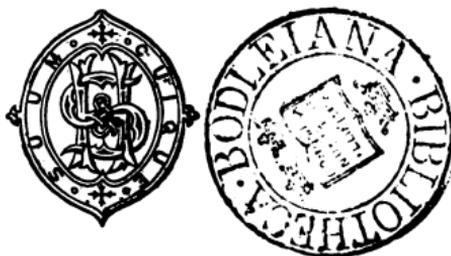


HEART THOUGHTS.

BY

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HEART-THOUGHTS.

THE GREAT CHOICE.

ALLOW me the privilege of addressing a few plain, affectionate words to one who is yet without a hope in Christ. I address you, my friend, as the possessor of an immortal soul. In the language in which Moses addressed Israel before he went up to his mountain death-bed, "I set before you life and death: *choose life!*" Every one has the power of choice. God made you a free moral agent. The very fact that you are now reading these lines proves that you have the power of choice. Every Christian in the world *is* a Christian simply because he accepted Christ when He was offered. Every impenitent sinner is yet one because he *chooses to be*. There is no decree of the Almighty which forbids your having eternal life, if you desire to secure it. Perhaps you cavil at "God's *decrees.*" Just look at *this* one: "He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved." Or at this one: "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of

the wicked." Or at this one : "Whosoever cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." God's immutable decrees, in fact, secure salvation to every penitent believer and follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When Joshua submitted the great alternative, "*Choose* ye this day whom ye will serve," he addressed his auditors as free agents. When Christ said to Andrew and James and John, "*Follow me*," He talked to them as rational beings, who had the power of choice. If they could not "follow" Him, why did He ask them? When Simon Peter stood up before the mass-meeting in Jerusalem, and exclaimed, "Repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost," he addressed them as free agents; and three thousand of them accepted the Divine Saviour.

If you ask me what is meant in the Bible by "*life*," I would answer : It is the favour of God ; it is the pardon of your sins ; it is the sustaining strength to do right ; it is a union of heart to Jesus ; it is a Divine support in the last hour, and everlasting holiness and joy beyond the grave. "*Death*" is the opposite of life : it is the absence of life. Spiritual death is the unbroken dominion of sin in this world, and the unending punishment of sin in the world to come. In this world the God of mercy says to every one,

“I set before you life and death : *choose life.*” In the next world, the Divine and all-righteous Judge will say to those who choose life, “Come, ye blessed of my Father ; inherit the kingdom prepared for you.” To those who choose death He will say, “Depart, ye cursed !” and they “shall go away into everlasting punishment.”

But you may say, “I do *not* choose death. It is impossible that any sane person should deliberately choose to be eternally wretched, when he might be eternally happy.” This seems very plausible, and there is a sense in which it is true. Men do *not* commonly select wretchedness and ruin as the end of their voluntary endeavours. They do not set success and happiness on the one hand and ruin on the other, and then calmly choose to be ruined. Yet it is equally true that men are continually selecting and pursuing courses that inevitably *lead to ruin.*

Here is a young man setting out in life. Of course his preference is to become rich and prosperous. But he chooses also to lead a career of indolence and thriftlessness, which inevitably brings him to poverty, and keeps him there. His poverty is the fruit of his own conduct. Again, no man voluntarily chooses the disgrace and disease and horrors of drunkenness. But thousands, alas ! *do choose* to tamper with the

wine-glass and the brandy-bottle, and their own free choice brings them surely to the drunkard's self-damnation. Did that poor girl who gave her heart and hand to the showy vagabond who stole her affections choose to become a wretched wife? Yet she did choose to marry him; she did it in spite of reason and conscience, and dearly does she pay the consequences of her choice.

In the same manner, my impenitent friend, when you decide to reject the knocking Saviour from your heart, you do choose to risk the awful consequences. When you choose to live on in sin, to follow the devices and desires of your own lusts, and to grieve the Holy Spirit of love, you deliberately choose everlasting death. You choose the road that leads to death. If you are lost, it will be your own fault. It will not be your heavenly Father's fault: He says to you, "Choose life!" It will not be the loving Saviour's fault: He says to you, "Look unto me, and live!" It is not the fault of that patient Spirit of truth, who is now pleading with you to renounce sin and accept the atonement offered to you in the gospel.

It is a delightful thought that your encouragements to seek life are so abundant. The word of God overflows with encouragements. You may grow dis-

couraged in seeking wealth, or health, or office, or great literary attainments; but no living man or woman need despair of gaining salvation. If you seek it in time, and seek it rightly, it is yours. The only time you are sure of is the *present*; and the only way is, through penitence and faith in the crucified Jesus. Eternal life is now within your reach. It does not depend on intellect, or wealth, or social patronage, or on the will of another. It depends on your own willingness to accept the Saviour, and by Divine help to serve Him faithfully. God will not hinder you, and Satan cannot hinder you, if you are in earnest. The only being who can destroy you is your own self. God is love; and God sets before you life and death, and says to you with infinite tenderness, "Choose life! Give me thy heart!"

"There for thee the Saviour stands,
Shows His wounds, and spreads His hands;
Christ is love,—this know and feel!
Jesus weeps, and loves thee still."

Not long since, a friend came into my study in deep distress of mind: she had been awakened by hearing me preach from the words, "Choose life." She wished to know what she should do. I said, "You have been opposing God all your life. You

have shut Christ from your heart. He seeks admission. Let Him in. Give yourself all up to Him. Choose life." I prayed with her, and besought her to yield herself to Jesus while we were on our knees. After rising up, I handed to her Newman Hall's blessed little book, "*Come to Jesus.*" She laid it down, and modestly said, "I want now to pray too." We knelt once more together; and in sweet, artless language she just poured out her whole soul in penitent petition, and gave herself up to Jesus. She rose with brightened countenance, and said, "I feel more peaceful now." She had made the GREAT CHOICE; she had given her heart to God; and on the next Sabbath she stood up and made a public profession of her faith in the Redeemer. My friend, you can make the same choice. It is only a moment's work, when you are in earnest. God offers you His help. I have set before you life and death. Before you lay down this book determine to CHOOSE LIFE.



THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN.

HOW hard it is for physicians to undeceive a consumptive patient! It is so painful that the office is seldom done. The victim of that flattering disease—which so often selects the fairest for its prey—tells us every day that she is better, and “will soon be out again.” The hectic flush which she mistakes for returning health is only a cunning mask behind which death steals in to strike the doomed one to the heart. Such is the deceitfulness of disease.

We could to-day summon ten thousand slaves of the stimulating cup, and not one of them would acknowledge that he intends to become a drunkard. The fatal symptoms of their sin are all too legible in the flushed face, the unsteady gait, and the tipsy talk; and yet they stoutly insist that they “never take more than is good for them,” and that they “know just when to stop.” This is Satan’s catechism, which every tippler learns. Such is the deceitfulness of evil habit.

Now, just as the victims of consumption or of cancer deceive themselves, just as the inebriate tries

to conceal from himself the fatal serpent in his social glass, so do all impenitent persons deceive themselves as to the nature and enormity of their sins. They regard all sin against God as a light thing. Dishonesty in trade, falsehood, adultery, theft, treason, they understand perfectly to be exceedingly injurious to their victims and to society. But while they are keenly alive to every trespass against commercial integrity or social order, they utterly belittle all *heart-sin* against a holy God. They regard it as a trifle; and secretly a vast majority of impenitent sinners hold that a future hell is an improbability. I once heard a learned judge say that the idea of future punishment was "a ghost story, only fit to frighten weak-minded women." What his infidel lips expressed coarsely, millions who are *not* "infidels" believe in their inmost hearts. Their "hearts are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" as to the very essence of sin, and as to the extent of their own guiltiness.

We do not exaggerate the importance of a right estimate of sin. This is a vital point in the soul's salvation: it is more than a technic of theology. The nature of sin and its inherent ill-desert is a precise point where the rejectors of future punishment diverge from the path of truth. Only admit that sin is an infinite offence against Jehovah, and their error

perishes in a moment, under the direct threatenings of God's word. It is at this point that Socinians leave us,—and leave their Bibles too. They assume that sin is a light and venial thing that may be pardoned without an atonement; and then they discover no need of a Divine Redeemer to “make a propitiation” for the sinner. When a man is thoroughly convicted of his own guiltiness before God, he is seldom disturbed with any Socinian doubts as to the *necessity* of grasping Christ Jesus as his only Saviour. Sin appears to him so abominable an outrage against the holy and loving God, that he can understand why a Redeemer is indispensable, and why he should accept the all-sufficient One whom the gospel offers. In fact, this matter of estimating sin rightly, lies at the dividing-spot between truth and error, with myriads of persons. This is the starting-point toward Calvary and heaven; or it is the “stumbling-point,” whence they precipitate themselves downward toward perdition.

After all, *what is sin?* It is a transgression of the law of God, and it proceeds from the heart. It lies not only in evil performances, but in evil purposes. If sin is committed against God, what does God Himself say about it? He pronounces it in His word to be “exceeding sinful,”—“the abominable thing

that He hates." He compares it to a loathsome leprosy. He declares that the "wages of sin is death." He declares that even the "evil thoughts" which proceed from the heart "defile a man," and that nothing that defileth shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. Many passages in God's word flash red with holy wrath against sin as the stupendous crime against the government of Jehovah.

Human history is the record of what sin has wrought from Eden to this hour. Sin gives birth to every real sorrow. Sin mingles every cup of temptation. Sin breeds every war. Sin blanches every corpse. Sin digs every grave. Sin weaves every shroud. Sin kindles the fires of future torment. As Chalmers has nervously phrased it, "The waste and the havoc of centuries that are gone, and the waste and havoc of centuries yet to come, all reverberate in one awful voice, 'Death hath passed upon all men, for *that all have sinned.*'"

The crowning evidence of the exceeding enormity of sin is seen on Calvary. What reared the cross? What wove the crown of thorns? What mingled the bitter cup which the suffering Jesus prayed "might pass from Him"? What slew the Lamb of God? Heaven, earth, and hell all answer *Sin*. On that background of infinite love—the love of Him who

died for sinners—human guilt stands out with a midnight malignity of blackness!

Impenitent friend! come up to Calvary, and see yourself in the light of that wonderful scene! See what sin is doing there, what your sin deserves, and what Jesus bore there for you, the sinner. Confess there what you cannot deny, that you are rejecting Him who shed His blood for you. Confess that you are making a mock at sin, and treating it as a trifle. Confess that you are among Christ's crucifiers. And then pretend, if you dare, that you are not guilty. If those "who despise Moses' law perish, of how much sorer punishment will you be thought worthy, who have trodden under foot the Son of God, and have counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing?"

That men who are guilty of such a crime against the loving Jesus should esteem it a small and venial matter, is the strongest proof of the "deceitfulness of sin." Other arguments cluster about it; but we have no space to cite them. We might remind you of the thousand false promises sin makes, but never keeps. It promises happiness, and pays in remorse. It smiles and smiles, and "murders while it smiles." It whispers, "Ye shall *not* surely die," but its wages are death everlasting.

We have read of a singular tree that forcibly illustrates the deceitfulness of sin. It is called the *Judas-tree*. The blossoms appear before the leaves, and they are of brilliant crimson. The flaming beauty of the flowers attracts innumerable insects, and the wandering bee is drawn to it to gather honey. But every bee that alights upon the blossoms imbibes a fatal opiate, and drops dead from among the crimson flowers to the earth! Beneath this enticing tree the earth is strewed with the victims of its fatal fascinations. That fatal plant that attracts only to destroy is a vivid emblem of the deceitfulness and deadliness of sin. For the poison of sin's bewitching flowers there is but *one remedy*. It is found in the "leaves of the tree of life," that groweth on Mount Calvary.



PAYING THE FARE.

THAT was an expensive voyage which Jonah made when he “fled from the presence of the Lord” and ran away to Tarshish. He found a ship just ready to sail, and he “*paid the fare thereof.*” But he paid dearly. How much money he paid we do not know; but it was a dead loss, for he never got to Tarshish. He paid away his credit as a servant of the Lord. He made a hard draft on his *conscience*, and that is always a dear bargain for any man. Nothing hurts us like the hurts we give to our conscience.

After Jonah’s sinful voyage began, the second part, and the hardest part, of the bill came in. For the Almighty sent after him the policeman of a mighty *gale*, which caught hold of the vessel and well-nigh shivered it into wreck. Poor Jonah had not paid his fare to the bottom of the sea; but there is no help for him. The frightened crew pitched him out into the deep, and but for God’s interposing mercy he might have been devoured by the sharks instead of being preserved by that “great fish” which was sent to transport him safely to the dry land. A dear voyage that!

The prophet who ran away from God lost his money, lost his time, lost his credit, lost the approval of his conscience and of his God, and would have lost his life but for a miraculous interposition. All this was the "fare" which one man paid for *sinning*.

But many of our readers may be committing the same terrible mistake. For no path seems to most people so easy and pleasant to travel, as the path of sinful inclination. It is what the Bible calls "walking in the way of a man's *own heart*, and in the sight of his *own eyes*." One man, for example, is entirely absorbed in making money. When this becomes a greedy appetite, the money-lover must pay for it with daily anxiety and worry, and he runs the fearful risk of being eaten up with covetousness. A greed for wealth grows with years. When the rich miser of New York tottered out into the street at fourscore, and a friend asked him how he felt, the feeble old miser replied eagerly, "I feel better to-day : *stocks are up*." Ah! what a *fare* that old millionaire had to pay for travelling farther and faster than others on the road to wealth ! It shrivelled up his very soul. Gold may be a useful servant, but it is a cruel master. It is not easy to own *it* without its owning us. Where one man makes it a rich blessing to others, thousands make it the ruin of their souls. Love of money drew

Lot to the fertile valley of Sodom, and he "paid the fare thereof" in the destruction of his family. Love of money made Gehazi a knave: he "paid the fare" in an incurable leprosy. Love of money was one of two sins for which Judas paid with the suicide's rope, and everlasting infamy. No man can make money safely and wisely, unless he holds his earnings as a trust from God. What would it profit you to win the wealth of an empire, if you should pay for it the price of your undying soul? "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Into no road do young persons press more eagerly than the road to sensual indulgence. No turnpike is more travelled, and none exacts a more terrible "toll." He who travels it must "pay the fare" thereof. The licentious man pays it in shame and self-loathing, in remorse and "rottenness of the bones." No young maiden can take these hot coals into her bosom without being fearfully burned. The beautiful but ill-fated girl from New Jersey, whose tragical end once awakened such a universal thrill of horror, may have taken only one false step at first. But how far that led! It requires but *one step* to go down Niagara. She paid dearly for yielding to temptation; for the end of it was death. Hundreds of young men are pressing in every night to houses of wanton pleasure, bent only

on enjoyment. But over the door of every house of infamy the finger of inspiration has written, "This house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death."

