

LOVE TRUTHS FROM THE BIBLE.

BY

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*“Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm:
for love is strong as death.”—SOLOMON’S SONG viii: 6.*



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P R E F A C E .

THERE are better books than ours ; books more interesting, more instructive, more productive of good : but should *it* therefore not have been written ? “ The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee : nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.” There are gems less valuable than the diamond, and flowers less beautiful than the rose. What is contained in this volume, may be no gem of value, no flower of beauty, and of silver and gold there may be none ; but such as was ours, has been given. If the writing be inferior, at least do not condemn the writer who, like the woman anointing Christ for burial, has done what he could in a spirit of love for the Master, and therefore should be much forgiven.

The Creator has not left his creatures without a revelation ; the Lord has not left his servants without a commandment ; the Father has not left his children without an expression of care ; the Bridegroom, to whom we have been betrothed “ forever in righteousness, judgment, loving kindness, mercies and faithfulness,” has not left his bride without a message of love. And from this revelation, this commandment, this expression of care, this message of love a few truths have been chosen, that are encouraging to the soul, precious in our own experience and doubtless in the experience of others. We ask you to give them attention, to

study their meaning, to accept them in their full value, to cherish them as assurances from God—that with *his* children it is *well*; and it may also be, that our consideration of them has not been in vain.

“God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.” May we not be the humble instrument to accomplish some divine purpose? What rejoicing would be ours, if permitted to be of service in the Lord’s vineyard! “The words of the wise are as goads, as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies.” No claim is made to wisdom in the production of this work; yet its preparation was not without much reflection, much solicitude, much anxious prayer; and it is sent forth with a fond hope and an earnest petition to God, that it will not return void, and that the Great Master of assemblies will use it to some good. If in any way a soul be helped in the Christian life by a thought or reflection herein expressed, it will be more than a compensation for any labor of ours, and we shall have more cause than ever to render thanks unto God who, in the last day, will have a special reward for those instrumental in the salvation of others.

What truth is so grand and comforting as—*God is love*? and where, in sacred, or profane literature, can be found a fact of such importance to helpless humanity? It is therefore written; “Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm; for love is strong as death: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the

floods drown it:” and to know this love of God, is to know “the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe.” We thus learn the character of the divine nature—as abounding with affection, and that the objects of its care are the human creatures of earth. In this fact originate the subjects of this volume, hence the name—Love Truths from the Bible.

If we may express our hope, dear reader, it is—that Love Truths from the Bible may have a place in your affections, to the influencing of life and character and to the bringing forth of fruit to the glory of God; if not for its value, at least because of its aim to magnify divine love. Not to your intellect, but to your honest heart it is therefore commissioned; with the single request—that it be read as it has been written, with the desire to realize, in its fullness, the Saviour’s devotion to those consecrated to His service.

“May the Lord direct your heart into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.”

Now these sermons have been delivered from the pulpit, and some of our readers were present on those occasions. You remember how you clasped our hand when the service was over, speaking words of encouragement and friendship, that are still treasured in our memory and heart. Wearied by the work of the hour, and fearful lest the preaching had been to no effect, your expressions of regard were a source of re-assurance, of consolation, of strength. There are those met but once, and the good bye was spoken with a hope to meet again; but with many of you we had frequent companionship in social and religious intercourse, so that

attachments were formed that will ever continue; and to us it will always be a privilege to revisit your pleasant churches and homes; for those associations are among the most cherished and delightful in our experience.

We now commit our little volume to your keeping and consideration, with the sincere desire that it may contribute something to your good, that the divine blessing may accompany your reading of its pages, and also that it may retain in your remembrance (as in ours) days that may perhaps come no more. Let us so live that *together* we may know the bliss of Paradise, *together* behold the King in His beauty, *together* love and enjoy the Saviour, and *together* spend eternity. As you read what you have heard before, remember how the preacher has prayed for you, and breathe for us a prayer.

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OUR PRAYER.



“So much the rather, Thou celestial light,
Shine inward, and the mind through all her pow’rs
Irradiate, *there* plant eyes, all mist from thence
Purge and disperse, that we may see and tell
Of things invisible to mortal sight.”

Paradise Lost.

LOVE TRUTHS FROM THE BIBLE.

THE PRECIOUSNESS OF CHRIST.

“Unto you therefore who believe he is precious.”—I Peter,
ii : 7.

EVERY one is concerned with a countless number of common-place objects, whose pursuit gives rise to the everyday routine of existence, and occasions all the little joys and sorrows which enter into every one's experience ; but in addition to all these, the thoughtful, earnest mind has always an object of special regard which rises far above these petty aims of endeavor, like the grand dome of some cathedral towers above the insignificant structures at its base. Here relief is found from gnawing care, as rest in the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land ; here the mind delights to dwell in sweet forgetfulness of what is or has been, and muse on what the coming years will bring of anticipations realized ; here also is the motive to thought and action, the cherished nucleus about which hope and imagination rear their most magnificent creations, the fond object of all sleeping and waking dreams, the constant source of a peculiar coloring to the whole fabric of life, and upon which depends

the consciousness of a whole life's failure or success, according as there is disappointment or triumph.

With the Christian this main central object is, *Christ*; whose unequalled attainments in perfect manhood have not stirred the world's deep gloom with only a *few* rays of light; whose intimations of a future existence have not gilded life's landscape with only a *few* rich tints of hope; but who is the very chief among ten thousands, so identified with the most vital interests as to be the inspiration to all the faculties of mind and heart; for here ambition may never be restrained, nay, it is actually essential, if true Christian experience is desired.

Accordingly, religion is not the quiet haven after the stormy voyage, not the cool shade after the scorching sand, not the sweet rest after weary toil, but a life-long struggle to get nearer to God in Jesus Christ, to take him as the chief corner-stone for time and eternity.

Our text is the conclusion of a statement in the preceding verse—"he that believeth on him shall not be confounded," more literally, shall not be put to shame; and by shame is here meant, not the trivial embarrassment which causes the color to mantle to the cheek, when modesty has been shocked or the young criminal detected in his crime, but that profound humiliation in the crushing consciousness of failure, which, like a great darkness, rushes over the soul when all has been lost, the foundation has crumbled beneath the feet, the bark in which was entrusted all has gone down beneath the waves, and there is nothing left but a dreary

waiting and longing that death may prove a sweet destroyer of all sense of life. But against this, those trusting in Christ are promised to be insured; and hence our theme:—The preciousness of Christ in preserving believers from shame or humiliation. From mere appeals to the emotions there may result the interest of an hour fancied more than real, but the deep and abiding hope of a life-time is based upon facts; therefore, in demonstrating the truth of our text, we have only to refer to what is known of Christ.

First, then, Himself. The cry of the soul is not so much for God as for the *living* God; not so much for infinitude as for one who is infinite; but to fully satisfy there must be in this personality a capacity for sympathizing in all the experiences of human nature: and though this was doubtless the case with God before the incarnation, that event was needed to enable fallen humanity to appreciate the truth. Accordingly, the God-man, Christ Jesus, was endowed with every requisite qualification to inspire confidence and hope; even unbelieving critics being compelled to acknowledge the marvellous adaptation of such a character to meet the wants of the soul.

Though brief, his public life was a manifestation of the noblest qualities human and divine.—Just in his condemnation of the self-righteous Pharisees, but moved with compassion toward the multitude who seemed like sheep without a shepherd; severe, in his detestation of sin, as when he said,—“thou Capernaum, (which art exalted to heaven,) shall be brought down to hell,” but kind toward the sinner,

as when he said to the erring woman, "neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more;" stern, when he saw his Father's house transformed into a den of thieves, but gentle as a mother, when he took the little children in his arms; strong, when strength was needed to calm the troubled waters of the Sea of Galilee, but weak in the presence of human grief when the two sisters whom he loved had lost their only brother and he, his friend.

How lovely, how grand the union of essence uncreated with created mind, possessing all the excellence of the one forever before the point when time began, with all the nameless charms of the other made perhaps more precious by their growth in time! A great mystery, yet a glorious fact, with the same meaning now as eighteen hundred years ago; for, though Jesus in bodily form is seen no more, as once in the streets of Jerusalem, and the many villages of Judea and Galilee, he nevertheless still lives, with the same infinitude of attributes, and, sweet to think, with the same human nature vibrating to all the joys and sorrows of earth.

As a friend, a teacher, a philanthropist, a hero, or a God, experience presents no parallel; and art, even in the sunny days of Greece, never portrayed on canvas, in verse, or marble such perfection as shown in him, who in contempt was called a Nazarene, but whom millions to-day recognize as "the only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Solitary and sublime he stands out in history, the admiration of enemies, the all in all to his faithful disciples. Intellect discovers no defect, heart asks no more.

Those, who accept him as he really is, are exhorted by his wondrous revelation of divinity to an obedience, a love, a consecration to God, which, not the voice from Sinai, nor even that heard in Paradise in the cool of the evening, could ever have inspired. Also, by his exhibition of perfect humanity they are irresistibly led to an imitation of his virtues, the effect of which is an exercise of sentiments whose harmony is a rich music enjoyed by all who come within the charmed circle of their influence. And if men will cavil at the persistency with which the lineaments of his character are sought to be reproduced in human nature, sufficient is the reply of the artist of old; "I paint for *eternity*." Therefore a mere honest belief in the existence of Christ, as one, who once blessed this earth with his presence, affords an elevation of thought and feeling beyond the power of time, place, or circumstance to destroy: it imparts a tone, a vigor, a nobility of purpose and aspiration which cannot be annihilated by any change of fortune. For it is impossible that the world should ever be robbed of Christ, directed by whose spirit ethnic development is unfolding to a grand consummation, upon the moral principles of whose doctrine society is founded, with the force of whose influence true improvement is identified, and the impressive eloquence of whose life and character will never pass away, or cease to move, as long as there remains in the human heart the faintest glimmering of what is true and good:—Unto you therefore who believe he is precious.

But, *secondly*,—Christ's work. "Of man's first disobedience" and all its train of woes which still

continue, little need be said. Disappointment, disease, and death became the heritage of the race, to take from each sunbeam its warmth and brightness in casting an ever deepening shadow with the lapse of years from youth to age, from which in this life the soul shall be lifted nevermore. But these are temporary ills and might be borne, if there were hope of rest beyond the grave, which also is denied; for in the fall humanity lost companionship with God, apart from whom immortality would be a hideous curse. But just here comes in the work of Christ. Hear him address the father in the language of earth's sublime poet;

“Behold me then; me for Him, life, for life
 I offer; on me let thine anger fall;
 Account me man: I for his sake will leave
 Thy bosom, and this glory next to Thee
 Freely put off; and for Him lastly die
 Well pleased: on me let Death wreak all his rage.”

And so it came to pass. The grim guardian of the gate of hell, offspring of devil and sin, did rush to conflict with the Ancient of Days, but miserably failed in his fell design: so that “Hope enchanted smiled, and waived her golden hair;” for death had lost his sting, and the grave her victory.

Looking upon the all-sufficient work of his Son in man's behalf, the Father is well pleased: there is therefore no condemnation to those who are in Christ, whose meditation was perfect from the circumstances of the case. Infinite in merit, because he was the Son of God; universal in its application, because he has broken down the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile; eternal in its effects, because he has entered into the tabernacle not made

with hands, even heaven itself. Thus Christ suffered the penalty of man's transgression : upon him was laid the iniquities of us all, and when the darkness of the crucifixion had cleared away, Sinai's smoke had vanished forever. Yes, the shewbread, the candlestick, the altar, the temple itself is seen no more ; and though the Ark of the Covenant still remains, its covering has long since melted 'neath the precious blood there sprinkled, and is now running over the tables of stone in liquid gold, a beauteous tracery of love. Here Mercy and Truth have met together ; Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other. Having the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come, they who rely upon the work of Christ will surely never be put to confusion : Unto you therefore who believe he is precious.

But, lastly, Christ's peculiar relation to each of his followers. A statesman may command admiration, a patriot, honor, but genuine love is only evoked by the meeting of hearts in the strong quick sympathies of individuals as such : Wherefore, if the multitude had been the sole object of Christ's regard, what he is and has done, would have had little influence upon practical life. It is not sufficient to know that he fed the five thousand, that he was moved with compassion toward the people uncared for, that he wept over Jerusalem when he saw her coming doom ; but it is required also to know, that he said to Peter, "I have prayed for *thee*," to the thief on the cross, "to-day, *thou* shalt be with me in Paradise," and to the woman, who had lost her all in losing him, "Mary."

It is said that Pericles learned the name of every Athenian citizen, and that Cyrus learned the name of every soldier in his army. The wisdom of such a plan is evident. Each man was made to feel that he had a personal interest in the welfare of the State, and thereby his co-operation was secured in every public measure. What was prompted by policy in the statesman and general, has love for its ground with the Saviour of mankind ; for Jesus knows the name of every disciple.

With every casting upon him of a contemptuous sneer came the thought of each one he was redeeming from woe. With every stroke, under which his flesh quivered, as it nailed him to the cross, was stamped upon his breaking heart the image of each one for whom he was purchasing everlasting life. With the loss of every drop of blood, as it fell slowly to the ground, his mind reviewed each one he was winning back to God and heaven.

My beloved spake and said unto me, "rise up my love, my fair one, and come away. Open to me my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled ; for my head is filled with dew and my locks with the drops of the night." And in sweet accord is the language of the bride : "My beloved is mine, and I am his. His left hand is under my head and his right hand doth embrace me." Thus it is the privilege of every Christian to feel that Christ sustains to him a relation as intimate as though he were the only one to be redeemed by the atonement, as though he were the only object of consideration in the councils of God.

The glory, the strength the very soul of Christianity is this personal element, to which are due its

conquests both of individuals and nations, by beauty of life, by force of speech, by nerving the arm to strike for liberty and truth.

Before it the Lion of Tarsus was subdued; the proud Eagle of Rome folded his wings in the dust; the pale Crescent is fading as the moon before the sun; the great Dragon of the Vatican is in the last throes of death, and the glory of Jehovah is fast filling the earth.

Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift, but everlasting praise that each of the fold is the object of his care! so that he is your God and mine, your Saviour and mine, pressing each one to his yearning heart with a love so deep, so gentle, so enduring, so satisfying, that from each the joyous exclamation is heard, "*you may have all the world; give me the hope in Christ.*" What more is required to preserve from shame! What more can imagination add to the truth! Will believers ever be compelled to acknowledge that, alas! they have leaned upon a broken reed? that the corner-stone of their building has given way? The strong faith of living men is a standing denial. The heroic death of martyrs from Stephen till the last fire kindled at Smithfield, is a resistless refutation. The ineffable smile of peace on the face of the dying Christian, is proof conclusive that Christ is with his people to the end. Unto you therefore who believe he is precious.

By way of conclusion permit us to emphasize the fact that only believers are referred to in the text. This was a *very* bad world, and bad enough now; yet oh! how much better for the coming of Jesus Christ. This was a *very* dark world, and dark

enough now ; yet oh ! how much brighter for the light that shines in the face of Jesus Christ. For wherever the influence of Christianity extends, suffering is alleviated, morality advanced, education encouraged.

But, as only to those who appreciate its value, is the costliest diamond of any worth ; as only to those who have a sense for its perception is a “ thing of beauty, a joy forever,” so only to those who really believe, is Christ subjectively and objectively, eternally ; and temporally, precious. It is faith that catches the glow of the “ bright and morning Star.” It is faith that soars and meets with eagle eye the splendor of the Sun of righteousness. It is faith that enjoys the full radiance of the Light of the World.

The awful warning in the last part of the verse not merely indicates what a privilege is lost, but what misfortune results from not having faith.

If men *will* not take the Stone laid in Zion as the chief corner-stone of all their hopes ; whether they will or not. It will be the corner-stone of their despair. If they will not take it as a stepping-stone to heaven, it certainly will prove an obstruction in their way. But to as many as sincerely say, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,” the Lord of hosts is mighty to save.

How evident, then, is the necessity of accepting Christ ! Pursued to a certain extent, earthly objects yield a reasonable pleasure, which life with its many sorrows could ill afford to spare, but made the chief end of desire and exertion, the time will sooner or later come when finally will cease their power to interest ; the walls of the soul will fall together about a space where *once* there seemed a world, but

now a dreary void ; and, oh ! how terrible this desolation of spirit.

But why art thou cast down, O my soul, and “why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God.” “Behold I lay in Zion, a chief cornerstone, elect, precious ; and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded : Unto you therefore who believe he is precious.” Precious for the realization of his presence all along through life ; precious for the vision of his glory in the fearful “hour of wrenching away from all we have known and loved ;” precious for his appearance in human form at the pearly gate to welcome each brother and sister to “Paradise regained ;”

“Where they shall dwell secure when time shall be,
Of tempter and temptation without fear.”

THE PURE IN HEART, AND THEIR REWARD.

“Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.”—Matthew, v: 8.

