have taken place previous even to our coming to the mercy-seat for ourselves.

It cannot be that the passage we are studying means that our forgiveness of others is in any sense the *ground* for our remission of sins from God. We must not consider ourselves here encouraged to say, "Forgive us all our transgressions because we have shown ourselves magnanimous enough to forgive people against whom we might have brought charge of injury." This was the prayer of the Pharisee, who went down from the temple unjustified. Our sins are forgiven because of Christ's righteousness.

It cannot be that the passage means that our forgiveness of others is to furnish the *measure* of our own pardon from God. We must not say, "Forgive us our debts as we human creditors do sometimes forgive others who owe us and cannot pay." For even the best of us might detect some instance of unforgiven wrong in our history which would instantly vitiate the whole prayer. To make our insignificant generosity a register for the grand

majesty of heaven in manifestation of pardoning love, to implore to be treated as we have been wont to treat others, to venture, with all our imperfection of motive and act, to suggest that we be forgiven as we are wont to forgive, would be full of honest alarm. Indeed, this would be to imprecate in many cases a deadly and eternal vengeance upon ourselves; for often we do at heart not forgive those by whom we have been despitely used.

2. What then does our Lord mean when he gives this warning? How is a forgiving spirit connected with our prayers? If our having pardoned those who have injured us be not a ground for our own pardon nor a measure of divine grace, what is it?

For one thing, it may be used as a *token*. It can be looked upon as a hopeful sign that our transgressions have been removed and that we are now heirs of the kingdom. The child of God often soliloquizes thus: "I know I am a sinner; I am aware my sins can be pardoned through faith in the atonement; I know that, if I am delivered from the law's curse, I am eternally secure; no one can ever bring up the wrongs of my life against me, unless he is bold enough and strong enough to pluck the divine handwriting from the cross of my crucified Redeemer; but how am I to be certain that my sins have been actually taken away?" To this inquiry Christ makes an answer by proposing a test; he has left it without qualification, as if he had no fear that Christians would pervert or abuse it: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your

Heavenly Father will also forgive you." Such a token can be employed very easily. If used faithfully, it would set at rest many a doubt concerning religion in one's heart. For a true man cannot possibly be mistaken about this one thing; the poorest metaphysician in the world can tell whether he wishes to feed his enemy when hungry or give him drink when thirsty, and so accept the principle Solomon gave to Paul (Rom. 12:20). Any man can know whether he is growing in mildness of temper or gentleness of charity as the years move on. He can understand whether he is becoming more and more moderate and placable in even his first honest outbursts of indignation. It is possible to settle himself, if he truly desires so to do, as to whether he forgives those who misuse him: "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

For another thing, this passage may serve as an *admonition*. And it is likely that it will have in this its widest use. The petition of the great universal prayer cannot be pressed without its comment. In this demand for a forgiving spirit there is nothing less than a permanent reminder that when we come asking for pardon we must be prepared to exercise it likewise; if not, we are to turn on our track and seek preparation. For it never does any good to start for communion service when in our heart there is an old grudge against the man who is to distribute the bread or hand us the wine. It will avail nothing to enter our closet of supplication with our minds morose and embittered. We

are to drop the gift we have brought up to the altar of prayer, and just go and get into a better frame of devotional feeling; then we can come back again.

Still further: this passage, if rightly improved, may serve as a *comfort*. When one has been deeply injured it is natural that his mind should experience a sense of dull pain even if it is not full of spite or rancor. There is a certain measure of melancholy in the tones with which most Christians are wont to speak of sacrifices made for others or of endurances undertaken for the sake of others, as if they considered such a surrender a sure precursor of suffering and general heaviness of depression. This does not always show itself in the result of the discipline. Many are surprised, when they have fallen into one of these necessities, to find that they have no anguish to speak of. For example, one discovers that he must not think of avenging a great hurt to himself because he will inevitably hurt some one else worse. That stops him suddenly and absolutely; and then he sees that he must cherish no malevolence in even his heart. He must forgive and forget, and afterwards go on enduring patiently. Now he supposes he has a frightful distress on ahead, keen with torture. He goes straight on to meet it with a brave, sweet, manly heart. To his amazement it does not excite him; he has no convulsing throbs. Nay, more; he is quiet; before long he feels content; then he grows elate with a kind of exalted joy.

This is so helpful a thought for real use that I pray you to let me give you an illustration which

most of you recall. There is no exaggeration in the picture that the poet laureate presents of Enoch Arden's life after he has made up his mind not to claim his old wife who had become married and settled while he was away. He saw how terribly destructive it would be to break up the new home where she had learned to find her rest. He loved her still; dear old heart, she had not designed any wrong. It was better he should bear the burden of the mistake and carry the heavy years of separation than that she should have to be suddenly flung into a distraction between two loves. So he disappeared, effacing himself as if he wiped the record off from a slate.

“He was not all unhappy. His resolve
Upbore him, and firm faith, and evermore
Prayer from a living source within the will,
And beating up through all the bitter world,
Like fountains of sweet water in the sea,
Kept him a living soul.”

So now, when we come to a strict understanding of the passage in which the text is found, we are to remember that Christ is speaking out of the depths of the New Testament dispensation of grace. These deliverances are part of the Sermon on the Mount. They are the embodied enactments of the Law of Love. “Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:” a single sentence contains the entire principle of fresh Christian life.

II. This being the exposition of the verses, and the conclusion having been inevitably reached that we cannot even pray without the spirit of forgive-

ness, it is evident that we must move forward to a higher plane of Christian experience in this one particular. So we inquire, in the second place, concerning the reach and the limit of the doctrine of forgiveness.

1. The *reach* of it is indicated in an incident of Simon Peter's life (Matt. 18: 21, 22). This disciple wanted to know whether he was bound to forgive a man who kept injuring him, and about how long such a magnanimous form of procedure was to be continued; and he suggested as a good fair frontier "seven times." Our Lord replied, Four hundred and ninety times. The Jews were accustomed in those days to say, "Bear with thine enemy three times, and then duty is done towards him." Simon went beyond his national traditions. Three was considered a sacred number, but seven was more sacred still. This decent disciple supposed that seven times would be satisfactory even to Christ.

Just think how one of this old fisherman's temperament would have rejoiced to find it settled that when a seventh offence had been reached, then it would be actually religious to say to the injurious fellow, "Now you have to take your turn; your days of grace are exhausted; do that thing an eighth time if you dare!" But his Lord answered him with a somewhat startling extension of the bounds, "Seventy times seven!" There is no need of imagining that exactness of figures was designed to be stated in these words. The four hundred and ninety times of forbearance with one man, however, would cover the ground of most people's

troubles, if the language must be forced. Probably Jesus meant that there should be no limit whatsoever to the principle that men must be forgiven as often as they erred.

2. But now, with a sober sense of inquiry and a sincere wish to be reasonable, some of us are ready to ask after the *limit* as well as the reach of this counsel. Are we to take the admonition literally? Is there actually no bound whatever to our charity? At all events, does not even God demand repentance as a condition of pardon?

Before this question can be plainly answered we must be careful to see that forgiveness does not imply that we approve, condone, or underrate the injurious acts committed; we forgive the sinner, not the sin—the sin we are to forget. Nor does forgiveness imply that we are to stifle all honest indignation against the wickedness of the injury. Nor is it settled that we are to take the injurious man into instant companionship if we forgive him; Jacob and Esau will do better apart.

What then are we to do? We are in our very heart of hearts to cease for ever from the sore sense of a hurt; we are to shut our souls against all suggestions of requital or future revenge; we are to use all means for furthering the interests of those who have done us harm; we are to illustrate the greatness of God's pardoning love by the quickness of our own.

“And if ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? for even sinners love those that love them. And if ye do good to them that do good to

you, what thank have ye? for even sinners do the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? even sinners lend to sinners, to receive again as much. But love your enemies, and do them good, and lend, never despairing; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be sons of the Most High: for he is kind towards the unthankful and evil."

All this before our wrongs have been atoned for, before our honest acts and decent deeds have been shown! It does seem a little difficult; but think over Augustine's searching question, "Do you who are a Christian desire to be revenged and vindicated, and the death of Jesus Christ has not yet been revenged nor his innocence vindicated!"

It is related of the chivalric leader, the great Sir Tristram, that his step-mother tried twice to poison him. He hurried to the king, who honored him as he honored none other, and craved a boon: "I beseech you of your mercy that you will forgive it her. God forgive it her, and I do! For God's love I require you to grant me my boon!"

Sweet brave words are those of Jean Paul Richter: "When thou forgivest, that man who has pierced thy heart stands to thee in the relation of the sea-worm which pierces the shell of the mussel; the mussel straightway closes the wound with a pearl." "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him."

XV.

“THEY SAY, AND DO NOT”

“AND WHY CALL YE ME LORD, LORD, AND DO NOT THE THINGS WHICH I SAY?”—*Luke 6:46.*

HIRAM POWERS, once familiarly describing the process of his own mind in fashioning his celebrated bust of Jesus of Nazareth, remarked that his great trouble had been found in giving the proper expression to the countenance. “How could I put into the same marble face,” he asked, “the look of Him who pitied the sick and the afflicted, who encouraged those of feeble mind in their faith, and who pardoned the penitent, together with the look of Him who uttered such terrible threats of woe against the hypocritical Pharisees in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew and the eleventh of Luke?”

The whole life of our Saviour is an illustration of the verse, “Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God.” He was the incarnation of mercy and justice in the same person. The one sin for which he rebuked those leaders of the Jewish people more determinately than for anything else, was their insincerity. Once he actually crowded his entire accusation into a single sentence, sharp and short: “They say, and do not:” this motto given in Matthew’s Gospel is the key to all those heavy maledictions.

Studies in Luke’s Gospel.

I. Here is a convenient rule on which to classify men as we see them in every-day life. Most people find it impossible to preserve an undemonstrative attitude concerning religious matters. The devotional element in human nature often asserts itself in one's demeanor, so that he must either take a position or assume a posture.

1. There are those *who neither say nor do*. They pose. Desiring to be considered orthodox, and even spiritual, they keep as quiet as they can, only loving and working their way to the uppermost places in ordinary synagogues and accepting congratulatory greetings in the markets. We might not distinguish them from good, pious people. Careless travellers often walk over graves and are not at all aware of it. These hypocrites have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof. Their real spirit is devoteeism, not devotion.

2. There are those *who both say and do*. But the doing is only bustle. They busy themselves much over the surface of platters and cups. Generosity of money from such persons is apt to be indiscriminate. All things being alike clean to them, they give alms of such as they have. But they do not always say the wise thing, and they do not ever do the real thing which God loves.

3. There are those *who do, but will not say*. It is pathetic, sometimes, to know the inner life of one who is at heart a Christian, but will not openly confess Christ. The number of such in ordinary congregations is large. They make us think of vines on the hinder side of the trellis; they give

some grapes to the vintner, but they have little sunshine for themselves, and their life is feeble.

4. There are those *who say, but never do*. These are modern Pharisees. Really burdened with tithings of mint and rue and all manner of herbs, they pass over judgment and the love of God. They join the church and sing its psalms and repeat its forms and observe its ordinances punctiliously. Our Lord spoke a parable once in which he described such people under the figure of a son who was summoned to work in his father's vineyard; he said, “I go, sir,” but went not. They are to be commended, perhaps, as far as their action extends. What they do ought generally to be done; but they ought not to leave the other and the greater thing undone.

II. Here also is a convenient test by which to register the sincerity of men as we see them. Saying and doing should always go together. The separation of the two offers us now quite a new analysis of classes. Our Lord gave us another of those abrupt questions for which he was so noted among the Pharisees, and it can be a motto, like the other, for our use: “And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”

1. Some say “Lord, Lord,” *from mere ignorance*. They seem to suppose that this is all they ought to say. They are wont to exclaim, “Great is the mystery of godliness!” So their religious life contains an element of mysteriousness which is unmistakable. It consists in some general, vague, goodish talk about truth and God and heaven. It is

almost as much like real piety as Lord Byron's old Hebrew melodies are like hymns; some of those have got into the collections before compilers discovered that the spirit of them is only that of poetry and not at all that of grace.

2. Some say "Lord, Lord," *from early education*. They have been habituated to attend church and trained to an external reverence for the Bible. It is likely they even love the forms of spiritual life as fondly as they love the other memories of their childhood. They pray sometimes, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done," without pondering how long a time it will take for God's will to be done if everybody should be content to do as little of it as they do.

3. Some say "Lord, Lord," *from a taste for argument*. Most of their religious conversation is polemic. Among the various denominations they choose one, or accept one chosen for them, and so fall back devotedly upon its creeds and its practices as the ground of faith. Often such people become exceedingly intelligent and orthodox over sectarian points. They would rival the Samaritan woman at the well in dispute about the advantages Gerizim had as a place of worship over Jerusalem. But they feel that religious teachers should be considerate about forcing religion into private life with too much particularity, lest they become righteous overmuch.

4. Some say "Lord, Lord," *from sheer cupidity*. It pays to be pious. The Scripture is quoted for an indorsement: "Godliness is profitable unto all

things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” This some persons deem admirable; reckoning godly exercise, however, like bodily exercise, as in most cases profiting little, they never attempt much of it. It is sad to have to admit that it would not be impossible even in our times to find in the church of Christ a few who have deliberately undertaken to use Christian liberty “for a cloak of maliciousness.” As the apostle said of some congregations in his day: “There are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not for filthy lucre’s sake.” It is respectable to be devout, and there is gain in godliness.

III. Here likewise is a convenient formula with which to challenge hypocrisy in men as we see them around us. “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.”

Even as far back as Malachi’s time God has been met by mere lip-service. The moment he charged disobedience upon his ancient people, or unfruitfulness in *doing*, they would come up before him with some more *saying* instead—talk, always more talk. “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” But these various utterances of the New Testament contain the assertion of three principles,

which are enough for all practical purposes in determining the genuineness of the piety which men around us possess, and will well serve to exhibit our own.

1. Religion as Christ taught it *is a life*. It is not just a creed to be accepted and relied upon to save orthodox souls without any failure. It is not a code full of intricate enactments of law, to be trusted by obedient souls in order to insure salvation. It is not even a career splendid with a line of meritorious achievement, which will be sure to put the illustrious hero among the demigods. It is a plain every-day life, full of gentleness and sweetness in disposition, but forceful with devout energy and consistent prayer. The possession of it may even be unconscious to one's self, and occasionally inconspicuous to others. In some things religion resembles health. It is the natural and normal condition of the human soul. It is of itself the bringer and the bestower of beauty. But of a necessity it will attract less notice generally, because it never limps nor whimpers nor groans, but looks to be so much a matter of course. It will become famous more by results than in any other way. Every healthy soul demands a work to do, and will do it as an inalienable right: so there will be fruits, and by the fruits the character will be disclosed. "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit;

but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.”

2. Religion, as Christ taught it, *demand*s *un-
ceasing solicitude*. It is not an easy thing to be saved; for from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has been suffering violence, and the violent have been taking it by force. Even the eminent apostle Paul declared he was fighting to keep his body under in his old age, lest, having preached to others, he himself should finally become a castaway.

3. Religion, as Christ taught it, *finds its only
safety in a continuous growth*. Those that keep up saying in the place of doing will very soon leave off even the saying. In Christian life there is no possibility of standing still; one must go forward in grace or he will slide backward: “But be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own

heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

IV. Out from all this exhibition there comes now a series of admonitions, of which we notice only a few in closing our study.

1. Shallow piety is deep deceit. When any intelligent man is willing to falter or trifle or prevaricate concerning such momentous issues, involving life and death, it does seem as if there is and must be something wilful and malignant in his disposition. The heart is deceitful and desperately wicked; and this is its worst of all manifestations. "Lying lips are abomination to the Lord." A stern rebuke is followed with a warning: "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me."

2. It is unjust to class true Christians with hypocrites and then reject them all. It is like the folly of refusing sterling coin because counterfeits are in circulation. It is the highest of all compliments to the coin that it is counterfeited; did anybody ever imitate that which had no value? Why will not candid men discriminate? Leave harsh judgment to cavillers, some of whom are, perhaps, thoughtless, but others of whom plainly are spiteful.

3. Pleading falsehood for one man's excuse only shows another man is dishonest. Fleeing behind the imperfections of confessed hypocrites is the

worst form of saying and not doing. “What is that to thee? Follow thou me.” Those that know how to criticise so intrepidly ought to know best how to behave.

4. Retribution comes finally in kind. Those who grow habituated to say “Lord, Lord,” and to depend upon it, will simply be left at the last to go on saying it. “Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able. When once the Master of the house is risen up and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are; then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.”

XVI.

THE WIDOW OF NAIN.

"NOW WHEN HE CAME NIGH TO THE GATE OF THE CITY, BEHOLD, THERE WAS A DEAD MAN CARRIED OUT, THE ONLY SON OF HIS MOTHER, AND SHE WAS A WIDOW."—*Luke 7:12.*

IDEAS last longer than monuments. An incident is more permanent than an inscription. Human affection will stand after artistic architecture has vanished. Memories are more imperishable than stones. An affliction outlives a joy. History is more enduring than geography.

For here is a site fully fixed, though the village is gone. Nain is mentioned only once in the Bible, yet it is one of the first places a traveller goes to see in Palestine. A nameless widow gives a fame to a town which would have slipped off the map but for her mourning. Only one young man is remembered now, after all the rest of the citizens are forgotten; and of him nothing is known as to his career, except an interesting fact that one day he died and was raised to life again.

The city lies in ruins, the family has disappeared, and the story, told by one of the evangelists, is at last all that remains; a story which each Christian recollects and teaches to his children as a token of his love for the Saviour who came to comfort the bereaved. A study of the verses is all we need now for the sake of some lessons.

I. It is fortunate that Luke's narrative is so

simple and plain. No labored expositions are necessary. But the circumstances point out very many lines of religious instruction by reason of their oddness.

1. For example, the place demands a slight notice. Nain was one of the small towns of Galilee, fortified to be sure, but of no military importance. It was the custom then to surround such sites with the line of a wall, pierced according to convenience with gates; sometimes there were gates without walls, marking the ordinary road for entrance or departure. This town was located on the northern slope of what has been called Little Hermon, just west of Endor, and some miles south of Mount Tabor. It never had any history; there was no mart there, there never was any palace or royal residence in the precinct; no battle was ever fought there; it had no conspicuousness whatever; and now nothing remains but weeds and some few signs of old buildings. No convent was ever put up to commemorate the spot, no tradition is repeated in mediæval books to show anybody cared to keep the story alive. It takes an incommensurate renown simply from this incident related by Luke.

2. Then we must notice the peculiarity of two somewhat conspicuous processions which came suddenly together one day just at the gate: "And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain: and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. Now, when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and

she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her." One was headed by our Lord Jesus; the other was the funeral train that was bearing the body of a young man out to burial. "Much people" made up the following of this Nazarene preacher; "much people" joined those who were doing the neighborly kindness of carrying the bier. The companies must have been very large. At that time Jesus was at the highest point of his popularity in Galilee. Throngs attended him wherever he went. It would not be right to pass by such an evident coincidence in time and place, and opportunity and necessity. Divine providences, moved by infinite wisdom, always wait on divine grace, moved by infinite pity. One who knew all things brought the Christ at the exact moment to the gate when the melancholy mother arrived with her dead. An opportunity was offered that seemed accidental; but God knew it all.

3. So, in the third place, we turn our eyes upon this sad widow. "And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still." Observe carefully the matchless blending of tenderness and authority. Jesus was a stranger, but he interrupted the train with a gesture. He "had compassion;" he "touched the bier." His tenderness bade her weep no more; his touch bade the hearers stand still. The arrest was sovereign; no one questioned his action. It is not a rebuke, this word "Weep not;" only a cheer, as if he had said to her, "Tears

are not needed now." While they stop, wondering and stricken with awe as they gaze upon this great Rabbi of whom they had heard, let us take a fair look at them likewise. Village people are very affectionate and kind in times of trouble to each other. In such a town everybody knows everybody else. Neighbors make common cause when gentle services are in requisition. And indeed we see that this was one of the vast catastrophes of bereavement which make all hearts akin. A proverb was made out of such dreadful afflictions in Bible times; over in the Old Testament we find it used twice as a symbol of overwhelming grief. Jeremiah cries out: "O daughter of my people, gird thee with sackcloth, and wallow thyself in ashes; make thee mourning, as for an only son, most bitter lamentation: for the spoiler shall suddenly come upon us." And Zechariah exclaims with equal pathos: "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." And this last text calls to our minds instantly that God saw his "only Son" die for the sinful children of men. Only mothers, and perhaps it is only widowed mothers, can fully understand what God gave us in that awful moment when his only-begotten Son was dying upon the cross.

4. But we move on a step farther; let us look

also at the company which stood around Jesus as well. For we need to notice the infinite specialness of our Lord's compassion. Here was a woman who had in the years before the heavy bereavement which makes widowhood; still it was a comfort to her that she kept her son. It is likely he loved her as she loved him, with an undivided heart. Now she had nothing else to care for. All that crowd of strangers was of no account; possibly her suffocating grief left her hardly breath enough to care much for those who stood about the bier. She was isolated and utterly alone; and exactly there the Son of God made his almightiness touch her unutterable solitariness. We look in vain for anything like a sign that Jesus had concern for those two vast throngs of people. To be sure, we say with a quick recognition of its importance, it was fine to have so many witnesses on both sides present to authenticate the reality of this prodigious miracle he was going to work. But no act or word or aspect of Jesus intimates that he was thinking of anything or anybody except this poor woman whom he found in the depth of pain. Oh, how wonderful this always seems to a real mourner! Jesus cares for me—just for me now in the midst of my great sorrow! He knows me—he will save me!