All along the seductive pathways of self-indulgence God places His toll-gates of retribution. I sometimes pass in the streets a wretched man who often needs the help of a policeman to convey him to his desolated home. He was once rich and respected. Poor victim of the bottle, he is "paying the toll" on the devil's turnpike. The heartless dramsellers, who furnish him the poison for guilty gain, will have to pay *theirs* when they reach the judgment-bar of God!

We cannot stop to recount all the penalties which men and women have to pay for sinning. The costliest thing in the world is *sin*. It costs purity of conscience, and costs the favour of God. It will cost at the last the loss of heaven. The sin of grieving the Holy Ghost has cost many a one everlasting perdition.

"Show me the better way,—show me the safe way," exclaim some of my readers who are alarmed at their own course of sin, and who really desire to live a better life. "Show me the way, and tell me what is *the fare thereof*." Friend, salvation is *free* on God's side ;

but on *your* side it must be won by repentance and faith. As far as Christ's precious atonement is concerned,

“ Nothing, either great or small,
Remains for you to do ;
Jesus died, and paid it all—
All the debt you owe ! ”

But the road to heaven, which the crucified Jesus has opened to you, can only be entered by your abandoning your sins, and following Him in faith and self-denial. “ Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” “ Except a man take up his cross and follow Christ, he cannot be His disciple.” Friend, this “ fare ” you must “ pay ” to enter heaven. Are you willing?



THE RICH SOUL.

“Rich toward God.”—*Luke* xti. 21.

“HAT is he worth?” Used in its full significance, this would be the most pregnant, the most just, and the most comprehensive question that could be propounded in regard to any immortal being. When asked in the ordinary way, it simply means, How large are his estates? how much gold has he in his bank-vaults? And the ordinary answer would be, “The man is worth twenty thousand, or a hundred thousand dollars.” Then we can only say that he will have twenty thousand or a hundred thousand dollars to account for at the bar of God. Then will he be either the happy reaper of immortal joys, when every well-employed coin shall nod like a golden ear in the full sheaf of his heavenly harvest; or else he must meet thousands of scorpions to torment his soul through his dreary eternity of despair. Is a man worth uncounted thousands in bullion or bank stock, in real estate or rare commodities? Then he ought to be worth a vast deal to the community in which he lives, and to the Church of Jesus Christ.

He ought to be worth—bread to the hungry, schooling to the ignorant, Bibles to the unevangelized, and mission-schools to the heathen children at our doors. He ought to be rich towards God in the large and liberal employment of his high stewardship.

For not every rich man is “rich toward God.” Else our Saviour would not have uttered the parable from which our text is taken. He probably had in His mind just such a person as I could easily find in a ten minutes’ walk through this commercial city,—a self-complacent Croesus, shrivelled in soul, but corpulent in purse ; a man in whom avarice has devoured all the other appetites of the heart, as voracious sharks gulp down whole shoals of smaller fish ; one who could call up his immortal part, and address it in the same spirit in which he would talk to a silken-haired pet spaniel, “Now, my little soul, thou hast much goods laid up for thyself!” Not for others, observe. Not for God. But for *thyself*. “Now eat, drink, and be merry. Sate thyself. Feast thy eyes on full barns, full board, full bags, full bank-vaults. Gloat over them, They are all thine. Never will I be so weak-headed as to be cheated out of them,—never so weak-hearted as to squander them on foolish charities.” “*Thou fool!*” thunders the voice of God above him, —“thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of

thee : then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided ?”

This terrible satire of Divine indignation is not expended upon the subject of this parable because he was rich in earthly goods. The Bible has no controversy with men of wealth. It never discourages the acquisition of gold, as long as the heart owns the gold, and the gold does not own the heart. The anathema of the parable is not against riches, but against *selfishness*, the mammon-worship which dethrones Jehovah. And by as much as this selfishness is the selfishness of wealth, by just so much is it the more abominable and hateful. For when God makes an individual worth tens of thousands, and he makes himself worth less than nothing to his Creator and his fellow-men, God will curse such selfishness with the most crushing condemnation. Even at the bar of final judgment, one test-question will be, in regard to you and to me, and to every man, “How much is he worth,—worth to his Saviour and the Saviour’s cause ? How much has he been worth to his fellow-men ?” In that great day of decision I should like to stand up as the pastor of a rich Church,—exceeding rich in faith and good works. If so, you must begin now, with a holy covetousness, to lay up spiritual and eternal treasures. Let me point out to you a few simple rules for becoming “rich toward God.”

I. And, first, let me remind you that *every soul on earth is born poor*. There is no exemption from this hard lot. Whether in royal nurseries, where the heir to the throne is well-nigh smothered in down, or in the pauper's thatched hovel, every immortal soul begins its existence poor. Sin spares not a solitary child of Adam. Sin writes its moral poverty on every occupant of every cradle. As the emptiness of the purse makes one poor financially, so the entire emptiness of the heart as to all holy emotions, holy desires, and purposes, constitutes our native moral poverty. Who would go to the ragged urchin in the industrial school for a loan? Yet it would be quite as wise to expect a depraved heart to give forth what it has never yet possessed,—one pure, holy emotion.

How then can any soul become rich toward God? He does not inherit spiritual wealth, but rather the entire and most pitiable want of it. He inherits guilt. He inherits evil passions. Noble faculties and capacities are his inheritance, but not one particle of native grace comes with them. The more gifted in intellect, the more dangerous will he become, if those mental powers are wholly uncontrolled by the law of God. Without grace, he is a guilty creature on earth, and a lost creature through eternity.

He must begin then on that grace,—on God's free

gift to him through Christ. Just as a liberal father establishes his son in commercial business by furnishing him a certain sum as his capital, so (if we may thus speak) our heavenly Father gives the new heart as a Christian capital. This is the starting point. As soon as converting grace enters the soul its condition changes. At that moment, by that act, the seeking sinner becomes the forgiven, the accepted, the adopted heir of God. And the religious principle then implanted by the Holy Ghost is the spiritual capital with which the new-made heir begins his stewardship. Sometimes this capital is furnished in childhood or in early youth, and then a long "three-score and ten" witnesses the growth of that soul into vast possessions. Sometimes a person begins late in life; and then, like those who mistake their secular callings, and only get hold of the right occupation at forty, he seldom becomes a spiritual millionaire. In fact, he does not get far beyond his original capital. It is hard work to make a "first-class" Christian out of an aged sinner. Old habits of sin have become inveterate. The best soil of the heart has been worn out in growing enormous crops of tares. There is a want of spring and pliability in an old man's temperament; he does not readily adapt himself to new positions and new duties. As the

merchants who have accumulated the most gigantic fortunes are commonly those who began to be rich before thirty, so the richest Christians are usually to be found among the converts of the Bible-class room and the Sabbath-school. Begin young, my friends, if you would attain to great riches. Those who are no longer young may still be saved if they will come heartily to Jesus; but I doubt if they often do much towards saving others. God reserves the highest reward to those who enlist the earliest, and serve the hardest and the longest.

II. In the second place, let me remind you that *he who would amass large wealth must not sit down content with his original capital.* He makes investments. He plants his gold in a well-tilled farm, or sends it seaward in strong-bottomed ships, or sets it to spinning new fortunes in the factory. He must venture what he has, if he would gain more.

Even so in the spiritual world that professor is but a lean, poverty-stricken starveling, who never gets beyond the infantile condition in which he stood for the first time at Christ's table. Such professors there be in every Church. Their single talent is hidden in a napkin,—a very small napkin. What God bestowed upon them at the time of conversion is all that they have now: if there has been any change, it has been

rather a reduction than a growth. Such began small—they continue smaller. They never were anything but rivulets, trickling with slender thread of water among the barren stones, at the mercy of every August drought, and well-nigh drunk up by every thirsty noonday sun. Year after year they trickle—trickle—trickle—until death dries them up, and nobody misses them. They watered nothing; they refreshed nobody, and blessed no living thing. Earth is little the poorer for losing them; heaven scarcely the richer for gaining them.

But a growing believer's course is like yonder river's,—its birth-place some secluded fountain under the mossy rock. Cool and clear, it steers its modest path whithersoever God shall lead it, laughing evermore and leaping to its own silvery music. For long we lose sight of it. Then we meet it again, no longer a wayside brook, but a deep-voiced river, beating against its banks,—swelling up to kiss the marge of green meadows,—winding around the highland's base,—rolling on its majestic march until it spreads out into a hospitable bay, on whose placid bosom fleets ride at anchor, and in whose azure depths the banners of all nations are mirrored. Such is the onflow of a rich soul,—every day widening in influence, every day deepening in experience, every day running

purser and purer. To human eyes such believers may move more slowly as old age draws on. But it is because the volume of their graces is increasing, and they are nearing the ocean of Eternity. How these lives gladden the regions through which they pass! How they mirror back the glory of Christ's gracious handiwork! How they bear up human hopes, and spread themselves out like broad, patient rivers, to carry all burdens that are launched on their bosoms!

Yet such a glorious Christian career, so beautiful in its daily flow, and so beneficent in its results, is only the original grace of conversion employed at compound interest. This mighty river of holy influence is only the original fountain magnified. Behold the virtue of *accumulation*! To this the apostle exhorted when he urged his brethren to "*grow in grace.*" To accumulate soul-wealth for God is the purport of that apostolic injunction,—"*Add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity.*" Brethren, I repeat and re-enforce the exhortation: Grow in grace. Expand. Absorb every down-pouring of heavenly influence. Catch every descending

drop of spiritual blessing. Open your hearts to every stream of Bible knowledge. Be filled with the fulness of Christ. So shall ye be neither empty nor unfruitful, but "always abounding in the work of the Lord."

III. This leads me, in the third place, to speak of the METHODS of spiritual wealth-getting. How shall a believer become "rich toward God"? We answer that the rules for securing success in secular affairs will apply to the advancement of the soul in grace. The real currency in commerce is metallic, the broad earth over. And the gold and silver which make up the basis of personal wealth are the product of the mines; each glittering coin the result of the miner's hard toil with sieve or with mattock. Now, the currency of God's kingdom is *truth*; and the Bible is the ore-bed. To every one of you this mine is open. He must be a blind or a careless miner who does not come out of this inexhaustible ore-bed with some new and massive "nugget" as the result of every hour's research. Do you consider every bank solvent, whose vaults are the hiding-place of solid bullion, amply sufficient to meet its liabilities? So is he a solvent Christian whose secret soul is stored with gospel principles, all coined and stamped for daily use. Nor should any Christian ask credit any further

than he can fully redeem his promises and professions by the "ready money" of consistent, godly conduct.

To make a rich believer, something more than faith is needed. More, too, than scriptural knowledge. There must be also—*experience*. Ah, this is a costly possession! Nothing is bought so dear; and yet it is worth all it costs us. This is a part of the soul's wealth that no one can purchase for us; no dearest friend can make it over to us as a gift. We must "go and buy for ourselves," and exorbitant is the price we often pay for it.

There are sometimes rare and beautiful wares brought into the market that are invoiced at almost fabulous rates. Ignorant people wonder why they are priced so high. The simple reason is that they cost so much to procure. That luxurious article labelled £200 was procured by the adventurous hunter, who, at the hazard of his neck, brought down the wild mountain-goat, out of whose glossy hair the fabric was wrought. Yonder pearl that flashes on the brow of the bride is precious because it was rescued from the great deep at the risk of the pearl-fisher's life, as he was lifted into the boat half-dead, with the blood gushing from his nostrils. Yonder ermine, flung so carelessly over the proud beauty's shoulder,

cost terrible battles with Polar ice and hurricane. All choicest things are reckoned the dearest. So is it, too, in Heaven's inventories. The universe of God has never witnessed aught to be reckoned in comparison with the redemption of a guilty world. That mighty ransom no such contemptible things as silver and gold could procure. Only by one price could the Church of God be redeemed from hell, and that the precious blood of the Lamb,—the Lamb without blemish or spot,—the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

And so is it that the best part of a Christian character is that which was procured at the sorest cost. Patience is a beautiful trait, but it is not worn oftenest by those who walk on life's sunny side in silver slippers. It is the product of dark nights of tempest, and of those days of adversity whose high noon is but a midnight. For "the *trial* of your faith worketh patience." Purity of soul is like purity in gold, where the hottest fires turn out the most refined and precious metals from the crucible. Joseph found his crucible in an Egyptian prison; but he came out thence with the soul of a virgin. Purity of character is often bought in this wicked city by the bitter price of a crust of bread eaten with a good conscience in an attic; when a guilty connivance would have been

rewarded with French satins and a harlot's sumptuous couch.

The knowledge of our own besetting sins is a knowledge we all crave. We imagine that we would be willing to pay liberally for the insight into our own hearts which shall reveal all our weak points, not knowing how soon some unexpected emergency might develop some foible or some vice of character hitherto unsuspected. But men have paid dearly for such discoveries. David paid for his self-knowledge with the life of a darling child and a broken heart; Hezekiah paid for his by the wearisome sufferings of a sick-chamber; Peter for his by the bitter agonies in Pilate's garden. But the discoveries were worth all they cost. Among God's jewels there is no brilliant which flashes with such lustre as the tear of true penitence. Yet God only knoweth what heart-pressure, as in a vice,—what wringings and rendings of soul, what crushings of pride and wrestlings of agony,—may have been needful in order to press out that jewel-drop upon the cheek of the stubborn sufferer! We have sometimes met with a person in social circles, who possessed a peculiar gentleness and docility of character. As we came to know her better, we were amazed and charmed by her calm self-poise, and her heroic submissiveness to God under sudden shocks of

calamity. We admired so beautiful a character. We envied its possessor. We coveted such a spirit for ourselves. Ah, we little knew at what fearful price of severe chastisements and bitter disappointments, of hopes desolated and expectations crossed, of faith put to the rack, and patience burned bright in seven-times-heated furnaces, all that meek loveliness of character had been gained ! So true is it, dear brethren, that he is the most rich toward God who is ready to toil the hardest, and to bear the most to gain his acquisition.