THERE are to be found in the Bible, comprehensive principles for the regulation of life and character; so that, we are often left to decide, whether this, or that act; this, or that state of mind, be in accordance with what is required. Special injunctions are not wanting, however. The Old Testament seems almost wearisome, in this regard, to those enjoying the liberty of the Gospel: and also in the New Testament the observance of certain duties is mentioned, as meriting peculiar rewards; and the commission of certain evils, as meriting peculiar penalties. This is strikingly the manner of Christ's teaching in the Sermon on the mount. Accordingly, if any one desire to shape his inner and outer life consistently and favorably in the sight of God and man, let him carefully heed the lessons there taught. The first twelve verses of the fifth chapter of Matthew command more than ordinary interest; for various classes of individuals are there pronounced blessed by the Saviour himself. But the world may be surprised to find in this catalogue, not those whom it cherishes most, but just those, for whom it cares the least. For nothing is said about the rich, the famous, the mighty, or the learned; but the poor in spirit; they that mourn; the meek; the hungry and thirsty after righteousness; the merciful; the pure in heart; the peace-

makers; the persecuted for righteousness' sake; the reviled, the persecuted, the evil spoken of falsely for Jesus' sake; all these have a place; God's richest gifts await to perfect their happiness: the bright robe of promise is cast about them all.

Our text stands out prominently among the beatitudes, as at once setting forth the most difficult condition to the most glorious reward. "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God." In other words, purity of heart brings the blessedness of seeing God. Do you marvel at the joining of these, this condition to this reward? Ask yourself, would you have it otherwise? That God should be looked upon at the pleasure of a heart full of sin; would not this be, not only adverse to conscience, but also repulsive to heart and intellect? We think of God, as boundless in mercy and love, yearning to regain his children from suffering to his infinite rest; but we cannot think of him, as being indifferent to sin. If the conception of divine holiness should be altogether lost, it would be the destruction of all sense of right and wrong; society and government, as well as religion, could not exist; chaos and anarchy would universally prevail. God's hatred of sin is evident from the character of the divine nature; and it is also evident from the impure heart, whose tendency is directly away from God; whose delight is in that which he abhors; whose conduct is forbidden by his commandments. Such is sin; not only violating, but vitiating; not only removing the good, but instilling what is evil; at once outraging divine justice, and causing the heart to rejoice in its separation from God. Thus

it is no arbitrary decree, but a just and natural sequence, that only the pure in heart shall see God.

In what does purity of heart consist? Have you ever considered the destiny of the little rill that has its source far away from the sea, in the ravine of the mountain? Now dashing from rock to rock, now gliding so smoothly that the ear can scarcely catch the ripple as you rest upon the bank; now blending with the babbling brook, now with the brook uniting with the greater stream; now with the stream mingling with the mighty river; now with the river going out into the broad bay; and now with the bay lost in the abyss of waters; its object is one, namely, to reach the ocean; and persistently, therefore successfully is its object accomplished. Just so with the heart: it must have but one aim, namely, to do the will of God; and if persistently, then successfully will its object be accomplished. This was the example left us by Christ, who said to his disciples, "I came, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me:" and we know how sublimely He persevered, even to the bitter end. And now, this devotion to God's service does not interfere with man's obligations to himself, or to others. On the contrary, it insures their faithful observance; for show us a man, who is observant of the divine law; and we will show you one, who is blameless in regard to all else. To act in harmony with the great author of the universe, is to act in harmony with all the relations, in which one is placed; and hence, there is perfectness in the entire life, just in proportion as the effort to do God's will is successful.

Again, have you never contemplated with delight clear, crystal water springing out from a rock by the wayside? How beautiful its fondling of the bright, gentle sunbeams, rejoicing in the presence of a purity like its own! Nature's divinest offering, fresh flowing from her stony urn, unsullied by the touch of earth! That, with its glow, with its freshness, with its freedom from stain, is a true emblem of the pure heart; and as day dispels the darkness of the night, brings back a flush of beauty to nature's cheek, and re-animates the waiting world with a new impulse of life; so truth, in such a heart, dispels all darkness, elevates the desires, makes heavenly what is earthly, remodels in celestial beauty what has been deformed by sin. It was just this cleansing of the heart, which the Pharisees so much lacked. *Outwardly* they were as polished sepulchres, faultless to the eye; so minutely exact in every requirement of the law, as not to be willing that a poor woman should be healed on the Sabbath day, whom Satan had bound for eighteen years. But *inwardly* they were full of foul corruption, which called forth the severest denunciations of Christ; as when He said, "ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell!" Gentle, patient, loving, self-sacrificing, and looking heavenward, the purified heart is—as an instrument without discord; upon which every one may depend "for the note wanted," with which even God himself is well pleased. The realization of this truth caused the Psalmist to pray, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."

So then, there are two essentials to the pure in heart; singleness of purpose in doing the will of God, and the sanctification of the affections by the truth; a holy life and a holy character. The holy life is more especially for the benefit of men; for an example is thereby set forth; encouragement is afforded; and the precept, love thy neighbor as thyself, is put into action; so that, human hearts have occasion to bless God for human sympathy and relief. In this connection it is said of Jesus: "He went about doing good:" A distinction, which earth's proudest monarch might well covet; yet one within the reach of all. The holy character is more especially for the eyes of God, as only He can estimate its capabilities, not only for the moment we call time, but also for that infinite beyond, known only as to its name, *eternity*. To him who is from everlasting to everlasting, what are the acts of creatures such as we, excepting so far as they indicate dispositions of soul, that may endure forever? This is well exemplified by the case of the poor widow, casting her two mites into the treasury; of whom Christ said, "She hath cast in more than they all." The Pharisees gave of their *abundance* to God; while she, of her *penury*, gave all that she had. *They* were prompted by a desire for the praise of men; while *she*, only mindful of her duty and love to God, thus disclosed to the Savior's view the priceless pearl of a self-sacrificing heart.

"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place?" The answer comes at once; "He that hath clean hands and a pure heart." The prophet, Micah, also asks, "Wherewith shall we come before the Lord, and

bow ourselves before the high God? He hath shown thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Here again, the same requirement is set forth, only in a more practical form. The possessor of any one of these graces is deserving of regard: for we honor the judge, who in his decisions recognizes neither friend nor foe; we love the sister of mercy, who with a steady flame of kindness in her heart, (though she "may not always be clad in a costume of black,") is ever ready with her gentle ministries of relief; and we are drawn toward the humble, who parade not their gifts and attainments above those of others. But where these graces are found combined; concentrate their influence in elevating life and character; and are exercised with due regard to divine, as well as human claims; it is *there* that the true Christian spirit is realized. The loveliness of those thus favored seems all but sacred. About them is something of the glory of the transfiguration. In their presence we are encouraged, strengthened, subdued; and we feel that it is good for us to be there, in homage to the exalted sceptre of true manhood and true womanhood. Thus single in their purpose of serving God, like the mountain rill in reaching the ocean; and stainless within, like the living water from the rock; *they* are the pure in heart, whom our text pronounces blessed; for *they* shall see God.

Let no one suppose that actual perfection is attainable on earth. That would be contrary to revelation, as well as to experience and observation. The fact is, that a sense of imperfection is essential to

any advancement whatever in the Christian life; and where imperfection is not felt to exist, there, rest assured it is to be found in its most hopeless form. To borrow an illustration from a favorite writer: there were two pictures of an early art, perhaps executed in the eighth century. One was receptive of improvement; and clearly evidenced an artist whose ideal was far above what his unpractised hand was able to realize: while the other gave evidence of an artist well satisfied with what he had done. Italy, where the first was executed, boasts to day of her Raphael and Angelo; while Ireland, whence the other came, cherishes no distinguished representatives of the art. Just so in spiritual affairs; there is great hope for those, who are ever striving for a higher experience; while little or none for those, who are satisfied with their attainments. The commandment is, do all you can, and do it with your might. Obey this, relying upon our Lord Jesus Christ for salvation; and your acceptance with God is insured. You are purified in Christ, whose blood cleanseth from all sin; and his spirit will continue the work of grace.

One of the means to be employed by the pure in heart is communion with self. A certain piece of land is to be made into a beautiful park. Now what is naturally the first step to be taken? Why of course a thorough examination of the said piece of land, to ascertain what use can be made of existing peculiarities, what old features need altering or removing altogether, and what new objects should be introduced to heighten the effect. This stream must be turned to form a cascade. Those trees must be cleared away to complete the symmetry of a

grove. This hill must be levelled in constructing one of the grand avenues. That valley must be filled up to get rid of an offensive marsh. Besides all this, many new trees and shrubs and flowers must be planted, which never were known to grow there before; and so the work goes on, not to be completed in a month or year. Should it be otherwise in regard to life and character? In beautifying these, is there less need of care? Let there be a thorough self-examination, to ascertain what faults need correction, what virtues should be added; and this being known, act promptly, with decision. There are appetites and passions to be controlled; habits to be overcome; errors of intellect to be removed; unwise conduct to be reformed; charity and her sister graces to be cherished; forethought and judgment to be exercised. All this may be an unpleasant and arduous task; one that may tax your powers to the very utmost; but it cannot be avoided in the Christian life.

Aids are not wanting, however, in this self-examination. There is conscience, the never silent monitor within; always advising, or warning; commending, or forbidding; excusing, or accusing; urging, or restraining; in order that the right may be thought and felt and done. There is history, individual and national, which by its motives and results, may assist the mind in pursuing what is good, and shunning what is evil. There is nature, with her thousands of voices proclaiming the truth on every side. To say nothing of the lessons taught us by the grand firmament, upon which the old sacred writers delighted so much to dwell; the objects of earth all about us, have an urgent message

for all who will listen, and be guided by what they hear. Yes,

“Every bird that sings;
Every flower that stars the elastic sod;
Every breath the radiant summer brings,
To the pure spirit is a word of God;”

therefore, of order, of innocence, of faith, of love; of all that purifies the soul for heaven; of all that contributes to the ideal, dreamed of by Plato, and the best men of every age. But greatest of all! there is revelation. Conscience, may be weak. History, unless viewed through long periods of time, may lead to false conclusions as to what is right and wrong: and nature, to be fully appreciated, needs a peculiar endowment of soul, possessed by few. But the Bible is forcible, is unerring, is universal in its teachings; and if in its light, especially that light reflected from the character and works of our Lord Jesus Christ, self be reviewed with a purpose to reform; the progress made will be sure.

There must also be communion with God. To enjoy the light, to experience its full radiance, it will not do merely to study optics: nor will it suffice to observe light as reflected by moon and stars. The great orb of day must himself be gazed upon in his noon-day splendor, the centre and source of light to our solar system. In like manner, it will not do merely to talk of purity; that may only lead to a sickly sentiment: nor will it answer to regard the character of good men, as a sufficient model for imitation. Those who would be pure, must go to the fountain of all purity; that is to God himself.

Only in earnest communion with our heavenly father, (a privilege secured to us by the sacrifice of Christ,) can we obtain relief from the guilt and power of sin. Earth presents much that is fair, touching and impressive. A young mother bending in tenderness over her sleeping babe; a sister's holy affection; a patriot, striking for liberty and home; an old man's dream of childhood; all these touch the heart; and awaken a pleasure, subdued but intense, because the finest chords of our nature vibrate with emotion, like a rich harp string with the witchery of sound. But lovelier far, more impressive than all, is the human form bowed at the altar of prayer.

The world forgot; the soul alone with its God, pleading in tones that will take no refusal, till at last the answer comes, not in the fire, not in the storm, not in the earthquake, but in the still, small voice, I will; be thou clean! my blood washed away thy sins: my spirit will sanctify thee to myself.

Now as to the great reward, the blessedness of seeing God. We observe that it is enjoyed in the present life. Christ went away, that the Spirit might come; and in nature, in revelation, and in their mental conditions, the pure in heart experience the Divine presence. Their blessedness arises from a sense of God's protecting care; so that they are not afraid "for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at their side, and ten thousand at their right hand; but it shall not come nigh them. He shall give his

angels charge over them, to keep them in all their ways. They shall bear them up in their hands, lest at any time they dash their foot against a stone." Their blessedness arises also from a sense of God's boundless love; for to them it is given to "comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth all knowledge;" and from it they cannot be separated, by tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword, or death, or life, or angels, or principalities, or powers, or things present, or things to come, or height, or depth, or any other creature; for all are theirs, and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Their blessedness arises also from the hope, with which they are inspired; for "God according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten them unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

"O hope delicious, O conception grand,
That pictures visions of the flowery land;
That wafts the fragrance of its fields of bliss
Across the deserts of a world like this!
Extatic hope, that gives to mortal eyes
A passing glimpse of its refulgent skies!
Transporting hope; that lifts the soul above
To wondrous regions of eternal love!
O hope divine, thou art the voice of God!
By thee allured we seek his grand abode."

They are thus made blessed in this life by something far better than mere pleasure, or worldly possessions. They have a deep and abiding trust in God, whom they see by faith; and they have the assurance, that in the life to come, they will no

longer see as through a glass darkly, but face to face.

After the farewell with friends, after the flood has been crossed, after the pearly gates have been reached, after the city has been entered ; the vision of God to the pure in heart shall be perfect. Yes! They shall see Him as He is; worthy of blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might. They shall see him, as the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely. They shall see him to be like him, and shall be satisfied with the likeness. They shall see him to glorify and enjoy him forever. The seraphim will still proclaim to one another, saying, "holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory:" but none there will tremble with fear because of unclean lips; and there will be no need of a coal from off the altar. Guiltless and pure, the redeemed shall be in free communion with God, to behold the King in his beauty, to experience the joy of his presence, to be enraptured with the affluence of his love: and O surpassing bliss! the coming ages will bring no change. How glorious and sublime the prospect of living with God for all eternity! Amid the difficulties and trials of life, there is no greater source of encouragement, strength and hope. It was this that caused St. Paul to say, "I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed."

In conclusion, let it be ever borne in mind, that the requisite to the privilege of seeing God—is purity of heart, only attainable by acceptance of Christ. Men have tried philosophy; which, by its wondrous

power of diversifying the appearance of truth, flatters the mind with a promise of success. They have also tried asceticism, (self-torture,) in the hope, that cruelty to the flesh would leave the mind unobstructed in aspiring toward the divine. They have also tried retirement from the world, that the mind might be lifted above things seen and temporal, to those unseen and eternal. And strange to say ! men have even tried to buy the privilege of seeing God ; who, together with all those who encourage the blasphemous practice, deserve the rebuke of Peter to the sorcerer ; “ Thy money perish with thee.” All these attempts are vain, and worse than vain ; for often their only effect is to widen the gulf between earth and heaven. Accordingly, if we would see God in this life, if we would have a sense of his presence continually with us, if we would kneel at the feet of Jesus, not as Mary, here on earth in tears, but in that better country where no tears ever fall ; if we would dwell with God forever ; let us keep our lives consecrated to his service ; let us have our affections sanctified by his spirit : in a word let us keep our hearts with diligence ; for out of them are the issues of life. “ Blessed are the pure in heart ; for they shall see God.”

FROM SAUL OF TARSUS TO ST. PAUL.

“All that heard Him were amazed.”—Acts, ix : 21.

THEY at Damascus knew that Saul had come there to persecute the Christians ; and when they heard Him preaching in the synagogue, as our text tells us, they were amazed. The 9th chapter of Acts contains the first account of Paul’s conversion ; one of the most remarkable and important events in church history ; its far-reaching results are beyond computation. The apostle preached everywhere the salvation he had found himself ; and though we might arrive at some estimate as to the number of churches he established in his various missionary journeys, there is no estimating how many individual souls have been brought to a knowledge of the truth through his *instrumentality*. It is a vast multitude which no man can number. His writings also went far to revolutionize opinion, life and religion in his own time ; and to-day they are ever increasing in their influence over the minds and hearts of men.

This conversion was peculiar in its attendant circumstances, which made a profound impression upon the apostle’s mind ; inasmuch as they occasioned to him an intimate communion with Christ, and forever attached him to the Master’s person and cause, through every vicissitude imagination can conceive. Paul several times refers to them in proof of his apostleship, and also to enforce the

truth with all classes of men, Jews and Gentiles, unbelievers and Christians, enemies and friends. These circumstances were the sudden shining of a great light round about him on his way to Damascus; the audible voice of the Lord from Heaven, remonstrating with him against his conduct; the loss of sight, with its subsequent recovery by the laying on of the hands of Ananias; and the gift of the Holy Ghost, received at the same time. This was doubtless that extraordinary communication of the spirit giving power to work miracles, possessed by the apostles and many others.

Evidently supernatural, Paul's conversion was genuine and complete. He, who persecuted and wasted the Church of God, now became most active in its defence and extension. He, who profited in the Jews' religion above his fellows, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of his fathers, now, when it pleased God to reveal his Son in him, delighted in the word of God, uncorrupted by the views of men. He, who had stood by and had consented to the death of the first Christian martyr, now was ready to die in the same cause, to which Stephen had testified with his blood. He, who had done all things contrary to Jesus of Nazareth, now became His most devoted disciple; willing to spend and be spent to advance the truth.

You know the difference between an arctic and a tropical clime; between the rough, unpolished mass of stone and the beautiful statue; between the babble of a child and the utterances of a Milton or Newton; and certainly the difference is great; yet not half so great, as between Saul of Tarsus who is

an object of aversion, and St. Paul, whom we reverence and love. No wonder that they at Damascus were amazed. Let us now consider the progress of this transformation in its successive manifestations, which are set forth in the 9th of Acts—in a sequence, precisely answering to that of reason and experience.

First then, there was humility. “And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from Heaven: and he fell to the earth.” His prostration was not chiefly because of the physical effect produced; though that may have had some influence. The light directly from the throne and possessed of spiritual power, penetrated his very soul; shone there as in a place long kept in darkness, and so revealed its deformity and repulsiveness, that he felt unworthy to stand in the divine presence. Immediately he realized, that his zeal had not been according to knowledge; that while his motives to some extent, had been commendable, his conduct and spirit were to be condemned; and that his previous life had been in direct antagonism to the divine will. Gamaliel, his distinguished teacher, had once warned the Jewish council, not to molest apostles of Christ, lest haply, as he said, they should be found “fighting against God.” This wise advice had been unheeded by Saul at the time; but now doubtless it was re-called with the keenest pain of regret; for the fact, that he himself had been fighting against God, was terribly and distressingly evident.