5. Then comes the miracle, the like of which never had been seen in Nain before since the world was created: "And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise! And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak: and he delivered him to his mother." There the story closes. It began with the forlorn

woman; it ends with her. If Jesus had set his eyes upon her at the beginning and never at any instant taken them off, it would not have been more specific. The most noticeable thing in the story is this perfect absorption of Jesus in his work. He makes no preparation, he poses for no effect. He utters only two sentences; the one of these is addressed to the mother's ear, the other is addressed to the youth dead on the bier: "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." Human nature is staggered by such a call. A dead man cannot arise from his bier. He is not supposed to be able to hear any voice coming to him from this world. But now Jesus speaks to the widow's son just as if he were lying there asleep and needed to be waked with a word of command. The same thing is to be observed in the raising of Lazarus, and also in the case of Jairus' daughter: "Damsel, arise;" "Lazarus, come forth." It looks as if he had the power to utter a note of command that should ring through the universe, and reach any ear in the midst of the thronging immortals who were waiting obediently at his service in the halls or on the plains of eternity. This young man heard it, at any rate. He lifted himself up from the pillow he lay on and began to speak the low words that his mother knew well; and hers was the swiftest of answer by her presence. Jesus made still one more of those silent gestures that had meant so much that day, and with that the widow of Nain took her dear boy again into her love, and life began newly with a splendid reversal of the procession into a jubilee of glad-

ness, as they all went singing along back to their home.

6. Singing? Yes: a little frightened under the exhibition of an omnipotence so majestic, but exhilarant as they remembered the wonderful gentleness of the Master's compassion. They use a kind of responsive poetry when they sing in those countries; and it looks as if they made up two short anthems on this occasion, and sang all the distance: "There came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people. And this rumor of him went forth throughout all Judæa, and throughout all the region round about."

II. So much, then, for the details of this passage. We can proceed now to choose the few lessons which seem easiest for our comfort.

1. Let us begin with a remembrance that *death is the one horror, the horror of horrors, of all human life*. It has reigned supreme over this poor world for six thousand years. Proud Jerusalem, humble Nain, just the same, death lurks everywhere, and breaks up our confidence in each relationship. The regions of rhetoric have been somewhat exhaustively ransacked for similes which might avail to show man's mortality and the insecurity of all his possessions. A tree of the forest widely spreads its branches, striking its roots downward around the rocks like bands of iron: the lightning flashes, and the tree lies shattered into a thousand splinters. The blasts of the winter night wreath the snow-whorls into fanciful forms of exquisite beauty, and children

clap their hands with delight as they see the palaces of frost: the morning sun only looks upon the fantastic structures, and they flow away in an imperceptible stream. The stars in the heavens glow with their serene loveliness, "strangely, spiritually bright:" but even as one watches them a glittering train darts across our vision, and Lucifer has fallen. Now the melancholy voice of some preacher begins to say that every man is like the tree of the forest, like the snow-drifts of winter, and when at the very summit of his glory only like the shooting star.

" But pleasures are like poppies spread;
 You seize the flower—its bloom is shed:
 Or like the snow-fall in the river—
 A moment white, then melts for ever."

The widow mourns and the orphan moans; the king suffers and the pauper weeps; so all the world cries out in captivity to the monster death.

2. A second lesson follows closely on after this: *sin is the unseen and unrelenting destroyer of human hopes and joys.* "Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." We have this brought plainly before us here in the story by the action of our Lord. Jesus in every case accompanied his miracles of healing with the vaster miracles that gave spiritual regeneration to the sufferer's soul. When this son was presented to his mother again it would have been a frightful mockery—a disappointment as bitter as it was useless—if he had returned only with a new chance for evil as a sinful creature of God. The voice one could have heard

in other cases he must seem to hear in this; the same Lord was performing the miracle. And what that voice said was unvaryingly a word of pardon: "Thy sins be forgiven thee; go in peace." The blight is everywhere, and so death is everywhere. Think of anything a generous heart can love; it is only a fresh mark for death to shoot at and destroy. See a bright daisy yonder in the field, nodding with the most artless unconsciousness of peril; right before it there is a plough coming slowly and relentlessly; it will lie uprooted and dead in but a moment more. The world is sold to the devil under mortgage to death.

3. All this appears so melancholy that we hasten to speak of our fresh lesson from the story: we learn that *Jesus has the supreme power over death*. He is really "Death of death, and hell's Destruction," as we sometimes sing. The old Romans had the custom of lighting up their tombs with metal lamps placed in the niches of them. Often these have been found in sepulchres, and we can fill and light them again. Beautiful indeed is this lamp of hope which we find here in God's Word. A miracle is instantly planted across the path of the destroyer, and the widow of Nain is bidden to weep no more. Three cases of raising those who were dead are recorded—but three. An only daughter, an only son, an only brother; the first from the sick-bed where she died, the next from the bier upon which men were bearing him to his burial, the third from the grave where he had been lying four days in corruption. Jesus

therefore is the conqueror of death in all its horribleness and in all its supremacy. A touch stops the bier; a word defeats the devil.

4. So, next, we learn why *living is a conflict between life glorious and everlasting and death dark and fatal to body and soul*. For it is simply the advance once more of these two processions which we saw at the moment when Jesus drew nigh to the gate of this little village. Since the gospel came, and with it spiritual immortality through grace, the powers of eternal life have been marching right up to confront the powers of death and hell in the distance. The two columns continually meet each other; Jesus stands like a chieftain clad in panoply of shining gold; Satan glooms in the lead of death's army, waving the pall of a funeral for his flag. Just a word from our Master, and the dead are living again, and the foul host of corruption flies back into hell. A new world is created; for Christ has brought life and immortality into an existence which seemed utterly dying and dead. Now we are safe and sure of all we love and cherish. Jesus will take care of it; our hope stands as if indeed founded upon a rock. "If Christ be for us, who can be against us?" The future is secure; the day of judgment is welcome.

"For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father which hath sent him. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word,

and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

Lord, it belongs not to my care
Whether I die or live;
To love and serve thee is my share,
And this thy grace must give.

If life is long, I will be glad
That I may long obey;
If short, yet why should I be sad
To soar to endless day?

Christ leads me through no darker rooms
Than he went through before;
No one into his kingdom comes
But through his opened door.

My knowledge of that life is small;
The eye of faith is dim;
But 't is enough that Christ knows all,
And I shall be with him.

XVII.

THE ALABASTER BOX.

"SHE LOVED MUCH; BUT TO WHOM LITTLE IS FORGIVEN, THE SAME LOVETH LITTLE."—*Luke 7:47.*

"SHE loved much." This was what our Saviour once said concerning a penitent woman who anointed his feet with her perfume and wiped them with her hair. If any reader of Luke's Gospel grows confused over the narrative, and proposes to identify this incident in its particulars with another he finds farther on, let him remember that the Simon noticed by the three other evangelists was a leper, and so could not have sat with his guests, even at his own table. In all, nine Simons are mentioned in the New Testament, for the name appears quite frequently. Moreover, the other anointing was in Judæa, while this was in Galilee; and that was just before Jesus' crucifixion, and this was far earlier in his career. That woman was Mary, the well-known sister of Lazarus; this one was a courtesan, nameless in history and wanton in life. We shall wander widely if we do in this instance anything more than study Luke's story by itself.

I. We find, here in the beginning, an illustration of the recognized *value* of all acts of simple-hearted devotion to Christ.

In our hasty zeal to be rid of the old dangerous dogma as to deeds of merit and indulgence, we have even run sometimes into the danger of be-

coming too Protestant for the Bible itself. We are desirous, and rightfully so, to have all the world know we owe our entire salvation to the Saviour; and, as the Old Testament phrases it, "our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." And we certainly are correct in every one of these estimates. In the act of justification God is entirely sovereign and man is entirely passive; but in the work of sanctification which succeeds it we are permitted to coöperate with the Holy Spirit. And all along in our career, as the forgiven children of the Highest, we are welcomed in the ministries of affection which evidence our appreciation of divine grace.

We cannot pass by the fact that this same Saviour has crowded his sermons and his life with exhortations, encouragements, and promises, all urging us to zeal of duty to others and superabounding love for him. He has omitted no opportunity to show us how solicitously and sharply he holds his followers up to the highest and noblest standard of religious activity in his service.

It is interesting to observe that the early reformers had no confusion in regard to this point. Though they reacted with all violence from the errors of the papacy, they claimed with utmost earnestness that life for Christ should be full of energy and abound in self-sacrificing labors; these, so they taught the people, would be like the smell of sweet savor unto the Lord. Their notion as to the proper blending of faith and works may be seen in the two seals which Martin Luther used indiscriminately in his correspondence. On one

was cut his family coat-of-arms; two hammers laid crosswise, with a blunt head and a sharp head, his father's tools at the time when he was a miner; and Martin used often, in connection with this, to quote the saying of Achilles, "Let others have wealth who will; my portion is work." Upon the second seal was cut the device of a heart, with wings on each side of it spread out as if soaring; and underneath this was the Latin motto, "*Petimus astra.*"

Thus it was with all those old reformers. Sitting under the deepest shadows of God's awful sovereignty, and declaring that the doctrine of justification by faith alone was the corner-stone of any church which could hope to stand, they yet recognized the binding necessity of every one's being about his Father's business, and so evidencing the sincerity of his belief by the warmth of his zeal.

II. Our second lesson from this story is concerning the active *principle* on which zeal proceeds, and from which comes its value.

Three motives are noticeable in the conduct of men around us, each of which has force, but only one of which has worth; these are, self-interest, conscientiousness, and grateful affection.

1. Many men feel the superior power and dignity of a Christian life, and so seek something like conformity to its maxims. They desire commendation, and they are often self-complacent. Perhaps too refined to be vicious, and too tasteful and proud to love the world supremely, they practise some of the religious customs which Christians profess.

Praise wakes their emotions, and worship arouses amiable sensibilities. They move on in a correct living of outward morality, because it brings a reputation with others and satisfaction in their own minds; they are wont to speak pleasantly of themselves as "outsiders, with a great respect for religion, you know!"

Now there is no value in this; none whatever. The instincts of an honest heart make us claim, as the very first characteristic of friendship, its disinterestedness. We will not suffer ourselves to be used or patronized; can we suppose God will endure it?

2. Another motive, which gives to many a life a sort of religious cast, is found in conscientiousness. We are all by nature devout; something draws us, and keeps drawing, to God; we grow uneasy under its tension. We seek a kind of temporary relief by yielding a little, without at all intending to yield the whole; just as the foolish fish is said to run up towards the fisherman for a moment, to ease off the stress of the hook, and yet without purposing ever to leave the water. Such a service of God we call *duty*.

Now there is no value either in the surrender we make or in the acceptance we profess. When we give up sins from mere pressure of pain, we are apt to choose those which will be missed the least and have grown the weariest in indulgence. We shed a few insipid tears over those particular wickednesses with which we have no controversy beyond the recollection that their zest left us before

we became inclined to forsake them. We take great credit and great revenge in crucifying those lusts the indulgence of which has grown difficult and the gratification of which brings pain. Such surrenders constitute our easy repentance; but there is no "broken heart" in it.

Nor is our obedience any better; we go on with a round of duty-doing as senseless as the whirling of a Japanese praying-machine in the market-place. Our motive is the refinement of selfishness; for we work like a galley-slave who is afraid of the lash. We find conscience will not be satisfied till something is offered which is sufficient to serve as an excuse for not offering more; because we mean to cheat on the *principal* by-and-by, we scrupulously keep paying the regular *interest* now. And all this is mere hypocrisy.

It needs hardly to be argued, therefore, that conscientiousness in duty, all alone, is not enough as a Christian motive. What father is satisfied with the mere sullen performance of work in his vineyard from the spendthrift son he has restored to his home? Or what wife will rest in the kind offices of her husband when he has informed her with deplorable candor that he is faithful in meeting them only because, being married, he would be decorous in duty?

3. The other, and the true, motive for all Christian zeal, is found in love—simple, honest affection for Christ as the Lord of grace and glory. Only the most cursory reading of this story of a woman at the feet of Jesus is enough to show that the value of her

attention to him was in the heart which prompted it: "she loved much." Here is a most interesting illustration of the inspired saying, "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." A good deed is measured by the temper and feeling which underlie it. It was not for the intrinsic value of this woman's gift at all that Jesus commended her. Doubtless this Pharisee's feast cost far more money than the alabaster box did; and yet nobody would ever have learned Simon's name but for the woman's affection. She surrendered much; she dared much; she wept much; and there could be no mistaking her affection. Well was it said by an eminent commentator: "The soul should have no other notion of itself than of an unceasing sacrifice, always ascending to God in its own flames."

III. So now, in the third place, we are ready to learn the best lesson of all which our story teaches. We have seen the value which true zeal possesses and the principle on which it is reckoned; we now must notice the *recollection* by which it is stimulated.

"And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment."

“To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.” The one great matter of notice here at this moment is that alabaster box. It becomes the symbol of a heartful of experience which no possible language could describe. It would have been more properly named a phial or a jar. It was one of those small vessels, wont to be cherished in that day by vain and silly women, containing rare and curiously perfumed cosmetics, used by the fastidious Orientals for a meretricious and luxurious toilet. Two things, therefore, were exhibited in the act of this woman—penitence and faith.

Her penitence appears in the surrender of the unguent; it was one of the tools of her trade. Her giving it up reminds us of the burning of the magical books at Ephesus when the sorcerers turned away from their arts and came to Christ for pardon. This abandoned woman avowed her definite and final relinquishment of that old gay life she had been living. Brought with ostentation, it would have been the most direct insult she could have offered to a decent man; broken and shed with blinding tears at the feet of Jesus Christ, it was the supreme offer of her repenting soul for ever and ever unto him. She was there for forgiveness; and she knew he would give it.

For observe, also, the faith in this action. She ventured much when she came to that feast unbidden. If Jesus should rebuke her, she would be excluded with contumely and contempt. But she trusted him with all her heart; she believed in her forgiveness in the very moment of asking for it. So

she offered her Saviour the highest of all she had. It seems pathetic to find her using her hair to wipe the feet of the Saviour she loved. It is likely this was about the fairest thing she retained; the glory of women is their long hair: "But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given her for a covering." She gave Jesus her last glory; he gave her his full pardon of her sins as his reward and benediction in return.

"And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thy house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore, I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with him, began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace."

Can we stoop low enough to-day to learn a lesson from such a story as this? Then with tranquil humility and tearful gratitude we can sing:

"Here it is I find my heaven,
While upon the Lamb I gaze:
Love I much? I've much forgiven:
I'm a miracle of grace."

XVIII.

SOWING THE SEED.

"NOW THE PARABLE IS THIS: THE SEED IS THE WORD OF GOD."

Luke 8:11.

OUR Lord gives us two parables, among the earliest he uttered, based upon the ordinary customs of that agricultural people. Ever so many times we saw, both in Egypt and Palestine, the scenery of the first of these, every particular of it, all within a single sweep of the eye. The name by which the Germans know what we call the parable of "The Sower," is, "The four kinds of fields." One can often point out to his companions the wayside, the stony ground, the thorn-thicket, and the good ground, at the same instant. He can often see how the birds are picking up the grain and the sun is scorching the shoots and the thorns are strangling all the hopes of a harvest. The picture never ceases to be beautiful in its aptness, even though it becomes familiar.

When the clods are very heavy, they have an instrument somewhat like a cross between a stone-boat and a harrow, which a man rides upon as he tumbles along roughly over the track of the ploughman. But ordinarily they do little more than tear up the surface-soil. Then they put in the seed. So that oftentimes there will be seen the sower and the ploughman close together, the one following the other. There are no fences there. By-paths

go in any direction to reach a destination by the shortest cut. So there are frequently seen these "wayside" lines of beaten transit. The ploughman actually lifts his feeble instrument over them, lest it should be broken in the useless attempt to get at the sub-soil.

What seemed to us always most strange was the absence of houses, even in neighborhoods which showed as much husbandry as any others. Nobody was around anywhere, although sometimes fine fields were growing well. There was a mysterious absence of laborers. Near the wretched villages you see people; but an indefinite sense of loneliness appears to rest upon all the extensive sweeps of territory. We observed this especially in Egypt. A feeble patch of corn, a palm of exquisite proportions, a close clump of olive-trees, may attract your attention; but you will mark no husbandman near.

The explanation which was given of this was quite satisfactory. The inhabitants are crowded together for mutual defence. They rarely linger in the exact neighborhoods they cultivate. The Arabs are their hereditary foes. Distance from them is their only hope. Absence of body is better even than presence of mind. Now that the country is opened more, there is hardly any shadow of danger; but old habits are never relinquished among Orientals. So they do their tasks of farmer-life lightly and slightly, and hurry away to their squalid homes. Herein we are reminded of the verisimilitude of the parable even in the opening sentence, "A sower went forth to sow."

I made inquiry of one of the missionaries as to whether there was any custom among the fellaheen which might have been the basis of that exquisite figure in one of the Psalms: "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

And I received for answer that there may have been at least three things in it, if the figure was intended to be analyzed. The soil is exceedingly hard, and husbandry is difficult; some might be discouraged even to tears. There is great danger to men in the fields, as their enemies might make a descent on them any moment, and their families often are anxious even to tears. And then the government is a tyranny and grinds the farmers to the very dust. So the sweet promises of that sacred song gave help and solace to any one who was wearied, disheartened, or afraid.

There was a command given by Moses which read thus: "Thou shalt not sow thy field with mingled seed." I put all these passages together. They are like that precept concerning the yoking of an ox and ass together. Here is another: "Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woollen and linen together." All such forms of prohibition are explicable upon one principle. Our real danger as moral beings in this world lies as much in the mere iniquity of a compromise as in anything else. The teaching of such discriminations centres upon the incongruity involved. The

chosen people were to guard against a listless and unthinking confusion on any point, lest the blurring of moral distinctions should result.

Things contradictory in nature should be always kept apart, lest by looseness in estimate one should eventually come to confound the principles of eternal right and eternal wrong.

Hence the apostle employs the simile when he exhorts the Christians in his time to choose their yoke-fellows in life and labor with care: "What concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing."

In one of his parables Christ represents an enemy going out by night and sowing tares in the field of a neighbor. These tares are a kind of bastard wheat, and are not distinguishable from the real wheat till the latter comes into the ear. The act is not wholly imaginary. Dean Alford, in his Commentary, gives an account of such an act of malice towards one of his tenants, whose field was sown by night with a somewhat similar weed.

In the gallery of the International Exhibition anybody could see a somewhat conspicuous painting called "Sowing the Seed." It represents a venerable old man sitting beside a stand upon which lies a large Bible. He appears to be alternately reading and commenting, doubtless suggesting many a wise admonition and many a sage counsel drawn from the sacred pages. Before him at the

table sit two young maidens, one clad in simple garments, her hair smoothed carefully across her forehead, the other dressed in showy adornment of silk, jewelry, and curls. The force of the artist has been expended upon the attitude and demeanor of these two listeners. The sedate posture of one of them, as she looks directly into the face of her benignant teacher, contrasts visibly with that of her uneasy neighbor, whose eyes roam forth from the canvas with a singular seeking of our own, as we seem to look back into them. Nor can it be denied that those eyes express a weariness of impatience, perhaps of disgust, which claims a kind of sympathy from us, as if the maiden knew that any lively person would be certain to understand her dislike of the exercise and her wish for a romp.

Now of course the main and very proper lesson from the picture is addressed to young people. One will heed, another will be listless. One will learn, another will smirk. And truth requires much adroitness to keep it from becoming tedious. Still the old men must go on teaching. One of the New England axioms to which my early ears became somewhat over-well accustomed was this: "Young persons *think* old people are fools; but old people *know* young are."

But possibly I may be pardoned for saying I received a new sensation as I stood before the painting. Out of my professional experience, it may have been, came my suggestion. I studied the old man more than the maidens; and I tried to consider his sowing and tried to consider his seed,

For some years, now, many of us have been wont to read over the prepared lessons in the various newspapers. I am delighted at their general excellence. And I go to a great many conventions. And I steal quietly into Sabbath-schools, and stand within ear-shot of teachers. And I am told, first and last, scores of incidents concerning the regular prosaic work of teaching children. So I feel ready to assert and reiterate my old adage: It is not what you say about the truth, but the *truth*, which converts a soul.

A visitor came into one of our Sunday-schools a few weeks ago. She said she was willing to take a vacant class for that day; but when planted at the head of it (so one of the girls told me), she seemed frightened, as if utterly at a loss what to do. She explained herself thus: "I did not know I should have such big scholars. I have not studied the lesson. At our church they read over the verses, and then we learn one of the prayers together, and the teacher talks to us; but I cannot talk to you." It ended with one of the pupils taking the lesson in hand, and they wisely all went on learning it then and there together.

Here was another instance: A member of the Bible-class was drafted to teach in an absentee's place. She began on the verses, but could not hold the attention of the scholars. She expostulated, whereupon one of the boys said: "We never do it that way, ma'am. Miss W—— hears us say the lesson, then she reads us beautiful stories out of her red book."

I should say that, although sowing is to be done carefully, it is not the sowing, but the *seed*, which insures a harvest. "Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God."