To be truly rich, all these graces of patience and purity and meekness and long-suffering are indispensable. Cost what they will, they must be attained. By prayer and by practice they must be sought after, and so sought as to secure them. He is a meagre, crude, unfinished, unripe, and unimpressive Christian who does not possess those peculiar graces which are only to be won by suffering and trial. Do not draw back from the possession of any spiritual treasure, I beseech you, from the dread of paying dearly for it. The worldling withholds no toil, no sacrifices, that are needful to secure his coveted gains or honours. The merchant begrudges not the evenings spent away from his own fireside, if those extra hours over his ledgers will give but an extra dividend of profits. The

sculptor counts not the long months wasted which see him with hammer and chisel pursuing the imprisoned figure which his keen eye detects within the block of Parian marble. And the children of light must carry into their service of Christ the same untiring ardour, the same zeal, and the same self-denial by which the children of the world win wealth and honour and emoluments. Oh for a holy enthusiasm!—a holy covetousness to become rich toward God!

IV. The fourth and last principle that I shall present is, that whoever would become rich in spiritual treasure must *give away bountifully*. This is the truest paradox in Christian economy. He that saves for self only loses: he that loses for Christ's sake is sure to save. Would you grow rich toward God? Then learn to give. God loveth a cheerful giver. Nor do I limit this rule to the donation of the purse. The mere gift of gold is but a part of Christian benevolence, though by no means an unimportant part. I often wish that I were the possessor of the wealth of Henry Thornton or Amos Lawrence, provided that I had always, too, the wealth of heart-love to do good that those princely men had. But a rich *soul* can be always giving; as the noonday sun overflows his golden urn of ceaseless radiance, and is yet

none the poorer in warmth and glory when a whole universe has been lighted.

We must freely give of everything that we have freely received from the Lord. If we have the heart to pray, let us give of our prayers. No legacy that a rich father could have left me would compare in value with my widowed mother's prayers for me at the mercy-seat. You that have acquired the wisdom which age and experience confer can give those counsels which are apples of gold in baskets of silver to the young, the inexperienced, and the unfortunate. Give your personal labours, too, for Christ. Many a rich man seeks to compound with his conscience by bestowing bank-checks in lieu of his own presence in the mission-school, the prayer-meetings, or the abodes of suffering. O man of wealth ! God gave thee that very leisure thou enjoyest in order to do the very work of charity which thy poorer, hard-toiling neighbour has no time to perform. Those that have not money or counsel, or charitable deeds to bestow, can at least afford a godly example. And so a godly life may be, from first to last, all expenditure ; just as the temple lamps consumed themselves away in giving light. But the life and the heart grow the fuller, the brighter the stronger, the more they expend. What were rich-souled Christians given to the world for but to be reservoirs of blessings ?

Happy is the man who can bring the very atmosphere of heaven with him whenever he approaches us!—who acts upon our spirits as the May breezes act upon the first shoots of the tulip and the violet! He is a bountiful giver. He confers on us light; he beams goodness into our souls; he teaches us patience; he showers on us brotherly kindness; he illustrates for us faith; he exhibits the true beauty of meekness; he sheds hope by his very presence; and his unflinching bravery has often been an inspiration of valour to our failing hearts. Next to Christ Himself, there is no blessing to the community like a Christ-like Christian.

My dear reader, I covet for you the best gifts. Ask of God who giveth liberally that ye may all be rich,—rich in faith, rich in good works, rich in revenues of joy, rich in heart-holiness and the love of Jesus. And then, although your frame be wrapped in coarse raiment, your soul shall be enfolded in the shining garniture of Christ's righteousness. Though your dwelling-place be so lowly, yet your heaven-seeking affection may be at home in the celestial courts before the throne of God and of the Lamb. Although your purse be scanty, your heart will be a palace whose chambers are filled with "all pleasant and all precious riches." So shall you be made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

WHO KINDLED THE FIRE?

 ONE article in the Mosaic law, given from heaven, is this : “ If fire break out and catch in thorns, so that the stacks of corn or the standing corn be consumed therewith, *he that kindled the fire* shall surely make restitution.” This statute had a peculiar necessity in such a hot, dry country as Palestine, where there was a peculiar danger from accidental conflagrations. If a man burned over his stubble field, it was necessary, before the dry grass was lighted, to see that the wind was in the right quarter, and every precaution taken that the flames should not kindle upon the property of a neighbour. If any farmer neglected to take these precautions, and the swift-footed flames went careering through vineyards, and orchards, and stacks of barley, then he who kindled the fire was required to pay for the damage produced by his own carelessness.

The sound principle that underlies this law is that men must suffer for the evil they do through thoughtless recklessness, as well as for what they do with malicious intent. Men are to be held accountable, not only for the injuries which they wilfully

perpetrate, but for the injuries which they occasion to others through wanton carelessness or even thoughtless indifference. The person who set his neighbour's barley-stacks on fire was required to make restitution, although he did not intend to burn him out. The responsibility comes back on him who kindled the flames. Let us apply the principle of this Divine enactment to our own times, and point out the moral dangers of *playing with fire*. Perhaps we may discover that some very respectable people are often very destructive incendiaries.

I. If I invite a group of young men in my house to surround a card-table, I may simply design to furnish them an hour's amusement. But perhaps a lust for gambling may lie latent in some young man's breast, and I may quicken it into life by my offer of a temptation. There is fire in that pack of cards! And I deliberately place that fire amid the inflammable passions of that youthful breast. On *me* rests the consequences of the act, as well as upon him whom I lead into temptation. The motive does not alter the result by one iota.

“For evil is wrought by want of thought,
As well as by want of heart.”

II. Among social virtues none is more popular than that of hospitality. When bountifully practised

towards the *needy* it rises to the dignity of a Christian grace. And ordinary hospitalities may be set to the credit of a generous spirit. But here is the master or mistress of a house who spreads their table with a lavish provision for the entertainment of their evening guests. Among the abundant viands of that table the lady of the house places the choicest brands of Madeira wine, and on a side-board she sets out a huge bowl of inviting punch. And among the invited guests of the evening comes a man who has promised the wife of his early love that he will never again yield to his awful appetite and turn their sweet home into a hell. He sees the tempter in that accursed punch-bowl, and is pressed very courteously to "take a glass." The fire "catches in the dry thorns" in an instant. He drinks. He goes reeling into his own door that night, and his whole household is in a flame of excitement and terror, and agony and shame. *Now who kindled that fire?* Let her who put that bottle to her neighbour's lips make answer! According to the Jewish law, the incendiary was required to pay the damages of the conflagration. But what "restitution" can be made for a ruined character, a desolated home, or a broken heart?

If my house and its contents are destroyed by fire,

the insurance company may restore my pecuniary loss ; but they cannot replace the precious keepsakes and the relics of the loved and lost which my dwelling contained. To-day there are thousands of human houses in New York and Brooklyn—dwellings of immortal souls—that are on fire ! In these burning bodies of our fellow-men are precious things beyond the wealth of Ophir,—hopes, talents, faculties, affections, and an immortality of being. Who kindled those fires ? We answer that every one who tempts another to the social glass is a partner in producing the conflagration. Who *feed* the fires ? Unquestionably the vendors of strong drink, who, for lucre's sake, deal out the liquid flames of perdition. The proprietors of the ten thousand drinking-saloons in our twin cities do not aim to kill their fellow-men. But they do kill them, whatever be their secret motives in pursuing their abominable traffic. At the bar of God they will be held responsible. And let me inquire just here, whether those Christian citizens who do not even lift a finger to sustain the law which *banks the grog-seller's fires during God's own Sabbath*, are not themselves partially guilty for some of the consequences of the wide spread conflagration ? We commend this question to the consciences of our neighbours on the day of election.

III. The artillery of this Divine law against incendiarism has a wide range. It is pointed against that social nuisance the *slanderer*. "Behold how great a matter his little fire kindleth !" The utterance of evil reports may be well likened to playing with fire. For there is but a spark required to set a whole neighbourhood in a blaze ; and when the flame gets under way it is beyond all human control. No matter that the spark may have been lighted without malicious motive. The ugly scorch upon the commercial integrity of the merchant, or upon the good name of the Christian minister, or upon the reputation of the young maiden, may not have been the prompting of wilful malignity. But the scorch is there ; and somebody struck the spark.

A careless word sometimes makes irremediable mischief. I have read that a foolish young English clerk, fond of practical jokes, once said to a friend, "Have you heard that E—— & Co., the bankers, have stopped payment?" He merely meant that the banking-house had as usual closed up for the night. But he amused himself by seeing how he had startled his friend. He did not stop to explain his real meaning. His friend mentioned the alarming report to another : the rumour spread. Next day there was a "run upon the bank," and Messrs. E——

& Company were obliged to suspend payment ! The silly youth did not mean to burn down the commercial credit of a prosperous house : he only meant to amuse himself *by playing with fire*. And a kindred mischief to his is perpetrated by every one who retails contemptible gossip, or gives birth to a scurrilous slander. "An abomination to the Lord is the false witness who speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren."

IV. This law against incendiarism applies to every utterance of spiritual error and infidelity. He who utters a devilish suggestion to corrupt the innocence of chastity sets fire to passion, and becomes the incendiary of a soul. He who scatters a pernicious literature comes under the same condemnation. He who sows scepticism, by tongue or pen, sets fire to the "standing corn" of righteous opinion. Beware how you play with the sparks of falsehood ! Beware how you play with the fire of wicked *suggestion*, that may kindle a blaze of sin in another's heart ! Beware how you fling an infidel thought among the growing barley of a young and sensitive mind ! For in the day of final reckoning you will be called up to answer to the question, Who *kindled* the fire ?

WEDDED FOR HEAVEN.

NEXT to choosing the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour and guide, the most important choice a young man can make is that of a *wife*. Yet this most eventful step is too often regarded from first to last in the most trivial aspect. With many it is the merest matter of fancy or boyish caprice. Sometimes a wife is sought for the sole gratification of sensual appetite. Sometimes marriage is viewed entirely as a shrewd pecuniary speculation. Indolent, extravagant young men often intrigue through a marriage-vow for a wealth which they are too lazy or too thriftless to earn by honest toil. On the other hand, many an ambitious parent has sought to purchase a splendid "establishment" with the sweetest charms that Heaven has bestowed upon a daughter. What baser bargain can be consummated? And when a woman consents to sell her person without her heart to a rich suitor, what is it but the essence of prostitution without its loathsome name? Only one man should be rich enough to win my daughter: it is he who can offer a love without a rival, and a character without

a stain. True religion, common sense, industrious habits, and a warm heart,—when a young man can offer *these*, no daughter who is worthy of such a prize will be likely to “say him *nay*.”

With what a rash recklessness do millions rush into the momentous engagements that yield their inevitable retribution of domestic misery! How few seek by prayer for Divine guidance when choosing the companion of their heart, their home, and their destiny! Far oftener, we fear, is it passion than prayer that controls this great decision. The gratification of a fancy, the excitement of a courtship, and the frolic of a wedding are frequently the only preparations for the serious realities of wedded life.

Boyish caprice and girlish romance look vastly different in human eyes when they have crystallized down into the permanent forms of daily existence under the same roof, at the same table and fireside, year in and year out, for summer and winter, for sickness or health, for better or worse, clear on to the doorway of the tomb. When the novelty of wedded life has worn away, and perhaps the beauty of the fair face that inspired the early passion has quite faded out, then there must be something *solid* left behind, or marriage is a mockery and its coveted happiness but a dream. There must be mutual

confidence, mutual respect, unity of aim, and old-fashioned love: there ought to be also a union of hearts in the love of Christ, in closet devotions, and at the communion-table. When these are the qualities of a nuptial union, it is a marriage in the Lord. It "shineth more and more" from the auroral dawn of first love unto the perfect day of rich and ripened bliss. When young hearts are wedded in Christ, they are wedded for heaven. It is a delightful act for a Christian minister to join such hearts and hands together; but the words sometimes stick in his throat when he attempts to pronounce a benediction on a marriage which neither common sense nor conscience have had a share in bringing about. His *fee* seems to come out of Judas's bag.

The admirable Philip Henry, of Broad Oaks, England, sought the hand of an only daughter in a somewhat prominent family. Her father said to her, "This young man seems to be an excellent preacher, but I do not know whence he came." "True," replied the daughter; "but I know *where he is going*, and I want to go along with him." The marriage proved eminently happy, and one of the children was the famous commentator. When his own son Matthew and his daughters asked his consent to their marriage, he said, "Please God,

and please yourselves, and then you will be sure to please me." At their weddings he saluted them with a fatherly kiss, and said, "Other people wish you much happiness, but I wish you much *holiness*: if you have that, you are certain to be happy."

No two steps in a man's life are so solemn as those which join him to Christ's Church, and join him to a wife. Marriage is an ordinance of God. It has often proved a "saving ordinance" to those who had no other tie to Christianity. The men whom a wise marriage has saved (with God's blessing) are innumerable. The men whom a reckless, wretched marriage have ruined,—are their histories not written in the "Book of the Chronicles" of prayerless homes and impenitent death-beds?

"Rebekah," said a dying husband to the wife who bent over him in remorseful agony,—“Rebekah, I am a lost man. You opposed our family worship and my secret prayer. You drew me away into temptation, and to neglect every religious duty. I believe my fate is sealed. Rebekah, you are the cause of my everlasting ruin.” Terrible in eternity will be the reunion of those who helped each other on the downward road, partners in impiety, and wedded for perdition.

On the other hand, many a man has owed his

conversion to the steadfast, noble, attractive godliness of a praying wife. "I never doubted the immediate answer of prayer since the conversion of my husband," said a devoted Christian once to her pastor. He had long been a stranger to God, and bitter in his opposition to the Gospel. During a powerful revival in her Church she attended a morning prayer-meeting. This annoyed him, and he denounced it as a waste of time, and forbade her to go again. Next morning she came down with her bonnet on to go to the meeting. He sternly said, "If you *do* dare to go, you will be sorry for it." She could not speak: the rudeness of her husband crushed her into silence. But she determined not to retreat; and when she reached the meeting she could only bow her face on the desk before her, and pour forth her tears and prayers for the obdurate heart she had left behind her. There was certainly *one* praying woman in that gathering.

When evening came, the kind wife put away the children in the crib, took her needle, and sat down by the fire. Presently the husband came in. "Wife, are you not going to meeting to-night?" "No," she replied, gently; "I thought I would stay home with you." He sat awhile in guilty silence: the

fire burned brightly in the grate, and a hotter fire burned in the poor fellow's heart. "Wife," he exclaimed, "I can't stand this any longer. The words I spoke this morning to you have tormented me all day. I can't get any peace till you have forgiven me and prayed for me. *Won't* you pray for me? Oh, what a life I have led!" They knelt together. "That night I shall remember through eternity," said the happy woman, afterward. "There was no sleep for us. Before the dawn of day peace dawned into his soul: we went to the morning meeting together, and he rose and confessed Jesus as his Redeemer." That man walked faithfully with God ever after: from that memorable day they two were *wedded for heaven.*

Happy are those who, like Aquila and Priscilla, are united in the Lord! Happy are they who walk the life-journey,—all the safer and all the happier for walking it hand in hand, keeping step to the voice of duty and of God. Wedded in time, they are wedded for heaven; and will sit down together, with exquisite rapture, at the "marriage-supper of the Lamb."