But now there he lay upon the ground, humble, helpless, self-condemned; all his self-righteousness,

self-sufficiency, intolerance and blood-thirstiness gone for ever ; but leaving scars and wounds upon His soul, which only balm from Heaven could heal. Accordingly, when he asked, who art thou, Lord ? And the answer came, I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest ; he could only answer, from out the depth of his humiliation, “ Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ? ” “ I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest. ” How kind and gentle the reproof of the Master ! yet, oh how effective ! It was the touching complaint of unappreciated mercy. It was the sorrowful remonstrance of unselfish goodness. It was the resistless protest of injured innocence. It was the heart-cry of neglected love ; making Saul of Tarsus, not so much afraid of retribution, as ashamed of his hatred and ingratitude ; and to a man of his type, who had prided himself on his religious zeal, that was the surest way to bring him to submission. A bold, true nature can only be effectually reached by appeals to its nobler impulses, to its manhood, to its chivalry. It may not be driven ; it may, however, be won. Threats will only excite its opposition ; but love may bind it in chains, that can never be removed. God is fully acquainted with every impulse and sentiment of human nature, and is quick to improve the very best means of accomplishing His purposes, as in the case before us ; for Saul was immediately and thoroughly subdued. He always proved himself to be one of the most gifted ; yet he always remained one of the most humble disciples of Christ. He was always one of the most privileged in receiving divine revelations ; yet his determination was—to glory, not in

these, but in his infirmities. From Jesus himself he had learned to be meek and lowly in heart.

Next, there was prayer. "And the Lord said to unto him," (That is, unto Ananias,) "arise and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus: for behold, he prayeth." The weight of his sin bears the misguided man to the earth; but sorrow, taking the form of repentance, soon directs his thoughts heavenward. He thinks perhaps that he may not be forgiven; that his crimes are too numerous and of too flagrant a character to be regarded with mercy: yet the consciousness of having wronged one, who has shown him only kindness and compassion, compels him to an acknowledgment of his faults. But of course it is also true, that hope, ever rising anew from her own ashes, likewise suggests prayer. Speak, she whispers: "God is slow to anger and plenteous in mercy:" "A bruised reed will he not break;" "a smoking flax he will not quench." It may be, he will hear.—Accordingly, as a disobedient child hastens to its mother, assured that no disobedience on its part can destroy that mother's love; so this strong man, weak in the consciousness of guilt, hastens to his Heavenly Father, trusting to that love which nothing can change: the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. How comforting the truth, that however much steeped in iniquity, however far down in the cesspool of sin His creatures may be; if they will only lift the hand, only cry for help, God will heed and save.

Behold, he prayeth. Is there not a mark of advancement here? We were hopeful, when the

sinner was prostrate upon the ground : are we not much more encouraged, when told, that he prays ? He is not now subject to the heat and glare of the noon-day sun on the way to Damascus. He is under the refreshing shelter of a friendly home : therefore his brain is clear ; he has full opportunity for sober thought ; and as his first care on receiving the revelation of Christ, was the *enormity* of his sin ; so now his great concern is, may I be forgiven ? may I be freed from the “ body of this death ? ” O wretched man ! let thy tears fall ; let thy soul rise up ; let thy petitions ascend ; pray ! pray ! for every sin of thine weighs heavier upon the heart of God, than all nature’s frame upon His hands : every aspiration of thine for purity and innocence is to Him a dearer treasure, than the brightest star that shines : every effort of thine for a higher life, is hailed by Him with more rejoicing, than the creation of new worlds ; and every prayer of thine for acceptance in Christ is to Him far sweeter music, than the richest harp in heaven.

Next we contemplate Saul as connecting himself with the visible church. “ And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales : and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.” To a mind, well disciplined like that of Saul of Tarsus, organization and government were of the highest consideration. He was naturally compelled to regard division as weakness, union as strength. Besides this, from the nature of his education in Greek, Latin and Hebrew learning, he doubtless from his youth had entertained a respect for law. This opinion finds confirmation in the fact, that when about to enter upon the persecution

of the Christians at Damascus, he went first to the High Priest to obtain letters giving him authority. After his conversion this constructive tendency of his disposition led him at once to identify himself with the people of God: therefore he was baptized. At that time baptism signified connection with the visible church; and it would be so to-day, (in practice as well as theory,) were it not for the neglect of parents, elders and pastors. If the church were more attentive to her baptized members, her extent would soon be more commensurate with the faithfulness of her doctrine to the teachings of scripture.

Humility had begotten prayer, and prayer had brought both the converting power of the Spirit immediately from God, and the miracle working power of the spirit mediately by the laying on of the hands of Ananias. Then after this when the scales had fallen from his eyes, when he also beheld the light of the other world which is Jesus Christ, he made a public profession of his faith in the act of baptism. He knew that the way to see Christ—was to see him, as exemplified in his true disciples; that one of the highest proofs of his love for Christ would be a regard for those who love the Lord; that the means of enjoying communion with Christ was by association with those who, when even two or three are gathered together, have the promise of the divine presence, that the appointed channel of receiving nourishment and strength from Christ was through his body, which is the church: and hence the promptness of his action. It was the lying down of the wolf with the lamb, of the leopard

with the kid. It was the fierce enemy of the cross, taking position with its most devoted friends. It was the Samson of the world's wisdom giving up his strength, not in a Delilah's lap, but in the embrace of the heavenly bride, descending out of heaven from God, "having the glory of God: and the light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper-stone clear as crystal."

Next we find Paul at work. "And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God." Of an ardent and resolute nature, possessed of quick sympathies and a clear judgment, Paul doubtless never held a half-way opinion on any question, he was never lukewarm in any cause. Whatever was his faith, Jewish or Christian, he embraced it with energy and zeal; and therefore he was ready, not only to contend for its defence, but also to labor for the extension of its influence. Accordingly, as soon as he had fallen under the power of the spirit, had acknowledged his allegiance to Christ, and had been enrolled among the disciples; the work of serving the Master by making known the truth to others immediately began. Rejoicing now himself in the liberty of the sons of God, he longed to bring freedom to others; especially as he had for years endeavored to fasten upon others the sin-fetters of unbelief. The remembrance of his opposition to Christ and of his violent persecution of the Christians urged him to make the utmost endeavors as far as possible to recompense for the evil he had done. He therefore entered upon his work, with all the enthusiasm of one, who had long been wandering in darkness but had suddenly come to the light; of one, who had been committing a fear-

ful wrong against God and man, but now had discovered his mistake, and was determined henceforth to live for no other cause than to establish the kingdom of Christ throughout the world.

There is a beautiful, little tract, called—The Starless Crown. It tells of a maiden, who in a dream went to heaven and was given a crown; but was much grieved, when she saw that the crowns of many others were bejewelled with stars; while hers had none, because she had brought no souls to Christ. For the sake of the cause Paul was willing to be considered the very off-scouring of the earth; but he was ambitious of being a nobleman, a prince in heaven; and knowing the great compensation to those, who labor in the Master's vineyard, he consecrated all that he was and had, to the saving of souls. Whatever were his circumstances on earth, he was content; but he aimed at nothing else than the highest honors in the future world; and these he sought to attain, not by the frauds and shams of modern politicians. He endeavored to earn them by faithful service; for, though it is true, that all the gifts of God are of grace; it is also true, that even so small an act as the giving of a cup of cold water in a Christian spirit, will by no means lose its reward. "And the King shall answer and say unto them, verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Consider the advancement now reached by St. Paul. From the uncompromising foe, he has changed to the earnest advocate of the truth. He has not only deserted the ranks of the enemy; he has enlisted for life in the army of the Lord: and never

in any warfare, never on any battle-field did soldier ever contend more faithfully, more gallantly, more successfully for victory, than did this grand old Christian warrior, in endeavoring to conquer the world for the King of kings. No land was too distant; no danger too threatening; no difficulty too arduous; no trial too severe; wherever and whenever there was an opportunity of preaching the gospel. As his own statement is, "in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor, and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." He could therefore well exclaim at the close of his useful and eventful life; "I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day."

We come now to what was most commendable, most praiseworthy in St. Paul's record; namely, his suffering for Christ, finally culminating in his martyr's death at Rome. "And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill

him." If religion were all happiness, the gate of course would not be strait, the way not narrow ; and instead of a few, there would be many in search of eternal life. Unfortunately to the discomfort of indolence and selfishness, but fortunately for the development of true character, the commandment is, " he that would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." Another declaration is, " all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution." Now the cause of this necessity is the presence of sin ; yet the enduring of trials by Christians should always be regarded as a gracious ordering of God for the perfecting of his children. Are not our souls whitened by the waters of affliction ? Are they not purified by the fires of suffering ? As some one has beautifully said, " from our hearts God takes the thorn, and makes the rose of it. Out of our griefs our purest joys are born. From out the ashes of our pleasures lost, spring up the snow-white flowers of peace." There is a winning grace about those made patient and submissive by trial, which even man so dull and slow of heart, can appreciate. The refining thus secured to the soul, is of much more value to God, whose delight is not in burnt offerings, but in a broken and contrite spirit.

After his conversion Paul became sensible of the vicious effects, which his misguided zeal had had upon his character. He realized that he had been cultivating a spirit, directly opposed to what was Christ-like ; and therefore he was even anxious to pass under the rod, to submit to the discipline of trial, that he might be renewed in the spirit of his

mind ; that he might put on the new man, which after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness ; that, as a diamond is polished for setting in the crown of a king, so he might be made meet for the Master's use, and be received when Christ shall come to make up his jewels. There was no danger of his being overwhelmed by overmuch suffering ; for his reliance was, not upon his own strength, but the strength of God ; having the assurance that he would always come forth more than conqueror through him that loved him. He was always bearing about in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in him ; and we venture to affirm, that among the redeemed of earth that rejoice in heaven to-day, there is none with a prouder title ; none with a more princely bearing ; none with a more God-like grandeur about him, than the beloved apostle to the Gentiles.

We have now reached a climax in Paul's experience. He started from Jerusalem a bigoted, intolerant Jew, bent upon the destruction of all those at Damascus, who called upon the name of the Lord Jesus ; not even helpless woman escaping the hatred of his fiendish spirit. But we observe humility, when he is prostrate upon the ground ; then prayer, when it is said, behold, he prayeth ; then obedience, when he is baptized ; then work, when he preaches Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God ; and then suffering, when the Jews take counsel to kill him. How wonderful the change ! such transformations do not occur by the power of man. Only by the power of almighty God are souls thus redeemed, regenerated, renewed.

They at Damascus were amazed. Ah! The world is always surprised, whenever any of its number turn out of the broad way, leading to destruction, into the narrow way, leading unto life. By them the motives and objects of Christian endeavor cannot be understood. Like Nicodemus, they are ready to ask in astonishment, "How can these things be?" And just in proportion as there is spiritual development, their wonder is increased, that men like unto themselves should pursue such phantoms of hope, while all the splendid realities of the present are so inviting, and so easily enjoyed. God, have mercy upon the foolish, misguided world. We say *mercy*, for if any of us have been taken from the horrible pit out of the miry clay; if any of us have been placed upon the rock; if any of us have been given the new song; not unto us, no, not unto us, but unto God alone does all the praise belong. My friends, is our religion a growth, an advancement? Are we humble, prayerful, obedient, useful, and willing to suffer in the Master's cause? Are we endeavoring to grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ? Are we pressing forward toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus? Are we striving to ascend where Moses stood, to obtain a clearer view of the land of promise? May we all ascend so far, as to be received at last: life's conflict all over, the victory won; life's sorrows all past, God's own peace pervading our souls; our immortal longings fully satisfied; Jesus, Heaven and our dear ones ours forever; "Love, rest, and home, sweet home."

THE ROCK HIGHER THAN I.

“Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I.”—Psalm lxi: 2.

THE genius for poetry and vocal music among the Hebrews, found expression in their psalms. They seem to have been written in some kind of measure, and were chanted, accompanied by instruments. These compositions are remarkable for the history, moral philosophy, prayer, praise, adoration, and Messianic intimations they contain. To quote from Lange's introduction to his commentary on the book; “these Psalms are as manifold in contents, tone and color, as the agitated life of David himself; and reflect most instructively, as in a mirror, the changing emotions of a heart as tender as it was brave. We hear his cry of anguish and his shout of joy; the tearful wail of sorrow, and the courageous expression of his trust in God; the penitential prayer of the broken hearted sinner; the joyful thanksgiving of the favored one; the wisdom of an experienced sufferer, who knows that his life is hid in God; the shepherd's voice of the prince; the royal word of the hero; the prophetic utterance of the seer.” In the great variety of heart and soul experiences that abound in the Psalms, in their unequalled expression of the inner life, every one may find what is suited to his condition; and when we call to mind the inspiration of Scripture, we recognize the fact that our experiences are of interest to God; and with this thought comes the consolation we need.

There were many reverses of fortune in the life of David. He had much to enjoy, yet also much to suffer; and what intensified his grief was the fact, that those who should have been the greatest source of comfort and strength, were not unfrequently his cruel foes. "It was not an enemy that reproached me; then could I have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: but it was thou, O man, mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company." The 61st Psalm was doubtless written by David while in exile, occasioned either by Absalom or Saul. He is far from Jerusalem, deprived of the privileges of the temple; and realizing the uncertainty, the insufficiency, and the transient nature of all things earthly, we hear him breathe this prayer; "Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I." Nothing could more fitly express his helpless condition. Nothing could better reveal his profound consciousness of self-weakness, and of his great need of more than a human refuge. God had been a shelter and a strong tower in the past; and now when the Psalmist's heart is overwhelmed, when he is far from home, he calls upon God to hear his cry, to attend unto his prayer.

It must be admitted, that our text is a confession of frailty. We are born into the world; grow up from childhood, and become conscious of ourselves as differing from the objects about us, so that we discover ourselves to be members of an altogether separate class. But still more, we become cognizant of ourselves as possessed of certain endow-

ments, that widely distinguish us from the rest of creation ; that enable us to rise above the circumstances of our condition ; that to a large measure, give us the power to order events to our own advantage, and thus entitle us to an unquestioned pre-eminence. The oak is strong ; the gazelle is beautiful ; the precious stones of the earth and sea, all have a value that is known and prized, and every object in animate and inanimate nature has some quality of commendation : but only man, in the capacity and variety of his constitution, in what he is able to be and to do, is formed to be in the hands of his God, "A crown of glory and a diadem of beauty."

This much is evident, and we cannot be robbed of the truth. No science can ever lead us to regard ourselves as mere developments of a lower form of existence, and no philosophy can reason us into the belief. Our reliance is upon the facts of consciousness and revelation, which no definition or speculation can destroy. As Christ said to Nicodemus, "We speak that we do know ;" and therefore we *will* not, we *cannot* accept any explanation of our existence, that calls in question the Divine origin and the innate greatness of human nature. Accordingly, if man rise not above the base things about him, it is not because he has never known a higher life : he is as an eagle whose upward flight has been stayed. If his condition now be one of darkness, it is not because he has never known the light : he is as a star that has ceased to shine. If his position now be in the dust ; it is not because he has never enjoyed an exaltation : he is as a monarch who has been dethroned. If his record now

be one of guilt and defilement, it is not because his origin was not in innocence and purity; he is as a brooklet from the river of life, into which have fallen the dregs and impurities of earth. He is God's workmanship, created in righteousness and true holiness; and though sin has blighted the fair creation; though the glory of the Divine grace has faded from the soul; do not despise the temple in ruins, the fallen royalty; but look you well to what remains, and hope for a better day.

Man's condition is one of weakness and infirmity. All that has been said of him by way of commendation is true, yet there are laws and limitations and restraints of various kinds, that circumscribe his life, and prevent the full enjoyment of the gifts in possession. His physical organization, wonderful and perfect as it is, yields to disease and death. His intellect, keen and far reaching as it is, is often led astray and gathers in much chaff instead of golden grain. His heart, quick and appreciative as it is in appropriating the objects adapted to excite pleasure, is never satisfied: and his hand, skillful and active as it is in daily toil, often does not accomplish as much as necessity demands.

So then, in our strength we are weak; in our riches we are poor; in our abundance we suffer; for purposes are crossed, plans are not executed, and hopes perish. Cares and afflictions follow fast upon each other. The bloom fades from the cheek, and now there are long, deep furrows made by tears. But do not advancing years promise relief? Not so!

“Backward, turn backward, O time in thy flight;
Make me a child again, if only to night.”

This expresses the desire of the old ; for in childhood there is at least the bliss of ignorance ; and there is a temptation to ask, is it not folly to be wise, when wisdom implies old age, and old age, sorrow ? In view of all this here is the natural language of the soul : “ Oh that I had wings like a dove ! for then would I fly away, and be at rest. Lo, then I would wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest.”