How can Christians expect anything when they sow nothing, or when they sow something besides seed? I heard a minister of the gospel say that once his father gave him a small plot of ground and told him he might cultivate and claim it as his garden. So he spaded and weeded and raked the mellow soil, as he had seen other people do. He was in greatest perplexity what to do in the choice of a crop. Most things fail in dry seasons, and it would not do to waste time. At last his father told him turnips might be relied upon, and he gave all his pocket money to purchase a bright yellow paperful of seed from the grocery.

Never were such straight furrows drawn with whip-cord; never were such holes punched with the table-steel—five seeds in a hole was the rule of generous measure—then the bell rang for dinner. Afterwards it was only needful to cover up, press down, sprinkle with water, and wait—this last the hardest.

But no crop. Two weeks came and went. The plot had "much water," but no shoots sprouted. Even the father said there was a failure, and he had better dig up and try again; and the first stroke of the hoe at the border pulled out the *whole unbroken paper* of seed, yellow in the grass. He made everything ready, thought he had done the rest, and covered up the empty holes. How could he

have expected anything to grow up out of his mocked furrows when he put nothing in?

Some years ago, one of the officers of our church, in the course of a conference we were having on the general subject, offered in his quaint way an illustration, which I give, I think, in his own words.

“In the spring of 1834 I was sent by my father on an errand to a neighboring farmer. I was a little Scotch laddie and full of eager questioning for all human knowledge. I was taken to the kitchen, so neat and clean; under the stove stood three or four bowls full of fresh earth. I asked what this meant. ‘We are trying the seed,’ said the kind farmer, and putting his finger into the earth he brought up a kernel of corn. ‘We first try the seed to see if it will grow.’ A few days later we were all invited to a planting bee, and I got my lesson in dropping corn. ‘Count five kernels to each hill.’ ‘Why five?’ ‘One for the worms, one may rot, and three to grow; give plenty of seed.’ I noticed that my farmer, in covering the seed with soft earth, pressed it down with his hoe. ‘Why is this?’ ‘We press the earth close around the seed, that it may take hold and come up quick.’ I observed that an old Connecticut Yankee instead of the hoe put his heavy foot on the hills as he passed on. ‘Why?’ ‘He throws his whole weight on the corn, and you will find his row will come up first.’ 1. So let us first try the seed. The teacher can only tell what he knows, and the good seed of the Word can only be rightly planted by consecrated hands. 2. Give plenty of seed, on the wayside, on the stony ground,

among the thorns, and on the good soil of the heart, that the full harvest may grow, and sower and reaper rejoice together. 3. Press down the seed sown by fervent prayer. A Paul may plant, an Apollos may water, 'but God giveth the increase.' We cannot ourselves save a single soul, but we may bring them to God by prayer, and he can change the heart and sanctify the soul. As the old Yankee threw his whole weight on the hill of corn, so the teacher should so live in the sight of his class that he can throw the whole weight of his personal character on each member, that, in following him, they may be following Christ."

Such instruction, meant at first perhaps for teachers, is precisely what preachers need. Eloquence is the bow, but truth is the bolt. Let us read over this description of a good sermon:

It should be brief: if lengthy, it will steep
Our hearts in apathy, our eyes in sleep;
The dull will yawn, the chapel lounge doze,
Attention flag, and memory's portals close.

It should be warm—a living altar-coal,
To melt the icy heart and charm the soul;
A lifeless, dull harangue, however read,
Will never rouse the soul or raise the dead.

It should be simple, practical, and clear;
No fine-spun theory to please the ear!
No curious lay, to tickle lettered pride,
And leave the poor and plain unedified.

It should be tender and affectionate,
As His warm theme who wept lost Salem's fate;
The fiery law, with words of love allayed,
Must sweetly warn and awfully persuade.

XIX.

THE RULER'S DAUGHTER.

"FEAR NOT: BELIEVE ONLY, AND SHE SHALL BE MADE WHOLE."

Luke 8:50.

CLASSIC history relates that once when Alexander the Great stood beside the grave of Achilles he exclaimed, "O happy youth, who hadst Homer to be the herald of thy virtues!" Very true: the Iliad proved erelong to be a tremendous advertisement of this Greek soldier's valor; a thousand men, perhaps every one of them quite as valiant and surely as worthy, died in the Trojan war, and nobody ever heard of them, through lack of a fitting epic to give them their dues. It is fortunate for a man like this ruler Jairus that he had a biographer like Luke and Mark and Matthew to put his name in the Bible; for thus his story of sorrow has come down to us full of comfort and admonition for all the ages.

I. Let us commence the perusal of the record with the reflection suggested by the entire passage in the midst of which it stands. What an array of troubles meet our eyes at once! How full of varied woes and sorrows and plagues and griefs and scourges this old world is!

1. On the whole, this chapter is one of the most melancholy that we find in the New Testament. Casting out devils, an awful storm upon the sea,

a frightful wrestle with a lunatic, followed by a rush of demoniac swine pursued by the spirits which had possessed him; then this pain-struck member of the Sanhedrin falling on his face at the feet of Jesus with the story of desperate sickness in his house, and the invalid woman, coming in the midst of his pleading with her touch upon the hem of Jesus' garment; then this death of a fair child, the funeral in progress under her father's roof; and the cry of two blind men calling out for miraculous help, while a dumb spirit tears another poor wretch to pieces by the side of the road. Was there ever such a series of abominable pains and racks of hopeless humanity on record before? What an infinite miscellany of diseases and horrors are within the reach of Satan when he desires to pursue and afflict our fallen race with ill.

2. Take this case in particular: what could be more pathetically sad and heart-rending? It was a child who was dying, a little girl of twelve years. It always seems to us as if some relentless fate is absolutely in pursuit of a child when a fatal fever tosses it to and fro. For the girl was so feeble, she looked so innocent and defenceless lying there on the bed; we feel like striking back at something which is hateful and spiteful and malignantly attacking a poor little weakling. Yet even a baby is not safe. The Mexicans used to say to each infant, "Child, thou hast come to the world to suffer: endure, hold thy peace."

3. This is the reason of so much mourning in the world and of so much comfort in the Bible.

God's Word was given for a distressed race of creatures. Think what a Christian man would do without it! Remember that, while this ruler was off on his errand after Christ, the beloved girl died; and when he returned to the house he found it filled with boisterous and costly minstrels screaming and weeping, beating on gongs and clashing cymbals, all hired to mourn for him. What a deliberate exasperation! Oh, how he must have hated the sound of them! How little the fashionable world has to offer in times of real trouble! A genuine mourner wishes the palls and the plumes, the flowers and cards of condolence, all at the bottom of the sea. What could this official ruler of the Sanhedrin do? It was according to custom to have the hypocritical singers inside of his home the moment any one was dead. It was Jesus who turned them out; it was Jesus who brought all the relief and comfort; and he went about the house quietly and scarcely spoke an audible word. It is better to talk little to the afflicted. It needed no philosopher to phrase such a thing, but it was Seneca's saying after a painful discipline: "Light sorrows speak; great grief is dumb." Where mere platitudes come in, and the worn commonplaces have to be endured, it makes one almost crazy under the pressure. A Spanish proverb truly says, "In trouble, to be troubled is to have one's trouble doubled."

II. It is time for us to move on to the consideration of a fresh lesson from the story: we see again the proof that all suffering, pain of sickness and gloom of death, comes from sin. The earth is ac-

cursed and ruined by sin. The whole creation groans and weeps under sin.

1. It is easy to find the proof of this right here in these stories of trouble and cure. Jesus always seems to have in mind the cure of spiritual disease as well as of bodily ailment. He heals the woman of her distemper, then calls her forward for the greater blessing of a free pardon. He says to the blind man, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." Ever since Adam fell from his first estate death has ruled the world. "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" was the fatal sentence; and since that day man and beast have been doomed.

2. The brutes have the worst of it. For they never took part in the sin, and they have no share, so far as we know, in the redemption. It is of no use for any of us now to look back; the die is cast. Most of us wish the father of our race had stood more stably; it is too far away now for us to understand it, and too late for us to remedy. Cowper once wrote to Lady Hesketh, "We are forbidden to murmur, but by no means forbidden to regret." It goes hard with those poor brute creatures which men abuse while living, and sink down into death by old sin.

This thought ought to make us kind to animals. Not long since I was very greatly touched by what the wife of Thomas Carlyle wrote in a letter: "I forgot to tell you," says the sprightly woman to her friend in a passing sentence, "that I am owning a small dog, which my husband accepts with amiabil-

ity; to be sure, when he comes down in the morning or comes in wearied with his walk, this infatuated little beast dances round him on its hind legs, as I ought to do, and cannot; and he feels flattered and surprised by such unwonted capers to his honor and glory." Now on the other hand, it is curious to read what this great Scotchman thought (unknown to her) of this same minute creature in his turn. In his journal he wrote: "We had many walks together, he and I, for those next ten years; a great deal of small traffic, poor little animal—so loyal, so loving, so *naive* and true with what of dim intellect he had! Our last midnight walk together (for he insisted on trying to come) is still painful to my thought. Little dim-white speck of Life, of Love, of Fidelity and Feeling, girdled by the darkness as of night eternal!"

3. But human souls have a higher destiny than that. Man was instinct with immortality when he arrived in this world. He stood alive with the image of God on his forehead and in his heart. The glory belonging to another life beyond this was waiting for the dawn of a glad day which should usher it into new being. It was upon this inner life of the soul that sin made its deadliest attack. The headlong ruin was predicated exactly there. Very sure are the retributions of guilt after this life and its probation period are over. "Sin when it is finished bringeth forth death." It is this horrible element of sin, moving forward in its inner working, that renders fate so mysterious, and yet insures its absolute certainty at the last. We do not know.

when a swift bolt may fall and life suddenly vanish. This plants terror in a joyous heart, a misgiving and an uncertainty in every experience, future retributions and present pains casting gloom across every prospect of rest; a strange, secret, remorseless power eating out all that is ever worth having in this existence, and sometimes even leaving the soul doomed with the fatality of the second death before the body is buried after the first death. It is not the death of the body that is horrible, but the death of the soul. And the worst of this is to know while we eat and drink, and wake and sleep, the fatal work may be going forward swiftly, and we ourselves be totally unconscious of its progress.

This thought is of vast importance, and we might do well to keep it ever in mind. Let me see if I can interest you in an illustration, which I take as a fact in natural history of insects. Most of you are aware that butterflies come from caterpillars. But perhaps not all of you know that by the use of a microscope we can in every case see that a distinct butterfly, only undeveloped and not full grown, is contained within the body of the worm. The caterpillar has stomach and lungs and heart, and this butterfly inside of it has a different stomach and heart and lungs, and the lives of the two creatures are perfectly separated and independent. But it is the enfolded butterfly which is the thing that is to live hereafter; the worm will die, but the insect has a beautiful future as a winged existence flying in the sunshine. Just here note one very curious fact: there is another sort of insect which natu-

ralists call an ichneumon fly, greedy and deadly in its attacks on this undeveloped butterfly inside the worm. The ichneumon pierces the body of the caterpillar with her sting, and leaves an egg which afterwards speedily becomes a grub, and that feeds upon this butterfly within. It eats it slowly away, a little at a time; and yet this caterpillar goes on looking as well and thriving as heartily as ever, while the butterfly inside of it is dying. By-and-by it is dead—but the worm does not seem to know it. By-and-by the caterpillar dies, and now is the time for the beautiful creature to come forth on its wings. Alas, it has been eaten up long and long ago! Now for the lesson that comes to us: the Greek word for butterfly is the Greek word also for a human soul—Psyche. We have a soul within us, and the devil of death and sin feeds on it secretly; so that when we die, that soul which was made for an immortality of joy and hope has been eaten up by sin absolutely, and vanishes away into the darkness and misery of a second death.

III. Let us turn away from this altogether; we have lingered under the shadow of this death long enough. Into that ruler's house Jesus came, and now nobody will wonder why they called him "Master" when the conversation began. The grand relief of all this desolation, horror, sin—everything at once—is found in the Mastership of Christ.

1. The narrative moves along simply; they said, "Trouble not the Master." The Master was not troubled; but he went into that believing man's

house without any further pressure. Jesus always comes when any one goes for him in person, and nothing ever gives him any trouble.

2. The condition of his giving help is faith. He overheard that word about "trouble," and he answered very kindly and reassuringly to the bereaved man, "Fear not, believe only." He always claims that; he never asks anything beyond that; but he never forgets that unalterable condition. It is of no use to try to work in any modern philosophy at such a crisis. The connection between human trust and divine acquiescence is beyond our investigation. Even Goethe was obliged to confess this. He said once: "The deepest subject in the history of this world and of mankind, and that to which all others are subordinated, is this conflict between faith and unbelief." Do we help God by prayers? No. Do we prevail over his unwillingness by our importunity? No. What do we do then? We pray and we trust him; and then he answers and acts.

3. Then next comes the disclosure that death is only a sleep. A word which Jesus spoke just then was absolutely laughed to scorn. The weeping was trying to him; he wept once because the sisters of Lazarus were weeping; he bade them cease those unnecessary tears. Then he uttered those wonderful words which have named our graveyards ever since in this Christian world. He said, "She is not dead, but sleepeth." A truth lies in that worth all this life has to offer—death is only a sleep after all. Graveyards are nothing but *ceme-*

teries; that word has been transferred from the Greek language almost directly into ours; it means "sleeping-places." Jesus said the same thing upon another occasion: "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." The figure is accepted by the apostles. Paul tells us that "them which sleep in Jesus, God will bring with him." This refers to the body; the soul is alive all the time in the presence and companionship of the redeemed in heaven. When the open sky reveals the form of the Saviour coming again to his own, when the last trumpet is heard and the judgment is near, then those bodies shall be awakened anew to a glorious life, and shall die nevermore.

4. So then we learn also that we are to have back again the beloved ones whose bodies we for a while lay away in the tomb. There is mystery here; no one pretends to deny it. God has never intended that the veil of disclosure shall be withdrawn. Notice particularly in the story before us that the daughter of this ruler does not tell her old friends where she has been or what were her experiences while death has had dominion over her. This is singular; but it is stranger still as we find the fact in the history of Lazarus; he was actually dead in the grave for four days, and corruption had had time to begin. He was raised to life once more, but he never told any of God's secrets to any one of those who knew him. These must be among the things that are not lawful for man to utter. But it is better to know what men really do know than to look the future in the face blankly and say with infidel Hobbes, "It is but a leap in the dark."

We know that our dear ones who loved the Saviour went to him as they died, and are with him now, waiting till we can join them; we shall find them all safe by-and-by.

“Only the dead hearts forsake us never;
Death's last kiss has been the mystic sign
Consecrating love our own for ever,
Crowning it eternal and divine.
So when fate would fain besiege our city,
Dim our gold or make our flowers fall,
Death, the angel, comes in love and pity,
And, to save our treasures, claims them all.”

5. Finally, we see how to meet an affliction that comes from the loss of a child. Young children who have not reached such years of an intelligent wilfulness as to sin actively and resolutely are saved assuredly by the blood of Christ. These are therefore the safest of all human beings, and we can afford to be content. Martin Luther stood by his dying girl, his eyes full of parental tears: “My little darling, I know you would willingly stay with your earthly father; but if God has called you to-day you must go to your Heavenly Father.” She had surely been well taught, for she answered, “Yes, dear father! it is as God pleases.” Then he turned away a moment. “Oh, how I love her!” he suddenly cried out; “the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Then he read a few words from the Bible, and added, “My daughter, enter into thy resting-place now in peace!” She turned to him again with fond eyes, and then said with touching simplicity, “Yes, father,” and died.

XX.

A LAD'S LOAVES AND FISHES.

"BUT HE SAID UNTO THEM, GIVE YE THEM TO EAT. AND THEY SAID, WE HAVE NO MORE BUT FIVE LOAVES AND TWO FISHES."
Luke 9:13.

It is always one of the perversities of the human heart, especially in religious matters, that it loves to make mysterious that which the gospel takes pains to make clear. Give a man some plain and everyday principle to work out into action; and it may be anticipated, almost without chance of mistake, that his wits will be found perversely studying how to force into it more than it was designed to bear. Give him some slight cross to carry, and the likelihood is that he will uplift it, plant it conspicuously erect, begin to hang flowers around it, fold draperies about its unsightliness, and become an easy enthusiast in self-admiration, while that which is noble in the cross's simplicity is concealed or lost.

Religion, as revealed in the Scriptures, is an eminently prosaic thing; it is a practical experience; for it has been intended to be *lived* out into action in every particular. Hence, we always observe that Jesus of Nazareth is laboring to keep within reach of his dreamy and imaginative disciples. They, on the contrary, keep running away with his discourses, and exhibit a tendency to become inveterately mystical. They get accus-

tomed to dispute with one another by the way. They walk as if their heads were enveloped—as modern artists represent them—in clouds. They proceed curiously and delicately on tip-toe, as if they were enacting some drama the world was watching. While all the time their matchless Leader awaits their return to common sense, and sometimes adds a summons.

Herein, I am persuaded, may we find an explanation of some of those surprising parts that Jesus plays in the melodramatic scenes their imaginations were persistently getting up. He thrusts their stilted enthusiasms off from the stage with mere replies of commonplace necessity and unsentimental matters of fact.

I take it that this is the real purpose of our Lord's speech on the occasion introduced to us in the text. You will recall the circumstances. Christ was with his disciples across the Sea of Tiberias, up in the forest just behind Bethsaida, whither they after the death of John the Baptist had retired for quiet. A great multitude followed them around by the shore. The little company of believers were disturbed by the unmistakable signs of a large crowd. When they advanced out from under the shelter of the trees where they had been resting, a fine sight burst upon their eyes. Nearly ten thousand people were ranged down the slope on the grass. That weary band of disciples must have been surprised, and there is evidence that they were not much delighted; but they had become accustomed to follow their Lord. And, as they saw him

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making immediate preparation for work, they were kindled into an exalted enthusiasm, and began their usual demonstrations of zealotry and fuss, from which he brought them back with one of his most extensive miracles.

Hour after hour passed along, as Jesus continued patiently to preach to the crowd there in the mountain of Golan: where were his disciples during this time? It is possible that they were waiting tranquilly on the hillside, taking the rest he had invited them to seek. They were really worn out with work and sorrow. It is possible that they were in the midst of the listeners, humbly willing to be taught with even the least of them. It is possible they were journeying around asking where food could be found against the hour of need. Thoroughly discouraged at this prospect, however, and plainly growing somewhat alarmed as the twilight drew on, they ventured to interrupt Jesus in his discourse, and suggested that the multitudes were in some peril; their homes were distant, the forests on the shore along which they had come were roadless; and so they begged him to dismiss them in time to provide for themselves.

Christ once more lifted up his eyes to look upon the throngs of shepherdless sheep; most pitifully he turned to the disciples: "He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread and give them to eat?"

That is to say, they all fell back upon the prudential calculation as to how much a supply would

cost. About twenty or thirty dollars of our money they imagined would be needed; and no one had supposed that the bag Judas carried was ever a heavy burden to him. These disciples answered, precisely as we have all answered in our worried lives over and over again when the old question of aiding the poor has come up: "Alas, this benevolence is costly, this hunger is endless, and we cannot afford to take up the relief!"

The height of dramatic power in this narrative is reached at that point in which Jesus says calmly to these solicitous men, who appear at their wits' end to know what to do with these tumultuous strangers: "They need not go away; give *ye* them to eat!"

There is no need of any one's ever going away from Christ for any purpose whatsoever. When these disciples had played servitors at this miraculous forest feast, they did, at last, begin to understand Jesus and his sufficiency for each want. It is for the simple sake of the lessons they learned that day that this chapter is valuable. Take Simon Peter, for example: he is at school; and some of his instruction awakes curiosity; and some of his gains on that occasion explain ever so many incidents in his after life; and the whole story is serviceable for all who try to become acquainted with his Lord.

I. Observe, then, in the first place, that Simon learned that **A MAN'S USEFULNESS MAY POSSIBLY BE HINDERED BY AN OVER-PRUDENT CALCULATION OF HIS RESOURCES AND AN OVER-CAREFUL USE OF HIS OWN WIT.**

There needs to be something more than mere sympathy with a vagrant crowd to explain this exceeding anxiety of the disciples at our Lord's prolonged sermon that afternoon. It was growing late—but not very late. Matthew says it was "evening:" but there was one period of the day called by the name among the Jews, beginning at three o'clock. It seems to have been quite early yet.

Moreover, this was going to be a moonlight night. How do we know that? Because this occurrence took place a few days before a Passover—and Passovers were always celebrated at the full of the moon. It will have to be admitted that there was going to be a severe storm before long. How do we know that? From the simple narrative which follows, recording that a wild tempest was met by the boats on the sea. These men had fished that lake over for many an observant year; and like all other fishermen, it is probable they had keen eyes for detecting each phase of the weather in their common haunts. They may have noticed already some recognized signals of the boisterous wind they were to encounter before midnight.

It is plain that mere prudential considerations made them anxious. They were influenced by their own processes of reasoning to the exclusion of faith, and perhaps even of reverence likewise.

There is too much of this hanging back from duty because of calculation of resources and because of foreboding prediction of storms. Forebodings are not arguments. All labor for Christ

proceeds upon a principle of mingled rashness and trust. We hurry into zeal, no matter how discouraging may be the prospect or how formidable may be the obstacles, with brave reliance upon a strength greater than ours, which has been covenanted to be manifested in the instant of our need of it. He that moves right on is the one who does most good; he who does least is the one who turns his eye aloft at the weather, and temporizes and plans and grows unutterably wise, as he begs his Lord send the multitudes away to find something to eat.