GREAT EXPECTATIONS—FROM GOD.

HE less we expect from this world the better for us. The less we expect from our fellow-men, whether of spiritual help or of inspiring example, the smaller will be our disappointment. He that leans on his own strength leans on a broken reed. We are always *going* to be something stronger, purer, and holier. Somewhere in the future there always hangs in the air a golden *ideal* of a higher life that we are going to reach ; but as we move on, the dream of better things moves on before us also. It is like the child's running over behind the hill to catch the rainbow. When he gets on the hill-top the rainbow is as far off as ever. Thus does our day-dream of a higher Christian life keep floating away from us ; and we are left to realize what frail, unreliable creatures we are when we rest our expectations of growth and of victory over evil in ourselves. "My soul, wait thou only upon GOD ! My expectation is only *from Him.*"

God never deceives us and never disappoints us. I do not say that God never allows us to be disappointed in our darling plans of life, in our children,

or in our most cherished projects. What I mean is, that we are never disappointed in God. When we study the Almighty, whether in His glorious word or in Nature, we find our utmost expectation overtopped by the stupendous and magnificent reality. Read such a book as "Ecce Cœlum," and see if you are disappointed in your Creator. When, too, we obey God, we always find our reward, either sooner or later,—just as surely as light comes with the sunrise. When we trust God, He never deceives us. When we pray to Him *aright*,—that is, with faith, with perseverance, with submissiveness, and with a single eye to God's will,—He answers us. He *always* returns the best answer possible. Our Heavenly Father makes no mistakes in His dealings with suppliants. He is a sovereign but not a despot. If it pleases Him to keep us waiting for the trial of our faith, then we must wait.

But delays are not denials. God's long-dated promises are honoured in His own good time. If we had but to demand from God just what we desired, and when we desired it, we should be stealing His sceptre and ruling the Almighty Ruler. Did you ever know a child that ruled its parents without ruining itself? And, if it spoils our children to let them always have their own way, I am sure that it would

be my ruin if I could bend my Heavenly Father's will to all my own wishes. If *this* be your "expectation" from God, He will very soon teach you better.

God fulfills no foolish, greedy, presumptuous requests. But He does keep His promises. (He never promised to let you or me *hold the reins.*) He always answers a right prayer, and in the way and at the time which His all-wise love determines. And with what unexpected deliverances and blessings He often loves to take us by surprise! I never went through a revival in my congregation without discovering that I could not trust God our Saviour too much, or my fellow-man too little.

Are you Christ's, my brother? Then all things are yours. In Him dwelleth all the *fulness* of the Godhead. "Of His fulness have all we received," said that beloved disciple who leaned on the Saviour's bosom. John was never disappointed in his Lord; nor was Paul either, when he found himself "filled with all the fulness of God." There is a fulness of sufficiency in Christ as a Divine Redeemer. His blood cleanseth from all sin. There is a fulness of justifying merit in Him; for "there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." There is a fulness of power in Him who "is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him." There

is a fulness of love in Him who "having loved His own who are in the world, loveth them to the end." In my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is a fulness of grace and strength and peace and consolation that no man has ever been able to explore, and all the needy sinners in the universe could never be able to exhaust.

To little brooks men have often gone in seasons of drought, and found only a parched bed, cracked open with the heat. But who ever saw the Atlantic *low*? What ship ever failed to set sail for Liverpool through lack of water? Oh the *depth* of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge and grace of God! When some one urged old John Jacob Astor to subscribe for a certain object, and told him that his own son had subscribed to it already, the old man replied, very dryly: "Ah! he has *got a rich father.*" Brother, you and I have got a rich Father, too. You are an heir of the King of kings. Then ask for great things, for "all our expectation is from Him."

God must take it ill in us that we ask for so little and with such a puny faith. He says, "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." He must wonder that we expect so little from Him. "The Lord taketh pleasure"—in whom? Why, in "those that hope in His mercy." He loveth to be inquired after. Oh if

we would only expect enough, and strive after enough, and ask enough from our infinitely rich Father up yonder, who can tell what blessings we might obtain !

Paul only expressed the unanimous judgment of all the heirs in God's household when he exclaimed, "I *know* whom I have believed." He summed up his glorious past, and his expectations for the future, when he cried out, with rapture, "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: *henceforth* there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the righteous Judge shall give me in that day !" Paul "looked for" that magnificent inheritance. So do I. So may you, if you are a follower of Jesus. I expect that if I endure to the end, I shall be saved. I expect, and confidently too, that through faith I shall be kept by the power of God unto salvation. I expect that when I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, He will be with me ; His rod and His staff will comfort me. Heaven is to me only an expectation. So is to-morrow's sunrise. I have not yet *seen* either of them ; but they are coming. Behind this day's midnight lies to-morrow's dawn. Behind that night called death, lies the day-dawn of heaven's exceeding weight of glory !

I expect that, if I hold fast to Christ, I shall see it.

Beyond all that human eye hath yet seen, or human ear heard, is that glory to be revealed to me! I expect a *joy* that shall be to me as a “harp,” and a *triumph* that shall be to me as a “palm,” and a *glory* that shall be as a “crown unfading.” Figurative or not though the words may be, I expect the substance which they describe. My soul, wait thou only upon God ; my expectation is *from Him!*

“Our knowledge of that life is small,
The eye of faith is dim ;
But 'tis enough that Christ knows all,
And we shall be like Him !”



THE BITTER WATERS SWEETENED.

HREE days of torrid and thirsty travel from the Red Sea brought the children of Israel to a fountain in the desert. All rush forward eagerly for a cooling draught. But, alas! the waters are so bitter that neither man nor beast can drink them. The disappointing spring is at once named by the murmuring Israelites, *Marah*, which signifies the waters of bitterness.

To this day a fountain is known (about seventeen hours' travel from the "wells of Moses"), which the Arabs still call *Howara*. It is supposed by many geographers to be the identical spring of *Marah*, for its waters are exceedingly brackish. Professor Stanley, of Oxford, mentions a spring, a short distance south of *Howara*, which "was so bitter that neither men nor camels could drink it."

Beside one of these two fountains of bitterness stood the great host of thirsty Israel, with a terrible bitterness of disappointment in their hearts. They cry out against God. The deliverance at the Red Sea is forgotten. Past mercies are lost sight of, and present griefs seem to stir up all the acrid

humours within them. They murmur against Moses, and exclaim, despairingly, "What shall we drink?"

Fellow-pilgrims to the promised land, how exactly this scene tallies with our own experiences! Right after happy days of prosperity and mercy, we come suddenly upon a *Marah* of bitter disappointment. We had set our hearts upon some favourite project. Perhaps we were going on a long-coveted tour, and had made all our arrangements. But the day for the departure finds us on a sick-bed; and the medicine we swallow is not half so hard to take as the disappointment. Selfishness murmurs and chafes under the trial. But presently we begin to see that this bed of sickness lay right on the road to Canaan. We begin to talk with our own hearts, and to think over our past lives. We begin to pray with a new hunger of soul, and to read God's promises with new eyes. We make fresh covenant with God, that, if He will restore us to health, we will use it for Him, and will walk more closely with Him. We take up one precious promise after another, and drop it into the fountain of trial, and lo! the waters begin to taste sweeter to us! Prayer becomes sweeter, and Christ's presence sweeter; and something within us whispers, "After all, is not this better for us than the journey to Europe or to the

mountains? Is it not good for me that I have been shut up here with Jesus?"

Now this was just what happened to angry and disappointed Israel. The Lord showed to Moses a tree, which, when he had cast it into the fountain, made the waters to become so sweet that the whole host drank of them with delight. I doubt whether God created that tree miraculously; He simply "showed" it to Moses. So God does not create a Bible, or a mercy-seat, or an atonement, or a jewel-casket of promises, or supplies of grace, especially for us. His Spirit simply opens our eyes to see them, and our hearts to enjoy them. He reveals to us the tree of healing which turns a draught of bitterness into a draught of holy joy. Thus,—

"Trials make the promise sweet ;
Trials give new life to prayer :
Bring me to the Saviour's feet,
Lay me low, and keep me there."

It is delightful to sit down beside a child of God who has in his hand a bitter cup of trial, but the "sweet breath of Jesus" has turned the bitterness into such a blessing, that he "tastes the love" of Jesus in every drop.

I love to hear old Richard Baxter exclaim, after a life of constant suffering, "O my God! I thank Thee for a bodily discipline of eight-and-fifty years."

I love to sit down by Harlan Page, and hear him say, "A bed of pain is a precious place, when we have the presence of Christ. God does not send one unnecessary affliction. Lord! I thank Thee for suffering. I deserve it. I deserve death eternal. Let me not complain or dictate. I commit myself to Thee, O Saviour, and to Thy infinite love. I stop my mouth, and lie low beside Thee!" So God built up the blood-bought soul faster than disease was pulling down the frail tenement in which it dwelt. And through the rents heaven's glory shone in with rapturous radiance!

I suppose there is rarely a Marah on earth more bitter than that which a father or mother reaches when they bend over the coffin which holds the darling of their hearts and home. In all God's chemistry, is there any solvent which can sweeten such a draught of disappointment?

Yes; there is! I have now before me a tear-moistened letter from my beloved brother W——, the superintendent of the famous B—— Sabbath-school. It was written by the waters of Marah. But mark how the angel of love is letting fall the sweetening leaves into the fountain. Brother W—— writes:—

"Our darling Hattie was another of God's beautiful things, wise beyond her years, more like a sister

to us older ones, than like a little child. On the last Sabbath morning that she came to the breakfast table, she had, as usual, her text, but it was a new one to her: "Hide me under the shadow of Thy wing." God heard the little tired body's prayer, and gathered the lamb to His bosom. We watched and watched beside her; and when all others had given her up, I was still hopeful; and taking the physician aside I inquired, "Doctor, will she wake up, do you think?" His reply almost killed me as he covered his face, and sobbed the answer, "No: not till she wakes in heaven!" O my brother! I cannot tell you the anguish of that moment. I sat in the shadow of our great affliction, dumb. But Christ Jesus, the Man of sorrows, was acquainted with my grief. He put His everlasting arm around me,—the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother. Unto those that believe, He is precious; and never more so than when He brings heaven close up to us."

Beautiful words of a victorious soul! I send them through these pages as a bough from the tree of experience, to sweeten the fountain of bitterness beside which many of my readers may be sitting to-day. If God's grace can make the waters of trial so sweet on earth, *what will the fountain be in heaven?*

WHERE IS YOUR PLACE?



A PLACE for every man, and every man in his place! This motto is as good for Christ's Church as it was for the army during the war. But what is every Christian's right place?

We answer that it is the one for which God made him, and for which the Holy Spirit converted him. To mistake it is a sad blunder; to desert it is a disgrace. The Bible acknowledges that God made His servants for some especial "niche:" for it says, "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given us, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth on teaching; or he that exhorteth on exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness." The principle here laid down is that every man or woman who loves Jesus should select and should fill that post of duty for which his or her gifts have fitted them. But "let no man neglect the gift that is in him."

Some men—like Spurgeon and Newman Hall and Bishop Simpson—were created for the pulpit. God

gave them clear heads, warm hearts, strong lungs, and eloquent tongues, and a hunger for saving souls. To possess such gifts is a clear call to the ministry. And thousands of humbler preachers who cannot attract Spurgeon's crowds are yet as clearly called to the ministry of the Word as the London Boanerges was himself. But the vain-glorious creature who cannot attract an audience except by sensational "clap-trap," or by Barnum-ish advertisements, was certainly never called of God to the sacred ministry. He may draw auditors; but he commonly draws them away from places where they would be more profited.

Suppose a man or a woman feel—after deep prayer and self-examination—that God has not called them to the pulpit; what then? Must they be silent? Are all the speaking gifts of the pious lawyer, or doctor, or merchant, or mechanic to run to waste? No, verily! Let such proclaim the glad tidings of Christ, and the story of their own Christian experience in the prayer-meeting, or the mission-school, or the cottage conference meeting, or wherever they can find souls to plead with. How successfully this lay-labour may be made, let such men as Harlan Page, and Richard Weaver, and George H. Stuart, and D. L. Moody, and John Wanamaker, bear witness. Let the powerful lay-preaching heard every

day in "Fulton Street" answer. Some of the best discourses I have ever heard were but five or ten minutes long, and were delivered in my own prayer-meeting. Christian lawyers ought to do more of this tongue-work. As a class, they are too silent in our meetings and Sunday schools. God is opening a wide field for laymen to act on "picket-duty" and as skirmishers and sharpshooters in the spiritual warfare.

What our churches most need (next to the baptism of the Holy Ghost) is the development of all the members. So much is thrown upon the ministry that some of us can hardly catch a spare hour for our own family and fireside. The Spurgeons and John Halls and Guthries are being ground to death by overwork. A city pastor is often expected to prepare three sermons or lectures, to visit the flock, to see the sick, to bury the dead, and to act on a dozen committees, and to make two or three speeches, all in a single week! The church becomes Dr. Tyng's church, or Mr. Beecher's church, or Dr. Crosby's church, or some other man's church—instead of being the people's church, with some gifted man as its overseer and pastor.

Now I love to work exceedingly; but not one whit more than I love to see my congregation work. And

no man in my flock has any more right to turn his spiritual work over upon me than he has a right to send me to market for him, or to cook or eat his dinner for him. He needs his work as much as I need mine. In revival-times the whole Church is alive and busy. But where and when did the Master ever give a "furlough" to three-fourths of our people to quit the ranks just as soon as a revival-campaign is over?

A Christian who is keen for work will soon find his place. If he is "apt to teach," he or she will soon gather the Sabbath-school class, and will be there, Bible in hand, every Sunday, even though the rain is pattering on the pavements. Commend me to the teacher who wears a "waterproof," and always consults conscience sooner than the barometer.

Whoever has the gift of song should join God's great choir, and sing at every religious service. The owner of a good voice must give account for that voice at the day of judgment. We never shall have genuine congregational singing, until every redeemed child of Christ sings from duty, and consecrates the gift of music to the Lord. Those who expect to sing in heaven had better practise here.