Man is the mere sport of sin, sorrow and care ; each doing its utmost for his destruction : one, by separating him from God ; another, by crushing the buds of hope ; another, by filling life with unrest ; and in his frailty he is unable to resist their influence. Thus beset with difficulties and trials, tossed to and fro upon the ocean of life at the mercy of the waves, and realizing that help can be obtained, neither within himself, nor from others, he seeks a higher power, upon which to rely. He learns from sad experience, that amid the forces that are active all about him, over which he has but little control, there is need of protection from above. A sense of weakness and entire dependence, one of the chief essentials to religion, bears down upon the soul ; his earnest desire then is, to become strong in God and in the power of his might : and accordingly, the prayer is heard, “ Lead me to to the Rock that is higher than I.” *Lead* me ! as if he were helpless. *Lead* me ! as if he had lost his way. To the *Rock* ! as if hitherto he had been stand-upon the drifting sand. To the *Rock* ! as if he longed for a foundation that would never be moved. That is *higher* than I ! as if he had found all earthly sup-

ports to be insufficient. That is *higher* than I! as if he were assured, that somewhere there is a power that would counteract the impediments of time and sense; that would afford to human nature an unbounded opportunity for development; that would realize all our lofty ideals and dreams; that would remove all obstructions from the upward and onward path to perfection.

But observe in the next place, that our text is an expression of need from an *immortal* nature; from a nature that cannot die. Whence we come, and whither we go, are questions that cannot be answered apart from revelation. Life appears, passes through various changes, and then disappears. The bell tolls; the man of God speaks what words of comfort he can; and friends for the last time press their lips to the marble brow.

“Her hands are cold; her face is white;
 No more her pulses come and go;
 Her eyes are closed to life and light;
 Fold the white vesture, snow on snow,
 And lay her where the violets blow.”

Spring passes into summer; summer into autumn; autumn into winter; and thus the years pass on like a river to the sea: but however useful when in life, however fondly cherished while with us; however painfully our hearts ache in the separation, we *never, never* hear again from the dead. The earth is silent; the grave tells no tale; the beloved form is seen only in imagination; the low, sweet voice is heard only in dreams; and O how naturally comes to the lips the complaint of Mirza: “man was made in vain; given away to misery and

mortality; tortured in life and swallowed up in death.”

But were it true, that man is altogether swallowed up in death, we scarcely think that he would shrink from dying; excepting as there would be a desire to escape physical pain; for then—to die—would be to cease to be; and not to be—would be—not to know, not to feel, therefore, not to suffer. But there is a *dread* of dissolution; and this is not because we are satisfied with our condition, and opposed to any change; for our actual state is one of discontent: nor is it because of an existing attachment to possessions and friends; for the poor and the friendless are no exceptions to the rule. The explanation is found in the fact, that the soul, conscious of in-dwelling life, is sensitive to every adverse influence: its spirit of immortality shudders at the very thought of dissolution; and like the gentle flower shivering in the cold autumn wind, the soul trembles in the presence of even physical death: not because there is actually any danger of its being destroyed, but because of the very antagonism, existing between such opposites as life and death. The wages of sin is death; and O how terrible the penalty as regards only the loathing aversion created in the soul! more than what exile is to the patriot; what slavery is to the freeman; what darkness is to the creature of light; death is to the human spirit that cannot die.

Accordingly, amid the destruction constantly going on when everywhere the king of terrors is filling homes with sorrow and gloom, the soul—conscious that it must live forever, yet haunted by fears, seeks an abiding refuge. No material struc-

ture will answer in this hour of need ; no theory of the human intellect ; no device whatever of a temporal character. A refuge is needed that will resist every destructive influence ; that will outlast the wrecks of time ; that will co-exist with eternity ; and therefore the prayer is offered, "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I."

The impulses of an endless life, the gift of God in Eden, and still retained through all our sin, stir within us ; and turning away with horror from the contemplation of mortality, our souls long, "yea even faint for the courts of the Lord ; our hearts and our flesh cry out for the living God." Oh humanity, so frail yet immortal ! "strengthen ye the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees." "Say to them of a fearful heart, be strong : fear not : " for there is a hiding place from the wind ; there is a covert from the storm ; there is a great rock in this thirsty land : and this rock is *Christ*. This is the stone, cut out without hands. It smote the image ; it has become a great mountain ; it is destined to cover the whole earth. This is the living stone, spoken of by St. Peter ; "Disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious." This is the Rock of Ages ; the measure thereof longer than the earth, broader than the sea, high as heaven.

Here is the refuge for the children of men in their frailty. Sin is the cause of their infirmity ; its penalties are the limitations and afflictions they suffer : but Christ was manifested to take away sin ; who bear our sins in His own body on the tree. Accordingly, there is for the weary and heavy laden—the rest that remaineth for the people of God : there is for the weak—the strength that will

enable them to run, and not be weary; to walk, and not be faint: there is for the deceived—the truth that will make them free: there is for those walking in darkness, the light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day: there is for those who know not whither they go, the way that leadeth unto life. Relying upon Christ, our souls will be kept from distress, our eyes from tears, our feet from falling; and the only reason why we can affirm with such confidence, that “earth has no sorrow which heaven cannot cure,” is because that in Jesus human grief finds a friend all its own.

“His presence has a wondrous power;
The sharpest thorn becomes a flower,
And breathes a sweet perfume.
Whate’er was dark and sad before,
With happy light shines silvered o’er;
There’s no such thing as gloom.”

Through Him we may subdue kingdoms, and out of weakness be made strong. We may come forth more than conquerors through Him that loved us; we may take up the song of David; “the Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; the God of my rock; in Him will I trust.”

Here also is the refuge for the children of men in their immortality. “The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!” The soul is comforted by the assurance, that it will not be harmed by the death of the body; also that the body itself shall be at last restored. But this is not all; for Jesus said to Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall

he live ; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die ;” that is, shall never suffer banishment from the divine presence. Our “ lives become hid with Christ in God.” Because he lives, we shall live also. God’s immortality becomes the pledge of ours. Thus belief in Christ brings deliverance from death ; the effect of which is an exaltation of both soul and body to dwell with God forever. To the Christian, who is able to rejoice with Job in the knowledge that his Redeemer liveth, and that in the flesh he shall see God, death has lost his sting, the grave her victory ; for, for him to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Resting upon a sure foundation, and unmoved by destruction about him, he is ready, whensoever the summons may come, to depart in peace. What is life without this triumph over death ! and how can we triumph but in Christ ? O “ Lead me to the rock that is higher than I ! ”

“ And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow ; and they awake Him, and say unto Him, Master carest thou not that we perish ? And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.” Just so, amid the misfortunes, the disappointments, the dangers of life, and amid the surging waves of death, we must go to Jesus. He never sleepeth now, and is ever ready to minister relief. We will not be exempt from storms in this life. They will overtake us as they do others. Amid the clouds and darkness surrounding us, we may sometimes be tempted to think, that the sun will never shine again : but cast within

the veil, our anchor will be sure and steadfast ; we shall never be overcome ; we shall never be swept away ; and the precious truth will ever be present to the mind, that if the earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, we shall have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Beautiful and sublime indeed is the Christian's hope beyond the grave ! It gleams along his earthly course like a pathway of gold. It brightens the horizon of his life like the sun rising from the sea in the East. The heart is nerved for trial. True manhood is developed. A stimulus is given to action. An object is afforded to thought and imagination, that draws away the mind from the vicious and degrading, and directs attention, affection and effort to what is elevating and divine. Let us not forget that we live in the present, but also remember that the present is only useful as it marks the way to the future ; and what we shall be in the many mansions, what we shall be in the companionship of God, should be the inspiration to life and character.

Even now the rain is descending ; the floods are gathering ; the winds are beating fiercely against us ; what is our foundation ? Is it Christ ? If so, it is well. Our house is built upon a rock : it *will* not, it *can* not fall ; so that we may joyfully sing, "the Lord of Hosts is with us ;" "the God of Jacob is our refuge : " therefore, we " will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." But if not Christ, O if not Christ ! woe, woe unto us ! for our house is built upon the sand : It *will*, it *must* fall ; for there is no other name given under

heaven, whereby we can be saved. Upon this rock alone God has founded his church ; and the promise is, that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it : therefore “ lead me to the rock that is higher than I ! ” It will be a shelter from the persecutions of the world. It will be a stronghold against the wiles of the adversary. It will be a refuge amid all the buffetings of life. Surely and safely it will direct our way to heaven.

“ Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee.”

CHRIST AT PRAYER.

“And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.”—St. Luke, vi: 12.

PRAYER from man to God is in accordance with their relation to each other, as creature and Creator. When the former awakes to consciousness, and discovers the origin of his existence, what is more natural, than that he should seek to communicate with Him, who, being the Creator, must have had a purpose in creation; who, being the author of human life, must have intended that life to accomplish some end. It is true, that the thing formed—may not say to Him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? for that might justly be condemned as presumption: But being gifted with powers of knowing and appreciating—at least to some extent, the divine purpose of His existence, surely man should seek communion with God; if for no other reason than to ask, what wilt thou have me to do? In a world where there are so many influences at work, where the paths of pursuit are so various and numerous, and there is so much danger of going astray; we cannot direct ourselves aright: and constant information as to our proper course of action, from one possessed of all perfections, would be of the greatest advantage in the affairs of life. The promise is, “I will instruct thee, and will teach thee in the way which thou

shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye." Shall we not ask, when the Lord is so ready to hear?

But is not prayer also a necessity of human nature? to the thoughtful and earnest—even among the happy and successful, often comes the longing for a sympathy, compared with which the desire for friends, riches, influence or possessions, is utterly insignificant. It haunts the mind in hours of employment, and moves the heart in the gayest scenes of pleasure. It does not vanish before the sunlight; and if sleep perchance be driven from the eyes, it is most present in the still, solemn hour of night. That hour, when the soul has leisure to look in upon itself; when the possibilities of the future pass in rapid review; and when thronging into consciousness, come those thousands of needs too deep for tears. This longing for more than the earth affords, for more than human sympathy, has its source in the very depths of being; and it only finds expression in some such words as these: (as the heart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God!)

But again, there is with nearly every one—to a greater or less extent, a fear of coming evil, a sort of indescribable dread that some affliction will occur; some disease set in; some tie be severed; some hope destroyed; some dream dispelled; that that life will be made unhappy; that in some way or other the future will be for the worse. This opinion originates in that impression so prevalent among men, that they are urged on in this, or that direction by an uncontrollable and unalterable force; variously known as fate, necessity, or destiny; and to escape this thought of fatalism, so

repulsive to the immortal soul, they turn instinctively to God ; trusting to His omnipotence to preserve them from danger, and preferring to regard themselves as governed by a person, rather than by a relentless law. How precious the truth that there is one all-supreme Being, who regards His creatures as children ; who knows all their wants, and will abundantly supply them as far as consistent with their good. Thus naturally, necessarily, and in order to obtain an assurance of safety, there is recourse to prayer.

Now we might consider Christ in the character of a preacher ; that is as making known the divine will to the people : but at present we are to consider Him in the character of a suppliant ; that is, as making known the human will to God. His speaking on the one hand as one possessing authority, indicates how really divine He was ; while His speaking on the other hand as one under authority, shows how intensely human was the Saviour. Thus we often read of Him as praying ; using just the same expressions of supplication for Himself and others, that are characteristic of human nature ; excepting of course confessions of sin, which have no place in His petitions. When we call to mind how frequently it is recorded that Christ engaged in prayer, it almost seems that all the time He had to spare from healing and preaching, was devoted to that delightful employment. The fact is, He was willing to remain on earth to accomplish His mission ; but absent from a pleasant home, He desired to communicate with the dear ones He had left, and to receive in return some message of com-

fort and love ; especially needed at the time, to which our text refers.

First then, as to the occasion of Christ's prayer.

He had been teaching in the synagogue on the Sabbath day ; and the Pharisees, who a short time before had been rebuked by Him for calling in question the right of His Disciples to gather and eat corn from the field on the Sabbath day, together with the Scribes, now watched Him whether He would heal on the Sabbath day ; that they might bring an accusation against Him. But He knew their thoughts, and said to a man that had a withered hand, rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose, and stood forth. Then came from Jesus the searching question ; I will ask you one thing ; is it lawful on the Sabbath days to do good, or to do evil ? to save life, or to destroy it ? They answered nothing ; but Jesus looking round about upon them all, said to the man, stretch forth thy hand, he did so ; and his hand was restored whole as the other. We are then told, that they were filled with madness : and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus : and *then* it is said, that it came to pass in *those* days, that He went out into a mountain to pray.

When his actions are misjudged, when his motives are called in question, when the world frowns, when oppositions arise, when men take counsel together against him ; to whom does a good man go, but to his God ? Elsewhere hatred may be against him ; but there, never ! elsewhere curses may be heaped upon him ; but there never ! elsewhere efforts may be for his destruction ; but there, never ! “ When my father and my mother

forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." This is the principle, acted upon by the true servants of God ; so that whether merely neglected, or actually slighted ; whether merely annoyed, or actually distressed ; whether merely persecuted, or actually sought to be destroyed ; there is always one, to whom they can go with no fear of being repelled, but with full assurance of being received, and of being refreshed with the gift of the Holy Spirit ; never so much appreciated, as when human sympathy and human consolations are withdrawn. It really seems that God often takes away the earthly supports, leaned upon too strongly by His children ; just for the purpose of leading them to rely more upon Himself. Nay ! He often takes away the dear, living human things, about whom the tendrils of our hearts twine so fondly ; just for the purpose of directing our attention more to that spirit land, where with Him and with them we shall one day realize that perfect happiness, here longed for, but here never known.

The nature of Christ was of so delicate a mould, that a single word or thought of dislike, directed against Him, must have caused Him pain. But instead of this small degree of opposition, there was, in the whole ruling class of the country, prompted by fiendish malice, a deep seated purpose to do Him injury, and finally to put Him to death : yet marvellous to say ! He never once shrunk from duty : He pressed steadily on in the accomplishment of His mission : never discouraged by His trials ; never doubting of success. Ever calm ; ever gentle ; ever hopeful ; ever patient ; answering the cavils against His good deeds by perform-

ing others, and meeting the violent rejection of His doctrine, by revealing more and more of the word of life. The only secret of such self-possession in the face of so much opposition, was communion with His Heavenly Father. The example of all saints, both in sacred and profane history, illustrate the same truth. If we would rise superior to all the adverse circumstances of life, we must live in constant communion with Him who hath said, ask, and ye shall receive.

Thus, on the occasion under review, weary and saddened by the envy and hatred that pursued Him like harpies, ravenous for their prey; the son of man, needing to be sustained and strengthened, sought the lonely mountain top at the close of day—to meet with God. In another's language, "the very wildness and silence of indifferent nature, not only affording Him a delightful refuge from the noise, meanness and malignity of men, but also elevating His thoughts and feelings into a holy calm," and adjusting them in sweet accord with that spirit, given unto Him without measure. It was a meeting of the three species of existence; nature, humanity, divinity: nature, passive; man, submissive; God, supreme; nature, asking nothing; God, ready to give; and man, alone in want—of that sympathy, denied to him among his fellow-men, but here found in such an abundance, as at once to satisfy the heart, and strengthen the soul for another day's task. Scribe and Pharisee might pursue Him with the most deadly opposition and enmity: they might accuse Him of unfaithfulness to the law of Moses: they might endeavor to misrepresent and convict Him before the people and the

Roman Governor, in order to wither and blight His life and spirit: but as long as He had this source of relief; as long as He could receive counsel and comfort from above; their efforts were powerless to accomplish their object. Even when apparently *most* successful, that is, in the hour of His crucifixion, they utterly failed: for Jesus was enabled to say, Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit. To be strong in God, and in the power of His might, is a victory, a triumph, which can be equalled by nothing in the universe: and this victory, this triumph is obtained through prayer.

Note also that Christ prayed alone. It was by no means a phantasy, that in early times led men to court solitude for communion with God: A corrupted manifestation of which holy desire is to be seen in the monasteries and nunneries of to-day. There is in retirement a much better opportunity for collecting one's thoughts; in truth, more honesty in the examination of one's motives and intentions, and a more accurate perception of one's duties and obligations; hence a more earnest, sincere confession before God. Besides, is it not in silence that we stand for the first time in the presence of old ocean? and as his giant waves lash the trembling shore, lose ourselves in thoughts of the boundless expanse and depth? Is it not in almost oblivion to the things about him, that the astronomer looks away into the heavens, so near, and yet so far? and as his eye wanders through the ethereal depths, permits his mind to expand and glow with thoughts of what may be in those myriad worlds? Certainly then, to secure that peculiar elevation of the spirit that comes with the contemplation of the Infinite,

God, who is the embodiment of all that is great and grand, *must* be, *must* be met *alone*. The Psalmist understood this when he said, commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. The assembling of ourselves together for public worship should never cease. It is to edification and a divine command. But it is in secret prayer that the soul is prepared for the daily conflict with sin; that such confidence is inspired as will urge us to go forth to the duties of life; that such measures of grace are given as will enable us to work and endure to the end.

As the fisherman moored his boat to gain repose, and as the vine-dresser homeward turned his weary steps; as the shadows of evening lengthened, and night came on; Jesus left the crowded city, filled with worldliness and sin; left his persecutors, the scribes and the pharisees; left the multitudes healed during the day; left even the disciples, who must have been loathe to part with him, if only for the night: and he ascended doubtless to the topmost peak of the mountain, that overlooks the sea of Galilee.