Old Cœcolampadius was right when he once exclaimed, "Oh, how much more would a few good, fervent men effect in Christ's behalf than a multitude of lukewarm ones, pondering all the chances!"

II. Now let us put with this a second lesson which Simon Peter is sure to have learned that day: **TRUE CONSECRATION IS THE MEASURE OF SUCCESS IN ALL DIFFICULT ENDEAVOR.**

The hours sped slowly by and the evening now drew near. It would not do to converse any more about feeding these people. For the time had arrived when they must be provided for or else start towards home. One thing had been ascertained, thanks to the questions of Philip, that the multitudes had brought no food with them, and that the poor neighborhood could not furnish any.

And yet we find, in the confusions of modern cavil, some few unbelievers so determined to reject this miracle that they declare in so many words—these friendly fishermen distributed their ordinary

stores; and the people in turn, seeing their liberality, also began to pass around to each other what they had, and so the cheerful crowd found their fill! As if to prevent any such suggestions, the conversation up on the hillside is now repeated down on the beach. As Philip returned, quite unsuccessful, he hurried at once to Jesus. There again they all sought to persuade him to dismiss the throng. Then followed that sublime utterance, which might for ever be chosen as a motto for any purpose of real Christian zeal: "They need not depart; give *ye* them to eat!"

This reply must have made immediate suggestion to them of an unexpected supply or of some hidden source of help. No Christian is ever left to doubt that God will aid him in doing what He bids him do. Just at this moment Andrew presents one of those three interesting appearances which constitute all his New Testament history: "One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here, which hath five barley-loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?"

This silent man makes no comment; only he mentions that some of them had met this small boy whose providence had been a trifle more thoughtful than that of the rest. He had in his wallet—the common lunch-bag of rustics in those days—five thin barley-cakes, and two somewhat insignificant dried fishes. These Andrew said he had bought, or had persuaded the lad to surrender. But even he in such a plight found words enough

to say, "What are these among so many? He put in a demurrer, or a sort of apology for the speech. Before we blame him, let us try to remember that poor human nature has always been just so provokingly obtuse and backward in believing. The distrust of the heart is its most inveterate enemy. The disciples said no more than the Israelites said: "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" Moses was accustomed to rebuke their unbelief; but what did Moses himself do when in a like stress?

"And Moses said, The people among whom I am, are six hundred thousand footmen; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month. Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them? And the Lord said unto Moses, Is the Lord's hand waxed short? thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee, or not."

The secret of all success that notable day is found in the abrupt, but tranquil, order of Jesus: "Bring them hither to me."

Mark well, he does not say, Distribute them to these hungry people: he says, Bring them to *me*. These are his words to the entire church along the ages. Christ commands: Consecrate your gift to me; give to me your talents, your time, your wealth, your education: of themselves, these shall prove pitifully small, but I will multiply them as I touch them; I will make even a little lad's wallet hold enough to feed the famishing thousands!

It is not the grandeur of one's personal resources which fixes the measure of his usefulness accomplished. It is "the people that do know their God" concerning whom it is promised that they "shall be strong and do exploits." It is not profuseness of human means, but closeness of spiritual consecration, that prevails.

III. In the third place, among the lessons Simon Peter learned on that occasion is this: **THE HUMILITY OF TRUE GREATNESS: THE SUPREME MAJESTY OF A SERVICEABLE DEED DONE IN A MEEK AND LOWLY SPIRIT.**

It is impertinent now to force forward our curious questions concerning the mysteries of this miracle. The calm dignity of the gospel narrative puts the entire proceeding before our eyes: "And he said to his disciples, Make them sit down by fifties in a company. And they did so, and made them all sit down."

The rule announced by inspiration long afterwards—"Let all things be done in decency and in order"—seems to have had pleasant sanction from the divine example here. No one can fail to remark the exceeding tranquillity of the unhurried demeanor of Christ. He caused the great throngs to recline on the sward in ranks or in groups. John appears to have remembered, in his account of the august scene, that there was plenty of grass growing on the spot: it was in the middle of spring, and the season had opened with vernal luxuriance. The word rendered "sat down" is an unusually picturesque one in the Greek. It describes a simul-

taneous, sudden movement, full of grace and cheerfulness. The people, at a mere order from Jesus, flung themselves joyously upon the earth, in a sort of symmetrical arrangement calculated to facilitate an easy and satisfactory distribution of their food by the disciples.

A beautiful spectacle now rises on our imagination—that verdured slope, that peaceful lake, that mountain pulpit, those well-arranged terraces of human beings aisled ready for easy reach, the weary, hungry, expectant throngs looking up into the face of their patient Benefactor. But there was a pause for just a moment.

Ten thousand men, women, and children reverently bowed their heads for the giving of thanks: “Then he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude.” What a magnificent illustration of that other precept: “In everything give thanks: whether ye eat or drink or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God !”

He, in whose person were united God and man, might well give *thanks* for his human privilege, and bestow *blessings* in his divine right. The people who had sought first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, now found all these other things added unto them. “And they did eat and were all filled: and there was taken up of fragments that remained to them twelve baskets.”

There is a limitless multiplying power in God's grace and affection for men: we are to trust him

and surrender all we possess. He will work marvels even with gifts meagre as ours. And the generous rewards of well-doing are worthy of him. He often pays great loans in kind, and he pays munificently. We may be sure that even the provident lad went home with his wallet fuller from the twelve baskets than it was when he started from the village. No man ever did a good deed openly without getting more than he gave.

O Bread, to pilgrims given,
 O food that angels eat,
 O manna, sent from heaven,
 For heaven-born natures meet!
 Give us for thee long pining,
 To eat till richly filled;
 Till, earth's delights resigning,
 Our every wish is stilled.

O Water, life-bestowing,
 From out the Saviour's heart,
 A fountain purely flowing,
 A fount of love thou art!
 Oh, let us, freely tasting,
 Our burning thirst assuage!
 Thy sweetness, never wasting,
 Avails from age to age.

Jesus! this feast receiving,
 We thee unseen adore,
 Thy faithful word believing,
 We take, and doubt no more;
 Give us, thou true and loving,
 On earth to live in thee;
 Then death, the veil removing,
 Thy glorious face to see!

XXI.

THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND.

"THEN HE TOOK THE FIVE LOAVES, AND THE TWO FISHES, AND LOOKING UP TO HEAVEN, HE BLESSED THEM, AND BRAKE, AND GAVE TO THE DISCIPLES TO SET BEFORE THE MULTITUDE."—
Luke 9: 16.

UPON only one of the miracles wrought by our Lord Jesus Christ has been put the supreme honor of a record by all of the four evangelists. This one is that in which the divine power of the Saviour fed "five thousand men besides the women and the children" with the contents of a child's wallet.

The reason for a notice so peculiar is found, possibly, in the magnificence of the wonder itself, in the ease with which its reality could be tested among the multitude of witnesses, and in the important lessons it was intended to teach. There is record of another miracle, very similar to this in many of its details; and to both of these the Lord makes reference on a subsequent occasion with something of surprise and expostulation in his speech, as if he had been grieved to think that even his disciples had already forgotten the impression these marvels had made at the first: "Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?"

His language seems almost reproachful; and we readily infer that there was meant to be in this

August transaction food for reflection and material for profitable thought never to be forgotten. Our study will be better conducted now, if we seek in turn some few of the characteristics of this miracle, which show it to have been one of the greatest Jesus ever performed.

I. In the first place, it was remarkable for the extraordinary *number of witnesses* there were to it.

We are compelled to make a little calculation in order to arrive accurately at this. The evangelists say there were five thousand men fed that day, not counting in the women and the children. It is easy to remember that the women and the children were always the fastest friends of Jesus. The children in troops sang hosannas to him as he entered Jerusalem, and his most faithful ministrants were females, from among whom the three Marys were chosen. Hence, we might readily suppose that the women and children, here on the slope of the mountain of Golan, would far outnumber the men, who generally followed him so reluctantly—if it were not for the fact that the multitude were all so far from home. The walk around the beach of the lake was one of several miles in extent, and this would be a serious hindrance to either zeal or curiosity. So we shall do better to reckon that an equal number, perhaps, certainly no greater, of this unenumerated class were present. At any rate, we shall not be far out of the way if we conjecture there were ten thousand people fed that day, men, women, and children.

But let us understand here that this miracle was

peculiar in that everybody who saw it shared in it. Each one in all the vast throng became a witness to its character as a wonder. It was not as if Jesus had made one ineffably grand exposition of power up on the hillside, which, while it would be conspicuous to some, might be missed by many. Every one of these persons had, as it were, a part of the miracle for his own; for every one partook of the loaves and fishes, and hence knew unmistakably whether he did eat or not. So the witnesses were beyond reckoning who would testify to the marvellous character of the feast.

II. Again, this miracle was more than usually remarkable for the mysterious *peculiarity of the process* in working.

The explicit form in which it was wrought is nowhere revealed. These five loaves, which were after the long search at last discovered in the lunch-bag of a little boy, were merely brittle, dry, flat cakes of barley, such as the commonest of the people in Palestine now use for food when too far away from home to secure fresh ones. These are about the size of a table-plate, made simply by bruising the grain with a mixture of water, and then baking or drying the thin layer over a fire. And the two fishes, which went in as a relish on this memorable occasion, were probably cured and dried as usual in the sunshine, easily pulled to pieces in the fingers, just such as the peasants use now. Out of these scant materials there came, to meet the hunger of those thousands, everything they needed, under the hands of the Master of that desert-feast.

How did he do it? We ask in vain. The banquet of Ahasuerus, to which Esther invited her lord, did not equal that entertainment. The grand assemblage in the palace of Belshazzar saw no such sight as this. For newly created viands fell from the fingers and palms in which was "the hiding of God's power." Where did so vast a quantity of food come from? When was the crisis of the change by which the small stock was so increased?

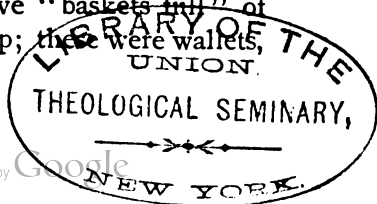
It would be amusing, if it were not so pitifully humiliating, to examine some of the rationalistic theories which have been suggested. Only one, however, needs now to be considered. It has been asserted that Christ only quickened the ordinary processes of nature, so that what generally took some months in arriving at the harvest now was accelerated into growth and maturity in a few hours. This might do for an explanation, if Jesus had simply produced more barley; but what he produced was a mass of barley cakes in crisp and brittle recognition at once. Grinding, kneeding, and baking are not processes of nature, but of commonplace art in the household. Moreover, there were the fragments of fishes also in the baskets; surely, it is of no use to say these were hastened into existence simply a little out of due time. Were those dry creatures ever alive at all? Indeed, the folly lies in an attempt to explain such a wonder; no considerations can render the process of working it clear. There was an act of new creation in it. If three barley loaves are made out of one, then two of them are created out of nothing by an exertion of divine power.

But when did the multiplication take place? Even that is not announced. We are nowhere told whether the fragments grew in Jesus' hands as he brake them, or in the hands of the disciples as they distributed them, or in the hands of the multitude as they received them. All that we need to remember is that, in the beginning, the lad was told to bring his store of resources, not to the multitude, not to the disciples, but to Jesus; then the Lord of heaven and earth made use of them. The smallest of all means become the largest of all helps when fully consecrated.

III. In the third place, this miracle is remarkable for the *extraordinary affluence* of its products.

It takes a good deal of food to feed ten thousand people, even for one meal, and even with no greater variety than mere bread and fish. You cannot deceive children in respect to appetite. Some silly skeptics have said that the multitude were wrought up to an unreasoning excitement, and then induced to suppose that their hunger had been satisfied without having had anything to eat after all. One would like to see that tried on a few scores of young people, before he would put it in a commentary as an explanation of the tranquillity that evening.

It is just as easy, doubtless, to work a great miracle as a small one, to feed five thousand persons with a few loaves and fishes as it would be five hundred. But when such a magnificent profusion as this is displayed, we feel sure there must be a religious lesson in it. Twelve "baskets full" of fragments were finally taken up; ~~there were~~ wallets,



not panniers; they might possibly hold a peck each. When compared with the original contribution of the lad, this is seen to be a large increase. The disciples are bidden to gather up the fragments: why was this?

One reason was, they would need them for future use. The followers of Christ were poor. We can be very certain that the boy who gave his all found plentiful reward. Another reason, it is likely, was, the fragments themselves would be mementoes of the occasion and proofs of the miracle. Still another reason may have been, there would be a lesson of frugality in the husbanding of all their resources hereafter. At any rate, the picture is beautiful: how calm now seems to us, as we contemplate it, the dignity of Jesus' mind, so poised and so careful, as he sits there tranquilly, while the disciples wait to finish the feast with due order—just as he himself waited, on the morning of his resurrection, to fold the napkin which had been put around his head and lay it where it should evidence his composure! Unhurriedly always the Saviour completed his work.

IV. Finally, this miracle is remarkable for the *profound impression it made*, and is making yet upon the ages.

It moved the multitudes at the time; they were going immediately to make Jesus king in the place of Herod. Tidings of the amazing wonder rushed through the whole country. For many a month the people quoted it to each other, and said, "Is not this the Christ?" It makes as deep an impression

now as ever. It disturbs the skeptical world that they cannot dispose of it.

In addition to the verbal testimony of the throngs of witnesses, there were these fragments of bread and fishes. They must have become swift and mute evidences of the wonderful performance. Once there was a pot of manna preserved specially to commemorate the passing of Israel through the wilderness. Only conjecture can say that any of these fragments were laid up for after-times. But while they endured, there would certainly be eminent suggestiveness in the very sight of them.

Can we conceive of a greater marvel than that would be? A barley loaf that had never been baked, the flour of which had never been crushed in the mill, the kernel of which had never been threshed, the straw of which had never been winnowed, the stalk of which had never waved on the hillside! Think also of a fragment of a fish, dried, eatable, nutritious, yet which had never been swimming in any sea—a fish which Jesus Christ created on the shore of Lake Gennesaret! These would be evidences of Christianity to which there could be no infidel reply.

Our tale is now ended; but we must not lose the fine lessons taught by Jesus' withdrawal from the scene. The enthusiasm was evidently boundless: one vast shout of acclamation rose on the shore: "Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world. When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take

him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone."

Unobservedly this Son of God, who was the Son of man, glided away from the dangerous crowd that would have made an insurrection in his behalf: the next we know of him, he is out of sight praying.

Few men can do a really great thing and then keep quiet concerning it. Only one man in an age can, like Samson, rend a lion, and afterwards keep the prowess secret enough for a riddle. Jesus alone in history could have wrought such a wonder as this, and at the height of the applause have retired into communion alone—and "yet not alone, for the Father was with him."

Break thou the bread of life,
Dear Lord, to me,
As thou didst break the loaves
Beside the sea ;
Beyond the sacred page
I seek thee, Lord ;
My spirit pants for thee,
O living Word !

Bless thou the truth, dear Lord,
To me—to me—
As thou didst bless the bread
By Galilee ;
Then shall all bondage cease,
All fetters fall ;
And I shall find my peace,
My All-in-All !

XXII.

THE TRANSFIGURATION.

“AND AS HE PRAYED, THE FASHION OF HIS COUNTENANCE WAS ALTERED, AND HIS RAIMENT WAS WHITE AND GLISTERING.”—
Luke 9: 29.

NEARER to heaven can no man come while on the earth than the three favored disciples of our Lord came when they were, as one of them says afterwards, “with him in the holy mount.” And nearer to the true spirit of this celestial experience can no student of the Bible come than when he reverently approaches the examination of the story that records it.

A few words are needed here concerning the spot, before we attempt to draw nigh the spectacle; then, after all, we shall be ready to seek the purpose of the display and the doctrine.

I. Where was this “mountain apart” which Mark speaks of? The current tradition has been undisturbed for many centuries that the august event of the transfiguration took place upon Mt. Tabor. There is nothing whatsoever in the Scriptures to invalidate the statement, and surely there is no unfitness, intrinsically, in the locality rendering it unworthy. But late writers seem to have found reason for the interjection of doubt, and the drift of modern impression is mostly towards Hermon.

i. Some have said that Tabor is too far distant

from Cæsarea Philippi, where the narrative in immediate connection appears to leave Jesus with his followers. But what does an expression like this "after six days" mean? Certainly it may have been possible for the entire band to journey fifty slow miles during this time. Scores of people come from Hermon to Tabor every winter inside of a week. There is no difficulty in this.

2. Others have said that the allusion to "snow" in this description of our Lord's raiment ought to be considered as evidence in favor of Mt. Hermon, where alone snow could be seen far to the north. If this puerile form of suggestion be worth anything in such a process of inquiry—if a man must be within sight of drifts before he can say as "white as snow"—then it remains to be said that the words containing the comparison are wanting in two of the four most trustworthy manuscripts of the New Testament, and are excluded from the new Revision.

3. Others, again, have said that a long time before this, and for a long time after, Mt. Tabor bore on its crown a fortified Roman city; hence, so conspicuous an event as this transfiguration must have been observed and reported to an alert garrison. This may have been true—though it is not undisputed even now, as a historic fact—and yet a hundred places, outside of the walls or along the terraces of the slope, could readily have been found where these quiet persons might wait through a night-season of prayer. How much room does it take for four peaceable people to stand or kneel or fall on

their faces? It is not a likely thing that the supernatural spendors of the vision were at all disclosed to any other eyes than those which had been summoned to behold them. There was a "cloud" too.

4. It is fair to say that, when everything in this discussion rests on mere conjecture and repetition of opinion, it is not worth while to waste much time in talking. But it would embarrass most men to be asked to state the grounds of their preference for Hermon. Scholarly opinion seems to fill the commentaries now with pictures of all sorts of spurs of Hermonic pinnacles, as it used to fill them with the round top of Tabor; arguments do not help much. And there will always remain a tranquilly disposed few who will deprecate needless change. The miracle of healing the demoniac boy took place at the foot of the mountain, "which was probably not Mt. Hermon," wisely remarks Dr. Lyman Abbott, "for the scribes would not have been in heathen territory."

II. Up into this mountain, then, we understand that our Lord went one evening to pray; there "he was transfigured;" his whole appearance was changed. Grand, vague, and beautiful, that magnificent spectacle rises upon the devout vision.

I. What are the details of this scene? Luke, who in some particulars gives us a more extended narrative, relates that it was in the very midst of the act of petition that the extraordinary change came over the Saviour's person: "And it came to pass, about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter, and John, and James, and went up into a

mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening." The word "fashion" occurs but six times in the New Testament. It is generally rendered the *sight* or the *appearance*. The phrase "was altered" means literally *became other*. The look of the Redeemer's face became another look. The very singular term which describes the mystery, "transfigured," is that from which comes, with barely a dropping of letters, the word in our language *metamorphosed*. We have the noun, upon the sense of which the verb is cast, in that famous passage in the Epistle to the Philippians which describes the incarnation of Jesus Christ: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." And we have the same word also in the account given of our Lord's disclosure of himself to his disciples in the mysterious walk to Emmaus: "After that, he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country." It was another *figure* that Jesus assumed along the way, so that the disciples did not recognize him till afterwards.

2. What was the meaning of this wonderful exhibition? It is likely that the patient study of these passages to which attention has been called

will suggest to us that Jesus there on the mountain became like some other being; but the phraseology is so peculiar that it intimates that this was only his former being suddenly reassumed. He who had once taken the "form" of a servant, now put on again his original "form" as God: "And behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias, who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." These three disciples must have been startled with a vast surprise. More glorious vision never burst upon mortal eyes than this sudden out-gleam of the Godhead of Jesus through the shape of the humanity he wore. The exalted locality, so high and so lonely, so quiet in the serene midnight, the pageantry, so dignified and royal, the companionship of lawgiver and prophet beside Jesus—this is what would make one think of Daniel's vision: "I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire."

III. So much, then, for the spot and the spectacle; now let us inquire concerning the purpose of the display. Several lessons may be learned from the scene. Perhaps we shall not appear irreverent if we assume that Jesus had these in mind.

1. For one thing, he may have wished to show the identity of the two dispensations of grace. Here were Moses and Elijah coming abruptly into the pageant. The one represented the law, the other

the prophets, as Jesus himself represented the gospel. These "appeared with him in glory." That vision must have been ineffably grand and glowing with splendor. Even Christ's garments were interpenetrated and pervaded by the effulgence of deity shining through the humanity they held. They became like snow, "white and glistening." That new word means gleaming in sparks, or coruscations, like the point of a spear brandished in a sunbeam; glittering, emitting flashes of flaming brightness. The glory of those two Old Testament saints was like that of Jesus. And they all talked of "the decease he should accomplish at Jerusalem." Both Testaments tell the same old, old story.

2. But mainly, and most of all, we are led to think that our Lord's aim in making this display was to prove to them that the greatest glory of the gospel was to be found in the sacrifice for sin it involved. One must bear in mind the peculiar circumstances in which our Redeemer was just now placed. At this exact moment he was turning the corner of his prophetic work where it bent into his necessities as a priest. Jesus had lately taught his disciples—these men, so affectionate and still so dull—day after day, concerning the divinity of his mission; but he had added some words which evidently they were not able to bear. He told them of his coming humiliation and crucifixion: "He began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again." This startled and stunned them.