Tract-distribution is going too much out of fashion. It is a blessed and heaven-honoured agency for doing

good. Every one who has some spare time and a tongue and a little pious tact can go out with a bundle of tracts to the abodes of ignorance and irreligion.

Those who cannot exhort, or teach in a Sunday school, or distribute tracts, can at least live for Jesus at home, and come and join in the prayers of the prayer-meeting. The oldest, the timidest, the least gifted, can do surely as much as this. Every one, too, can give something when the contribution-box is passed. The gift of a "cup of cold water" in Christ's name has its reward. Every one whom Jesus saves has a place assigned to him in the vineyard. An idle Christian is a monster!

Friend! have *you* found your place?



CHRIST A SERVANT.



HERE is one character in which Christians too seldom think of their Divine Redeemer. It is that of a disinterested SERVANT, ever serving our highest interests. We call ourselves Christ's servants. Do we constantly think of Him as ours?

At the last supper, we read that Jesus rose from the table and laid aside His robe. He takes a towel, and girds Himself after the manner of an attendant in a guest-chamber. Pouring water into a basin, He washes the disciples' feet, and wipes them with the towel wherewith He is girded. After the suprising act of self-humiliation is over, He says to them, "Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord : ye say well ; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet ; ye ought also to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you."

Then He tells His disciples for what paltry distinctions the Gentiles and the worldlings crave. But *they* were to aim at a nobler, sublimer supre-

macy,—the supremacy of disinterested love, and devotion to the wants of others. “Let him who would be chiefest among you become *servant of all.*’ The feet of His followers were scarcely dry from the washing He had given them, as He says, “I am among you as *he that serveth.*”

Run your eye, my brother, over the whole earthly career of our blessed Lord, and you will find in it a beautiful illustration of the truth that the loftiest post of honour is the lowliest post of service. Every word, every act, is inspired by disinterested love. He condescends to teach the most ignorant, for they have the deepest need of light. He condescends to feed the hungry poor out of His miraculous basket. He condescends to sit at meat with despised publicans, to heal wayside beggars and outcast lepers, the children of poor, heart-broken mothers, and the servants in noblemen’s kitchens. More than one fallen woman, whom most parents would have thrust out of doors, He allows to come into the sunshine of His presence, and does not let them go until they are penitent and pardoned. And so all through that three years’ pilgrimage of love,—instructing the benighted, comforting the afflicted, pardoning the guilty, healing the sick, stooping to wash disciples’ feet and to cleanse their still more

polluted hearts,—Jesus is everywhere the “servant of all.” The years of penitent self-denying service culminate in the grandest, most stupendous, and sublime service of all,—the service of suffering on the cross of Calvary! Oh, self-indulgent Christian, who art unwilling to lift a finger to relieve a fellow-being or undo his burthen, look on the wondrous spectacle of an incarnate God stooping to the lowliest offices of love,—bearing poverty, and ignominy, and toil,—bearing the curse of the broken law,—bearing your sins in His bleeding body on the cross,—look at this, and hide your selfish head in shame!

Nor did the service of our Divine servant end with the cross and the new tomb in the garden. When He ascended to heaven, He only ascended to new departments of service for us. He ever liveth there to make intercession for His people. He is our “friend at court.” He is our advocate to plead our suit. He hears our complaints, and gives a ready ear to the faintest prayer which the feeblest faith breathes forth in its closet.

Does He not gird Himself as with a towel, to wash away our impurities? Not once only, but constantly. One cleansing of a soul at the time of regeneration will no more keep a Christian for ever pure, than a single ablution of his face or form would make his

body clean for a life-time. The world soils our souls every day. Each unholy thought, each angry word, each act of deceit, each covetous touch of gold, each insincere, unbelieving prayer, each cowardly desertion of duty, leaves an ugly spot. "Create in me a clean heart" is an every hour's prayer for a Christian's whole life. And He who girded a towel about Him, and washed His disciples' feet from the dust of Jerusalem's streets is ever beside us, ready to wash away the moral defilement which our daily walk on the world's highways brings upon our souls.

How many other services, too, our Saviour is rendering us! When starved on husks, He gives us the bread of life. When faint in spirit, He brings us into His orchard, whose apples of delight cause our lips to sing. Many an obscure saint in a smoky hovel has yet dwelt in the King's banqueting-house. The holy Rutherford, when in prison for Christ's sake, testifies that his prison-cell was "the King's wine-cellar" to his thirsty soul, in which every taste of the Divine love only made him more hungry for the "supper-time" in heaven. He says, "I get sweet *tastings* of my Lord's comforts; but the cause of that is not that our steward, Christ Jesus, is niggard and narrow-hearted, but because our stomachs are so weak, and our souls are narrow; but the

great feast is coming, when our hearts shall be enlarged to take in the fulness of the marriage supper of the Lamb."

Time would fail us to tell in how many ways the loving Jesus serves His people,—as their physician, their protector, and their guide through the valley of the death-shade. And one of the great practical teachings of Christ's sublime, self-denying service for us is that the lowliest post of service is the loftiest post of honour. If Jesus was a servant, who shall be ashamed to serve?

Why is it that so many professed Christians "feel above" undertaking humble work for God and humanity? We have heard of a minister of Christ complaining that his station was "beneath his talents"! As if the soul of a beggar were beneath the genius of a Paul! Some are unwilling to enter a mission-school, or to distribute tracts through a poor district, strangely forgetting that their Divine Master was himself a missionary.

Have such never learned that the towel where-with Jesus wiped His disciples' feet outshone the purple that wrapped Cæsar's limbs? Do they not know that the post of honour is the post of service? "My seat in the Sunday-school is higher than my seat in the Senate," said an eminent Christian states-

man. When we take the lowliest place of sacred service, we find ourselves in the best society,—in the society of mothers serving their children, of patriots serving their country, of pastors serving their flocks, and of ONE who is ever the gracious servant of His people. Heaven is but a higher sphere of service. For in that realm of unwearying activity and blissful worship we read that “they *serve God* day and night in His temple; His name is written on their foreheads;” and “they follow the Lamb wheresoever He goeth, and He leadeth them to living fountains of water.”



THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS.



HE most successful toilers are those who know best how to serve God in "small things." The Almighty never "despises the day of small things," or else He would not put His mighty oaks into acorns, or His golden grain-crops into little seed-bags.

I. Nearly all the greatest and best things had their feeble beginnings. The Mississippi begins as a rivulet; the splendid suspension bridge at Niagara first went over the deep chasm as a mere kite-string. And the noblest, holiest Christian lives had their origin in some word faithfully spoken, or in the reading of a tract, or the offering of a broken and brief prayer, or in a solemn resolution to quit favourite sins and yield to Jesus. One sentence seems to have brought Peter and John to follow Christ. One sentence converted the jailer of Philippi. Now if every Christian life sprouted out of the act of a single hour, and was probably the result of some humble agency, then it is a sin and a folly to "despise the day of small things."

Cases to illustrate this truth thicken in our memory.

A godly woman spoke kindly to her maid-servant about her soul : the gardener overheard the conversation through a hedge, and was himself convicted of his sins. Stray arrows often hit the mark.

The late Dr. William Wisner once stopped on a hot summer day at a Berkshire farmhouse for a glass of water. He talked faithfully with the young woman who gave him the refreshing draught, and directed her to the "living water." Long years afterwards, a middle-aged woman introduced herself to Dr. W— on a steamboat, and thanked him for the plain, kind word that brought her to the Saviour.

Harlan Page, coming early to a meeting, found a stranger sitting there, and politely spoke to him. The conversation went on until the man—who said that "Christians had always kept him *at arm's length*" before—was melted into penitence.

On the last day of the year 1867, I met a man of fifty in the streets, and said to him, "Had not you and I better begin the new year with a new life?" That simple remark set him to thinking, and resulted in his conversion.

The lesson of all these cases, and of innumerable others like them, is that the most effectual way to save sinners is to *use the day of small things*, and seize our opportunities. Nearly all revivals start with a single

man or woman. One live coal can kindle a great flame.

II. There is another view of this matter. As the usefulness of a Christian grows out of little deeds well done, so the influence of many Christians is terribly poisoned by little sins. Alas ! how great sinners we may be in small things ! Little irritations of look and manner ; little meannesses in our daily dealings ; little fibs and insincerities of speech ; little jealousies and spites ; little neglects of kind acts we might do, —all these are the “little foxes” that have spoiled many a goodly vine. Pile up enough tiny snowflakes on a railway track, and they will blockade the most powerful locomotive. So I verily believe that the *aggregate sum* of Christians’ daily inconsistencies and neglects of duty often block up a revival, and stay the progress of Christ’s kingdom. Jesus Christ laid great emphasis on “keeping the least of His commandments.” That was an awfully mischievous spark that lighted Chicago into a blaze ; but it *was* once only a spark !

III. This brings me to say to the unconverted, It is a fatal mistake to think that any wilful sin is a trifle. If you are lost, my dear friend, it is not likely that one huge crime like Judas’, or Pilate’s, or Ananias’, will sink you to perdition. It will be the sum of your

daily sins left unrepented of, the aggregate of thousands of offences against God's law and God's love. I pray you, do not say, "Oh, *this* is not much!" No sin is a trifle. No sin is harmless. In Sudbrook Park, England, a naturalist saw a small worm boring into the bark of a stately sycamore-tree. "If that worm is *let alone*," said he, "it will kill the tree." The experiment was tried. The next year the leaves turned yellow, and the year after the tree was a skeleton. Now if one sin is so deadly, what must a life time of sin be?

My last thought is that life is a series of steps. Each step counts. Coming to Jesus is a single step. It may be the work of a moment. It may turn on a small pivot. And you will never come to Christ, or never reach heaven, while you continue to "despise the day of small things."



DIGGING FOR WATER.



OME of the "out-of-the-way" passages in God's word contain precious teachings, which will repay us for hunting them out and turning them up. There is a rich ore of truth hidden under them. For example, there is an historical incident narrated in the third chapter of the Second Book of Kings which is very seldom noticed. We read that the kings of Judah and of Israel were at war with the heathen armies of Moab. The armies of the Lord were suffering from the want of water. Within the compass of a seven days' journey they cannot find a drop. In their straits they send for God's prophet, Elisha. He becomes God's oracle, and gives them this message from Heaven: "Thus saith the Lord, *Make the land full of ditches.*" The word may be better translated *trenches*. How shall they be filled? That is not their concern. It is the duty of faith not to question, but to obey. "For thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet this valley shall be *filled with water*, that ye may drink; both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts." The trenches were dug, and presently the waters began to steal into them from

some mysterious, invisible source. It was not an ordinary process of Nature; but a supernatural process, accomplished by the direct agency of God. All the awakening, converting, and quickening power that operates on human souls is really supernatural. Up to a certain point human agency acts, but not one hair's breadth further. "Paul may plant," and there he stops; "Apollos may water," and there he must stop. Then comes in the Divine agency, when "God giveth the increase." All that the thirsting Israelites could do, or were asked to do, was simply to dig the trenches. And then a supernatural power filled them mysteriously with water. There does not appear to have been any Huxley, or Tyndall, or Darwin in the camp, to teach God's people that *supernatural* agencies are never exerted, even for a good object. The simple-hearted Israelites wanted water, and they dug channels for God to pour it in. They prepared for a blessing, and the blessing came.

This is the pithy and practical truth that we find by lifting up this text and looking under it. It is a suggestive one to hundreds of our Churches, which have long been languishing in spiritual drought. If we want spiritual blessings, we must dig the trenches to receive them.

The first trench that ought to be opened in some Churches is a deep, broad channel of mutual confidence and brotherly love. When Christians grow cold and neglectful of their own duties, they grow censorious toward each other. As love declines, the critical temper increases. All along the eaves of a cold Church hang the sharp, piercing icicles of criticism and censoriousness. Then everybody suffers. The pastor catches his share: his most honest efforts are the most censured. The officers of the Church are blamed roundly, and those who happen to be unpopular are made the luckless scapegoats on which to load the failures of the Church. Each blames the others; but no one goes down in the dust of contrition, and blames himself. Sometimes this censoriousness is born of the very impatience at the want of success. Sometimes good men and women, vexed that things do not go better, fall to hitting right and left their fellow-members, their officers, the pastor getting a blackened eye among the rest. It is as if a rifleman on the battle-field, seeing the fight go badly, quits firing, and takes to battering his comrades with the butt of his rifle. Whereas his own *example*, in just standing firm and taking sure aim at the foe, would do more to restore the battle than all his disorderly assaults

on his fellow-soldiers. The charity that "thinketh no evil," and is "not easily provoked," and that "seeketh not her own" (way), is the first grace to be exercised in many a cold, discordant, fault-finding Church. How can Christians expect the outside world to put confidence in them when they put so little confidence in each other? The first duty in such a Church is to run a deep, broad trench of cordial charity and brotherly love right through the whole congregation. This trench must be dug by every one *before his own door*.

Another trench to be opened speedily is earnest, penitential *prayer*. This is God's appointed "channel to convey the blessings He designs to give." I sometimes think that there are no equal number of utterances by reputable people in which so many falsehoods are told as in public prayers. Loving words are often spoken by people whose hearts rankle with mean spites and malicious grudges. Sins are glibly confessed in prayer which if anybody else should charge upon the speaker he would grow red in the face with wrath. Words of solemn self-consecration are fluently uttered by persons who are living to themselves, and not to Jesus Christ. Such prayers are a mockery. They cut no channels for God's blessings. But genuine prayer—born of

contrition and soul-thirst, poured out with faith and wrestling importunity—breaks its way up to the Throne of Infinite Love. Such prayer always brings a revival ; nay, it is itself a revival.

A third work of preparation for the Divine blessing is equally indispensable. It is personal repentance of sin. Not of other people's sins, but of our own. The best draining of a farmer's field is subsoil drainage. In our Churches we need a subsoil repentance. It must cut deep. It must cut up sin by the root. If the ploughshare run through the flower-beds and melon-patches of our self-indulgence, so much the better. The trench that drains off our sins will be a channel for the sweet, life-giving waters of salvation.

We might mention other trenches that are needed,—such as hard work and liberality in giving for Christ. The wider we cut these channels, the broader and the fuller will be the stream of God's blessings. Thus saith the Lord to His people, “Make your valley *full of trenches.*” We may “see no wind nor rain.” We may hear no sounds of violent excitement. But silently and steadily the tides of spiritual influence will flow into our souls. As the tides rise from the ocean over bare and slimy ground, and lift up the keels of grounded

vessels, so shall these blessings of the Holy Spirit flow into our Churches. Not by might, not by human power, but "by my Spirit, saith the Lord."