“It was a place where spirits might blend;
Where friend might hold fellowship with friend:”

a quiet, holy place for communion with Him who made the mountain; made the sea; made the earth; made the universe; and more wonderfully still, made the human soul; not of the gross clay, but of his own breath; not in likeness to anything earthly, but in his own image: a place for the enjoyment of God, undisturbed by the tumult and turmoil of life. With only the note of the night bird and the

murmur of the restless sea, falling upon his ear ; with the soft, rich light of an eastern sky, resting upon his upturned face ; and with the spirit of the place and hour, hushing his soul into a sacred calm ; we think of Jesus as kneeling there upon the dewy grass in loving intercourse with his father. His hand clasped in no other's : his heart beating with no other's : his sighs and entreaties blending with no other's : and of the fact, that he was *in* the world, yet not *of* the world, we could wish for no better proof, than that while other men were under safe shelters in quiet sleep, he was here upon this lonely mountain top, laboring in prayer. And thus perhaps it should have been : for he was engaged in a combat with sin, *alone* ; and *alone* must the preparation for the battle be made : He was treading the wine-press of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God against human transgression, *alone* ; and *alone* must the needed strength be gained.

Observe now how long Christ continued in prayer. We are all apt to linger with those we love. An hour passed in their society seems all too brief ; and the natural desire of the heart is, that nothing shall bring about a separation ; as Ruth said to Naomi, the Lord do so unto me, and more also ; if aught but death part thee and me ! We are also inclined to remain with those, from whom we receive instruction, comfort and direction. Now what is prayer, but communion with God, who is the object of our love ; and who is our instructor, comforter and guide ? Christ regarded the father with a love, which had been cherished in his divine nature from eternity ; and in time it was expe-

rienced in his human nature, with a depth and intensity beyond our conception: He therefore spent much time in prayer. The change was so delightful, from reproach to approval; from enmity to affection; from persecution to caress: one rudely heaped upon him by a malicious world; the other graciously bestowed by an affectionate parent. Moreover, by reason of the magnitude of his work, and the great number of temporal and spiritual wants of the people which he had to supply, there was need that Jesus should linger long at the throne of God, to obtain much, that much might be done and given: and therefore he continued all night in prayer.

Now the busy day has closed: one by one the stars appear: the moon is rising slowly: the Roman sentinel in the neighboring city of Capernaum is marking the first watch of the night: meanwhile Jesus begins to pray. Now men are in profound slumber: the heavens are magnificent with constellations: the queen of night has reached the zenith of her beauty: the third watch has begun: yet still through the quiet air comes the pleading tones of the Son of Man, directed heavenward. Now the glories of the night have passed: the owl, the bat, and all other creatures of darkness are shrinking away into obscurity: the tide, which hours ago left the shore of the sea of Galilee, has returned; and faintly glimmering in the far east, is the light of the coming day: yet the Man of Nazareth is still communing with God. Not until day had fully come, did he again direct his thoughts to earth. *All* night in prayer! yet oh! how rich the reward to himself and others, which then

came down upon his waiting soul. It is still refreshing the earth. It is giving life and hope to humanity. It is preparing a kingdom, in which Christ is Lord of all. How many of us pray for *one* hour? How many for one *half* hour? How many for one *quarter* hour? Alas! how many there are, who *never* kneel down to say, our Father, who art in heaven! In *private* devotions we cannot continue too long; for under the influence of persistent, earnest prayer the soul grows strong and calm.

What is most worthy of remark, this night of prayer preceded a day of most important work. The verse following our text, reads, "and when it was day, he called unto Him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named, apostles." The twelve had doubtless been chosen before this time: but now the choice was marked and final. Hitherto their relation to Christ was occasional and distant. They had seen the miracles he performed. They had heard the doctrine he proclaimed. They had learned to admire the man, who went about doing good. But now their relation to him became close and intimate. They accepted his doctrine. Love took the place of admiration; and henceforth we seldom read of Jesus and his disciples, as being separated. By reading more of the same chapter, we discover that also upon this day Jesus delivered the Sermon on the mount; that grand treatise, demonstrating the harmony between the law and the gospel; and which alone in itself would give to the Lord Jesus Christ, a place far superior to the world's most distinguished teachers of morality, equity and theology. Such,

in brief—was the day's work that followed this night of prayer; and of course it was all *well* done; for Jesus had made the very best preparation by meeting with God. No mistakes were made. Every thought and word and act were faultless; and as to the vast effects of this day's work upon human hopes, and lives, and destinies, it will only be fully known in the great day of revelation, when they shall come from the east, and from the west to sit down with Abraham in the kingdom of heaven. We all have a work to do for God. Let us always prepare ourselves at the throne of grace.

Christ at prayer is an example we should not fail to observe, and profit by its imitation. It has special significance to those devoted to the service of God. The Christian's life is not without likeness to the earthly life of the Master; and if he had recourse to Divine help when persecuted by the world; if there were need that He should pray alone; that He should continue long in prayer; and that He should pray thus continuously before entering upon an important work; surely His servants cannot hope to succeed, insufficient as they are in themselves, without entreating assistance from above. The needs of the Christian life are too many and of too peculiar a character, to be satisfied with any prescribed formulas or ceremonies. The soul must hold immediate intercourse with the source of its strength and peace. God is ready to bestow unlimited measures of grace upon His children; but he wills that they, by seeking his presence, shall manifest their desire for His gifts of mercy and love. "I do not believe that any one who prays,

will be finally lost ;” exclaimed a distinguished preacher. His zeal perhaps led him beyond the truth. But this much is certainly true ; whoever prays persistently and sincerely, is not far from the kingdom of heaven.

PREACHING THE GOSPEL.

“For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel; not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.—I Corinthians, i : 17.

THE seen and temporal enforce the unseen and eternal; hence forms serve the purpose of impressing truth upon the mind and of perpetuating its influence. This fact is of course owing to the limitations of human faculties, though it may be a matter of opinion, whether these limitations arise, in any degree from the original constitution of human nature, or altogether from sin, which at all events is by far the most effective cause of the evil. We say *evil*; for as long as there is a necessary dependence upon the visible for an apprehension of the invisible, the condition is one of imperfection; therefore of evil. But as one advances in Christian experience, there is a clearer perception of spiritual objects, as immediately presented to consciousness, and an ever increasing realization of the fact, that intellect, affections, and moral energies, do not depend necessarily for their exercise and development, upon external rites, which have no virtue in themselves. Accordingly, as God has instituted forms for the preserving of a visible organization, and as helps in keeping alive the knowledge of the truth, they are in no case to be neglected; they are to be observed with a faithfulness proportionate to our reverence for their author. But the inner man suffers not himself to be enthralled by their requirements. Far above them

he lives, in an atmosphere, replete with the spirit of God ; and where the spirit of God is, there is liberty—liberty, not in doing this or that, as fancy, passion, or appetite may suggest, but in obeying the truth, and so realizing the grand possibilities of human nature, in the expanding mind and large heart, guided by an all-searching spirit, which, dealing, not with mere forms but realities, ensures a progress sublimely ennobling, far beyond the utmost extent of finite conception, and steadfastly enduring as the nature of which it is an exaltation.

Now Saul of Tarsus had all the narrowness of spirit and servitude of thought, characteristic of the Jew, as the natural result of a devotion to rites and ceremonies, so that he doubtless boasted of being “Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews ; as touching the law a Pharisee ; concerning zeal, persecuting the church ; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.” And when present at the martyrdom of Stephen, is he not a miserable object of compassion, as he stands there consenting to the deed of violence and bloodshed ; for all the wondrous powers and vast capacities of his nature are held inactive and incapable of development, under a bondage more crushing than that of the American slave. But St. Paul had all the breadth of understanding and liberality of thought, characteristic of the ideal Christian ; so that he boldly declared that “he is a Jew which is one inwardly ; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God.” Again ; “In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything,

nor uncircumcision, but a new creature," that is, a new life, a new heart, a new class of governing principles. Now with somewhat the same intent, to set forth the superior importance of saving truth over external observances, he uttered our text. The introductory "for" indicates the connection with what proceeds, which substantially is this: I baptized few—"for Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel; not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect." Of course the Apostle does not intend to undervalue in the least the importance of baptism, as may be proved by Romans, vi : 3 : "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death?" He only regards preaching as vastly more important, because the former is not essential to salvation, whilst it has pleased God to make the latter a means of saving them that believe; because the former is only a recognition and signifying of the fact that the gospel has been effectual; while the latter is concerned with the eternal destiny of immortal souls.

We are thus led to consider the subject of preaching, forever consecrated by the attention it received from Christ and his Apostles,—forever ennobled by the good men who have devoted their lives to its service,—forever made glorious by the blessing it has been to the world, in liberating men from the thralldom of sin, ignorance, superstition and formalism,—formalism, not only Pagan and Jewish, but also Christian; for even down to the present time the history of the church makes a sad record of an externalism, which only the *gospel*, presented

in simplicity and in truth, has the power to remove. And this accounts for the fact that forms most prevail, where preaching is neglected: for truth is searching, is powerful, and, if fairly presented to the mind, it will make men to think and feel and act as men, not as children; as Christians, not as formalists; as freemen, not slaves.

Now, as to the authority for preaching. As to this point there can be no *just* difference of opinion. The statement is definite: "Christ sent me." In another place it is written: "No man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." And Christ said to his disciples: "As my Father has sent me, even so send I you." From God himself then comes the warrant officially to proclaim his truth; and from this fact two advantages follow,—indispensable to success.

1st. We have confidence in the presence of the people. The message is not our own, but of God; announced, not in our own name, but in the name of God; vouched for as true, not on our own testimony, but the testimony of God; enforced, by motives, not drawn from our own judgment, but from God. Accordingly, we fearlessly tell men of their sinful condition; remind them of a *just*, as well as of a *loving* God, and thereby *persuade*, nay, if need be, *command* them to believe and repent, because it is the will of Him, whose is the "earth and the fullness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein." Though it may conflict with preconceived opinions, long-settled dispositions, and established courses of conduct, we are to speak the truth, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear; just as it is the duty of every ambassador to make known the

will of the government he represents, without adding to, or detracting from his instructions. And if our privilege be called in question, if commanded not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus, we answer with Peter and John,—“ Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye ; for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”

Of course opposition does not take the form of violent persecution as in the time of the Apostles, but as then, so now divine truth has its enemies ; and the tendency to ignore the sanctity of the marriage relation, to desecrate the Sabbath, and to prohibit the reading of the Bible in our public schools, is in reality a protest against God’s authority, equivalent to the answer of Pharaoh to Moses and Aaron : “ Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice ? ” And a disregarding of divine truth is of course a disregarding of its advocates, which, if not sought to be counteracted, will ultimately lead to a denial of the whole truth ; for the voice of the living preacher, exhorting and instructing, is the ordained means of keeping alive and of making effective the knowledge of revelation. Therefore, though laying no claim to infallibility, ambassadors of Christ are to be respected as such—and, accordingly, when the voice of the Christian ministry, in a Christian land, protests against, or favors the enactment of any measure, men, whether acting in an individual or representative capacity, are bound at least carefully to consider what is proposed ; lest, haply, they be found fighting against God. But

2ndly. We have encouragement in personal experience. Paul plants and Apollos waters :

“Sowing the seed by the wayside high ;
 Sowing the seed on the rocks to die ;
 Sowing the seed where the thorns will spoil ;
 Sowing the seed in the fertile soil : ”

but God gives the increase. It rests with him as to “ what shall the harvest be.” Therefore, when our best efforts appear to be made in vain, when toiling all night yet apparently taking nothing—when misrepresented by foes and misunderstood by friends,—when even tempted to abandon our life’s work, because the people seem deaf to our exhortation, and there are no visible fruits of our labor,—then the words of Christ come with a new force to the heart ;—“ Lo I am with you always, even to the end.”

So then, though troubled on every side, we are not distressed ; though perplexed, we are not in despair. Accordingly, when compelled to ask, “ who hath believed our report ? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed ? ” the precious truth is then remembered—“ He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” Earnest, sincere efforts, therefore, will not fail of results. They are prompted by the spirit of God, as is evident from their nature, and must be effectual. A word spoken here, or a word spoken there may seem to die away without effect ; but in the great day of revelation, souls will be in heaven, won there by these very words, attended by the divine influence ; and the only regret will be, that more were not spoken, that opportunities were not more faithfully improved. So then, as the work is God’s, as He selects and makes effectual his instruments of

salvation, we are encouraged,—and having done our utmost, commit the whole matter to Him, who doeth all things after the counsel of his own will. Two advantages have been mentioned. There are also two precautions, by no means to be disregarded.

1st. There should be an unmistakeable assurance of the divine call, a clear title-deed to what is claimed; one of the best practical tests of which—is the compulsion to say—“necessity is laid upon me: yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel;” for such a declaration indicates that present and eternal peace is involved, a conviction wrought by none other than the spirit of God.

2ndly. Having been thus assured, there should be a faithful performance of the duties required—“So thou, O Son of man, I have set Thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.” Is there not an awful significance in these words? In view of them, should not the most zealous be impelled to a consideration of their record? They speak of a duty imposed, and of a fearful reckoning in case of neglect;—for, if the wicked man who is not warned, doth not escape, what will be the fate of him at whose hands his blood will be required, who knew of the approaching danger, and might have given warning but did not? God forbid that *we* should ever prove false to our trust, that any soul should perish because of our unfaithfulness; but may we make full proof of

our ministry, that of those placed within our influence, none may be lost, and that in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ, we may not be condemned, but shine as the stars for ever, because of having turned many unto righteousness. Christ sent me. The power is all from him; yes, and may his spirit ever be present to consecrate all that we are and have to his cause.

But now as to the subject of preaching. Christ sent me not to baptize but *εὐαγγελιζεσθαι*—to announce glad tidings, to proclaim joyful intelligence—properly translated, to preach the gospel, good news—How good, let these pure hearts, these noble lives, these happy homes, these institutions of learning and benevolence, these well ordered governments testify. The unspeakable gift, the pearl of great price, the bread which cometh down from heaven, the fountain of life, the river whose streams make glad the city of God—All these figures of speech are full of meaning, yet do not convey the whole truth. For, as to intrinsic excellence, practical value, durable advantage, and vital importance, poet never swept his lyre to loftier theme, warrior never drew his blade for richer prize, statesman never sought for higher goal, nor in any sphere has man ever striven for more exalted good than that of the gospel, for the excellency of the knowledge, of which St. Paul counted all things but loss. But what is the gospel? The question finds an answer in verse 23, of this same chapter—*Christ crucified*! Only this? This is all; yet who desires more? for though a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks—it is unto them that are called, whether Jews or Greeks, “the power of

God and the wisdom of God." Thus, not a mere abstraction, engaging the intellect but cheating the heart; not a mere dogma, compelling submission by an imperious authority, the gospel is the revelation of a *Person*, what he did, what he is; and in this lies the secret of its success; so that, as the Platonists were drawn towards virtue because of its beauty, as the Stoics held to virtue because of its own reward, Christians love and practice the good, because of its embodiment in one like unto themselves, "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth—and who hath left" us an example that we should follow in his steps.

Looking unto Jesus, who is holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners, unvarying in self-denial for humanity, and continuous in harmony with the divine will, man is assured that imagination does not play him false, that the call from his inmost being for a higher life, is not unreasonable—that there is a reality to the ideal pictured by hope, and that the way to secure its realization, is by the Lord Jesus Christ. So then, the knowledge of Jesus Christ comes not only as a test to discover to man, whether he is building on sand or rock, but also as a revelation as to what he should strive to be, and accordingly, as the starting point of a development limitless as eternity; for the ultimate goal is God's perfection. Be ye perfect as my Father in heaven is perfect, and therefore the distance to be traversed is infinite: but ever goes on the transforming into the divine image, from glory to glory, by the spirit of the Lord; while a corresponding increase of satisfying happiness demonstrates that "Godliness is

profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is and that which is to come."

Now, if the gospel were only a presentation of Christ as an example, it would far surpass, in loftiness of motives and results, all other systems the world has ever seen: but this is not all: the half has not yet been told. The great distinguishing feature of the doctrine the Apostles preached, is Christ *crucified*—a Lamb without spot or blemish—made an offering for sin, as the prophet foretold—"He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

It is true—there are those who hold and teach—that the sufferings of Christ were only a manifestation of God's displeasure at sin, and consequently only intended to make a moral impression on the world. But was it only for this, in typifying the event, that the patriarchs made offerings to God? and after the establishment of the Jewish ritual, that the blood of bulls and of goats, unceasingly flowed in sacrifice for fifteen hundred years? Was it only for this, that the Son left the glory which he had with the Father, and took the form of sinful man? Was it only for this, that he endured the hatred and contempt of Pharisees and Sadducees? Was it only for this, that he agonized in Gethsemane, praying with his face upon the ground. "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me?" And was it only for this, that he permitted himself to be scourged, mocked, spit upon, then tortured to death on the accursed cross,—at the sight of which nature convulsed and the sun hid his face?

Never! Never! All this was far more than a manifestation of God's displeasure at sin. It was an *atonement*, a *penalty*, for man's transgression of the law; so that God can now be just, and the justifier of those united to Christ by faith.

Accordingly, to the question of the jailor at Philippi—"what must I do to be saved?"—the answer was given: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Justification by faith, then, is the *key note* of Christian doctrine, with which all else must be made to harmonize; and, though unsounded during the dark ages, when superstition and priest-craft combined to hush the voice of truth, Luther gave it an utterance, startling in its vehemence, which, echoed and re-echoed throughout the wide world, has brought hope and cheer to millions of human hearts,—who, conscious of their utter inability to meet the requirements of the law, would be in despair, were it not for their faith in Christ's offering for sin,—whose resurrection and ascension, are a pledge of his final re-appearance to gather his own unto himself.