Plainly, now, when his followers felt thus, it became necessary for our Lord to assert his unsullied divinity in direct defiance of the shame of the cross. He was not going to take back any of his revelations concerning the ignominious death he was to suffer. But he did design that transfiguration scene as a convincing evidence to them that the highest glory of redemption was to be found in the humbling sacrifice of the Redeemer. These disciples should hear what Moses thought of the "decease"!

3. Finally, there may have been a purpose of showing that the "kingdom of God" was really coming. Connect the last verse of the eighth chapter of Mark with the first verse of the ninth, and it becomes clear that Jesus meant to intimate that he was going to give them some wonderful disclosures before long concerning his work. The "coming of the kingdom with power" many sober people think was just this transfiguration spectacle. Some of them at the moment standing there were chosen to see it. It was much like the coronation ceremony of a monarch. It reminds us of the anointing of David when he was a shepherd boy. These witnesses were told to keep their secret, and they did so carefully. Judas personally, we suppose, never heard of the transfiguration. Before such a tale became part of the acknowledged history, he was dead by his own hand. Thirty years afterwards, Simon Peter told how it affected him. It was the one grandly convincing proof of the gospel to him: "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power

and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.”

Jesus is God! The glorious bands
Of holy angels sing
Songs of adoring praise to him,
Their Maker and their King.
He was true God in Bethlehem's crib,
On Calvary's cross true God,
He who in heaven eternal reigned,
In time on earth abode.

Jesus is God! Oh, could I now
But compass land and sea
To teach and tell this single truth,
How happy should I be!
Oh, had I but an angel's voice,
I would proclaim so loud—
Jesus, the good, the beautiful,
Is everlasting God!

Jesus is God! Let sorrow come,
And pain and every ill;
All are worth while, for all are means
His glory to fulfil
Worth while a thousand years of life,
To speak one little word,
If only by our faith we own
The Godhead of our Lord!

XXIII.

THE DEMONIAK CHILD.

“AND JESUS ANSWERING SAID, O FAITHLESS AND PERVERSE GENERATION! HOW LONG SHALL I BE WITH YOU, AND SUFFER YOU? BRING THY SON HITHER.”—*Luke 9:41.*

THERE now hangs in the Vatican palace at Rome one of the masterpieces of all art, done by the prince of painters three hundred years ago. This has been reproduced in a thousand copies, and now in prints and on canvas is found decorating the walls of many a republican dwelling on this side of the sea. Nay, more: it has lately gained a place in the illustrated Bibles, and is teaching whole generations what it has to say concerning this scene on the mountain. Artists say the figures are unrivalled and inimitable; the attitudes are eminently expressive; the coloring is exquisite; and a strict judgment would call Raphael's Transfiguration the finest of all pictures in the world—the first among works of art.

With just this amount of commendation of the connoisseurs to daunt one's common-sense courage, and with due deference to the admitted skill of this painter rendering him modest, it requires one to stand very steadily when he rises to say that such a celebrated painting is only a poor thing well done. For the whole idea of it is preposterous and untruthful to fact. If it gives any notion of the scene

whatever, it gives a false notion that needs correction.

No one can believe that our adorable Saviour stood there upon the apex of the hill, with Moses and Elijah so skilfully arranged around him. Nobody supposes that the great lawgiver's robe curved and curled around this way—and the great prophet's around that—like the two festoons of a curtained casement or the designed pattern of a memorial window. Nor did the disciples lie along on the ground in any such posture of utter abasement and alarm—a frightened trio hiding their faces from a floating triad in the air!

Then, everybody says, here are two pictures in one. And when it has been said, why does not the criticism stand? For this painting claims to be the best work of the best worker in history. It is ridiculous to force us to imagine that the demoniac child could be seen from the mountain, at such a distance, and in such an hour, struggling in the hands of his keepers. Common sense inquires why there was any need of such caution in bidding these disciples tell no man of the scene till Christ had risen from the dead, if the agonized boy, rolling up his distressed eyes, could attain a glimpse of the Redeemer's face, as critics praise Raphael for representing he did; it would be known through the neighborhood before daybreak. High art finds fault with exposition for many discrepancies in the interpretation of the Scriptures; but if the chieftains in saloons make such travesties in mere matters of observable fact, can it be wondered at if

polemics in cloisters sometimes make mistakes wild and egregious in the more abstruse matters of doctrine.

The truth is, there are not enough of details revealed for a picture of this spectacle: it cannot be fittingly and exhaustively reproduced on canvas. Let us see just what inspiration says.

This miracle of healing the demoniac boy connects itself naturally with the scene of the transfiguration, but there was no need for Raphael to put it into the same painting. The rapid transition from the one scene to the other affords a most pathetic comment upon the versatilities of human life, the shadows and the shinings lying right alongside and confronting each other.

Here the suggestion is singularly helpful; for we remember that long before this it was challenged, and was proved, that the Lord, who was "God of the hills," was "God of the valleys" also.

In this story there are offered two pictures in one, and each of these in turn may well claim a notice. There is recorded a miserable failure through lack of faith, and then there is described a very creditable success through even feeble faith.

I. Let us begin with the disciples' failure. When, that morning, our Lord came down from the mountain, he found his followers in the humiliation of a defeat, and probably under fire of mockery from those around them. A mere rehearsal of details will bring the whole story before our recollection.

1. They had received *the promise* of help in the

working of miracles. Specially this one thing had been mentioned : they should be able to cure demons : this power had been conferred at no request of their own : "And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease."

2. They had *exercised* the gift. We have the official report rendered by the larger company of the disciples which Jesus had appointed and sent forth, and we should be slow to believe that the chosen twelve had been endowed with less gifts, or had achieved poorer success, than the seventy ; these found even the devils subject unto them.

3. They had now *a new chance* to use their power. A father brought up to them his child, a lunatic, his only child, one dumb from his birth, burned, bruised, grinding his teeth, foaming at the mouth, evidently a most severe and extraordinary instance of demoniacal possession. We must admit that this was an unusually hard case for a test. This demon held his hold upon the unfortunate lad with a dreadful tenacity. And we must admit also that the three best men among the twelve—that is, the leaders they were most wont to put in the front—were at the time absent with their Lord in the mountain.

4. So they *failed utterly*. "They could not" cast this stubborn and refractory spirit out. We can picture their dismay, for their confidence in their powers so lately promised and given by Jesus must have been in some measure broken ; and,

moreover, those unamiable scribes stood there to taunt them with their palpable indiscretion in attempting to do what was so far beyond their ability to accomplish, and gibing them with profane jests. Meantime, it is likely that the afflicted boy rolled on the ground, muttering his uncouth cries, and the distressed father wept in the keen sorrow of his disappointment and the hopeless prospect.

5. They received *a rebuke* from the lips of the Master himself. In the midst of this confusion there is suddenly disclosed a new presence. Jesus himself, having arrived directly from the indescribable glories of the transfiguration, comes on the scene. Something there must have been in his appearance on this occasion of more than his usual majesty: "And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him." Perhaps his face shone, as did that of Moses when he came down from another mountain, having held an interview with Jehovah face to face. The moment the familiar form of the great Rabbi is seen, the uproar is apparently hushed. He speaks to the mocking crowd first, as if he meant to challenge them to say to him what they had been saying to his disciples: "And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them?" These creatures made no reply. But now the troubled father comes up with his boy, and tells over the story with the sad, sincere eloquence of one who has been in pain for years, and at last has little hope left: "And behold, a man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee look upon

my son : for he is mine only child. And lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth again, and bruising him, hardly departeth from him. And I besought thy disciples to cast him out, and they could not." Then forth from Jesus' lips came the rebuke to his followers for their prejudicing his cause by a failure: "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me." This language is that of a weary soul, tired of sustaining the ever-waning and ever-falling faith of weaker souls alongside of it. He does not denounce those nine men with violence of invective, nor threaten them with pains of retribution. He pities them and mourns over them; but then he addresses himself at once to gather up all that their unbelief had lost.

6. They learned *the reason* for their want of success. As to the artless affection existing between that Master and those men, no proof could have been given more touching than this inquiry of theirs and his frank reply: "And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, saying, We could not cast it out. And he said unto them, This kind can come out by nothing save by prayer." Perhaps it is just as well to notice that the word "fasting" is admitted to be unauthorized, and disappears in the new Revision.

II. Now, in the second place, we come to the success achieved by even the feeble faith of this troubled father. We may dwell upon just three particulars in turn.

I. The *details of the miracle* are described so simply and so gently in the inspired story that we should spoil it by the clumsiness of a paraphrase: "And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him grievously; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming. And he asked his father, How long time is it since this hath come unto him? And he said, From a child. And oftentimes it hath cast him both into the fire and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us. And Jesus said unto him, If thou canst! All things are possible to him that believeth. Straightway the father of the child cried out and said, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. And when Jesus saw that a multitude came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I command thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him. And having cried out, and torn him much, he came out: and the child became as one dead; insomuch that the more part said, He is dead. But Jesus took him by the hand and raised him up; and he arose." This afflicted father waited for no second invitation, when he heard that authoritative demand, "Bring him unto me!" Just at that moment, as if the demon knew that his power was soon to reach its end, he threw the poor lad upon his face in the dust, where he "wallowed foaming." Then the excited populace rushed up around to see the wonder wrought. They heard the calm words of the Master bidding the spirit come out and enter no

more. There was the swift and unrecorded defiance of the demon, and the violent onset on the boy for the spiteful revenge, so rough that it almost killed him ; and then Immanuel, "God with us," stooped to put his own hand into the clenched fingers, loosened them tenderly, while the dazed creature looked up in his face and saw his deliverer for the first time. So the miracle was wrought.

2. The *condition of the miracle* was faith. And now we instinctively inquire what there was in this unknown man's trust which could render it valuable. He was rewarded magnificently, but why? There are four things in one sentence which answer.

He confessed his faith openly as far as it went: "Lord, I believe." I feel keenly (for one) the loss of the word "Lord" here ; but scholars say it must go out of the Bible. Still, we can have no doubt that this man surrendered his full confidence to Jesus as his Master, the Messiah, the Christ of God. At all events—and this is the point to be pressed—he spoke out his thought before the crowd unmistakably.

He admitted his lamentable need of more faith: "Help my unbelief." We have to acknowledge that such a stranger had had some reason to say, "If thou canst do anything." For these nine men had announced that they could cure demoniacs by miracle in the name of Jesus of Nazareth ; and still they had exasperatingly failed. This man did not claim any perfection. If his son's whole future now turned upon the acknowledgment, he would frankly

admit there was in his confidence room for improvement.

He felt sorry for his lack in the full grace of faith: "He said with tears, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." Here, again, they say we must leave out the touching little clause of Mark's narrative, "with tears." If that must be so, then still there is, even in the expression "cried out," and in the whole structure of his explosive reply, quite enough to show this excited man's emotion and real regret that his trust was weak.

He knew enough to pray for the increase of what faith he had. It must have seemed to him impossible to gird up his energies to perfect confidence. It could not be denied that he had some fear as to Jesus' being able to bring that dear boy around to health and reason. It had doubtless dawned upon even his reluctant mind that this was a very hard case. We can almost picture him saying something like this: "Now if the whole thing is about to turn upon *my* trust—if my poor son will not be cured unless *my* faith should prove to be absolutely fixed that Jesus is able to heal him, and is willing, and indeed is going to do it right here now—then would the good Rabbi please to wait a moment;" and just then the tears would come into his eyes, "and, lest the lad should lose his last chance because of what he was not to blame for, would He be gracious enough to gird *me* up a little before he begins on the demon? For, indeed, my faith is hesitating in despite of me. Oh, I believe; help mine unbelief, for so much hangs on it now for the boy!"

3. So, then, we reach the *parable there is in the miracle*. Of course, we all understand that it was in working a miraculous sign that these disciples failed, and that it is not likely any of us now are expected to do such supreme wonders as casting out demons. But this does not destroy the force of the gospel instruction. Our own grand lesson is found just here. Let us at once accept the meaning without being bewildered by the peculiarities of this individual instance of testing. The weakness of God's people in all ages is owing to the lack of their faith. The entire progress of the church of Christ depends on the unbroken confidence of Christians. Note these points.

Sinful men may be looked upon as possessed of the devil. In a hundred ways he tears them and throws them down; he stops their intelligent speech, and sends them wallowing and foaming in sin. "*None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good.*" Even disciples fail. No priest can offer sufficient sacrifice; no man can redeem his brother. "Bring him unto me!" *Faith is in every case of instrumental usefulness positively indispensable.* There are times when Christ himself will do no mighty works because of unbelief. "O faithless generation!" How quickly this explains the coldness and backwardness of the churches! *When faith is feeble, what faith there is may well be employed in securing more faith.* "Help mine unbelief." Pray to the "Lord," even if the word be not in this verse; and pray "with tears" too!

XXIV.

FARING WHOLLY WITH CHRIST.

"NO MAN HAVING PUT HIS HAND TO THE PLOUGH, AND LOOKING BACK, IS FIT FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD."—*Luke 9:62.*

AT the close of the ninth chapter of Luke's Gospel we have, in connection, the story of three inquirers who came in turn to Christ. With each one he dealt according to his mood of mind and the posture of his present experience. So we are summoned to look upon three anonymous biographies, told in two verses apiece. On our Lord's side, there are exhibited three principles of divine dealing with men.

I. The providential conditions of the new life are absolutely exclusive: "And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest."

The bold proffers of this scribe were met by the pathetic announcement of what their acceptance involved afterwards: "And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."

i. Our Lord's earthly career was hard and lonely. The rulers rejected and despised him. His own friends had their doubts about him now and

then. John the Baptist sent messengers in order to get satisfied. Mary tested him with hints for a miracle. The disciples misunderstood him, and Simon Peter took him to task for too much depression and melancholy. Yet he went on his way undisturbed. The Messiah was treading the wine-press alone. He talked mysteriously concerning his "hour." He retired into his own reserve, and prayed solitarily through the midnight in the mountain. He lodged during the final week in Bethany—"House of the poor." He died in the darkness. He rose in the night-time. He ascended in a cloud.

2. Christ's followers were forewarned that they must fare entirely with him. He did not leave this to any mere inference. His own words are on record: "The disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord." Nor did he conceal that this involved trouble: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you; if ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

3. Henceforth, therefore, believers were to consider themselves shut up to the lot they had accepted. We have a right to expect all solaces, defences, and sustenances in Christ; but we must rely upon him for them. Honors and human praises, emoluments and ease, are excluded. We are to count all things but loss that we may win Christ and be found in him. The children of Israel

must move straight on towards the Red Sea, and depend on the rod of Moses. Daniel must go in the lion's den, and wait confidently for the angel's hand to be put over the beast's mouth. The Hebrew youths must enter the fiery furnace in full trust that there will be seen with them the shining form of one like unto the Son of man who was the Son of God.

II. The spiritual relationships of the new life are absolutely exclusive: "And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father."

We are told in Matthew's Gospel that this man was already instructed to some extent; he was one of Jesus' "disciples." Most of us would say that he appears in an unusually amiable light. The duty was accepted; only a mere human wish was interposed: "Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God."

1. The Bible employs the tenderest names for its illustrations of relationship between believers and God. "Thy Maker is thy husband." Even backsliders are thus summoned: "Turn, for I am married unto you." Abraham was called the Friend of God, and Solomon says, "There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." A significance of meaning worth noticing is found in the fact that in our version of the New Testament the word family occurs but once, and there it describes the household of God. Christ said to his affectionate disciples, "Ye are my friends;" and told them to begin their

prayers to the great God with the name of "Our Father."

2. The purpose of this use of terms seems to be to show that all lower relationships are overridden by the higher. At first it appears melancholy to have to surrender everything; but an immediate supply is furnished. Hear the Psalmist now: "I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me; refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul." This is sad enough, but then comes the thought of cheer: "I cried unto thee, O Lord; I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living." So when the choice is offered, the decision must be made quickly. The bride described to us in the forty-fifth Psalm—which we know to be the church—must remember that old associations should be broken off, for now her husband desires her wholly: "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him." The New Testament counsel is equally explicit as to loving father or mother more than Christ: "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me."

3. Our Saviour himself set the fine example of this surrender. More affectionate or devoted child there never lived; but he began to draw aside from all home entanglements as he reached the conscious nearness of his public work. Mary was as thought-

ful as any one human could be; she pondered every demonstration in her heart. Still she came up slowly to the understanding of that wonderful boy. Solemnly and seriously in its admonition comes even now to us the mysterious reply of Jesus at twelve years old to his sorrowing parents, who yet supposed they could chide him for carelessness of their anxious feelings: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (See also Matthew 12:46-50.)

III. The personal experiences of the new life are absolutely exclusive: "And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

We cannot help imagining there must have been some deft allusion here to Elijah's history in this reply of our Lord: "So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him. And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee." Elisha desired the same privilege, not as an excuse for delay, but only as a tender duty of respect to those who loved him at home. He was actually at the plough when he was called by the casting of Elijah's mantle upon his shoulders.

i. Gospel experience is generous. It supplies

II*

room for all; but those who reject the offer must be left behind. Recall the Old Testament picture of Naomi and Ruth; surely Orpah could have come along too. Remember the invitation of Moses to Hobab, his father-in-law: "And Moses said unto Hobab, the son of Raguel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." This disciple could have said to every one he loved: "It shall be, if thou go with us, yea, it shall be, that what goodness the Lord shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee." For Jesus had grace for more disciples still.

2. Gospel experience is indivisible. Philosophically speaking, it is impossible for any man to love two things supremely: "No man can serve two masters; ye cannot serve God and mammon." That old familiar call, "My son, give me thy heart," means the whole heart. "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways" (see 1 Chron. 12:33, and also Psalm 12:2). In both of these passages the margin has "A heart and a heart." A Christian man has only one heart, after God has given him a new one.

3. Gospel experience is uncompromising. All attempts to combine religion with worldliness are injurious. Naaman asks the privilege of going into the house of Rimmon with a show of devotion so as to keep his place at court: "In this thing the Lord pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth

into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon: when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing." The prophet is not to be understood as giving consent; he only keeps silence for a little, perhaps foreseeing that the man will learn a lesson before long: "And he said unto him, Go in peace. So he departed from him a little way." Then Gehazi tries the same sort of doubleness upon Naaman; that seems to have cleared his mind about "a heart and a heart."

4. Gospel experience is immortal. "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." This part of our nature is what projects itself forward beyond the confines of time. It is the heart which decides character: "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." And it is character which decides destiny: "Your heart shall live for ever."

So much, then, for the disclosure of the principles contained in the narrative we are studying. How the counsel of Jesus was taken we are not informed. What these three strangers to us replied we do not know. More important is it what we reply in our turn; Jesus Christ has left the same challenge for ourselves to meet. Now we are ready for some comment upon the text by itself.

1. *Half service of Christ is whole service of Satan.* What is "the kingdom of God"? There are only two kingdoms in this world. Each man is the subject of the one or of the other. The earliest step in

becoming a Christian is found in renouncing the devil.

2. *Failure in religious life is in no wise chargeable to God.* It only shows we have never been "fit" for his kingdom. Commentators say this word means *serviceable*; but that means fit for service. When one, after a period of decorous devotion, falls away, it will not do for him to say that the Lord has broken his covenant of grace. The weakness is in himself; he has grown tired of the furrow. "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you; cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded."

3. *The eyes will sometimes show where the heart is better than even the hands.* One can look back, perhaps, and still keep on with his ploughing; but the look betrays him. So here is an illustrated text at once: "An high *look*, and a proud *heart*, and the *ploughing* of the wicked, is sin." How much can be put into just one look of a divided heart! The men of Beth-shemesh only looked in the ark; but the Lord smote fifty thousand of them for their wicked curiosity. Eve looked at the forbidden fruit, and there her sin began, and all our woes. Only a look of wrong brought all the shame and sorrow that weeps in the penitence of the fifty-first Psalm. Lot's wife looked back on Sodom, because she was not fit for the kingdom of God.

4. *It is best to say our farewells before coming to Jesus.* A thoughtful mind will ponder difficult questions before any committal; then there will be no need of hesitation afterwards. Observe the in-

tense individualism of the choice here indicated. "No man" is excepted from the decisive enunciation. The expression we often use, "counting the cost," is directly Scriptural: "For which of you intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he hath sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish."

5. *They cannot fare well who do not fare wholly with Christ.* Our word "Good-by" means *God be with you*; but God will not be with those who reject his Son. Abram left Terah, his father, only half way to Canaan, and went on to the land of promise without him. Better for us to bring our friends along with us, when going to Jesus, if by any means it is possible. "And Terah died in Haran," and Haran unfortunately was only half way to Canaan.

XXV.

A HOST OF HERALDS.

"AFTER THESE THINGS, THE LORD APPOINTED OTHER SEVENTY ALSO, AND SENT THEM TWO AND TWO BEFORE HIS FACE INTO EVERY CITY, AND PLACE, WHITHER HE HIMSELF WOULD COME."
Luke 10:1.

WHEN we are told that Jesus Christ sent his disciples forth to "preach the kingdom of God," the word Luke uses means to *herald*. All Christians are heralds when they speak of the coming of their King. And the characteristics of heralds, before any other persons, are just these: they cannot be inconspicuous, and they must not be timid. Hence, ancient sovereigns used to dress their heralds in unusual and showy garments, so as to attract attention wherever they went; and they furnished them with horns and trumpets, so as to enable them to make a noise which should compel people to hear them.