Brethren, this plain-spoken article may reach scores of Churches who are so dry that there is "no water within a compass of seven days' journey." God's command to you is to *prepare for blessings*, or they will never come. When your trenches are ready, the currents of spiritual power will flow in. If you want water, *dig for it!*



THE SHEPHERD'S SLING.

A PLEA FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS.

“Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield : but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts.”—*I Sam.* xvii. 45.



THAT was a remarkable encounter which once took place in the little valley of Elah. With its thrilling story you are all as familiar as you are with the grapple of American yeomanry on Bunker Hill, or with the dear-bought victory of freedom on the heights of Gettysburg. From our early childhood we have all loved to read the brief epic of David and Goliath. With our childish eyes we distinctly saw the boastful champion of the Philistines plant himself in full view of Israel, and of Israel's heathen foes.

The champion measures six cubits and a span ; and every inch of his giant stature is encased in flashing brass. The staff of his spear is like to a weaver's beam ; the head of his spear weighs six hundred shekels of iron. A shield-bearer goes before him. His impious proclamation is : “ I defy the armies of Israel this day : give me a man that we may fight together.”

For forty days the heathen's challenge remains unaccepted, and for forty days the heart of Israel is growing weaker than water. At length a shepherd's boy, fresh from his flocks, with the ruddy tint of toil on his fair young face, steps modestly forth into the lists. In one hand he carries a staff; in the other he carries a common sling. He has dropped five smooth stones into the shepherd's pouch by his side. These are his only weapons; the protection of God is his only armour. Even so was ruddy-cheeked free labour, fresh from its fields, pitted against the giant of oppression in our late national conflict.

I need not recount to you the bulletin of that battle at Elah,—so short, so sharp, and so decisive. I need not repeat to you modest David's reply to the disdainful champion: "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, whom thou hast defied." I need not tell you how the stripling put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slung it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, and he fell upon his face to the earth. I need not depict to you the triumphant youth standing on the giant's prostrate carcass, and hewing off his swaggering head; nor the subsequent rout of the heathen before Israel's reassured and victorious armies.

I have brought to you this narrative as a starting-point and an illustration. It furnishes a happy *parable* of the "irrepressible conflict" between God's right and the devil's wrong. Goliath typifies the giant of ERROR that for forty centuries had defied the living God. Ruddy David is the Missionary Church. The five smooth stones are Gospel truths. The staff they bear is the unbroken promise of God. Before the "countless cloud of witnesses" in heaven and on earth the conflict is joined; and all that "assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear; for *the battle is the Lord's,*" and He will yet give the enemy into our hands.

If the stripling of Bethlehem seemed a most unequal match for the brazen-mailed giant of Gath, how much more disproportionate is the Church's missionary band to the stupendous enemy which they confront! Worldly wisdom smiles at what it styles their "weak-minded enthusiasm;" and, while it coldly commends their object, it predicts an inevitable failure. But the little band stand to their post. Rationalism derides them. Infidelity scoffs at them. The false prophet and the false priests of Baal threaten them. But yet the little band toils on. When one of their number sinks at his post, there is another ready to step forward and to take up the abandoned

implements of labour. The ranks swell every year ; and often a gentle woman steps forth, and with meek heroism takes up the burden of a toil that has sunk so many a strong man to his grave. Occasionally a youthful missionary falls when he has just learned how to wield his sling. Occasionally a Lyman or a Lowrie is struck down by murderous violence. A Winslow, a Judson, and a Poor sink under the burden of the long day, and are laid to rest. A Father Goodell comes home to die. A nobler life no man can live, a sublimer death no man can die, than to live or die a Missionary of the Cross !

“ How beautiful it is for man to die
Upon the walls of Zion ! To be called,
Like a watch-worn and weary sentinel,
To put his armour off, and rest in heaven.
What is the warrior's clarion—though its blast
Ring with the conquest of a world—to this ?
What are all the trumpetings of proud humanity
To the short history of one *who dies for souls*,
And makes his sepulchre beside the King of kings ? ”

I. Wherein lies the real power of the Missionary Church ? (I use this term because my Bible gives me no other idea of a true Church than a missionary, aggressive, reformatory, soul-saving body of working believers.) Wherein lies her power ? Manifestly not in her numbers ; for she embraces less than one-fourth

of the human race. Manifestly not in her earthly resources ; for Mammon has more wealth than the Church, and Antichrist possesses cunninger statecraft and mightier armies. Her power lies in her living *union with the living God*. And in proportion to her closeness of union with Christ Jesus will she be sagacious in plan, steadfast of purpose, fertile in resources, zealous in labour, prevalent in prayer, and victorious in achievement. Christ is in the Missionary Church. He is *not* in heathenism, or in Moslemism, or in Rome. When He gave the Church her commission, "Go, teach all nations," He sealed up with it the priceless promise, "Lo ! *I am with you* to the end of the world."

With one slender rod, Moses cleft the Red Sea asunder ; but God was in the rod. With a herdsman's sling, David brought down the Philistine ; but God strengthened the young shepherd's arm, and guided the fatal stone. Out from the doorway of a prayer-meeting in Jerusalem, a handful of plain people issued forth, to turn the heathen world "upside down," and to carry the cross from the Euphrates to the Tiber. But Christ went with them and in them from that "upper chamber." Christ flamed on Peter's tongue ; Christ reasoned from Paul's cultured brain ; Christ spake from Apollos' lips ; Christ throbbed

in the pulsations of John's warm heart; Christ shone from Stephen's face, when it was like unto the face of an angel. *Lo! I am with you always*, blazed on the banners of every apostolic corps; *Lo! I am with you always*, rang as her bugle call to every march to victory. The power of that missionary apostolic Church lay in her piety; for her piety was the measure of her union with Jesus Christ. And in our day the Church's piety is the Church's power. Do not forget, my brethren, this truth of truths for a moment. The power of the missionary Church is her living, toiling, self-denying piety. For this there can be no substitute. The Church may increase her agencies as she will; she may multiply her machinery a hundred-fold; but it will be all for naught, unless Christ Jesus be the "living Spirit within the wheels." What the Missionary Church now most needs is another Pentecost. And all ye who would see new vigour in the work of missions, who would see a new zeal, a new liberality, a new inspiration in the Church at home, must besiege God's mercy-seat for powerful, soul-quickenings revivals.

II. Look now with me, a moment, at another element of strength in the Missionary Church. Not only is the power of God promised to her fidelity, but the wisdom of God is visible in the choice of her

materials. In our modern times, God has put His gospel faith into the *best races* on the globe. David has better blood in his veins than Goliath. The races to which God has entrusted His staff and five smooth stones of gospel truth are the same races that drew up Magna Charta and the Declaration of Independence,—the races that have made metal types to talk and iron ships to swim,—that have strung the telegraphic nerves through humanity's limbs, and have woven out of revealed law the highest forms yet reached of Christian civilization. For the spread of His gospel, God has made Great Britain strong, and Holland industrious, and Germany learned, and has saved our American Republic as by fire. The welfare of Christianity has God bound up with the welfare of certain races and nations. If this be so, how vitally important it is that those nations who essay to Christianize other nations should themselves be Christianized to the very core!

When the diplomacy of Christian nations has been employed to outwit simple savages, and the commerce of Christian nations has been employed to cheat them; when the same ship that carried out the Bible was also freighted with opium and fire-arms, and with hand-cuffs to bind on savage limbs,—we need not wonder that the very name of Christianity became

an opprobrium and a terror. Only a short time ago a vessel was cleared from an American port to the coast of Africa, which carried seven missionaries in her cabin and several hundred barrels of New England rum in her cargo! I very much fear that the contents of her cargo will prove an overmatch for the contents of her cabin.

Of other nations I am not to speak. But, for my own beloved land, I rejoice to say that her Divine Deliverer seems to be preparing her for her predestined work abroad by no common discipline. What our liberated land now needs is another baptism, the baptism of Pentecost. Wherefore, all ye who long to see America's influence go forth like the morning light over every land, I pray you that ye besiege the mercy-seat for powerful, purifying, Pentecostal revivals.

III. Before I close, let me remind you of another pertinent parallel between the shepherd-boy of Israel and Christ's Missionary Church. The young David of Bethlehem brought from his sheep-cote to the battle-field of Elah a hearty frame, a rustic simplicity, and an intrepid heart. Like the strong-limbed rail-hewer of our day, he was a plain-born son of toil, with the smell of mother earth on his garments. His cheek was ruddy with temperance; his sinews were

knit with athletic exercise. That rustic son of Jesse, fresh from the hills, is a beautiful type of Christ's Church in its best days,—its *days of self-denial*,—its apostolic days, when fishermen and tentmakers conquered principalities and powers,—its Reformation days, when the miner's son from Saxony, and the lean student of Geneva, smote the Papal Goliath,—its Puritan days, when Cromwell's "Ironsides" sent curl-pated cavaliers "whirling" over Marston Moor; when a band of Yorkshire farmers and herdsmen steered the *Mayflower* through wintry tempests to bleak Plymouth Rock! And in our days the missionaries of the Cross have mostly come from such households as the household of Jesse. Herein lies a lesson and a warning.

Brethren, I have a prodigious fear for our metropolitan churches. I fear that fast-growing wealth is impoverishing the Church's piety; I fear that an unparalleled prosperity is making our churches luxurious, fashionable, worldly-minded, self-indulgent. The religion that walks on life's sunny side in Paris laces, and sips its choicest wines in freestone mansions, is not the religion that breeds missionaries, or fights Goliaths.

Don't you remember reading in your childhood's favourite fiction about Sinbad's voyage into the

Indian Ocean? Do you remember that magnetic rock that rose from the surface of the placid sea? Silently the vessel was attracted toward it; silently the bolts were drawn out of the ship's sides, one by one, through the subtle attraction of that magnetic rock. And when the fated vessel drew so near that every bolt and clamp were unloosed, the whole structure of bulwark, mast, and spars, tumbled into ruin on the sea, and the sleeping sailors awoke to their drowning agonies!

So stands the magnetic rock of *worldliness* athwart the Church's path. If the Church draw too near, then bolt after bolt of godly purpose will be drawn out, clamp after clamp of Christian obligation will be unloosed, until the sacred argosy, that is freighted with immortal hopes, shall tumble into a shattered and disgraceful wreck. Depend upon it, brethren, that God will never suffer this to be. He will not let us rob Him. Depend upon it, that if we lie down to luxurious slumber on couches of rosewood, while the world is perishing, He will snatch the couch from beneath us in financial judgments. If we persist in paving the way to our places of amusement and our parties of pleasure with His silver and gold, He will wrest it from us with the terrible rebuke, "Ye may no longer be my stewards!" Oh for the descent of

a Pentecostal fire to consume this "wood, hay, and stubble" of pomp and luxury! O ye who long to see the self-pampering churches brought back to a hardier self-denial and a holier self-consecration, I pray you that ye besiege the mercy-seat, and labour, too, for soul-humbling, church-purifying *revivals!*

But I must not weary you with the discussion of a widening theme. As we close, we seem to be looking out upon the stupendous conflict between light and darkness, between the hosts of truth and the hosts of error. The field of this conflict is not a narrow vale of Elah: it is the wide, wide world. Like the swarming squadrons of Philistia on the mountain side, stand the combined innumerable hosts of heathenism, of the false prophet, and the man of sin. Like the brazen-mailed giant of Gath, stands *Antichrist*,—proud, stubborn, impious, and defiant. As the shepherd's boy of Bethlehem came forth to confront Israel's foe, so come forth the missionary band of Christ. They are inferior indeed to the foe in numbers; but a single man with God on his side, is in the majority. In the missionary band of Christendom are represented eighty-five different organizations. Of these, twenty-two hail from Great Britain; twenty from our beloved Union; thirteen from Germany; nine from little Holland; seven from

the lands of the "Norsemen ;" one from France ; and the remainder from British colonies. Of these organizations, the two largest are the "Wesleyan Society" of England, and the "American Board of Foreign Missions." As the roll of the American Board is called, three hundred and twenty missionaries answer to their names. The Presbyterian Board have two hundred and forty in the field: These are the men of whom the most eminent Scotch painter once said to me, "America has produced many great artists and authors and orators ; but the most superior body of men she has yet furnished are her missionaries." Each one of them is equipped with the staff and the sling. Each one has in his scrip the five smooth stones from

"Siloa's brook,
That flows fast by the oracles of God."

To our weak faith, these missionary bands seem small and few for the moral conquest of the globe. But who can tell how many Martyns and Winslows and Duffs the eye of God may discern yet waiting in the household of Jesse? Who can say that there is not now upon his mother's knee another Luther, who shall lead the last great onset against the man of sin ; or another Calvin, to vindicate the cross before European scepticism ; or another Wesley, to awaken

with Gideon's trumpet a formal Church to fresh revivals and a loftier zeal? Who can tell how soon the eye of God may see an American missionary preaching Christ in the Mosque of Omar, or proclaiming the downfall of the Papacy under the frescoed dome of St. Peter's?

That time is coming! It is eighteen centuries nearer than when the first missionary concert of prayer was held in the "upper room" at Jerusalem. It is sixty years nearer than when the first American missionary sailed from Boston wharf to the shores of India. It is as sure to come as to-morrow's sunrise. Do you ask, When will that time arrive? I answer: It will come when the Church of Christ shall pray as the first missionary concert prayed at Jerusalem: it will come when all the followers of Jesus shall write *Holiness to the Lord* on every dollar in their coffers; when the Church shall consecrate all her children to self-denial and to holy toils, and shall train every David from his cradle to wield the sling! Then, all the world shall know that God saveth not with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and on the brow of the ENTHRONED LAMB shall rest the diadem of victory.

HEBER AND HIS HYMN.

THERE have been men who have won an honourable immortality in an hour. A brave word fitly spoken, or a noble deed promptly done, has given them a place on the bead-roll of fame for ever. Sometimes in a happy moment of inspiration a poet or an orator has "said or sung" what will last for ages.

One of these happy songsters, whose grandest strain was born in an hour, but which the world shall never willingly let die, was REGINALD HEBER, Bishop of Christ's flock in Calcutta. If the great mass of Christians around the globe were asked to name the two English bishops whose memory is most dear to them, they would probably name Jeremy Taylor and Reginald Heber. Yet the veneration and gratitude felt towards the latter is mainly founded upon a few lines which he threw off in a sudden inspiration, and which could be written on a single page.