Thus, with all the beauty of a sinless life and character, with all the heroism of a devotion to truth, with all the grandeur of a purpose to redeem the world from guilt and unrest, with all the excellence of a merit to satisfy divine justice, with all the glory of an exaltation to the right hand of God the Father, Jesus Christ, both as an example *and* sacrifice, is freely offered to perishing souls. "This is my beloved and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem." And to meet the necessities of human nature, we can conceive of infinite wisdom, as devising nothing more perfect. Such

is the gospel we are sent to preach,—sought to be fully known by prophets and angels, but revealed unto us by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

But, lastly, as to the manner of preaching. “Not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.” As expressed by St. Paul in the following chapter, my speech and my preaching were not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, that is, not with dependence upon eloquence of language, which often so bathes the cross in the mere splendor of oratory, that the mind, forgetting the terrible reality of Gethsemane and Calvary, pictures to itself “a feigned altar and a mock victim, decked with garlands for a festive occasion.” The meaning also is—not with philosophy—against which the Colossians, as hearers of the truth, were warned to be on their guard. “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” True enough, not after Christ,—for, undervaluing faith, and endeavoring to narrow down the truth to the sphere of human understanding, philosophy often passes by the objective fact of the sufferings of Christ, and only mars the simplicity of divine revelation, by subtleties without influence upon practical life.

Are education and eloquence, then, to be discarded in preaching? By no means. Only their *misuse* is to be condemned. We are in duty bound to secure the highest possible training of our faculties by knowledge and exercise, in order to become “all things to all men;” for, unless inspired as were

the Apostles, men of culture are certainly the best qualified to set forth the truth. The great error lies in supposing that the *word* itself has saving power, when in reality, saving power is only exerted by the Spirit of God, so that "no man cometh unto the Father, except the Spirit draw him." Therefore upon the Spirit, whose office it is to reveal the things of Christ, we are to rely for success; which fact precludes all conduct or speech, incompatible with the Spirit's influence, and demands a constant prayerful attendance upon God, that our efforts may be blest. With the wisdom which thus entreats the divine influence, immeasurably above the wisdom of the world, and beyond the value of the gold of Ophir, the precious onyx, or the sapphire, the objects of Christ's sufferings, will be fulfilled—the cross will be made effective, in transforming the lives and hearts of men; a result so wonderful, that it is not strange that supernatural power is needed in its accomplishment. For the cross is not peace but suffering, not self-gratification but self-denial, not regard for one's own pleasure but the welfare of others, not the *carnal* mind which the world approves, but the *spiritual* mind which is in Christ,—whose forming and controlling principle is revealed in those words to the Father, "Not mine but thy will be done."

We have thus considered the authority for, the subject-matter, and the manner of preaching. In conclusion we would briefly direct attention to its need. Nearly two thousand years have passed since the command was given—"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."

But compared with what remains to be done, alas ! how little has been accomplished ! Of the twelve hundred million souls that are upon the earth, not much over one-fifth are nominal Christians. The rest are idolators, or followers of false prophets ; many of them living and dying without so much as hearing that God loves the world, without so much as a glimpse of the light that shines in the face of Jesus Christ. But the most discouraging fact of all is, that the very worst enemies of the cross are in Christian lands,—men who see all about them the benign influences of the gospel, who recognize its power to impart a dignity to human nature otherwise unattainable, nay more, who acknowledge its adaptation to meet the wants of the soul, but notwithstanding all this, deny the testimony which God has given of his Son.

Thus, either at home or abroad, vice, indifference, infidelity, idolatry, and every conceivable form of sin, manifest a wide-spread need of the gospel,—not merely written as in the Bible, and other religious books, but *preached* with a voice passionate with earnestness, and eloquent with truth, which will reprove all error, compel attention, arouse to endeavor, and with the demonstration of the Spirit, win souls to Christ.

THE TEARS OF JESUS.

“Jesus wept.”—St. John, xi : 35.

WHERE fortune has given her gayest colors, where hope has woven her brightest designs, *there* may be found the coarse, dark threads of sorrow. The clouds may have a silver lining; but often they lower very darkly, and at times the blue sky is entirely veiled. “Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward;” but the most distressing, the hardest to bear, the one above all others is the sorrow of death. What grief can exceed this of David? “And the King was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he wept, thus he said, O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom! my son, my son!” Parallel with this, however, was the anguish occasioned by the brutal Edomite on the Jewish throne, when he slew the children of Bethlehem. “In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and would not be comforted, because they are not.” To listen to the voice, to press the hand, to see the face for the last time of one beloved; then to have the form borne away to the grave; and turning aside, to hear the cold, hard clods rattle down upon the coffin lid, is indeed a grief which only the bereaved may know.

There were many large families in Israel ; one of whose members might not have been missed so much. At all events, we may be tempted perhaps to think, that the little home circle at Bethany might have been spared. They were so essential to each other's happiness : two sisters and a brother. Their very orphanage bound them closer together. The loss of their parents made them dearer to each other. It was a home of innocence and love ; for its inmates were devoted friends of Jesus, and there He was wont to rest from the toil and discouragements of the day. We might suppose that they enjoyed an experience of unbroken peace ; but God's ways are not our ways ; and though we may not understand His dispensations, we know that the Judge of all the earth cannot but do right. Assured that the present sufferings of God's people will work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, faith accepts the mystery, and we patiently wait. It is not the possessions we have ; nor the deeds we perform ; nor the pleasure we enjoy ; that is a test of our success in life. Such as these are characteristic of many, whose record is a demonstration of utter failure. Sooner or later they are convinced of the fact themselves. True advancement can only be correctly estimated by our conquest of self, and submission to the divine will. The life in God is the only life, in which there is no sorrow, no sickness, no death.

The brother was taken sick ; and immediately they desired the presence of the Master, to whom they were attached with feelings of friendship and reverence. The sisters sent unto Jesus, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick."

But the Lord abode two days still in the same place where He was. His delay, however, was not occasioned by indifference. The Saviour is never indifferent to those who call. The final result (the raising of Lazarus from the dead,) affords the explanation ; for thereby the devotion of his friends was increased ; many new disciples were made, and God was glorified. Accordingly, Lazarus died ; was buried ; and when he had lain in the grave four days, the sisters heard that the Saviour was coming. Martha went first to meet Him, and then Mary, who falling down at His feet, said unto Him, " Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping that came with her, He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and said, where have ye laid him ? they say unto Him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept." " Jesus wept ! " The shortest verse in the Bible ! standing alone, without grammatical connection with what precedes or follows ; yet O how full of precious truth ! Like the single, bright star in a rayless night ; like the " repentant tear " at the gate of Paradise ; it has a value, an attraction peculiar to itself. It enshrines itself in mind, heart and imagination with a force and beauty unsurpassed. Is it strange that the Lord wept, when He knew that in a few moments He would restore the dead to life ? not so ! whatever of hope the future may contain ; it is not unnatural to mourn for present loss. But mark you ! the Master's grief was not violent, as that of those without hope. The verb in the *original* indicates that His was a gentle weeping, like a summer rain after the violence of the storm has past. We now invite your

attention to the truths, taught us by the tears of Jesus.

They are an evidence of His humanity. Before he stilled the winds and waves, Jesus slept: so here, before He revealed Himself as God, by raising Lazarus from the dead, He revealed Himself as man by His tears. They are as much a proof of His humanity, as omnipotence was of His divinity. When the Saviour stands before us with moistened eyes; with the fountains of His soul, a great deep broken up, and bedewing His cheeks; we know that He is human; just as we know from the murmur of the waves, there is a quiet sea; as we know from the singing of birds and the perfume of flowers, that summer has come; as we know from the voices of children, there are happy hearts; as we know from the Christian's rejoicing, there is a better country beyond. Accordingly, we will speak no more of Christ's humanity, but will speak of Him as being *human*, with all the world of meaning indicated by the word. This revelation of His nature comes to us in His tears; which are liquid gems to show how rich their source; how precious the treasures whence they come; and falling to the earth, to glisten and glitter through the ages, a wreath of diamonds for our inheritance. They are invaluable beyond all price, because their lustre is not of time, but of eternity; not of earth, but of heaven; not of a nature guilty and defiled, but of Him who, though tempted in all points like as we are, was yet without sin.

But were not tears degrading to Christ? That is equivalent to asking, was not His human nature a degradation? Heartless scepticism or infidelity

might assert this without conditions. And in truth, it was a humiliation—for the Son of God to be “born, and that in a low condition; to be made under the law; to undergo the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, and the cursed death of the cross; to be buried, and to continue under the power of death for a time:” but since His exaltation—“in rising from the dead on the third day; in ascending up into heaven; in sitting at the right hand of God the Father, and in coming to judge the world at the last day;” His human nature is not a degradation; and this becomes more evident, when we consider the countless number of souls, who are saved by the incarnation of Christ. The beautiful Greek mythology peopled air, woods and water with innumerable deities. The seven stars of the Pleiades were held to be seven sisters; all united to the immortal gods except Merope, who became less divine, and whose light is dim and obscure, because of her once coming to earth. Thus to the Greek mind divinity would suffer loss by contact with humanity; but such was not the case with Christ. He lost none of his perfections by coming to earth; for he is as much now “the brightness of the Father’s glory and the express image of His person,” as when “the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy.”

So far then from being depreciated, a *weeping* Saviour is the most *human* Saviour; that is, the most attractive, the most lovable, the most desirable for these frail, doubting natures of ours; and if endowed with divine attributes as was Christ, then He is also most worthy of our homage and

worship. Doubtless there still remain the wounds from the nails, the marks from the scourge, the scars from the crown of thorns; but these do not mar his beauty; they detract nothing from His glorified appearance; they are not blemishes; but precious reminders of a suffering endured for others. "Having loved His own, He loved them to the end;" and He shrunk from no self-denial that would be to their spiritual good. Thus in making others happy—the Saviour finds His chief delight. God has "raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:" and yet He does not forget His disciples; for through His sacrifice and intercession they are made to be heirs of God, and joint heirs with Himself. His words of comfort are, "I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

We are also assured of the sympathy of Jesus. Over Jerusalem there were tears of deep sorrow. Christ knew the fearful wickedness of the city, and wept when He foresaw its sure and terrible destruction, which was not far distant; for Titus and the Roman army soon came, and they scarcely left one stone upon another. In Gethsemane there were tears of agonizing supplication. The weight of the world's sin was upon the Son of Man; and being human as well as divine, the burden was heavy to bear. But at the grave of Lazarus there were tears of *compassion*. They indicate that we have a High Priest, "who can be touched with the feeling of

our infirmities ;” who “ will satisfy the weary soul ;” who “ will replenish every sorrowful soul.” Not the profusion of words ; nor the garments of mourning evidence true sympathy. They are conventional. They are often only a mockery or show. They are employed because it is customary, and they are looked for by the world. From, and to the *heart* one, single tear is far more than all else. It was when He saw them weeping, that the Saviour also wept.

“ O when the heart is full, when bitter thoughts
Come crowding thickly up for utterance,
And the poor, common words of courtesy
Are such a very mockery ; how much
The bursting heart may pour itself in prayer !”

yes, and also in tears ; mute, but eloquent appeals to divine compassion, which Christ, with His recollections of earth, may not resist.

Three friends went to comfort Job ; but forgetting the object of their errand, they became indifferent to his distress ; then accused him of self-righteousness ; and finally they charge upon him most heinous sins. Such is not the manner of Christ. He never once said, nor even intimated to the sisters—that their bereavement was a judgment from God : but He mourned that humanity was heir to such an evil as death, and He sympathized with those, who had lost the dearest, earthly object of their love. And this interest of the Saviour in human suffering, is universal. It may be claimed by those of every kindred and generation, who feel its need. Wherever cheeks are fading ; eyes are filling ; hearts are breaking, or lives becoming desolate ; there Jesus is ready to go, if only called. We have only to cast ourselves at His feet, in full reliance upon

His power and desire for our good ; and His sympathy will be as great, as soothing, and as strengthening to us, as it was to Martha and Mary.

Then let come what may ; failure, disappointment, affliction, disease, or death ! We will take encouragement from the sympathy of Christ. We will tell our sorrow at His throne of grace. We will pray, “ if it be possible, let this cup pass from me ; ” yet, “ not mine, but thy will be done. ” And if we may not be spared ; if it be needful that the chastening rod descend ; He, whose own soul was once exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, will draw us nearer to himself, and will calm the tempest of our grief. He may shed no tears ; but his arms will be about us ; His heart will throb with ours ; and the influences of His spirit will be quieting and comforting, as a mother’s lullaby to her restless child. It is not sufficient to know that our debt of sin has been paid. Something more is needed to inspire with confidence ; and this is supplied by the sympathy of Christ. Based upon a community of nature and a similarity of experience, it reaches us with a tender, gracious power that removes our fear, and leads us to pray, “ even so, come, Lord Jesus. ” Come, as Thou didst to the household at Bethany, and restore to us our buried hope and peace. “ The heavens declare the *glory* of God, ” and we stand in awe, as we contemplate the Divine majesty ; but the *tears* of Jesus declare the *sympathy* of God with human suffering ; and when the Saviour asks, “ where have ye laid him ? ” we are encouraged to answer, Lord, “ come and see. ”

One other truth remains. When we hear of a storm, an earthquake, a railroad or steamboat accident, by which scores of persons, who are strangers, or are indifferent to us, have been wounded, or have lost their lives, we are interested because we are human. We exclaim in sincerity, how sad! how terrible! and we are ready to contribute of our means, if assistance be required, because we sympathize with those involved in the great misfortune: but we do not weep. On the other hand, if any of our *loved* ones have suffered severely by the calamity, our grief is intense, and finds an immediate expression. Accordingly, though humanity and sympathy are indicated by Christ's weeping, they are not its sufficient cause: lastly, therefore we learn the love of Jesus. When the sisters sent for the master, their only message was, "behold, he, whom thou lovest, is sick;" and there was need of nothing more. Let us only be told that an object of the affections is in distress; that evil has befallen a treasure of the heart; and we are eager to devote ourselves to the cause. It was this that prompted Jesus to return to Judea, though the Jews of late had sought to stone Him; and it was this that prompted Thomas to say to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him."

How disinterested is the Saviour's love! Possessing in Himself all the fullness of the God-head bodily, Son of God, as well as Son of Man; the Lord is dependent upon no creature for his happiness: and therefore, in cultivating the love, either of that obscure family at Bethany, or of the whole human race, He could have no selfish purposes to accomplish; but the true interests of humanity to

advance, the highest privileges to secure for his people, and the grandest results to attain in their behalf for time and eternity. "The hireling fleeth, because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep." "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly:" and this was at the cost of His own life on earth. Then we must also remember, that the love of Christ is exercised toward those who are not strict to obey His commandments, and whose love in return scarcely deserves the name, cold and inactive as it is in our service and worship. How this magnifies; how it ennobles the Saviour's affection! It is like the lamb for the burnt offering, without spot or blemish; or like the sunbeam, yielding brightness and joy to all; "as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Sion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore."

The love of Christ has been eternal; for, though marvellous to say, it is gloriously true, that "God hath chosen us in Him, before the foundation of the world: that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." Existing thus from eternity, considered in the counsels of Trinity, and affording the reason for the incarnation, the scene enacted on Calvary, and the rising from the dead; its coming to us is fixed and determined. It is our certain inheritance. God, "having predestinated us unto the adoption of children" by Jesus Christ to himself; we, not merely as a class, but as individual Christians, may rejoice in the sure possession of His love. It softens and warms our hard, cold hearts,

as Spring brings life again to the ice bound earth. It illuminates our darkened minds, as day destroys the shadows of the night. It brings strength and gladness to our waiting souls, as the tide bears precious freight to various shores.

But the love of Christ is also everlasting. This is its crowning quality; the secret of its power to soothe the "restless pulse of care," and to lift our thoughts above to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Years will come and go. Age will follow age. Weakness and death will crumble the things of earth; and at last the angel, "with a loud voice," will proclaim, that "time shall be no more:" but with divine love as manifested in Christ, there will be no variableness, nor shadow of change. Imperishable, indestructible, it will survive the wreck of worlds; it will be co-extensive with immortality. United to Christ and our dear ones, divine love will encircle us with a fortress that will yield to no enemy; with a fullness that will supply every necessity; with a halo that will never lose its splendor; and with an influence that will ever lead us to higher attainments in the bliss and perfection of heaven. Jesus will not then weep; for death shall be swallowed up in victory; tears shall be wiped from off all faces; and sorrow and sighing shall have fled away.

"Brief life is here our portion;
Sorrow and short-lived care:
The life that knows no ending;
The tearless life is there."

The truth is made evident, that it is not unmanly, not unchristian to mourn. We should have more

self-possession and more trust in God, than to permit every little annoyance to occasion us distress: but there are grievous trials, times of sore visitation, when our feelings may not be concealed. It may arise from a weakness, but not a weakness to be condemned; for sorrow has been hallowed by the experience of Christ; and if he wept under its influence, may not we? Surely it is enough that the servant be equal to his Lord. We regard those as very unfortunate natures, who remain unmoved when some loved one has been taken from them, or some heavy bereavement has fallen upon the heart. They may become distinguished as victorious generals and impartial rulers; but they lack the sympathy and tenderness of spirit that are so attractive in the family, and social intercourse of daily life. Let us be men; brave, strong and active in the cause of truth; but not so self-reliant, that we may not weep with those that weep, as well as rejoice with those that rejoice. What makes life most noble and beautiful, is the exhibition of the gentler qualities of disposition; the walk and conversation of natures that are sympathetic, loving and kind, as well as manly and true.