I. The chief reproach levelled at the church by the wild race of wicked men around us is that we are not sincere in our professions of longing for the coming of Christ's kingdom. They laugh at a host of heralds so tame and bashful. "You make many a long prayer," say these harsh cavillers, "but you give niggardly alms among the populace; you put on a melancholy and sanctimonious face; but you are sublunary enough to fix your eyes on not a few of the best chances; you announce it one of your

chief missions on the earth to subdue us sinners to Jesus Christ, but you make your approaches deprecatingly, as if you were trembling with fright. Why do you keep making obeisances and apologies all the time, as if you were afraid some bold heathen might be going to strike you? Why do Christian people never speak up honestly and do their avowed errands like men? If you desired a merchant to make an investment or begin business with you, you would meet him with some proposal, and try to press him to a favorable answer. But here you shun religious subjects in every instance, and still you would have us believe these lie uppermost in your hearts. Are you ashamed of your cause? We are mostly tired of such hypocrisy and such velvet dealing. It has come to be time for any sinner to lift up the old words of reproach, 'No man careth for my soul.' Heralds! this generation is loud in heralding royal proclamations, but it scatters very little coin!"

2. Of course, the proper reply to all this violence is not found in any waste of furious declamation or any massing of forcible logic. If it be true that Christians are bashful, self-distrustful, soft-worded, and apologetic, the one thing needed is not long explanations of our secret reasons for the behavior; what is necessary is that we should quit it. Our remedy under such hateful attacks is found in undertaking at once the work which is urged. We shall never hear any more about our derelictions in duty if we are patiently doing duty. Spite resembles fire, it is true, in that it burns fearfully where

it falls ; but it resembles fire quite as much in that it cannot burn at all without fuel. We shall cease to be harassed with these spiteful complaints of insincerity the moment we all actively set about stirring up the gift which is in us.

3. Now it ought to be remembered that this plan of promulgation of the gospel was the choice of an infinitely wise God. There can be no doubt that it would have been an easy thing for him just to convert the world at a stroke by an irresistible impulse of the Holy Spirit's influence ; no doubt he could have turned men's hearts into obedient holiness by some suddenness of divine disclosure ministered possibly through a song of hosts of angels. But he chose to take time for it, and he chose to put the ultimate accomplishing of such a work into the hands of Christian men and women.

4. It might be well to dwell a moment upon the great grace of God towards us in granting such a favor. Next to being rich and imperial ourselves, it certainly would be very fine to be the almoner of an emperor, distributing his wealth to the poor. There was wonderful benediction to us in that God fashioned a form of practical evangelization which would allow play for all kinds of characteristic human endowments. By putting these into rapid and repetitious service, all of those who love him would share in the grand result.

5. Moreover, the wisdom of such an arrangement can never be questioned. Making men heralds to other men would economize force in exercise, for it would build up intelligence and grace

as it exhausted it. Personal activity in doing good promotes growth in all Christian excellence. Love increases by just loving. Hope enlivens itself by just hoping. Zeal gets on fire and keeps on fire by just arousing the heat. Knowledge is augmented in all cases more by the effort of teaching others than by simply studying for one's self alone. To the man who rightly uses the five or ten talents, extra talents are given from the Lord's money.

Thus spiritual life intensifies and economizes all its forces merely by living in the employment of natural energy. Manly stature is attained by the sinew doing sinew's work, and the brain doing whatever a brain can do to direct it, and the heart doing what the heart can do to succor it. A magnet is sometimes seen in a chemist's laboratory suspended against a wall, and loaded heavily with weights hung upon the armature. We ask the reason, and the scientific man replies carelessly, as if it were quite a commonplace thing, "The magnet was losing power after lying around here without using, and I am restoring its forces now with giving it something to do, more and more a little every day."

6. Right here, therefore, let us find an explanation of that low state of hypochondriac feeling which oppresses some Christians. They need spiritual exercise. Each soul of man asserts its inalienable right to a work to do and a chance to do it; so it must be always doing something, or it will lose the entire spring and pulse of a healthy life. But even that is not all; for this is the time in which

the constitution is open to attack from disease of a positive sort. Torpor of soul breeds sickness as suddenly as it does weakness. It is not the soldiers abreast of their leaders at the front who are accustomed to do the complaining over the policies of the war; it is those listless poltroons who long to continue sheltered in the hospitals and the camps. It is the idlers always in any regiment who catch the rheumatism and the scurvy.

Hence this melancholy mood, this imagining one has committed the unpardonable sin, this wilful questioning of divine Providence, this harsh criticism of others' behavior, this terrible depression as to the fancied degeneracy of our times—all these are common states of morbid experience. There is only one possible way in which to relieve them; people must go forth and do duty heralding the kingdom of God. One man cannot do that for another. We might as well hope to relieve a convalescent just recovering from a fever by proposing to take his constitutional walk for him; we shall do him a much greater favor if we inspirit him and even beguile him into doing some honest errand which involves labor, and rather more labor than less. Wilberforce was asked once when he was laboring hardest, if he had in these times no anxiety, as he used to have, concerning his soul's interests; and he replied, "I do not think about my soul; I have no time for solicitude concerning self; I have really forgotten all about my personal salvation, and so I have no distress."

7. It is possible, therefore, that sometimes it may

become actually necessary for the church itself to be taught by alarm. The heralds may have grown listless. A real sense of peril is of value. "Oh, do that on our souls," prayed Richard Baxter once, "which thou wouldst have us to do on the souls of others!"

Our Lord evidently meant to have his disciples suppose his immediate advent of return was to be expected every or any day, and so keep them alert and in a measure anxious to be ready for it. I have seen in the ancient hymn-books the headings which intimated the need of pastors in the pulpit. Across the top of one page was inscribed "arousing," across another, "alarming," then "convicting" and "converting." Underneath these were grouped appropriate hymns to be sung by the congregation.

Such an arrangement makes us think of a story in the history of France. Once when Napoleon was crossing the Alps, his army grew laggard and held back. He ordered the music to play, as if on parade. This was enough for most veterans in the ranks; but he observed that the trumpeters were tame, and their feeble strains of ordinary encouragement were not sufficiently seductive to draw away the minds of the rank and file from the awful weariness of the ascent of the mountain. One regiment especially just toiled along in a spiritless and forlorn array; these he gathered together, and then he ordered the bands to play the home-songs of the peasant people, in order that thoughts of sunny scenes behind them might kindle the men's enthusiasm. Even that failed among some of the sad

platoons ; and there were some conscripts who only wept beneath an inveterate gloom. Finally, that shrewd commander marshalled the worst of all into one battalion, and put them in the lead. Then suddenly he ordered the trumpets to sound the charge of battle. That was a solitary challenge that no soldier of a French army ever refused. No one could know how they came to be attacked by a foe in the icicles of the high Alps ; but it mattered nothing. Wild, indeed, was the excitement which ran through that hitherto dispirited host, for they supposed the enemy was upon them, and the quick instinct of war instantly flashed along the lines. The very bands played with splendid clangor of brass and shrill screaming of reeds on the frosty air. What that call meant pealing among the ravines was victory !

Most men need some sort of inspiration in religious life just to keep them up to duty. Woe to the heralds with trumpets in their hands if they lapse away into a feeble silence ! Songs of parade and songs of home and songs of heaven will often do much ; but the day arrives to many in which sharp summons to supreme endeavor, and this alone, will bring eagerness and life. The blast of a battle-cry, the great blast of the church militant and sound of attack in the air, is the only thing which can make the hearts kindle ; then "the people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits."

They called the old preacher Chrysostom "the golden-mouthed," as his name means ; did anybody

ever ask the question why? Hear him tell the secret of his power: "Ah me! if I were the fittest in the world to preach the one sermon which the human race all together was to hear, gathered into a vast congregation—if I had some high mountain for a pulpit, and were furnished with a voice of brass to reach the audience wide as the earth, a voice as loud as the trumpet of the archangel, so that all men might hear me—I would choose to preach on no other text than that in the fourth Psalm: 'O ye sons of men, how long will ye love vanity and seek after leasing?'"

Wake, awake! for night is flying;
 The watchmen on the heights are crying;
 Awake, Jerusalem, at last!
 Midnight hears the welcome voices,
 And at the thrilling cry rejoices;
 Come forth, ye virgins, night is past!
 The Bridegroom comes; awake,
 Your lamps with gladness take;
 Hallelujah!
 And for his marriage feast prepare,
 For ye must go to meet him there.

Zion hears the watchmen singing,
 And all her heart with joy is springing;
 She wakes, she rises from her gloom;
 For her Lord comes down all-glorious;
 The strong in grace, in truth victorious;
 Her Star is risen, her Light is come!
 Ah, come, thou blessed One,
 God's own beloved Son;
 Hallelujah!
 We follow till the halls we see
 Where thou hast bid us sup with thee.

XXVI.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

"BUT HE, WILLING TO JUSTIFY HIMSELF, SAID UNTO JESUS, AND WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?"—*Luke 10 29.*

"WHERESOEVER two persons meet," says the Jewish proverb, "there is also always a Third." The great doctrines of the New Testament seem to have been delivered in a dialogue. That of regeneration was given to Nicodemus; that of the resurrection to Martha; that of the church to Simon Peter; that of the kingdom of truth to Pilate; that of spiritual worship to the woman at the well. We conceive too poorly of our classes with but a single scholar; we give too little heed to our discouraging audiences of one.

Our Lord's general method appears to have been so to conduct his discussions—as we notice in the instance of this Pharisee lawyer—that his companion should be compelled unwittingly to pronounce upon his own case and forced to prejudge his own questions.

The whole narrative in the tenth chapter of Luke now under examination is so familiar that we need do no more than refer to the verses, and make the steps of the story serve us as propositions.

I. Earliest of all there is indicated here that *the recognized aim of the entire gospel is simply to save human souls*: "And, behold, a certain lawyer stood

up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

This man put the crucial question, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" It is not worth while to dwell upon the word "tempted;" for at most it means no more than *tested*. The man had no malicious purpose, so far as we can see, on the one hand, nor any solemn sense of anxious inquiry on the other. It is quite enough for our present end that he shall be understood as raising the question as to his duty necessary in order to secure what himself explicitly calls "eternal life." That is the one vast question for the human race and for the ages. It shows that he appreciated the mission of the Great Teacher, and knew the errand which, above all others, Jesus came with the gospel to answer.

II. So from the reply our Lord gave to him we learn, next, that *the grand source of all information on this subject is God's word, revealed in the inspired Scriptures*: "He said unto him, What is written in the law? How readest thou? And he answered and said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right; this do, and thou shalt live."

This lawyer was confronted with a pointed quotation from his own law. It was his personal and professional business to be acquainted thoroughly with the Old Testament, which it was his daily duty to expound. He was doubtless proud to an-

swer from Deuteronomy, believing that the testimony would make for his cause. Our Lord instantly gave approval, and, furthermore, applied the truth to his intelligent conscience as directly as was possible.

And there is no need of alarm; that utterance will stand for ever. If a man only *keeps* God's law, as thus epitomized, his soul will be saved. But can any one keep that law perfectly?

III. Hence, we reach another lesson: *the main office of the law of God thus revealed is to convince men of sin*: "But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor?"

Evidently this man was not at all satisfied. There was just one subtle implication in this courteous commendation of Jesus that stung his conscience. He knew he had never obeyed the command he had quoted. Most likely there was something in our Saviour's manner which made him feel he was understood and measured and registered at a stroke. He grew "willing to justify himself" without so much as a direct charge. He perceived he needed an extenuation or an excuse. Somehow he had managed to get his history on trial; so he was suddenly put at a disadvantage in the argument so far. New issues were raised; and he could only hope for relief in a diversion. At once he seized upon the smallest of all the particulars in the Deuteronomy verse, and went off abruptly upon a fresh question.

IV. Our Lord follows his extraordinary lead, and so we have another lesson: *the law of God ac-*

cepts even humanitarianism as one of the truthful tests of a real religious character.

Then, in the story, we are offered the old and beautiful parable of the Good Samaritan. As we enter upon the study of it in detail, we must keep in mind that the first inquiry is only laid by for a moment; it will be assumed as met by the inexorable logic of the conclusion. But for the present the reach of discussion is narrowed, at the man's own suggestion, to this subordinate inquiry concerning the class of persons whom—in order to inherit eternal life—he was bound to love as affectionately as he loved himself.

1. In the beginning of the parable Jesus shows what constitutes a neighbor, meeting the lawyer's interrogatory in its exact terms: "And who is my neighbor? And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead."

Three things are included in this description of an unfortunate creature taken as a familiar example. And we may just as well now as ever call attention to the omissions and the implications and the tranquil assumptions in the story. It was a nameless man who was in trouble; his nationality is not stated; the thieves were possibly Romans or Bedouins; touching people who might be wholly as well as half dead was unclean; those who kept on the other side of the way were among the highest class of Jews, and the one humane helper was of a

hated race; one might not always happen to have oil or wine for the occasion; and who was to give a couple of days' wages to a hotel-keeper for a stranger, and lose so much time?

A neighbor, so the story went calmly on to say, is *one who is close to us in circumstances of common exposure*. All these people were in the perilous and infested road between Jerusalem and Jericho. The Levite "was at the place;" the priest "came down that way;" the Samaritan, "as he journeyed, came where he was."

A neighbor is *one who has received misfortune which might happen to any one of us in the same circumstances*. Robbers are never specially particular concerning what respectable people they plunder. It would be straining the illustration to imagine the man now speechless to have been reckless in demeanor, or insulting in flinging epithets, so as to have provoked the attack and been to blame.

A neighbor is *one who is left near us helpless, and must suffer more unless succored at once*. The force of the figure turns on that. Here was a fellow-being, stripped of his outer garments, seriously wounded, and lying in his blood. Never mind that his condition was repulsive; he was human. Nor is it worth while to mention that he did not ask for help; he was too much injured to plead for consideration. And this may perhaps explain why he appeared so ungrateful; in all the story he is not represented as offering even one word of decorous acknowledgment; he was too far gone.

2. Thus having explained what it was to be a

neighbor, Jesus proceeded to show further by the parable what it must mean to love one's neighbor as one's self.

The exhibition is made very adroitly by describing three persons in turn, two of whom signally failed in meeting the most ordinary requisitions of humanity, the other of whom went even beyond.

First, a priest: "By chance there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side." The notion comes to us that this ecclesiastic happened to catch a glimpse of the poor creature. Perhaps he was one of these refined, fastidious men, full of soft sensibility, and could not force his delicate feelings to bear the sight of abject suffering, especially when no one was near to sustain and praise him. Possibly he could pity the wounded neighbor, but could not afford just then either the time or the twopence. It may be, housed in his comfortable quarters that night in Jericho, he took it out in blaming the government for the tolerance.

Secondly, a Levite: "Likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side." No better than the other: no reason to suppose he would be: a Levite was just a little priest: "like master, like man." Still, it is fair to say he went across to see what was the matter; perhaps he found there was too much the matter. Perhaps prudence suggested the robbers might return. Now please remember these were the friends this lawyer would have stood up for; a sacred calling certainly involves sacred duties.

Thirdly, a Samaritan: "But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again I will repay thee." This benefactor was of a despised sect. But he had love in his heart and succor in his hands. He went practically to work. He helped the sufferer unhesitatingly; he dealt with him generously; he kept on doing disinterestedly; he gave aid self-sacrificingly; he continued persistently.

V. So ends the parable; and now, as we return to the story for our final lesson, we learn that *mere formal devotion cannot even abide its own test, when forced to it*: "Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise." The end of the conversation is reached because the man has no more to say. He knew he had never loved his neighbor in a way like this. Moreover, he had received no answer to his questions.

1. He had wanted to know whom he ought to consider his neighbor. Jesus made adroit reply to this by exhibiting what it was to become and to be a neighbor. He had asked, "Who is *my* neigh-

bor?" And he found he had only been told who was the *wounded man's* neighbor, and been exhorted to go and be like the Samaritan himself.

2. But the other question was by far the most momentous. He began by asking, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" This had not received a reply either, save by implication of his own admission. The logic of the dialogue was plain; only it forced serious conclusions. He had claimed that, for the salvation of his own soul, he had no further need than obedience to the law of God. Our Saviour instantly admitted this; but he then asked the man to quote this law upon which he relied. That was easy enough; the Pharisee at once gave him his creed of sufficient faith and practice: One must love God supremely and his neighbor as he loved himself. A quiet reply came back from Jesus: Very well; go now, love God supremely and your neighbor as you love yourself. Much frightened, the lawyer could only make a diversion; he shirked the point adroitly, leaving out the question concerning eternal life, and in its place substituted a less one which would render the issue impersonal: "Who is my neighbor?" Since there was nothing better to do under the embarrassing circumstances, this scribe took his chances on the plain humanitarian issue. That led straight to the parable about the good Samaritan, which parable showed him that he had no footing to stand upon, and so crushed all his expectations of being saved. Such a question involved a reciprocal relation. "Who is my neighbor?" That depends upon the decision

a man makes as to the one he feels neighborly towards. The lawyer assumed that he had a right sovereignly to choose his neighbor; our Lord opened his eyes to see that the other man had the same right, and perhaps he would not choose him. He flung this supercilious creature back upon the surmise that possibly there were some who would contemptuously avoid his company and reject such things as neighborly confidence from him, which could be proved to be not genuine. Any one must be intelligent enough to perceive that, if love to man is but a hypocrisy and an ostentatious excuse for more self-indulgence, then a grand love for God, which even the law of Moses puts far before it, is most egregiously unfulfilled.

The parable showed that a Samaritan was a better man than ordinary Jews in high position, two to one as they would run. It had in all the years hitherto been everywhere the boast with this Pharisee's people that the Jews "held no dealings with the Samaritans." They lived close by, but the Jews hated them with a haughty spite. Jesus Christ forced this man absolutely to acknowledge that the Samaritan had helped a Jew, and in this been a better neighbor to a Jew than two Jews had been with the same chances. So this scribe found that he had not kept even the lowest conditions of his Deuteronomy text, and got no help. Indeed, it the rather made against him. What would then become of the highest condition of entering into heaven? "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his

bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

Hence, we reach our conclusions. We are aware that this parable is usually employed to teach the glory and the sufficiency of humanitarianism and general benevolence to men. But its main lesson we now discover to have been concerning the hypocrisy and the uselessness of mere humane zeal as the means of obtaining eternal life. Our Lord does not direct this lawyer to go down instantly to take his stand on the Jericho road, and set about saving his soul by watching for robbed people to be helped. He told him this story in order to show him clearly that this was the precise thing he was not ready to do, even if all heaven and hell hung upon it; and that if he did, there would still remain the obligation to love God with all his heart and soul and strength and mind, just as before.

Humanitarians have no special proprietorship in the parable of the Good Samaritan. It will not be of any great comfort to them, when they come really to understand it. It was never designed to offer mere philanthropy as the condition of eternal life; but to show the hollowness of it as any sort of pretence or excuse.

Humanitarians are, on the whole, no better than other people. They have just as many jealousies, prejudices, bickerings, and social spites, for all

their public patronage of the poor and needy. There is the same answer to the question as before: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

Humanitarians all need the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ to save their souls just the same as other men and women. When a day of real decision as to character is reached, it is quite possible that "Ben Adhem's name" *may not* lead "all the rest." "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."

The monk was preaching: strong his earnest word,
 From the abundance of his heart he spoke;
 And the flame spread—in every soul that heard
 Sorrow and love and good resolve awoke:
 The poor lay brother, ignorant and old,
 Thanked God that he had heard such words of gold.

'Still let the glory, Lord, be thine alone'—
 So prayed the monk, his heart absorbed in praise:
 'Thine be the glory: if my hands have sown,
 The harvest ripened in thy mercy's rays;
 It was thy blessing, Lord, that made my word
 Bring light and love to every soul that heard.'

So prayed the monk: when suddenly he heard
 An angel speaking thus: 'Know, O my son,
 Thy words had all been vain, but hearts were stirred
 And saints were edified and sinners won
 By his, the poor lay brother's, humble aid,
 Who sat upon the pulpit stair and prayed.'

XXVII.

MARY AT JESUS' FEET.

"AND SHE HAD A SISTER CALLED MARY, WHICH ALSO SAT AT JESUS' FEET, AND HEARD HIS WORD."—*Luke 10:39.*

CHRISTIANITY is emphatically a practical religion. It is understood best when embodied in real life, no matter how homely.

Hence, to every growing believer these Scripture biographies are very valuable. Sketches of even commonplace character tell us in a plain way more about living doctrine than any measure of mere philosophic analysis; for they present us with most interesting examples of accomplished endeavor and attained grace.

In this story of Lazarus' sisters, so familiar to us all, we feel preëminently satisfied with Mary. And still, it is not clear at all that Martha was not fully her equal. Indeed, Martha was occupied with doing what Sarah of old was commended for, and what even the decorous customs of Eastern regions declare to be the primary duties of every female when a guest claims hospitality.

The moment we are introduced to these two women we discover how they differ in temperament, even while they are evidently true to the common faith of the gospel; and this finely illustrates the fact that a fair margin under divine grace

is always left for personal peculiarities. Christian life is nothing more than ordinary life in the individual swayed by a new and better purpose.

Martha seems to have been an active, bustling woman, full of professional ambition as a house-keeper. She was bent on showing a real regard for Jesus in the way of a careful and generous welcome. Mary was more quiet in her preferences—perhaps more intellectual in her tastes. Immediately on the arrival of her friend, she manifested her affectionate delight by choosing a posture of listening to whatever he might say. The entertainment she proposed was that of calm conversation on the usual themes of spiritual truth. Martha quickly bestirred herself, as if she thought that most likely Jesus would want something to eat in the meantime.