Reginald Heber was born at Malpas, in Cheshire, on the 21st of April, 1783. He was a precocious boy, and at seven years of age he had translated

Phædrus into English verse. His prize poem at Oxford University on "Palestine," written in his twentieth year, stands at the head of that class of somewhat ephemeral productions. His "Palestine" will live, and so will his tender and graceful lines to his wife at Bombay, and so will his nautical hymn,

"When through the torn sail the wild tempest is streaming."

But all his poetry, and his Bampton Lectures, and his able *Quarterly Review* articles, are weighed down by his single matchless missionary hymn. Its composition was on this wise.

While Reginald Heber was rector of the Episcopal Church at Hodnet, in Shropshire, he went to pay a visit to his father-in-law, Dr. Shipley, then Vicar of Wrexham, on the border of Wales. Heber was in his thirty-sixth year, and had come to Wrexham to deliver the first of a series of Sunday evening lectures in Dr. Shipley's church. In the morning of that same day, Dr. Shipley was to deliver a discourse in behalf of the "Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts."

On the afternoon before "Whit-Sunday" (1819), Heber and his father-in-law sat chatting with a few friends in Dr. Shipley's parlour. Dr. Shipley, knowing his son-in-law's happy gift in rapid composition, said to him, "Write something for us to sing at the

service to-morrow morning." Short notice that, for a man to achieve his immortality. Heber retired to another part of the room, and in a little time had prepared three verses, of which the first one ran thus :—

“ From Greenland’s icy mountains,
From India’s coral strand,
Where Afric’s sunny fountains
Roll down their golden sand ;
From many an ancient river,
From many a palmy plain,
They call us to deliver
Their land from error’s chain.”

Heber read the three verses over, and only altered a single word. The seventh line of the second verse was—

“ The *savage* in his blindness.”

The author erased that word, and substituted for it the better word *heathen*. “ There, there,” coolly remarked Dr. Shipley, “ that will do very well.” Heber was not satisfied, and said, “ No, no : the sense is not complete.” In spite of his father’s earnest protest, Heber withdrew for a few moments longer, and then, coming back, read the following glorious bugle blast which rings like the *reveille* of the millennial morning :—

“ Waft, waft, ye winds, the story,
And you, ye waters, roll !

Till, like a sea of glory,
It spreads from pole to pole !
Till o'er our ransomed nature,
The Lamb for sinners slain,
Redeemer, King, Creator,
In bliss returns to reign."

"What shall we sing it to?" inquired Dr. Shipley. Mr. Heber, who had a fine musical ear, suggested a popular air called "'Twas when the seas were roaring." The suggestion was adopted, and on the next morning the people of Wrexham church listened to the "first rehearsal" of a lyric which has since been echoed by millions of voices around the globe. The air to which it was sung originally has given place, at least in our American churches, to a sonorous and lofty tune composed by Dr. Lowell Mason. The air is worthy of the hymn, and both are perfect. No profane hymn-tinker ever dared to lay his bungling finger on a single syllable of those four stanzas which the Holy Spirit moved Reginald Heber to write. Little did the young rector of Hodnet dream, as he listened to the lines sung that Sabbath morning, that he was catching the first strains of his own immortality. He "builided better than he knew." He did more to waft the story of Calvary around the earth than if he had preached like Apollos, or had founded a board of missions. In the "monthly

concerts," held in New England school-houses, in frontier cabins, on the decks of missionary ships bound to "Ceylon's Isle," and in the vast assemblies of the American Board, Heber's trumpet-hymn has been sung with swelling voices and gushing tears. It is the marching music to which Christ's hosts "keep step" as they advance to the conquest of the globe.

Heber lived but seven years after the composition of his masterpiece. In June, 1823, he departed for Calcutta, as the missionary Bishop of India. For three years he toiled and travelled incessantly, and wherever he went his apostolic sweetness of character and benignity won even the "heathen in their blindness." After a laborious day's work at Trichinopoly, he went to his bath to refresh his weary frame. He remained in the bathroom until his attendants became alarmed, and when they came in they found Reginald Heber *asleep in Jesus*. His gentle spirit had stolen away to join in the "song of Moses and of the LAMB."



NOTHING BUT LEAVES.

A REVERIE FOR THE CLOSE OF THE YEAR.

JESUS was on His way from Bethany to Jerusalem,—“hungry.” He espied a fig-tree afar off, well laden with leaves. As that tree puts forth its fruit in *advance* of its foliage, when a man should discover leaves on it he would, of course, expect to find figs. The successor having already appeared, he would look for the forerunner.

Jesus hastens to the tree which had telegraphed to Him already that it was in bearing condition; and lo! “He found *nothing but leaves.*” Forthwith He dooms it to perpetual barrenness. “No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever.” The deceitful tree, thus cursed of its Owner, withered down to its very roots.

Here is a parable for the close of the year. It is full of tender and touching solemnity to thousands of our readers. This parable from history teaches us the worthlessness of religious promises that are never fulfilled, and the guilt of appearing to be fruit-bearers when the eye of God sees “nothing but leaves.”

There is no sin in promises. Cherry-trees must issue their white and fragrant "promissory notes" in May, or there would be no payment in delicious fruit at the end of the allotted sixty days. God makes precious promises to us; and a converted heart is only in the line of duty when it makes a solemn promise, or covenant, to the Church and its Head, Christ Jesus. There is no sin in a church-covenant honestly made. The sin is in breaking it.

How full of leaves was the plausible fig-tree on the road to Bethany! How profuse of promises is many a young professor, as he stands up laden with the foliage on which the dew-drops of hope are glistening! How much his pastor expects from him! He makes no reserve when he covenants to "consecrate himself, all that he is, and all that he has, to the service of his Redeemer." As many a reader sees this solemn sentence, it sends a pang to their hearts. That was *their* promise. They once put forth just such "leaves" before their Master's eye, and before the eyes of men, and led them to expect an abundance of fruit. For a time the glossy leaves of profession made a fair show. But when the novelty of a new position had worn off, and that time of reaction came which always follows a strong mental

excitement, then the yoke began to gall the conscience, and every religious duty became an irksome drudgery. The Cross lost its charm; prayer lost its power; the Word of God lost its attraction; the very name of Jesus lost its hold; and church-membership became a hateful mask, which its owner was ashamed to wear, and yet afraid to fling away. Before the world, the fig-tree still bore leaves; but beneath them was utter barrenness.

My backsliding friend, this tells the sad story of your past year's life. As you look back over the barren year now closing, you find *nothing but leaves*. Your name is still on a church-record, but this fruitless wasted year has had no "record on high." Out of all the three hundred and sixty days that God has given you, not one has been passed with Christ, not one is marked with a "white stone" of fidelity. Instead of a sheaf, you have not gathered a single spear. Instead of leading others to Christ, you have not even followed Him yourself. Instead of growing in grace, you have lost even the self-respect which a false life always forfeits. The past is past. Fold up the pages of this dead, barren, wasted year, and write on it the bitter inscription, "Nothing but leaves."

Will you bear with a few plain truths even though

they have a sharp edge? You need them, and they are spoken in love. The simple fact is that you are "backsliders in heart." The best evidence of this assertion is that you do not feel as you once felt, you do not do what you once did, you do not enjoy what you once enjoyed, you do not pray as you once prayed, and you do not live as you did in the days of your "first love." You are off the track, and are *on* a track that leads away from heaven. You are more intent on making money, or in pleasure-hunting, or in pushing up into social promotions, than you are in serving God, or in trying to save sinners from hell. You would blush if you attempted to ask an impenitent sinner to become *what you profess to be?* Your worldly self-seekings have only been a climb-up to that dizzy "mast-head" from which you may be flung off the farther into the yawning sea. If you confess your sins to God, you still cling to them. And if you dealt as faithlessly with your fellow-men as you deal with your Lord, your note or your word would not be taken by a solitary person for a moment! While you live thus, you can have no peace of conscience. While you live thus, neither the Church nor the world fully trusts you; for you once left the world to join the Church, and then slipped away from the very fellowship

which you still profess to hold. While you live so, you are nullifying your pastor's labours, and voting deliberately *against* a revival of religion in your church. Not only are you yielding "nothing but leaves," but they are brown, withered, worthless leaves, such as the wintry winds are now whirling through the forests.

"Nothing but leaves : the Spirit grieves
 Over a wasted life ;
 Sin committed while conscience slept,
 Promises made but never kept,
 Idle words for earnest deeds,—
 Nothing but leaves !

And shall we meet the Master so,
 Bearing our withered leaves ?
 The Saviour looks for perfect fruit :
 We stand before Him ashamed and mute,
 Waiting that word He breathes,—
Nothing but leaves !"

Such are the sad thoughts and sorrowful self-reproaches that are troubling the spirits of many professed Christians as they review the year now closing. They admit that they have backslidden from their "first love," and have borne no fruit to their Master's glory. But the best repentance for sin is to forsake it ; and the only amends that can be made for neglected duties is to resume them, and perform them at once. Do not stop, then, my

brother, with sighing and sorrowing over the lost year that is just going with its accounts to God. Lay hold of the incoming year by the forelock, and begin it with a new consecration of yourself to Jesus. Go back to that deserted place of prayer. Put on the armour afresh,—humbled, yet hopeful. Seek such a reconversion as Peter had when he came out of Pilate's garden, weeping but forgiven. Make for yourself "a happy new year" by commencing a new life! "*This battle is lost,*" said one of his marshals to Napoleon; "but there is time enough before sundown to *fight another and win it.*" The opening year calls us to new resolutions, new hopes, and new consecrations. It has glorious revivals in store for us, if we will but resolve, with God's help, to cover with golden fruit the boughs that have been bearing *nothing but leaves!*



BEFORE THE JUDGMENT-SEAT.

“E shall *all* stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.” The colossal dimensions of that assemblage utterly stagger me. I try to imagine all the present population of the American republic—forty millions strong—convened in one mass meeting. To them I add all the existing peoples on the globe. Then I begin to add the generations of the dead. But the tremendous total breaks me down. There is not room in one little finite mind to put the bare *idea*. But there is room in God’s mind; and there will be room enough too for them all “before the judgment-seat of Christ.” He who telleth all the stars of heaven by name will recognize every single individual so closely that not even a beggar-child will be missed. Each person will stand as distinct and alone before the eye of the Judge, as Warren Hastings stood before the tribunal of the House of Lords. No one must imagine that he will be “lost in the crowd,” or escape that flame-bright eye.

Upon that throne of judgment, Jesus shall sit; for the Father hath committed all judgment to the Son of

Man. The despised Nazarene shall then come in His glory to that great white throne, and all His holy angels with Him. Is it a violent supposition that He will then bear the marks of the nails and the spear of Calvary on His glorified form? We trow not. Sinners shall then look upon Him whom they have *pierced*, and shall wail because of Him. The heirs of glory shall see in those scars of the cross their title to an everlasting inheritance. It will be upon the brow that once wore the crown of thorns that the imperial diadems will then be placed. John in his vision saw "on His head many crowns."

Before that dazzling tribunal, we are told that "the books shall be opened," and that every man will be judged out of those things which are written in the books, according to his works. The wonder grows. All the myriad millions of the globe in one assemblage! And *every act* of all these innumerable myriads brought out, and weighed, and passed upon with the most infallible equity! Yet we must accept this statement, or reject the whole revelation. For we are distinctly told that God "will bring *every* work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or evil." Fasten your mind to that fact, my friend. Just consider that you will be called to give account for every mercy and every moment,

every talent and every trust, for every Sabbath and every sermon, for every line and letter of God's law and God's love. For *all* these the Omniscient Judge will "reckon with you." And for nothing may you expect a closer and more searching inquiry than for your use or abuse of your influence. And suppose that your influence may have thrown some fellow-creature off of the track that leads to heaven! Are you *sure* that you will be admitted to the realms of bliss from which you have helped to keep another out? Think about this a moment before you sing again those self-assuring lines about "reading your title clear to mansions in the skies." It will certainly require an infinite wisdom in the Supreme Judge to unravel the tangled web of daily life in which so many good men have been instrumental in producing so many bad acts of their fellow-creatures. Will all these sins of God's people which *mised them into iniquity* go entirely unpunished? I tremble at the very question.

"There's pity for the hardened knave,
And mercy for the thief that stole,
But God in justice ne'er forgave
The murder of a human soul."

At that august judgment-seat every one will be dealt with in the impartial spirit of a justice that

cannot err a hair's breadth. There can be no bribery in that court. No titled sinner will reap any favours from his rank. No cunning sinner can take advantage of the technicalities of law. No appeal can be made to a higher tribunal. No wily advocate can befog the case, or move for an arrest of judgment. For once the universe will behold a tribunal on which infinite justice will preside, and dispense decisions with a spirit of ineffable love.

We learn beforehand that, in that Supreme Court, those who "*knew* their Master's will and did it not" shall be condemned to "many stripes." Oh, it will be a terrible thing to go up to that judgment-seat of Christ from before some pulpits, and out of some communities! It will certainly fare better with the poor wretch who stumbled into eternity from the heathenish haunts of Sodom, than with the cultured sinner who trampled on ten thousand Gospel truths in his guilty road to the judgment-seat. To topple over into hell from the very summit of the hill of Zion will be a frightful fall. If faithful pastors ever shudder at that judgment-seat, it will be when they see what is becoming of some of their own congregations. The very people who once melted and wept under revival sermons may then be calling upon the rocks and mountains to fall on them, and hide them

from the wrath of the rejected LAMB. Perhaps the reader of this paragraph may be one of those very people.

There is another thought which always weaves itself into every conception I ever form of the judgment scene. And that is the excruciating *separations* which that day will make. All the heart-breaking farewells of earth melt into nothing when compared with those leave-takings for an endless eternity. Who dares to conceive of them? How well I remember the shudder with which, in early childhood, I used to listen to that homely but thrilling hymn :—

“Oh, there will be parting, parting, parting—
At the judgment-seat of Christ :
Brothers and sisters there will part,
Parents and children there will part,
Will part to meet no more !”

If we would but run that dividing line—even in our imaginations—more often now, it would make us more tenderly *faithful* to the souls of those we love. God save us from the agony of breaking away from our own children then—and for ever !

Such are a few of the thoughts which crowd into my mind as I sit to-night alone, and let the light of that tremendous judgment scene break in upon me. It is an awful mystery ; but through the mystery I see

clearly a righteous Saviour on His throne, a heaven of glory, a hell of torment,—and every single human being bound either to the one or to the other. With the “fierce light” of that judgment-seat beating upon our path, let us all enter upon *a year* that brings us the nearer towards it.