Learn also, that in our sorrows the greatest consolation will be to have *Jesus* with us. We can imagine how anxiously the sisters watched and waited for the coming of the Lord; how their hearts were comforted when they knew he was near; and what happy sunshine brightened their home, when the Master restored to them their brother from the grave. Now the Lord will not give back to us our dead. This is not the age of miracles, and we should not pray for what the Saviour

has not promised. Those gone from us are in far better surroundings than what was theirs, or what is ours on earth. The comfort of his own presence is what we need to have from the Lord, and what He is graciously ready to give. In His humanity, sympathy and love we have an all-sufficient pledge of His interest in our welfare, and a precious assurance that he will minister relief. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

DESIRE FOR THE BEAUTY OF CHRIST.

“Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.”—Psalms,
xc : 17.

THE opinion, that Christ was remarkable for physical beauty may be correct. Even his countenance may have revealed the perfect man and very God ; just as the floor mosaic of some beautiful lake is revealed through its crystal waters. It may have been this, which caused his enemies to fall to the earth, when Jesus advanced to meet them on the night of his betrayal. It was doubtless his belief in this opinion, which caused Augustine to mention Jesus Christ in the flesh—as one of the three objects he most earnestly desired to see ; the remaining two being Paul in the pulpit—and Rome in her glory. Besides, it is quite natural to associate with a nature like that of Christ’s, without spot or blemish, an external form equally faultless. But where there is a pure and heavenly-minded soul, no face can be regarded with aversion ; and therefore the personal appearance of the Master is not a matter of first importance. It is *life* and *character*, that are deserving of much attention. Therein lies our real attractiveness or repulsiveness, both to our fellow-men and to God. We read of the beauty of Absalom ; but are we not at the same time repelled by his heartless conduct toward his father ? While on the other hand, we do not care whether Jephthah’s daughter was comely or not ; for her

noble act of self-sacrifice is more than sufficient to engage our affections and immortalize her beauty of spirit.

One of the sacred authors writes, "Thou art fairer than the children of men. Grace is poured into thy lips; therefore God hath blest thee for ever." Another, after exhausting his figures of speech, exclaims, "He is altogether lovely!" But the Psalmist is so enraptured with the divine charms as to pray, "let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us." That the reference here is to Christ, we conclude from the fact, that the Messiah was a familiar object of contemplation to the devotional writers of the Old Testament. In truth, we do not think it too much to say, that, excepting where the language indicates to the contrary, it may always be assumed, that the object of their praise and petition is He who should redeem Israel, in whom all the nations of the earth should be blest. When we look into those far ages of the past, and consider the sentiments and aspirations, contained in the sacred volume; we marvel at the elevation of thought and depth of feeling, experienced at a time which we are apt to regard as distinguished for nothing but vice and oppression. The ninetieth Psalm indicates a thorough comprehension of the relation sustained by the creature to the Creator; and its closing petition—for the divine beauty to be upon us, and for the divine blessing to be upon the works of our hands,—is suited to every condition of men.

The lily is fair to look upon, and so often is the face of youth; but to-morrow the flower will perish, and very soon the earthly countenance will be

marred by advancing age, and finally destroyed by death: but the graces of the soul need not vanish with the passing years. If they be gifts from above and are cultivated by the spirit, they will never fade, and will grow more lovely in the loveliness of heaven. "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us;" this is the prayer. That is, let us be beautiful as He is beautiful, in all that refines and ennobles the soul in principle, in impulse, in action; submissive under affliction, devoted to the truth, daring all things for the right, actuated by love; in a word, showing ourselves *complete* in Christ; that we may see in Him a beauty that we shall desire Him; that He may be formed in us, the hope of glory; that we may be, not conformed to the world, but transformed by the renewing of our minds, that we may know what is the good and perfect and acceptable will of God. The Jews took knowledge of the Apostles, that they had been with Jesus; and so may we, by our walk and conversation, make known the power of God to others. Men will deny an argument from the intellect; but they find it hard to resist the argument of a holy life and character. Accordingly, a consideration for others, as well as the desire for self-improvement, should urge us to that beautifying of our natures, which will be the wedding garment at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Now we meet a man degraded by dissipation: but if he seem ashamed of his condition, if he long for innocence and purity, we say at once, he is not an outcast from birth; he has once known better days; the counsels of a wise father and the solicitude of a sainted mother may have been his in

youth ; all the attractions of a Christian home may have been his to enjoy. In like manner, the desire for the beauty of Christ is evidence that we were not always as now ; that there was a time, when the human will was in harmony with the divine will, when the human soul was clothed with divine holiness as with a spotless robe, when human nature reflected the divine nature—as far as the finite can reflect the infinite. Thus, in this case, desire is knowledge. We learn of our original state of perfection by our present feeling of need. This need has been experienced by all ever since the blight of sin first fell upon mankind, but is now more clearly understood by the reappearance of perfect humanity in the Lord Jesus Christ, before whose coming human perfection was only a dream.

Why did the Saviour find such an acceptance among the Gentiles? they represented their Gods as faultless in *physical* beauty, regardless of purity of life and character, as is evident from their conceptions of Venus and Apollo ; while Christ is the perfection of *spiritual* loveliness. The inference is, that the sentiments of beauty, haunting the heathen mind, degraded as they might have been, were *spiritual* in origin, and took a materializing tendency from a debased moral condition. At the sight of a friend, long forgot but well beloved in other days, the profligate has been reformed by recollections of the innocent past ; and just so were the Gentiles led to embrace the new life in Christ, because (it may have been unconsciously) the past was recalled, and their minds turned naturally to the truth that once was the delight of man, when he first came perfect from the hand of God. Amid

their corruption and idolatry they were not satisfied ; and when Jesus appeared, He seemed as one, who had been lost, but was found. They recognized in him — “the unknown God,” to whom the Athenians had erected an altar, and whom they had ignorantly worshipped. Eden’s perfection had long vanished from the earth ; but its influence was still manifest in the restless condition of the heathen world. Roman conquests and Greek art very largely occupied the attention of the people, who seemed equally ready, either for war, or pleasure. Multitudes thronged the shrines of Mars and Bacchus ; yet notwithstanding this, there were undefined longings for the change, of which certain of their poets had some conception, when they declared (as said St. Paul,) that all were “the offspring of God.”

Our former state of sinlessness is thus evidenced by our desire for the beauty of Christ. But the truth comes to us with much the same influence, that a home letter comes to a convict on a distant shore. The tears are in his eyes and his heart is sad ; for there are memories of the happy home he can no more enjoy. In like manner, we mourn over the innocence and purity now gone. But are they gone forever ? is there no hope of restoration to the divine image ? If altogether forsaken, we would not only commit sin, we would delight in nothing else : we would not only tend earthward, we would never look heavenward. We regard this aspiration of our souls, as proof that we have not been left to ourselves ; that there is a gracious restraint upon our evil inclinations ; nay ! that there is upon us a magnetic influence from above, which, but for our

weight of sin, would draw and keep us close to God himself. The Creator is so grieved to see the blighting of those He created in his own image, and divine love is so devoted to its objects, that—amid their transgressions—impulses are kept alive that direct our souls toward God ; and even in our repulsive state of sin we are still made to long for clean hands and a pure heart.

It is then evident, that the desire for the beauty of Christ is essential to our restoration. Effort is required in attaining the graces of the Spirit ; and as desire is needful to moral action, it is needful in this connection. It is that which awakes the soul from slumber ; which gives vigor to our energies ; which begets hope ; and when hope spreads her wings for flight, we are compelled to follow. There is no zeal equal to that, born of inclination, and thought to be in a worthy cause. For example ; the soldiers of Cromwell contended most fiercely to overcome their foes ; and the secret of their zeal was strong inclination, accompanied by the belief that the conflict involved the safety of true religion. There must be no mere fancy, or habit of the mind, but a deep, earnest sense of need. A superficial interest will accomplish nothing, as when the Pharisee thanks God that he is better than other men. It would be far better, if he held his peace ; or continued to deceive men, without endeavoring to practice the lie upon God. But when the Publican, standing afar off, not deeming himself worthy to enter the temple, cries, “ God be merciful to me a sinner ; ” his manner and language clearly indicate that intense feeling which seldom fails of results. It was when he was *greatly* impressed with a sense of

his need, by the circumstances of the hour, that Saul of Tarsus was moved to say, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" And now it is desire expressed to God, that is, *prayer* that is most essential in securing to ourselves the beauty of Christ. As to this truth there is abundant testimony.

Is it not the dictate of reason? If we are to image the divine nature, should not the grand original be waited upon? with such base material as human nature, only *He* can be the sculptor in the work; only *He* can reproduce the wondrous beauty of Himself. The order for this piece of art must be taken to God, in a spirit of obedience and trust, with a determination to submit to whatever chiseling and carving—the great artist may deem necessary—in remolding what has been so much deformed by innate and acquired sin. There may be much pain and suffering; for blemishes are to be cut away, and forms of grace and symmetry made to take to their place: yet the end is bye and bye; and when we stand among the spirits of just men made perfect, there will be none of the trials we now experience. Whatever may be his command to us, and whatever may be his dealings with us, our helpless, dependent condition teaches us, that in God, our Creator, Preserver, Redeemer, is our only hope of relief. As Peter said to Christ, "Lord, to whom else can we go?" Communion with our heavenly Father should be as natural to us, as intercourse with one another. In the constitution of our natures is the source of prayer.

The same testimony is furnished by experience. You, or I never overcame a habit; never subdued a passion; never acquired a virtue, success-

fully, that is, thoroughly and permanently, without an expression of the desire to God, without an asking for his direction and abiding support. In fact, little progress would be made in moral reformation, if our own resources were our own reliance. Just here we find the reason why so many temperance pledges are broken, and exercise no restraining influence over those accustomed to strong drink. The only way to make men temperate in regard to drink, and every thing else, is to make them *praying* men; is to bring them in contact with the Lord, Jesus Christ; is to make them utter their vows before God: not as this, or that man who takes an oath; but being godless himself, does not care whether it is observed, or not. *That* is only a mockery, and an insult to heaven. Our vows must be uttered in humility and faith, relying for their observance upon a higher power than ourselves. Then the temptation which in our weakness we cannot resist! divine strength will enable us to laugh to scorn. There are those all about us, who, communing with God, are growing into forms of beauty, whether in the church, in the school, in the family, in society, or in business relations. They are bright and shining lights that draw men unto them, and unto the Father in heaven. They are an honor and a blessing to the world.

The same truth is taught by revelation. The Bible is full of the subject—both in precept and example. We call attention only to this prayer of David; “purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” Whiter than snow! Is not this a beautiful figure—

to illustrate the high attainments of the spiritual life? for the untrodden snow is more than beautiful. It images heaven's purity. Stretching far and wide, it reminds us of the *crystal* sea. It falls as a robe about the earth to conceal the ravages of winter; to make all things similar, stainless and lovely. It is an answer to nature's prayer for celestial beauty. May there not also be an answer to our prayer? only listen to this from Isaiah: come now; let us reason together, saith the Lord. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool; and though they be red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow." We rejoice that the object of our aspirations may be attained; that there is a means of having our longings satisfied. Let us be careful to recognize the opportunities God has provided. Let us ever be diligent to improve them to the best advantage: and let us never cease to render thanks unto Him, "who so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Christ said to the fishermen by the sea of Galilee, "follow me." They did so, but of course were not immediately transformed. It was the sons of Zeb-edee, who desired the Master to call down fire from heaven on a village of the Samaritans: and it was Peter, who vehemently denied that he was an associate of the Saviour. But by the time John wrote, "my little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth:" and by the time Peter wrote, "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ:" there was full evidence, that they had been with Jesus. In continued companionship

with Him they had seen and loved his beauty ; they had been stimulated to an imitation of his virtues ; they had caught the inspiration of his life ; they were fast being “ changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord.” They were accomplishing a vast work on earth, and they were deeply concerned in the welfare of their fellow-men ; but all the time the robes of the redeemed were being drawn about them, and now they are perfect in sinlessness for ever. By fellowship with Christ we may be clothed in the beauty of the Lord.

We are born with tendencies and inclinations, that have much to do with what we are in after life ; but, to a very large extent, we are the creatures of influence and imitation. We may therefore lay it down as a rule, that children will become just such men and women, as their surroundings are suited to produce. Even in the case of those advanced in years, their example is mutually effective to a remarkable degree. It is thus that those, intimately associated, grow to resemble each other in harmony of thought and sentiment, as also in sameness of manner and expression. This is the natural effect of the contact of mind with mind, of heart with heart, of life with life : the character, that is most strongly individual, that is of the most force, being the one that gives shape and direction to others. As to the effect of *evil* associations some of us may recall these well-known lines of Pope :

“ Vice is a monster of such frightful mien,
To be hated needs but to be seen :
But seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.”

the power of *good* associations is none the less marked. Merely in the presence of a good man we feel ashamed of our follies. Associated with him for a period of time, his virtues would manifest themselves in so many attractive ways, as first to convict us of our faults, then lead us to an effort for their possession.

We hear and talk about Jesus among his disciples. We sing about and to Him in our beautiful hymns, making melody in our hearts. We read of Him in the Bible, and other books that emanate from holy men. We commune with Him in prayer. Thus thinking and speaking his thoughts, ready to suffer in his service, and endeavoring to obey His commandments, to gain His approbation, and to realize His presence ; we are prepared to be impressed with His beauty. It is written, "He shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds:" therefore, in *His* light we see light ; and we come forth from error to be graced with the adornments of the truth as it is in Christ. His charity, consecration, and exaltation in innocence and purity reveal our selfishness, worldliness, and degradation in sin, and thereby urge us to reformation. The things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, in Him reach perfection. They shine forth, as pearls in a setting of gold : and like the gentle dew upon the flower, or the clear sun-light upon the face of nature, they are sent to brighten, and refresh, and beautify us, that the old life may pass away, and that we may be new creatures in Christ Jesus.

He said to the disciples, "I am the vine ; Ye are the branches." Accordingly, as the life, common

to the vine and branch, makes them to be similar to each other ; so the life, common to Christ and His disciples, makes them to resemble each other. He of course is not degraded into our sinfulness ; but we are glorified into his sinlessness : and where there is no sin, *there* is faultless excellence. This was so prominent in Jesus--that His very presence rebuked the shallow pretensions of the Pharisee to a superior holiness, and the false pretensions of the Sadducee to a superior philosophy : but to as many as seek his fellowship in true faith, the privilege is given, to be like Him. Our minds are enlightened, our hearts are purified, our lives take a new meaning and value ; and we are given a spirit that continues the work of transfiguration, and will restore us to divine image. Like the dry bones in Ezekiel's vision, we, in a spiritual sense, receive sinews and flesh and life that elevate us from the deadness and loathsomeness of sin ; that transform our natures ; that impart to us the beauty of holiness, which is the beauty of Christ. This is ours by an effluence from him, pervading our souls ; and we rejoice that it cannot be destroyed by time or death, and will be our resplendent possession in the fadeless Paradise of God.

If united to Christ by faith and love, it is thus that the beauty of the Lord, our God is upon us ; but the work is not yet complete. More and more of Him we should learn each day ; and with each new apprehension of the truth some blemish should be put away, or some charm gained. Growing in years, we should grow in the divine likeness ; "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man,

unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." You have seen a monument to the gallant dead on decoration day, how from base to top it is wreathed in floral loveliness. Thus it will be with his true disciples at the coming of the Saviour. The time for them will be a grand decoration day. The transformation will then be finished. The perfect image of Christ will be impressed upon our bodies and souls. "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him." "Let the beauty of the Lord, our God be upon us."

THE DUTY OF CONTINUED EFFORT.

“In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand : for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.”—Ecclesiastes, xi : 6.

THERE are acts, whose results are known before their occurrence. If a stone be dropped into the water, it will sink ; or if food be denied the body, it will die. But of the numberless acts, constantly going on, constituting our daily experience, the results are not *certainly* known beforehand, excepting to God who knoweth all things from the beginning. Men, best qualified for their work, are most likely to succeed ; but it is by no means a necessary fact—that they will be successful ; as is well expressed by Solomon : “the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.” Thus life is a venture ; its successes and failures are surmises, conjectures : for to-day a well directed effort may yield nothing ; while to-morrow an inferior effort may be fruitful in results ; hence the necessity for constant endeavor, that loss at one time be made up by gain at another ; and hence the admonition of our text.

There are seed unsound ; others fall into unproductive soil ; others do not germinate for want of moisture or heart : therefore many have to be sown that the sower may not lose his reward : and so it is in the broad field of life. Much there is, of which to think and dream ; much, for which to hope and

pray ; much to be acquired and accomplished ; but the means employed, are often wrongly directed, incorrectly estimated, feebly exercised, ignorantly managed ; and a want of knowledge as to which will be successful, requires their uninterrupted continuance. Whatever object is before us, we must be up and doing, with all our resources striving for its attainment, and permitting no opportunity to go unimproved. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand : for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good."