Such natural, unconscious touches of individuality are interesting beyond expression. In the end, as these two presentations come in contrast, it is Mary who receives the divine commendation. In this supreme moment of her history she takes place with Daniel, who was called the "man greatly beloved," with Abraham, who was named the "friend of God," and with David, who was declared to be the "man after God's own heart." Henceforth Mary is recorded to be the woman who cheerfully chose "the better part."

No disrespect was intended for Martha in this utterance: nor even here in our dropping her for a moment out of the story will any slight be put upon her. In the annals of inspired biography

often just one little touch of naturalness reveals an entire character. The small circumstance to which our attention is now called is Mary's choice of place in that remembered interview. "She sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word." Something in the attitude of this woman as she selected her position gives us the lesson of a simple life better than anything else. Oriental habits are usually more significant than ours. And this, of sitting at the feet of a superior, is full of meaning for Christian study.

I. In the first place, this posture exhibited her MEEKNESS.

Recollect she was the hostess, he was the guest. She was at her home; he had not where to lay his head. Yet she sat humbly before him and waited for him to speak. Most strikingly careful has the word of inspiration always been to keep us informed, as we read even the best biographies, that each human heart is naturally sinful. Mary, with all her present attractiveness, had known the year when that better part was not hers. Once tossed and turbulent, she had only lately come into peace. And here now the earliest outflow of her new life was found in her conspicuous humility.

It is well enough to commit this to memory, beyond any possibility of forgetfulness: "The meek will he guide in judgment; and the meek will he teach his way."

The first experience of a convicted sinner is the final grace of a completed saint—humility. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."

The form of expression in the text is found only once besides this elsewhere in all the Bible. The man out of whom the legion of devils had been cast was found "sitting at the feet of Jesus." There is no getting higher than this primal attainment. If the human heart would only retain in its after experience that utter renunciation of self with which it comes at the first calling for divine mercy, it would reach its serene rest in believing far earlier than it does now. More beautiful picture of meekness, embodied in an attitude as full of gracefulness as of grace, cannot be discovered in the Scriptures than this of Mary at the Master's feet.

II. In the second place this posture showed Mary's REGARD.

Customs continue in force still in Palestine which exhibit a meaning precisely similar at the present day; to sit at one's feet is to afford him the most artless and most delightful proof of closest friendship and familiar trust. Most attractive indeed appears to our imagination that spectacle at the door of the modest dwelling in Bethany, as we look upon it. Mary's heart kept solicitously in loving communion with her Saviour while she conversed with one who had shown himself her friend and the friend of the family.

There is something wonderful in the manner in which our Lord always speaks of himself to those whom he would win to the cross.

He says invariably, "Come unto ME." He seems to think that an offer of personal nearness and companionship is all that any of our fallen race

will need, either for invitation or encouragement. In the recesses of our nature the want is very deep to which this gracious revelation is intended as a supply. The patriarch Job in his affliction longed to be at one with God, and sighed, "Oh, that I knew where I might find him!" Christ came to this world in order that all men might know just where he was to be found. Our Maker became man that men might be acquainted and familiar with him. He made the angels sing in the air over one of the hills in Bethlehem, lest we should always be frightened at the thunders rolling along the Sinai ridges. The gospel removes the curse of the law.

We approach God tremblingly, as those arrested sons of Jacob drew near the throne of that awful monarch in Egypt whose cup was said to have been found in the sack of Benjamin. They never had a deeper or more welcome surprise than when they found the ruler himself, with tears in his eyes, saying, "Come near to me, I pray you, for I am Joseph your brother!" When thus any penitent human soul has urged its way before the Almighty, and found that he was Immanuel—a human brother in heart of love and welcome—and when that soul has grown familiar with the matchless fact that Jehovah is Jesus, it never wishes to depart from him. He loveth much to whom much has been forgiven. And he wants to show his love by going, abashed and affectionate, to sit at the Redeemer's feet.

III. Once more : this attitude exhibited Mary's
DOCILITY.

She went to the feet of her Master for instruction. Indeed, the language of the text presents this as the chief purpose of all. "She sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word." This was, perhaps, no novel thing for Mary. She had conversed with him many a time about those great themes of the gospel in the days before this.

There is one very beautiful figure of speech written in the twenty-fifth Psalm: "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." The term rendered "secret" is in the original Hebrew tongue "a whisper."

When a humble soul is close to the Saviour he often tells a secret to it. He whispers in the Christian's ear some sweet words of excellent promise which no one else can hear, perhaps which no one else could understand. Docility is the disposition that listens when the good Lord tells his secrets. Docility is only another word for teachableness. And these two elements of character in every case are meant to go together—meekness and docility. Really that is a fine definition which says meekness is just "love going to school." No child of God can ever exhaust his Father's knowledge. He will always have some new secret to tell; and those find truest peace who come most quickly to the tasks which are set. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me: for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls, for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

IV. In the fourth place Mary's posture showed her CONTENT.

Martha was on an errand of earnest and commonplace entertainment. Mary merely composed herself to enjoy the company. And the fact comes to view in the end that the great Teacher liked Mary in her place as a learner better than he liked Martha in her place as a mere hostess. Moreover, Martha was dissatisfied before she ended.

Under the arrangements of the gospel it has been disclosed as a beautiful surprise that they please the Lord Jesus Christ quite the most who are simply the most pleased with him. Those who seek his personal and intimate companionship are sure to give him most satisfaction. He seemed to welcome that listening Mary more than he did that energetic Martha, with all her bustling around.

It may be stated, as a general principle, that when the solicitous soul goes worriedly over the plane of grand enterprise, trying to discover some costly gift to bring to him, our great Master seems gently to say, "Come here yourself and be still; listen to me; I want not yours, but you." While the world whirls rapidly along, and the centrifugal force of its restless ambitions makes an active believer tend ever to fly away from the centre into loneliness of space, only the slender filament of personal affection to our Redeemer avails to bind us close and to hold us in. Perhaps it was just this wearing overplus of labor that made the busy Henry Martyn one day write in his journal: "It appeared to me this morning as if I had been long absent from God." Possibly he had been hurried so that he sighed for his usual rest.

Is there not an experience of quiet contentment in Christ as our teacher and companion which needs to be cultivated in many an anxious heart in these days of ours? Has not one particular medium of religious life and growth become almost unrecognized and lost among us? There is a type of listless and unaroused repose of soul which never raises a question concerning acceptance and duty; then there is a type of overmuch solicitude, continuously urging itself to enterprises of frantic and even conspicuous zeal, in order—as if by main strength—to meet the will of our Lord. We have surely enough of both of these in the range of ordinary observation.

But where is that type of meditative piety which satisfies itself with gentle communion, and grows in the sunshine of its own delighted contentment with Christ? You love to have your children sometimes sit tranquilly with you, and be as happy, just because of being in your company, as you are to know they are within reach of your caresses. God seems to love to have his children near him in silence occasionally, satisfied to sit still and hear his word.

V. Finally, this posture of Mary exhibited her SPIRITUALITY.

For one, I am willing to accept the conjecture that Martha's suggestion did not stand. It pleases me more to think that Mary in the visit of Jesus had not at all been remiss in housewifely duty; that she had already been aiding her sister in everything that was required. There appears no reason for

deeming her either indolent or ungenerous. But Mary had spiritual penetration enough to understand that what Christ had come for to their quiet home was conversation and not festivity. One thing was needful ; that she gave.

The truth is, those two sisters stand out before the ages as the representatives of two forms of religious experience which contrast duty with love. Martha moved upon a principle of duty-doing ; Mary upon a principle of love-giving. It would not be fair at all to assert that Martha was coarse or worldly-minded ; though, if she had lived in our time, it is conjectural that she would have talked much of her "covenant," and would often have employed the emphatic word "ought." Nor would it be fair to claim that Mary always walked with her eyes upturned as if gazing into heaven. Both of these sisters, according to their light and taste and judgment, were doing the best they knew how to entertain their guest.

But Martha did the housework to please him, and Mary sat at his feet to please him. Either disposition, carried to an extreme, would lead to mistake. Martha's care would run to self-congratulation almost akin to self-righteousness ; and Mary's affection would be in danger of becoming sentimental. Martha would, in our circumstances, have to be on the alert lest she should become legal and suffer from mere conscientiousness, and Mary would have to set her guard against growing visionary and mystical under mere emotion.

Take either experience by itself and it would

not be wholesome. Such extreme dispositions need to be mingled together and balanced aright. Real love for the Lord Jesus should penetrate every endeavor of matter-of-fact work in daily life; and the efficiency of practical zeal should supplement and imbue all the higher and more spiritual enjoyments of one's communion with Christ. In one word, Martha's activity would be quite consistent with Mary's composure; and Mary's contentment would enliven Martha's toil.

But meantime, if any decision must be pronounced, and so any standard of preference set up, we must not depart from the commendation which Jesus himself has left on record here. He called the choice of Mary the "better part." That may be cheerfully allowed to stand in such fatiguing times as these of ours.

It is clear that there is peril now of losing the contemplative type of Christian life out of these busy hearts of ours. The soul is so perturbed in the hurry of vigorous toiling that it is hindered from reflecting the image of Jesus; the rowers ripple the lake so that it cannot reproduce the round image except brokenly.

As a principle of religious activity and decision, love surely is more exalted than duty. A calm affection, when the question of behavior is embarrassing, leads forward more safely than an excited conscience. A heart disciplined with much spiritual teaching is a wiser guide than one which has been wearily cumbered with much serving. We want more Marys in the churches, though it is not

clear that any Marthas could be spared. Thus says and sings quaint old Quarles:

“Lord, clarify mine eyes, that I may know
Things that are good from what is good in show;
And give me wisdom, that my heart may learn
The difference of thy favors, and discern
What's truly good from what is good in part—
With Martha's trouble, give me Mary's heart.”

Perhaps this is enough for our analysis. And I am not sure there is need of anything more than merely to leave before our imagination the beautiful picture of this devout woman sitting there at the feet of her Master and ours. Only remember that in all religious relationships the Saviour is just as near us as he was to either of those sisters in Bethany. Our quick eye of faith can always see him; our alert ear of faith can always hear him; our longing heart of faith can detect the sound of his footsteps.

Is there any lesson in this story to those who are not known as the friends of Jesus? Indeed, the best of all. Christ asks every one—every impenitent man, woman, and child—to come closely to his feet. He offers the “better part” to all who will choose it. I have no doubt he talked to Mary most of the time about the work he was going to do for the salvation of her soul.

Fine reflection is it for us to close with, that the result of this kind of life fixes the fashion of the future. Heaven itself is only the experience of “sitting at the feet of Jesus.”

For the redeemed learn while they labor. Mary

and Martha unite their occupations now; only Martha is no longer cumbered, and Mary is no longer reproached. Mary helps Martha serve now, and no doubt without any bidding; and Martha goes with Mary now often in tranquil communion beside the same blessed feet as of old. The illustrious example of these lives shines for us in the simple history. And down upon us does that same kind, calm Eye continue looking, while the great Teacher points us affectionately upward.

How easy are the highest attainments of grace !
If this truly is the "better part," why need any one
lack it in our time?

If you cannot on the ocean
Sail among the swiftest fleet,
Rocking on the highest billows,
Laughing at the storms you meet,
You can stand among the sailors
Anchored yet within the bay,
You can lend a hand to help them
As they launch their boat away.

If you have not gold and silver
Ever ready to command,
If you cannot towards the needy
Reach an ever-open hand—
You can visit the afflicted,
O'er the erring you can weep;
You can be a true disciple,
Sitting at the Saviour's feet.

XXVIII.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

"AND IT CAME TO PASS, THAT AS HE WAS PRAYING IN A CERTAIN PLACE, WHEN HE CEASED, ONE OF HIS DISCIPLES SAID UNTO HIM, LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY, AS JOHN ALSO TAUGHT HIS DISCIPLES."—*Luke 11:1.*

THE simple-minded Christians of Yoruba are wont in their quaint way of speaking to call prayer "the gift of the knees." They look upon it as a spiritual grace, a thing from God, a thing to be cherished, a thing to be sought, a thing to be cultivated. As an exercise, they deem it eminently salutary; as a duty, imperative; as an acquisition, excellent. They believe its method should be studied, its temper and spirit should be searched for, its ends should be inquired after. Indeed, in their estimation, nothing which in any way concerns prayer is to be considered trivial, since prayer itself gives access unto God.

In such admirable views as these all true Christians would find much to confirm their confidence from a thorough perusal of the teachings of the inspired Word. Here in two of the Gospels our Lord gives, in answer to the request of his disciples, a sort of formula, not liturgical, but instructive, not as a basis of vain repetition, but as an orderly arrangement of particulars for their imitation. He

does not say, "In this collect pray ye," but, "After this manner pray ye."

The matchless compend to which our Lord's name has always been appended ought to be studied in detail and as a whole. In times of even temporary quiet the soldier takes the opportunity of burnishing his arms. In an hour of fortunate rest the fisherman enlarges, mends, and strengthens his net. It is well thus to watch our own instruments of acquisition and our weapons of conflict. The Lord's Prayer is an orderly sermon as well as a methodical supplication. It will bear perusal even when we are not praying. And if now, as we approach the examination of its meaning and structure, our interest in it should run low, it may deeply be feared that we have a less adequate conception of the real efficacy of devotion, the positive availability of prayer as an effective implement of grace, than the fisherman has of his ordinary tools of trade, than the soldier has of his weapons of war. It is a positive fact that this formula of our Lord is one of the means through which our daily sustenance is obtained, and through which we are enabled to conquer in the supreme exigencies of the life we live.

The Lord's Prayer! Oh, how many associations of thought and emotion, of tender memory and exultant hope, are awakened by the tranquil rehearsal of this beautiful group of petitions! Over the wide universe of living experiences these sentences have been borne upon the wings of a hundred languages for almost nineteen centuries.

Statesmen mature have vied with children of feeble years in fervency of repeating a supplication so simple and yet so majestic. So now for nearly two thousand rolling seasons since it first fell on the air amid the serene stillness of a Syrian mountain, it has followed the morning sun around the globe, and perhaps not a moment has passed during which it might not have been heard. Some one voice at least might have always been saying somewhere, "Our Father which art in heaven." Only one Being wearing a human form has been withheld from its repetition, and he was more a man of prayer than any one besides; our Lord himself could not use his own teachings to his disciples. He had never a sin which he could confess, never a debt he could ask to be forgiven. The true Lord's Prayer is that which is recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John's Gospel, the prayer our Lord prayed for his church in the ages.

I. We might call the attention of each other, as we seek to analyze this wonderful formula as a whole, to THE OFFICE IT SERVES AS A DISCLOSURE OF THE CHARACTER OF GOD to whom it is addressed.

Calmly it assumes that Jehovah is the centre of all human access and adoration. Then it exhibits his attributes by showing what might be the petitions he prefers. Three expressions of our desire turn in the beginning our wistful eyes upward towards the throne: God's name, God's kingdom, and God's will: these are seen to be very dear to him when we remember that his only-begotten

Son told his disciples to pray concerning them every time they came to the mercy-seat. In all these he claims to be admitted as supreme. Man is sinful; but the divine name must not be sullied. Man is rebellious; but the divine kingdom must be established on the earth. Man is defiant; but the divine will must remain paramount. All this is reasserted before human need can be allowed to ask any favor. Holiness comes earlier than hunger; sovereignty comes before succor; supremacy takes precedence of grace or guidance. God is in heaven, and we are on the earth; let our words be few.

Then in this prayer follow four petitions concerning our own indispensable needs. We are taught to pray for daily food, daily pardon, daily protection, daily rescue. And in the very requests we display most evidently God's benevolence, God's mercy, God's power, and God's love. We are to ask for common necessities of life and covenant blessings in the same terms. The Almighty has promised to forgive sin when it is confessed: "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out:" but then we are obliged to come to him. He has engaged to give us purity and peace: "I will also save you from all your uncleanness; I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it:" but then he has added: "I will yet for this be inquired of." Hence this prayer just throws us back upon God's fidelity and God's sovereignty likewise for its answers.

II. So in the second place, we see that this prayer is A NOBLE EPITOME OF THE ENTIRE GOSPEL which Jesus Christ came to proclaim.

In the three petitions that come earliest in order we must look to see how singularly the contemplation of God's name, kingdom, and will force upon us the recognition of man's need. In the four petitions that follow we see with equal surprise how inevitably the recognition of human need urges us upward to contemplate the divine glory.

The first part of this familiar formula seems to unroll, like the ladder in Jacob's dream at Bethel, step by step from above. "Hallowed be thy name" is an utterance let fall directly out of the bright heaven where the seraphim cry "Holy, holy, holy!" in an unceasing adoration. "Thy kingdom come" descends a little in order to embrace earth with heaven in loyal union to Immanuel as King. "Thy will be done" sets the limit for itself, descending yet further so as to rest on the world we inhabit, and implore it may vie in its full obedience with an unquestioning heaven which looks constantly to the throne of command.

Now in reverse order the petitions begin to climb up, round after round, commencing with a want the most human of all and advancing towards a want the most angelic. It sets out with our physical need—bread to eat; then it presents our moral need—pardon for guilt; then it touches upon our spiritual need—purity from defilement; thus this wonderful prayer culminates in God, where every supply is found.

And all this journey of intelligent thought is just the embodiment of the New Testament. The Lord's Prayer is therefore a gospel in a gospel.

This exercise of supplication is proposed as the link between the Creator and his creatures. Through its instrumentality infinite necessity forces its way up towards the infinite supply. It is astonishing to find so much meaning crowded into so few words. A simple series of compact sentences covers the entire nature of fallen humanity. Physical wretchedness, inborn sinfulness, mental conflict, and spiritual warfare—each has a special expression of its own. Pardon for the past, sufficiency for the present, and a great wealth of provision for the future—all these are affluently and appropriately met by the Father of lights from whom comes every good and perfect gift. The kingdoms of nature, providence, grace, and glory appear to have each furnished a key to their innermost portals, so that even the feeblest faith can unlock its way to unhindered and inexhaustible relief.

III. In the third place, we are to observe in this analysis of the Lord's Prayer A CONCISE ANNOUNCEMENT AND DESCRIPTION OF THE EVANGELICAL MISSION OF JESUS CHRIST as the Saviour of souls.

The life and work of our Redeemer can be traced almost in detail along the course of the petitions. He came to reveal God as our Father, to set up on the earth the kingdom of heaven, to manifest the will of our Creator in once more purifying the race. He came himself to be the Bread of heaven, to make a ransom from sin, to guide us by his unfailing counsel, to confront Satan on his own ground, and bring on the final glory. This was his errand,

and his entire official life of three and a half years was spent in working it out. His human career affords one of the finest commentaries conceivable upon this devotional part of his teaching. He lived a life of prayer, and this was exactly the one prayer he lived. We ourselves are good witnesses how he hallowed the name, urged forward the kingdom, and fulfilled the will of his Father. His prayer for those who crucified him was the most notable example of self-sacrificing forgiveness the world ever saw. The agony in Gethsemane chose for its very motto the acknowledgment, "Not my will, but thine, be done." He triumphed in temptation, he delivered himself even from the devil in person. Indeed, there is no petition in all the prayer that does not find some excellence in him for its illustration.

In this fact, moreover, is found the reason why he so boldly on several occasions pledged the entire Godhead to the covenant he always offered under the plan of redemption. These very petitions address in official terms the whole mystery of the divine being and power. It is God the Father whose name is hallowed, and who gives us daily bread. It is God the Son whose kingdom is to come, and who pardons our sins through the free atonement he has made. It is God the Holy Spirit whose will is done upon the earth as in heaven, and who leads us by a new and sanctifying grace out of temptation and delivers us from evil. We are thus encouraged to invoke our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier all at once, and rest ourselves upon the adorable Trinity for ever.

IV. Observe, therefore, in the fourth and last place, that this formula of devotion becomes A STANDARD AND MODEL, FOR HOLY LIVING.

It must have been intended to be one of those effectual and fervent prayers of the righteous which avail much. Hence, the more character there is in it the better. Think a moment, what positively supereminent graces would result if only men would live out exactly what they pray in this old prayer! How filial would be the spirit that every morning and evening sincerely invoked God as the one Father over all! How fraternal would be the feeling which, with a full recognition of its meaning, lingered on that one little word "our," as if, indeed, men bound to the same eternity could cherish the same parentage! What reverence there would be in the heart of him who truly hallowed the ineffable name of God! To what loyalty of earthly liege could the patriotism of a Christian yield preference, if only his constant devotion prayed and his life followed the petition, "Thy kingdom come"! Is there any resignation on earth better than that of one who is bearing the divine will, or any active zeal beyond that of one who is earnestly performing it? All true supplication culminates in praise; and "whoso offereth praise," says God himself, "glorifieth me."

And then, on the other hand, even in the human petitions how affecting is that childlike sense of dependence which delights to ask openly for bread from our heavenly Parent's hand! Of course, in the item of forgiveness there would be necessary most

extensive reaches of grace, but how fine always is the show it makes! Careful demeanor would grow out of the admitted temptation; alertness and watchfulness would be the fruit of all salutary dread of evil. So when the full round of heavenly graces prayed for had come in, perhaps we can begin to imagine how hearty and triumphant would be the happy ascription of supreme glory unto a God so kind and yet so sovereign as the God we worship.