HYMNS OF OUR OWN LAND.

F all the hymns born on this side of the Atlantic, the most celebrated, and the most perfect in execution, is Dr. Ray Palmer's "My faith looks up to Thee." The history of this exquisite production, which, like Heber's missionary hymn, was thrown off "in a heat," we have already published. The venerable Dr. Muhlenberg is about telling to the world the biography of his famous lines, "I would not live away:" probably they rank next to Palmer's in popularity among our American churches.

The first hymn ever composed by one of our countrymen, that has won permanent place in all our collections, came from that "king of New England," Timothy Dwight. While he was President of Yale College he wielded a wider intellectual and religious influence than any man of his day in the American pulpit. His discourses on "Theology" were in every minister's study: they were a text-book for students of divinity while Andover and Princeton were in their infancy. But they have gradually been supplanted, and few of our younger clergymen ever

open the four formidable but almost obsolete volumes. President Dwight will live longest in his one classic hymn, whose first verse is so familiar to us all,—

“ I love Thy kingdom, Lord,
The house of Thine abode,
The Church our blest Redeemer saved,
With His own precious blood.”

It is a metrical version of the one hundred and thirty-seventh Psalm; and it contains one verse of pathetic sweetness, worthy of Watts or Cowper. In addressing the Church of God, he passionately exclaims,—

“ For her my tears shall fall ;
For her my prayers ascend ;
To her my cares and toils be given,
Till toils and cares shall end.”

This fine hymn was born in the first year of this century, while Dr. Dwight was at Yale. His more ambitious poem of “Greenfield Hill” is now forgotten except in the families who still live on that verdant and picturesque spot. His theological treatises have climbed away into upper shelves. And the great and good Timothy Dwight, like several other good men, owes his main chance of immortality to a score or two of lines, which he could have written on a small sheet of note-paper.

The classic city of New Haven has given existence

to another hymn, which Dr. Leonard Bacon says is "unsurpassed in the English language, and as near perfection as any uninspired production can be." This is rather extravagant praise of a composition which not one person in a hundred has ever heard of. But it is certainly an exquisite hymn both in thought and in diction. If any of my readers will turn to the 557th of Dr. C. S. Robinson's "Songs of the Sanctuary," they will find it under the head of "Hymns of Repentance and Reception of Christ." It opens with the utterance of lowliest abasement. In the second verse, joy breaks in upon the penitent from the loving countenance and voice of Jesus. The third verse is "a gem of purest ray serene." My readers will thank me for giving these stanzas complete :—

"Trembling before Thine awful throne,
O Lord ! in dust my sins I own ;
Justice and mercy for my life
Contend ! Oh, smile, and heal the strife !

The Saviour smiles ! Upon my soul
New tides of hope tumultuous roll ;
His voice proclaims my pardon found ;
Seraphic transport wings the sound.

Earth has a joy unknown in heaven,
The new-born peace of sins forgiven !
Tears of such pure and deep delight,
Ye angels ! never dimmed your sight."

The thought of this third stanza is expanded in three more verses of most magnificent imagery. So grand a hymn ought to have an air adapted to it, and it would soon become a universal favourite.

The author was Mr. Augustus L. Hillhouse, one of that cultured family from whom "Hillhouse Avenue" is named. He was born at New Haven, in 1792, and died near Paris twelve years ago. While in France he composed this graceful and melodious hymn, and left it as a legacy of love to "that Name that is above every other."

About the year 1847, the late Dr. George W. Bethune, then pastor of a church in Philadelphia, published a hymn of rare beauty which soon found its way into nearly all the later collections. The reigning idea of this song of triumph over death is similar to that of Dr. Cæsar Malan's, "*Non, ce n'est pas mourir,*" a French production, which has been well translated by Professor R. P. Dunn, of Brown University. Before Dr. Bethune's remains were borne to their last resting-place in Greenwood Cemetery, these notes of victory were sung:—

" It is not death to die,
To leave this weary road,
And 'midst the brotherhood on high
To be at home with God.

It is not death to close
 The eye long dimmed by tears,
 And wake, in glorious repose
 To spend eternal years.

It is not death to bear
 The wrench that sets us free
 From dungeon chain, to breathe the air
 Of boundless liberty.

It is not death to fling
 Aside this sinful dust,
 And rise, on strong, exulting wing,
 To live among the just.

Jesus, Thou Prince of life !
 Thy chosen cannot die ;
 Like Thee, they conquer in the strife,
 To reign with Thee on high."

To many of our readers the Rev. Dr. Charles S. Robinson of New York is known as the successful compiler of the "Songs for the Sanctuary." But only a few sharp eyes may have detected his name appended to the 773rd hymn as its author. Those who do not possess this volume may thank me for inserting Dr. Robinson's sweet hymn entire :—

"Saviour ! I follow on,
 Guided by Thee,
 Seeing not yet the hand
 That leadeth me ;
 Hushed be my heart and still,
 Fear I no further ill,
 Only to meet Thy will
 My will shall be.

Riven the rock for me
Thirst to relieve,
Manna from heaven falls
Fresh every eve ;
Never a want severe
Caused my eye a tear,
But Thou art whispering near,
' Only believe !'

Often to Marah's brink
Have I been brought ;
Shrinking the cup to drink,
Help I have sought ;
And with the prayer's ascent,
Jesus the branch has rent,—
Quickly relief He sent,
Sweetening the draught.

Saviour ! I long to walk
Closer with Thee ;
Led by Thy guiding hand,
Ever to be ;
Constantly near Thy side,
Quickened and purified,
Living for Him who died
Freely for me !"

When that most apostolic minister of Jesus Christ, Dr. William Augustus Muhlenberg composed his world-known lines, "I would not live alway" (in 1824), it is said that he was suffering under a sore heart-sorrow. A spirit of mournfulness over "life's woes" breathes through the poem. But in later years he has expressed some doubts whether the hymn is

not too lugubrious for a "happy warrior" in the glorious service of Immanuel. In a letter now lying before me, the sunny-hearted old man says, that "Paul's 'to depart and be with Christ' is far better than Job's 'I would not live alway.'"

Like many other hymns, this precious production of Dr. Muhlenberg's genius has suffered many mutilations. The following verse, which originally closed the hymn, is now omitted from most of our books of metrical devotion :—

"That heavenly music, hark ! sweet in the air,
The notes of the harpers, how clear ringing there !
And see, soft unfolding those portals of gold,
The King, all arrayed in His beauty, behold !
Oh, give me, oh, give me the wings of a dove,
To adore Him, be near Him, enwrapt with His love !
I but wait for the summons, I list for the word,
Alleluia ! Amen ! Evermore with the Lord !"

Of one more American hymn we must speak before closing this paragraph. Its author was my beloved friend and teacher the late Dr. Joseph Addison Alexander. He certainly never dreamed that it would find its way into any collection for public worship when he threw it off one evening rapidly from his versatile pen. The day after its composition he mailed it to Rev. Dr. Hall, then the editor of the *Sunday School Journal*. The lines were published

under the title of "The Doomed Man," and they describe with solemn and terrible energy the fate of a sinner who has "crossed the hidden boundary between God's patience and His wrath." These fearful lines are not so much a hymn as a thrilling appeal to the impenitent, in metre. They were at first circulated in small hand-bills through prayer-meetings, in seasons of revival. They went the rounds of religious journals, and finally lodged in Dr. Robinson's Hymn-book, and in one or two others. As originally written, the opening verse was—

"There is a time, we know not when,
A point, we know not where,
That marks the destiny of men
To glory or despair."

If Hillhouse's hymn is a prelude to the minstrelsy of heaven, these solemn lines of Alexander may be styled the *dirge* of a lost soul against whom the gates of heaven are closed for ever !



THE SUCCESSFUL PASTOR.

“HE sermon always sounds better to me on Sunday when I have had a shake of my minister's hand during the week.” This was a very natural remark of a very sensible parishioner. We always listen with a more open-hearted readiness to everything which falls from the lips of one who has won our friendship or showed us a grateful attention. Even the instructions from God's Word and the precious invitations of the gospel come more acceptably from one we love than from him who treats us with indifference or neglect. After all, the great power of a good pastor over his people is *heart-power*. Intellectual brilliancy may awaken the pride of a congregation in their minister; but it is his affectionate sympathy and personal kindnesses to them that awaken their love for him and keep it burning.

When a pastor has gained a strong hold on the affections of his people, he may preach ever so pointedly against popular sins, and the people will receive his unpalatable truths without flinching, or

hurling a reproach at him. On the other hand, we have known fearless denouncers of wrong-doing to be ousted from their pulpits, simply because the radical thunderers had no *grip* on the affections of their flock. The sermon against rum-drinking or dishonesty was a mere pretext for blackballing him : the secret reason was that they did not love the man. Conscience sometimes requires a faithful ambassador of Christ to put a severe strain on the "tether" that binds him to his pastorate : at such times it is a happy thing for him if that tether is securely fastened to a hundred family-altars and firesides. The great mass of the ministry are not men of genius ; and, even if they were, they could not afford to dispense with that heart-power which can only be acquired by personal kindness and sympathy with their people.

We could name a certain successful pastor who for a quarter of a century has kept his church full and prosperous ; he has sided with most of the moral reforms of the day, and his vineyard has been irrigated with many a copious revival-shower. Yet he never could be accused of brilliant talents or profound learning. He has, in their stead, a warm heart, good sense, tact, winning manners, and fervent piety. He is not a powerful preacher, but he *is* a powerful pastor. He knows where all his congre-

gation live, and he visits them. He never comes as a stranger, or in a ceremonious manner; if the parlour is cold, or locked up for repairs, he drops into the nursery, takes a youngster on his lap, chats with the mother, inquires about the spiritual welfare of the family, and probably offers a fervent prayer with them before he departs. That family are pretty certain to be at church on the next Sunday. If a business man in his congregation has met with a reverse, he calls in at his counting-room, gives him a warm shake of the hand, and a kind word of encouragement. The unfortunate merchant *feels* the warm pressure of that hand the next time he goes to church: he is ready to put into that hand the key to his own heart.

If there is a sick child in the flock, the pastor is kneeling beside its little crib; if there is a bit of crape hanging at the door-knob, the pastor is quite sure to be found amid the weeping family within. At every pastoral visit he makes, he weaves a new strand into the cord of love that binds that household to him and to the sanctuary. Such a pastor bases the pulpit on the hearts of his people; and all the mischief-making *Guy Fawkeses* in the parish cannot put enough powder-kegs of discontent under that pulpit to "blow out" the incumbent.

It may be said that all this pastoral visitation consumes a vast amount of time. So it does; but it can generally be made in the afternoon, while the morning is devoted to study. And the minister is studying *human nature* at every visit: is not this next in importance to a knowledge of God's Word? It is idle for any pastor to plead that his flock is too large for him to visit them. The writer of this paragraph has over three hundred pews in his church,—every one of them rented, to the last sitting,—and he finds no difficulty in reaching every family, at least once in each year. The very exercise of walking from house to house is a life-preserver. Every visit gives an observant pastor some information that he wants, and some new materials for a sermon. It would be a great mercy to many a minister, and to his people, if he could be dragged out of his books, and be brought into personal contact with every-day life.

There is about one minister in every generation who is so situated that he cannot possibly be a visitant of his flock. Charles H. Spurgeon is such a one. With a congregation of five thousand souls, and a membership of over three thousand, with the charge of a theological school, the editorship of a religious magazine, and the oversight of a dozen mission stations, he cannot be expected to visit six or seven

hundred families. Spurgeon is the hundred-handed Briareus of the modern pulpit; but the visitation of his immense flock he necessarily leaves to his board of elders. When he does encounter his parishioners, he is said to be very cordial and affable.

Many arguments might be urged in favour of regular and systematic pastoral visitation on the part of every Christian minister. For what is the real object and end of a minister's office? Is it simply to preach sermons? No! It is to *Christianize and save immortal souls*. It is to edify Christ's Church, to purify society, to fight sin, to lead souls to Jesus. Preaching sermons is *one* of the means to this end. It is, indeed, a chief and indispensable agency. But if a pastor can prepare more practical sermons, and can lodge those sermons more effectually in the hearts of his auditors, by constant pastoral intercourse with them, then is he morally bound to keep up that intercourse. The mass of sinful men are only to be reached through their affections. Sympathy is power. Christ Jesus did not win Zaccheus the publican by argument. He simply went to his house, and won him by a Divine sympathy. Methinks, as I close this article, I hear some good, plain, humble "fisher of souls" whisper to me, "Brother C——, I thank you for your words of cheer. My Master never trusted me with

ten talents ; but He gave me one talent in my *heart*. I cannot be a Spurgeon ; but I can go out and love somebody into the sphere of the gospel. With God's help, I may become a successful PASTOR."



A SONG OF PEACE.



E close these pages with the following sweet song of peace. It issued first from the devout heart of one of God's suffering children. Mrs. Jane Crewdson of Lancashire, England, a member of the orthodox branch of the "Society of Friends," sang this heart-song from a chamber of painful sickness. She kissed the rod of chastisement which was laid upon her, and found that, like Jonathan's "rod," it had the "taste of the honey" upon it. Many who have never seen them before will doubtless welcome them here; and will read them the more often as they draw nearer to the "Better Country."

THE LITTLE WHILE.

Oh for the peace which floweth as a river,
Making life's desert places bloom and smile;
Oh for the faith to grasp heaven's bright "for ever,"
Amid the shadows of earth's "little while"!

"A little while," for patient vigil keeping,
To face the stern, to wrestle with the strong;
"A little while," to sow the seed with weeping,
Then bind the sheaves and sing the harvest song;

“ A little while,” to wear the weeds of sadness,
To pace, with weary step, through miry ways ;
Then to pour forth the fragrant oil of gladness,
And clasp the girdle round the robe of praise.

“ A little while,” ’midst shadow and illusions,
To strive by faith love’s mysteries to spell ;
Then read each dark enigma’s bright solution ;
Then hail sight’s verdict, “ He doth all things well.”

“ A little while,” the earthen pitcher taking
To wayside brooks, from far-off fountains fed ;
Then the cool lip its thirst for ever slaking,
Beside the fulness of the Fountain-head.

“ A little while,” to keep the oil from failing,
“ A little while ” faith’s flickering lamp to trim ;
And then the Bridegroom’s coming footstep hailing,
To haste to meet Him with the bridal hymn.

And He, who is Himself the Gift and Giver,
The future glory and the present smile,
With the bright promise of the glad “ for ever ”
Will light the shadows of the “ little while.”



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