Here, then, within reach of every one is an easy test of piety. How near are you to the standard of the Lord's Prayer to-day? It may be difficult at times to search out successfully the subtle evidences of grace. But anybody can know beyond a peradventure whether his life will square with the manifest rule of holy consistency in the prayer he repeats for twenty years or more with his children. He can tell, if he desires really to know, whether he forgives those who injure him as freely and fully as he hopes himself forgiven by God. He can decide whether he is meek and docile, submissive to the divine will, and active in advancing the glory of the Messiah's kingdom of grace.

Now it so happens that there is a large class of people who are not very fond of prayer, especially of extemporaneous prayer; who generally abjure prayer-meetings. They often urge somewhat strenuously that a prayer like the Lord's Prayer is quite sufficient for them. To such persons comes the quiet question whether the Lord's Prayer is not rather more than sufficient for their registers of grace and attainment up to this time. Do they live

as they pray? Do they find their behavior on the plane of a full level with the petitions they commend so strongly? Perhaps they will go on singing the verse once more :

“Only, O Lord, in thy dear love,
Fit us for perfect rest above;
And help us, this and every day,
To live more nearly as we pray.”

O friends! let us remember that heaven is the only place where we shall never hear the Lord's Prayer again. It will not be needed in that home of the blessed. There in all the untold ages God's name is hallowed, his kingdom has come, his will is done. There bread will be no longer needed, debts will not accrue, temptations will be excluded, and the devil will not be permitted to enter. Pray on then, pray always! And by-and-by we can keep singing the old doxology at the end for ever and ever!

XXIX.

THE RICH FOOL.

“AND HE SAID UNTO THEM, TAKE HEED, AND BEWARE OF COVETOUSNESS: FOR A MAN’S LIFE CONSISTETH NOT IN THE ABUNDANCE OF THE THINGS WHICH HE POSSESSETH.”—*Luke 12:15.*

IN the twelfth chapter of Luke’s Gospel we are introduced to a gentleman of respectability belonging to a former time. What we are permitted to learn concerning him at first sight is calculated to make a somewhat favorable impression and entitle him to notice.

“But God said unto him—Thou fool!” Our respect, therefore, receives a check before we leave the story. And our fathers gave to the parable, as in the more meditative days of long ago they used to study it soberly, the name of “the rich fool.”

I. Let us in the outset look at some of the ATTRACTIVE CHARACTERISTICS which this man exhibited.

I. For one thing, he was *wealthy*. Observe, the Bible never is found joining in with any wild tirade against riches. Inspiration has not even said, as some quote it, that money is the root of evil. It is written that “the love of money is the root of all evil.” But this is afterward explained so that there can be no misapprehension: “Which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”

Thus the sin is resolved into covetousness; and what is rebuked is the breaking of the Tenth Commandment. On the whole, it is a good thing to be rich; great usefulness can be attained by silver and gold.

2. This man in the parable was *successful* in business. That shows well as an evidence of his shrewdness and industry: "And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully."

He seems to have been represented as a landholder of some sort. He had not store-room enough to hold the yield of his ground. This is always a pleasant sight to see. One who is rapidly enlarging his fortune by legitimate enterprise has a certain claim upon our esteem for his thrift and ingenuity. He is considered a benefactor to the world at large who makes two spears of grass grow where only one grew before, for he thus augments the general wealth.

3. Furthermore, this was a *prudent* man. He shows himself in the recorded soliloquy here as being considerate concerning the future: "And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?"

We naturally feel distrust of all men who are content to spend as they go. "The hand of the diligent maketh rich; he becometh poor that deal-eth with a slack hand." We praise a man like this, who will not run into sudden lavishness of expenditure because it happens that he can afford it. We say he is a good manager of money. And

the picture which rises before our minds thus far is attractive and commendable. It is that of a prudent, prosperous proprietor, seeking investments for a surplus unexpected.

II. But now let us notice some EXTRAORDINARY MISTAKES which this wealthy man made.

1. To begin with, he made a mistake in *thinking there was no place for produce except in barns*. He was perplexed in his mind because he actually did not know what to do with the yield of his surprising harvests. His very riches embarrassed him. When a man has enough, he ought to be satisfied. When he has more than that, his cares are increased. One makes a wretched blunder who supposes he can do nothing more with an income dropped upon him from an extraordinary season than just to put it away with the rest and look to it for an increase by usury still further to come.

Some of us are inclined to start the question whether there was no other roof in Palestine besides that which covered such a landholder's barns! We wonder if all the widows around him had competence, and all the orphans were cared for! It is not wise to suffer the chance to pass of doing the good which great wealth furnishes. It is a fool's question to ask where one can stow away money; it is the part of a wiser man to ask how he can do God service with the use of it. Just that is what this man did not think of doing.

2. So we see another mistake he made: he *supposed his riches would be a comfort to him when they were hoarded*. Whereas they became then only a

care and a burden: "And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods."

There is no folly more senseless, and none more common, than is exhibited when one imagines satisfaction is to come from the mere possession of wealth. Money is our instrument, not our end. When it goes beyond that, it owns us, instead of our owning it. The nearest approach to the old disease of the possession of devils that we have in modern times is exhibited when a man is possessed of the money he thinks he possesses.

"A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Christian men should not waste their energies in showing which can build the highest warehouses and which can construct bolts of the safest lock. This rich fool said in effect, "The fruits of the ground are perishable; I will store them lest I lose them." A most illogical form of reasoning; for thus the poor famished, thus the produce spoiled. It is time to learn that there is literal doctrine and undeniable truth in the Scripture rule: "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." Giving away sometimes keeps better than hoarding. "The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall also be watered himself."

3. The third mistake this man made was worse than any one of the others: he *left out of his thoughts all consideration of the infinite God who made and owned him*. He says "my" barns, "my" goods,

“my” fruits, and even “my” soul. It would seem that he imagined he was the absolute proprietor of all he touched in two worlds. He fell into the radical error of forgetting he was at the best only the steward of God who had sent him his unusual harvests.

How far it is allowable to strain this parable for our present need of instruction it is not at all necessary just now to inquire. For surely we can leave it at any moment, when we wish to assert that in our day of gospel light there are laid upon us fresh and wider responsibilities. Scholars tell us that the word “conscience” does not occur so much as once in all the earlier books of the Bible. In a single instance it seems to be suggested: “Curse not the king, no, not in thy thought.” (Eccl. 10:20.) The word “thought” there used has a marginal reference that gives *conscience* as a permissible substitute. It looks as if the venerable translators felt a need of our familiar New Testament term. Perhaps here in his parable Jesus purposely left out any consideration of this business man’s interior life as swayed by such an experience as we recognize. But it is not possible that there should be any question now concerning that.

We—we who have in these later times the epistles of inspired men like Paul and John, with their energy of revelation and earnestness of warning as to the existence and office of conscience—cannot fail to see how frightfully this rich man erred when he entered upon his building project with no thought of his Maker either in his speech or in his

heart. Conscience is the vicegerent of God in the human heart, and must be heeded.

4. But this mistake inevitably led to another: he seems to admit *that his soul has no higher needs than his body*: "And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."

The word here is "dialogued;" he is pictured as holding a sort of complacent conversation with himself. To us there is an intense impression of sadness in his use of such expressions as are recorded. He talks to his immortal soul in terms of the grossest familiarity, as if that soul ought to be grateful to him for his generous foresight in having made quite sufficient provision for all its future. Do souls need luxurious ease? Are they to be for evermore content with having enough to eat and to drink? Are souls to be congratulated by rich people in this unctuous way just because there is much fodder stored now in the new barns? Is being merry what the image of God in man has been hankering after all these years?

Most of us have read the story of the shipwrecked mariner on an inhospitable island perishing with famine. One day a box was suddenly swept ashore, and he rushed eagerly to loosen its fastenings; but he fell back in fainting disappointment and consternation, saying, "Alas, it is only some passenger's pearls!" When this soul of ours is at last off upon the eternal shore, unready and unfurnished, will its undying hunger be appeased with indigestible jewels of earthly opulence alone?

III. We must come back to the parable now once more, in order to consider some SEVERE REBUKES which this rich man received.

1. In the first place, God *summoned his soul away from him*: "But God said unto him, 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?'"

That word "required" was the technical term in those days for the collection of dues. Every rich Jew that heard Jesus knew precisely what it meant. It was a business expression used to signify exaction. The man's soul was only lent him on demand; God took it away without even so much as one day's grace.

Opulent men grow old just like other people. Some of them also die young and in middle life just like other people. As life is running on in our great American wear and tear of money-getting, it is coming to be more and more observable that they are apt to die suddenly. The strife of the street saps the vitalities of many human constitutions. There are vast solitudes bred by unusual increase of property, and the work often does much, while the worry does more, to shorten life. Death sometimes comes in the night.

2. In the second place, *this man's property was ignominiously scattered*. Those new barns were never builded, after all. There is a striking rhetorical power here in the use of the question rather than of the assertion. The vagueness of the certain distribution of hoarded fortunes is what constitutes its worst unwelcomeness to the owner. Oh, what

stores of enforced wisdom this reluctant old world has been obliged to acquire on this its most sensitive point! It actually sounds like irony to raise such a question in times like ours. How have we seen wills broken, legacies diverted, fortunes squandered, and all the favorite plans of years thwarted on the instant, by some unwise and unanticipated heir!

“For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise man? as the fool. Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit. Yea, I hated all my labor which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labor wherein I have labored, and wherein I have showed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity.” It was the wisest man in the world that said that; and his son was a fool—or a knave, which was undoubtedly worse. “So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

Mark, then, the conclusion of the whole matter: “But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”

Will the thousand daily histories never teach men wisdom? Think over Hugh Miller's words: "The climax is a favorite figure in the book of Providence. God speaks to us in his dispensations; and in the most eloquent turns of his discourse, piles up instance upon instance with sublime and impressive profusion."

There was one, we will say, who a year ago dwelt in a beautiful mansion; he rode with a splendid equipage, he fared sumptuously every day; he joined field to field and house to house on the costliest thoroughfares; his family were pampered at home and flattered in the circles of fashion; he was free and lordly, and on occasion could be a little supercilious (if he tried) at the banker's counter or in the commercial board: he was rich.

But there fell a change upon the market. The bubble of this individual's importance collapsed. A day came when his riches made themselves some wings and flew away as if they had been birds going south. His neighbor dared to offer him the usual price for his carriage. Then his rival in business took one of us by the button one morning and in a complacent mood led him into that former owner's conservatory, and as he offered him a few rare flowers said hatefully, with scarcely covered spite, "Old So-and-so built up nicely here; when he broke I bought it at a bargain: going in to-day!"

"Old So-and-so"! Just where is that man now? There was a rumor of disaster; there was a gossip for a week, then there was a crash and after that a sale; we all heard of it. Soon the

moths began to flutter around the new candle. Where is he to-day? In some modest house the prince-merchant has found a silent shelter. The old friends have failed him. Society is rolling on in the same grooves; but at this moment it turns over upon him as once he made it turn over upon others. A statue off its pedestal is only a stone—often a very useless stone. “Thou fool! this night thy soul:”—his *soul* is required; where is the man after that? There are traceries of beautiful cut-work on the family tomb; he put that up before he lost his money. Now when a man thinks of it all, how the worm down below mocks the masonry! We cannot make biers beautiful. Riches cannot help the dead. Knells are just as doleful when struck on silvered bells. Is everybody a “fool”?

Oh, a truce to this hard, wild contest with God! Cease to lay up treasures for yourself alone, when you might be “rich toward God.”

XXX.

TRUST IN OUR HEAVENLY FATHER.

"YOUR FATHER KNOWETH THAT YE HAVE NEED OF THESE THINGS."—*Luke 12:30.*

"TAKE therefore no thought for the morrow." The word "therefore" intimates a close connection with what has gone before; indeed, a logical conclusion from what has just been argued. Hence the whole passage comes legitimately under our study on the present occasion.

I. Our earliest inquiry must be concerning the nature of this experience which our Lord seems so urgently to deprecate.

1. He cannot be understood as meaning that intelligent human beings should merely give themselves lazily and listlessly into his care, with no trades or industries or occupations. This is contrary to all teachings of God's Word.

2. Commentators tell us that, in this part of the sermon on the Mount, the word "thought" is used in the antiquated sense of anxiety—a foreboding solicitude about the future, a settled habit of forecasting the morrow as if trouble were surely coming then. "Be not therefore anxious for the morrow; for the morrow will be anxious for itself."

So the Revision phrases the sentence better. More than half the worry of the world comes from

the mere apprehension of things which, after all, do not happen. And still men tire themselves out in the daytime, and toss in their beds at night, brooding over what may perhaps come when the next sun sets.

3. There is need that we consider the inner sentiment of mind and heart which this over-anxiety implies. Habit is second nature to most men. Has it never occurred to you that a foreboding disposition in any person generally draws out of life exactly what it puts in? A piece of music sometimes pleases a listener in a conference meeting; sometimes it makes him petulant. In my day (and most preachers have the same experience) I have known one who heard to go away fairly unenthusiastic, indeed somewhat chill and displeased with the sermon; yet afterward, when the identical discourse was repeated, that man has sent me a letter to say how much he enjoyed the whole service. Just so you pass a beggar in the street, always the same old mendicant on the usual corner when you are going to business. One day possibly it is your good fortune to be in a fine and genial mood of feeling; your abundant gift and your cordial word to the man show that fact at once. If another day you are cross and find the fellow in your path, you cannot discover in him anything except that which makes you crosser. You turn him off so quickly and so sharply that he wonders what he has been doing now to make you hate him. The explanation is found in the fact that you put into what you see just what you are. The beggar is more disagreeable because

(as you felicitously phrase it) you gave him "a piece of your mind." So you did in a truer sense than perhaps you imagined at the moment when you said it; your mood of mind and heart was transferred; things offended and even provoked you because you were perverse for other reasons then.

4. And further, we notice that the interior feeling soon forces itself into outer show. Men often vent violent and hateful reproaches on their wives and children at home simply because some things have gone badly in business, and they have nothing else they dare loose their spite upon. What they see in the conduct of those around them is offensive and exasperating by reason of its being incongruous to their anxious thought. In another fit of feeling they would admire and praise what now they berate.

5. By-and-by this habit of carping grows on one, and he begins to be bad-tempered. So everywhere some people are sure to become ill-natured, harsh, cynical, backbiting, and envious, increasing in all that is hard and ungraceful; and that merely because they always look upon the dark side of things, and habituate their minds to forebode poverty and failure, misery and want, coming on them.

II. This, then, is the mood of mind and heart which our Saviour reprehends when he says: "Take no thought for the morrow." At once he goes on to tell his hearers concerning the moral quality of such a disposition. Hence our second inquiry must be answered here as to the real evil which, as he says, is inherent in it.

1. Among the elements of this feeling, as the very first, stands worldliness. When a man allows himself to consider the want of wealth as the greatest of all calamities for him and for his children, he simply becomes a mammon-worshipper. He avouches Mammon, the heathen deity of riches, to be his Lord and his God. And any nominal Christian especially, who broods over the future, and considers himself a ruined man in case that he becomes poor, has cut his soul off from its hope, and has joined it on with the fame and the fashion, the luxury, the looseness, and the lust of the world, the flesh, and the devil. We cannot keep faith with Immanuel and Satan. "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

The habit of our age is to let the toilsome activities of daily labor eat out all the spiritual graces. Far and wide over this land the people are aroused, alert, and exigent, bridging valleys, tunnelling mountains, damming up streams. Spindles are unceasingly whirling, forges are roaring, hammers are clanging. As a nation we are growing actually cold-blooded and matter-of-fact. Bone and sinew are taking the place of imagination and sensibility. The full-rounded proportions of the past are all gone. The tranquil days of long ago are ended. Social and domestic affection is largely shrunk away before the reckless demand for more wiry, more agile endeavor.

Now it here concerns us to note this only so far as it bears upon Christian life and religious character. It burns over all the verdured plains of feeling like an August sun. It beats off all the grass and flowers from the fields of common existence, and renders them deplorably dry and dusty. The struggle for competency and wealth absorbs all enthusiasm. A hurrying business man, whose heart is all trodden down under the feet of pushing bargains and rushing investments, is a hopeless subject for any emotional experiment whatsoever. You cannot make him feel "the joy of the Lord," if you try. He cannot even become genial in his temperament without something to eat or to drink. Bent, he is utterly unable to unbend. He makes wild work with even the least appeal to his religious fervor or his imaginative love. His sensibilities have only a material—often only a pecuniary—avenue through which they can be touched. When he retires from business he is worse and not better. He is just as much a worn-out machine as is a loom in a factory garret; for it never could do anything but shoot a shuttle, and it cannot do that now; and he never could do anything but make a trade for a profit, and he cannot do that now.

2. But besides this worldliness as an evil element in anxious thought, there is also stupidity. A kind of illogical unreasonableness is rooted in the mind of a foreboding Christian. He seems always to forget that the life is more than meat, and the body more than raiment: for he wastes life in a dull endeavor to secure food and clothes. "And he

said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. Consider the ravens; for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them. How much more are ye better than the fowls? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? Consider the lilies how they grow; they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, That Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

It is a shame for any able-bodied man to fear he cannot get a living for his family, while the merest "fowl" in his yard finds no trouble in rearing a new big brood every year. It ought to be a mortification to any Christian woman to spend a day in fitting fine dresses, and then to discover that the "lily" she carries is more modestly beautiful than she is. It is simply stupid to fritter away one's energy in merely caring for one's self.

We ought to attach great meaning to the passages in the Scriptures which speak of the affectionate feeling of our Master for his own children. "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing." "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." You perceive that these are very strong figures of speech; they are

drawn from those relations in life which are the tenderest and most provident. They all make allusion to the family bonds and confidences of men. Home is the symbol of heaven, and God is just our Father. Can anybody be so dull as to imagine he will not take care of us?

3. Hence we see, in the third place, there is also the highest irreligiousness as an element in this over-anxiety for the future. For one to be toiling and planning, moping and fearing, in order to gain the mere necessities of life; to be asking what he shall eat and what he shall drink and where-withal he shall be clothed; to be positively afraid that when to-morrow comes it will find him hungry and homeless—this is nothing more nor less than rank impiety. Such a course is virtually atheistic. For one might as well have no God whatever as to live and act as if our Father in heaven could not be trusted even to keep the promises he has already made. “If then God so clothe the grass, which is to-day in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith! And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after; and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you.”

Now the bearing of this thought is exceedingly wide. We are watched by those around us. Our words are interpreted by our deeds. And our be-

havior is much more influential than our speech. When poor working men and women hear us talk about God's faithful providence, and soon see how absurdly we deny it by our croaking and brooding over the future, then our hold on them for good is utterly broken. The world continually notices how eloquent Christians are, when, in the conference meetings, they talk about the ways of wisdom as being the ways of pleasantness and the paths of peace. But what must people think of our consistency, if they notice our slow steps and flagging zeal? How many souls by the year are won to the cross by solemn dignity, strait manners, stiff garments, long faces, downcast mien and lachrymose tones of voice? To be sober-minded is one thing, to be morose-minded is another. And I have no hesitation in declaring that more injury can be done by the mere example of a Christian who caricatures piety by carping at divine providence and by distrusting divine care, than can be remedied by a score of others whose very countenances shine with the blessedness of God. For men welcome all excuse for hardening their hearts. When a member of the Christian church says to his neighbor: "I know God and I love God, I worship God and I serve God, but I cannot trust God to take care of me, as he says he will," it is sheer mockery. It is worse than a sincere atheism; for it is practical atheism with a sanctimonious cant added to it. It is as if the man said: "I come unto God, and I believe that he is, but I do not believe that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him,"

III. Thus have we considered the meaning of our Lord when he gives his warning against anxious thought concerning worldly affairs; also we have studied the tests by which its moral quality as a dangerous sin is known. We have now to consider only the dissuasives he suggests in view of the peril and pain it brings upon all who indulge it.

1. He tells us, first, that God is well acquainted with all our wants. "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." Let every Christian be patient, frugal, industrious, and trustful, and the Lord will certainly take care of him.

2. Then he tells us that we must turn our minds off from mere material benefits. There are some things higher than food and raiment; these need to be attended to earliest. We need pardon for our sins and reconciliation with God.

3. After this comes the promise that our Lord will provide for us all that is needful in worldly matters. The more religious one is, the better clothed and the better fed he may expect to be.

4. He tells us that the highest lesson of all is concerning the kingdom of God and its righteousness. Remember that conduct is often more impressive than a sermon. There is great force to be attached to the one word "winneth" in the familiar text: "He that winneth souls is wise." Souls are never frowned into the kingdom. They are invited and persuaded, they are attracted and allured; but they are never coerced nor frightened to come to the cross, never scolded nor nagged into the love of

God or the church. Men reason thoughtfully ; and then they ask each believer in turn, " In this great worry of a world what does your religion do for you, and what has it to offer to me now in making me stronger or happier?"

5. Then, finally, he pictures the mood of feeling in which his children should persistently seek to live. Cease trying to manage the world. Never forecast the future as if it were your care. Trust God.

Lord, for to-morrow and its needs, I do not pray ;
Keep me, my God, from stain of sin just for to-day.

Let me no wrong or idle word unthinking say ;
Set thou a seal upon my lips just for to-day.

Let me be slow to urge my will—prompt to obey ;
Help me to sacrifice myself just for to-day.

Let me in season, Lord, be grave, in season gay ;
Let me be faithful to thy grace just for to-day

Let me both diligently work and duly pray ;
Let me be kind in word and deed just for to-day.

So for to-morrow and its needs I do not pray ;
But keep me, guide me, hold me, just for to-day.

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