There was work in Eden, and there is work in heaven. It is a strange idea which many have of the spirit world—that its inhabitants have nothing to do—but to play on harps and sing. God will tolerate no idlers about him, and will have something for each one to do. But work as *toil* was not known till the transgression of the law ; for, when perfect harmony reigned in nature and human nature, the former yielded spontaneously and bountifully to the wants of man ; so that our first parents had only to reach forth the hand to gather in abundance their daily bread. No need was felt ; desire scarcely existing, ere it was gratified. The only experience we have of such a state as this, is sometimes enjoyed in slumber ; when the mind, passing by the present and unhindered by realities, floats away in visions of what may be in the future, or what might have been, if the soul had never known the withering, desolating influence of sin.

But, in the effort to obtain more than infinite love had provided, all was lost. The decree went forth ; "cursed be the ground for thy sake ;" so

that "earth's hallowed mould of God inspired," lost its virtue, brings forth thorns and thistles, hence man must toil. It may be with hand, or with brain; in circumstances pleasant, or unpleasant; in weakness, or in strength; with hope, or despair to affect his spirit; but to labor he is compelled; else, refusing him nourishment, the earth will reclaim what has already been given; and the refined mould that appears in the human form, will return to gross clay; becoming not only lifeless but expressionless, not only unattractive but repulsive. "Idleness is a disease, a torment:" more than this, we may say, it is death; for what means the noise of machinery, the hurrying to and fro in the streets, the exposure to burning sands and sun, the encountering of danger in every form? all this is an expression of want, an effort for bread, a very struggle for life. Even in the tropical climes where nature is most lavish with her gifts, the natives are compelled to labor in the cultivation of the bread-fruit and other articles of food; or subsisting upon them in their wild state, to pay the penalty in stupidity and disease.

It is true—that in respect to material means, there are those above want; but the number is very small, compared with the millions who are scarcely sure of to-morrow's food; and many even of them have gained their wealth only by arduous work. Besides, is it not written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God? thus Dives in his palace, surrounded by courtiers and revelling in all the luxuries of the world, may be far more destitute than Lazarus at his gate: not that riches are an evil; they

are a blessing when rightly appreciated ; but only that they are not the sole object worthy of pursuit, and are by no means the most valuable possession to be attained by human effort. The rule is, as given by St. Paul ; “if one do not work, neither shall he eat ;” and the exceptions are few.

Now Adam’s knowledge of nature, of human nature, and of God, was doubtless much more extensive than that enjoyed by his posterity. He is represented by the poet as discoursing upon many lofty themes ; and here as often elsewhere, we believe that imagination has not gone beyond the truth. In fact, the highest poetry is only a recalling of former realities, a portrayal of what was true when man was perfect : not now untrue, but waiting, till the restoration of humanity, for another realization eternal in the heavens. But, striving to become omniscient as God, our first parents suffered loss. They gained the knowledge of good and evil ; but this is not a blessing to the race. Sin impaired the human intellect, as well as corrupted the human heart ; and degradation to ignorance was rapid and complete ; from which the only escape has been by toil. Is the nineteenth century distinguished for its culture ? let us never forget what it has cost ; and we need only to refer to the labors of such men as Bacon or Newton, to obtain some conception of the price paid for our civilization. Ignorance of results is consequent upon the limitation of our faculties, and this has much to do with the fact—that so much labor is required.

In the state of perfection, in which all things were at the beginning, there was nothing to pre-

vent the knowledge of what an effort would accomplish ; what a given amount of physical, or mental strength exerted in a certain direction, would effect : while the present state of imperfection, in which "all creation groaneth and travaileth in pain," is sufficient to account for the miscalculations as to where, when, how, and with what force we should act ; hence also for the many failures experienced. Thus man's condition is one of need, therefore of toil ; also of ignorance, therefore of incessant toil ; and all this because of sin. Has God then altogether forsaken the creatures of his hand ? not so ; but as man, for want of a just appreciation of his condition, lost in Eden what cost him nothing ; God intends that he, by laboring for its possession, shall learn to value what is enjoyed ; so that a second fall may not only be impossible because there will be no tempter to lead astray, but also because of man's correct estimate of what may be regained. To this end the Apostle exhorts the Philippians in regard to the Christian graces of character : "if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, *think* on these things ;" that is, *rightly* comprehend their importance and value, and the desire for their possession will be intensified, as also the determination to retain them against every opposing influence.

Every sphere of action demands the observance of the duty of continued effort. In money-making, in politics, in scholarship, in religion there is need of constant endeavor ; for you know not whether to-day's business will be successful ; you know not whether you will be a gainer by the next change in political affairs ; you know not what amount of

knowledge will be retained, or to what degree it will contribute to mental discipline; you know not the times when God will bestow His spirit; and in regard to the last mentioned case we *urge* the necessity of being always vigilant and active; for the interests involved are of pre-eminent importance, and besides, in all other pursuits it is not impossible that success may be otherwise attained. Some one speculation may bring to you wealth; a day's revolution in political affairs may elevate you to the highest position; extraordinary talents, or favorable circumstances may, in a comparatively short time, secure to you intelligence and culture: but rest assured, there is no easy, sudden way of preparation for the kingdom of heaven. In this connection, death-bed charities after lives of selfishness and sin, are wretched failures; and death-bed conversions are escapes, "so as by fire," to be regarded as exceptions explained upon the principle, that all things are possible with God.

The spirit alone effects regeneration; but man co-operates in his sanctification; and the fact is, God helps those who, after He has done His part, help themselves. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away. If then one of the greatest martyrs and saints in the cause of truth had need to strive continually, lest *he* should be a cast-away, what should be *our* efforts! with what persistency should *we* endeavor to be accepted in Christ! We must *press* toward the mark for the prize. We must

strive to enter in at the strait gate. We must give *diligence* to make our calling and election sure. We must be *steadfast, unmovable, always* abounding in the work of the Lord. Thus, whatever is our pursuit, there can be no hope of success, without a thorough and constant dedication of all our resources to the cause; and this is specially true of religion, concerning which "many are called, but few are chosen;" and "one is taken, but the other left."

Every part of our nature is developed by the same means. God said to man; "in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread;" and by *bread* is here signified whatever is needed to supply our physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual wants. Accordingly, in order to ward off disease and death, to deliver ourselves from the bonds of ignorance, to cultivate the affections, and to satisfy the deep longings of the soul, there must be endeavor, and ceaseless endeavor because we know not whether shall prosper, either this or that. Care must be taken, however, that no one class of objects receive disproportionate attention; for neglect, in this regard, has been the fruitful cause of so many abnormal developments, pernicious alike to those immediately concerned, and to all with whom they are brought in contact. For example; the gross materialist, the infidel scientist, the effeminate sentimentalist, and the fanatical devotee become what they are, just from efforts active in one direction, to the exclusion of all others. We should aim to develop our *entire* nature; for nothing short of this is worthy of our origin, and instead of restoring, would only tend to banish the divine image.

Now in the temporal affairs of life, even after the very utmost has been done, we should be prepared for disappointment; for over and over again the net may be cast into the sea without results; and like the disciples, we may toil all night, but take nothing. The enthusiasm and vigor of youth, the determination and power of manhood, and whatever of mental and physical strength remains to age, may all be expended wisely and continuously, yet in vain; and the old man, who all his life has sown morning and evening, in cloud and in sunshine, may at last go down to the grave in poverty and want, without so much as gathering a single sheaf. The fact is discouraging; but would it not be much more so, if the same uncertainty obtained in matters concerning the soul? It is a cause of sincere regret, that, under any circumstances, honest, persistent labor should command no reward; but would it not be fearful, to know that there was a possibility of a devoted Christian life failing of its reward? We therefore rejoice that, in respect to our most *vital* interests, an observance of the duty of continued effort, is a guarantee of success. We may not know what this, or that act of service or worship will accomplish, and the Lord at times may sorely try our faith; yet, if ever striving honestly to do the Master's will, if earnest and continuous in our consecration, we shall certainly reap from our sowing, and the harvest will be an abundant yield.

Our assurance arises from the promises of God. Sin involved mankind in darkness; but this darkness has been penetrated by beams of light, which intimate to us that "beyond the cloud is the sun still shining," and that, if we, guided by these silver

threads, will press steadily toward their source, a plain will at last be reached, where reigns perfection itself. These gleams of hope and direction are such as, "he that asketh, receiveth; he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened:" "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee:" "him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast off:" "to him that is faithful unto death, will I give a crown of life." If there were nothing more, we would not be in despair; for "though a mother may forget, yet will I not forget, saith the Lord;" and He is able to fulfill unto the utmost all He has promised. The gracious pledges of His mercy and love which God has given, are to the soul wearied and discouraged by sin, a source of comfort and peace that diminish not, but increase with possession; that cease not, but continue ever.

Our assurance arises also from the purposes of God. This, or that individual may fail of the object he has proposed to himself; his life may be spent and end in disappointment and misfortune; but there are no failures with Him, without whose permission even a sparrow may not fall to the ground, and who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will. The doctrine of predestination is incomprehensible, and may be a terror to unbelievers; but to true and faithful disciples it is a source of consolation: for, as it is written, "*all things work together for good, to them who love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.*" The very labors of the Christian are determined; as is learned from this comforting passage in Ephesians; "we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which

God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." "Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom;" and the inheritance being thus made certain, there is a feeling of confidence and trust.

But our assurance arises also from the co-operation of God. It is written, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is *God* who worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." If *God* therefore be for us, who, or what can be against us? If He, with His infinitude of wisdom and strength, be helping us to overcome our enemies, to liberate our souls from the guilt and power of sin, and to direct our steps in the way everlasting; surely we may rejoice, not only in the hope, but also in the certainty of ultimate triumph. Knowing that He could not accomplish the journey through the wilderness without divine help, Moses refused to make the endeavor, unless God went with him: neither could *we* reach the kingdom of heaven without assistance from above; but, knowing that God is with us, we go forth in *His* strength, and encourage ourselves with the thought—that it is only a question of time, as to when the inheritance will be ours.

Is not our duty evident? While opportunity remains and life is ours, let us not be weary in well-doing, but faithful to the end. The dying cardinal exclaimed, if I had served my *God*, as I have served my *king*, *He* would not have left me in my hour of need. Such disappointments are frequent, and are intended to incline us to that service which should properly engage the soul. Let us sow our seed in the morning, and in the evening withhold not our

hand ; for, though we know not whether shall prosper, either this or that, there is—from the promises, the purposes, and the co-operation of God an assurance of success ; and all this because of redeeming love. Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

CHRIST, THE WAY.

“I AM THE WAY, AND THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE: *No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*”—St. John, xiv : 6.

THE anatomist and ethnologist both present indisputable facts to prove the unity of the human race: but the argument most conclusive to the Christian heart, is the desire for God. This constitutes a bond of union, a source of sympathetic influence to all ages, all climes, all conditions of society, and with a strong probability points to the same earthly parent, as well as to a common origin. It is true that every art, every passion, every object of nature, even man himself, at some time or other has been deified; but in all cases the underlying impulse is the same: we are therefore authorized in saying, that all men feel the need of a higher power upon which to rely: in a word—that all men thirst for God; though of course with various degrees of intensity and clearness, from the most degraded heathen with his vague, undefined want, up to the Psalmist of Israel whose meat was his tears day and night, because of a brief absence from the temple of his God. The explanation of this universal need is found in the fact, that all mankind by their fall lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries in this life—to death itself, and the pains of hell forever.

But is there no escape from this terrible fate? Is man forever doomed to go through this world

of sorrow without a hope of rest? All praise to eternal love! The promise went forth just after the fall, that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head," that is, not only that the great Tempter himself should be finally overcome, but that his influence now should be counteracted by a power, more effective as its source should be more exalted, and thus left free to the promptings of his better nature and to the Spirit of God, man should return to his Father's house. This hope was continually kept alive by the chosen servants of God; for prophet after prophet foretold the coming of Messiah, portrayed His sufferings, and forshadowed His glory, both in language of noblest prose, and in strains of grandest poetry, till at last he *did* come, whom the Jews had long expected, whom the Gentiles were ready to welcome—Jesus of Nazareth, who in our text proclaims Himself to be the *Way*, and the only way to regain the divine favor. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh to the Father but by me." The words truth and life are here explanatory, showing how Christ is the way, and so leaving the Jews without excuse in their wilful rejection of his claims.

1st. Then, CHRIST IS THE WAY, BECAUSE HE IS THE TRUTH. All true education proceeds by degrees. We do not speak to children about the great principles of science in their far-reaching applications, until they have become familiar with the more simple laws of nature, and the way these are to be understood. The same gradual progress is observable in the religious life: 1st. An assurance of salvation through Christ; then advancement to the

higher plains of Christian experience, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. In like manner God has dealt with His church on earth. His first revelation was one pre-eminently of commandments, which was a preparation for one pre-eminently of principles; as it is expressed by St. Paul—The law was a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ. For the extensive ritual which God gave the Jews, whose central feature was a sacrificial atonement, served the purpose of impressing the fact upon the mind, that without the shedding of blood there was no remission of sins: but as it was impossible that the blood of bullocks and goats should take away sins, there was a constant pointing forward to “a sacrifice of nobler name and richer blood than they.” Christ then is the truth as opposed to all types and shadows.

Hitherto the church had spoken as a child, had understood as a child, had thought as a child; but now it was called upon to put away childish things; for it had reached its manhood, when a true earnest life must begin. The time for mere observances had passed. No longer the tedious requirements of the law were to engross the attention. Henceforward there was to be an all-pervading Spirit, under whose influence a universal progress would be ensured. “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world,” was the testimony of the Baptist, spoken fearlessly and spoken well; confirming what had been done, and kindling a hope for the future which shall never be extinguished. That

was the last voice of the Old Testament and the first of the New.

At once priest and victim, Christ made an offering of Himself to satisfy divine justice, thus reconciling man to God: and as the moon and stars reflecting only borrowed light, vanish at the approach of the great orb of day, so the Mosaic system with all its typical and symbolical rites and ceremonies, passed away on the appearance of the Great Anti-type, the Sun of Righteousness. Accordingly, in the solemn hour of the crucifixion, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from top to bottom; also a voice came from the dying Saviour saying, "It is finished," finished, because he had sprinkled the mercy-seat with His own precious blood, and he was soon to enter into the presence of God, there to make intercession for His people: therefore there is no more need of an interceding priesthood, no more need of an atonement for sin;—but every one for himself may boldly approach a throne of grace, where God for Christ's sake is waiting to be gracious.

But again. *The impulse to worship is innate in human nature.* The baneful effects of sin however, early appeared. Men very soon became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools; who change the truth of God into a *lie*, and worship and serve the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. Accordingly, in the time of Christ the whole world, excepting the Jews, was given up to idolatry, and even now the larger part is sitting in the darkness of gross superstition. Christ also then is the truth, as

opposed to all idols, and to all that is false in the worship of the true God.

As He said to the woman of Samaria, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." That was a rebuke both to idolatry, and to the heartless externalism of the Jews. But on another occasion He said to His disciples,—“He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father.” Again, “I and the Father are one.” By these declarations He proclaimed Himself divine, who in the beginning was with God, and was God: the same as Jehovah of the Old Testament, “in whom we live, and move, and have our being.” Thus to all other systems of religious belief the death-knell was sounded, and Jesus immediately began to subdue the world unto Himself: It having been ordained that “every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that He is God.”

“All hail the power of Jesus’ name!
Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all.”

But Lastly. There are men who have desperately tried to live without God: some engaging in intellectual pursuits, others steeping themselves in the cess-pools of passion and appetite; others going doggedly through life in a sort of stoical indifference; but with what wretched, miserable failures, if not their lives, certainly their death-beds will in all likelihood reveal. For, as it has been said; “a death-bed is a wonderful reasoner. Many a proud heart it has humbled without a word, who but a short time before would have defied any power

to have turned him from his course. For all is well as long as the curtain is up, and the puppet show of life goes on ; but when the rapid representation draws to a close, and all hope of longer respite is precluded, things appear in a very different light." Christ then, is the truth, as opposed to all that is false in human schemes for relief.

A bird only wearies itself by endeavoring to get free from the trapper's net ; and in like manner these poor, misguided souls only get more involved by endeavoring to free themselves from the meshes of sin and care ; to all of whom Christ tenderly speaks, in language every word of which is a tear of sympathy. "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Human supports will fail in the hour of need. Human plans will prove ineffectual to secure peace. Human sources of happiness, ceasing from one cause or another, will finally leave the spirit in despair. But they that trust in Christ shall never be confounded. Their's is an *eternal* rest.

"O rest, so true, so sweet!

(Would it were shared by all the weary world!)

'Neath shadowing banner of His love unfurled,

We bend to kiss the Master's pierced feet,

Then lean our love upon His loving breast,

And know God's rest."

Thus in being the truth, that is, in being that which is real, which fulfills expectation, which can be depended upon, and never fails or disappoints ; Christ is the way of reaching God. He is the *true* Shepherd, who calleth His own sheep by name, who leadeth them out in green pastures and beside still waters ; consequently He is the *good*

Shepherd, who, leaving the ninety and nine, goeth into the wilderness after the missing one; that finally there may be *one* fold and *one* Shepherd; a unity which is the perfection of existence, the ultimate triumph of infinite wisdom and love, certain death to base falsehood in every form, but a glorious perfecting of the resources of truth, by the eternal presence of Truth itself.

But 2nd. CHRIST IS THE WAY, BECAUSE HE IS THE LIFE. As a rock upheaved by some convulsion of nature, trembles on the brow of the mountain, only waiting the first stroke of the blast to be hurled into the valley below; so Adam, after eating the forbidden fruit, no longer felt secure in his old resting place in the favor of God, and only waited the completion of his degradation which was not long delayed. For in the very consciousness of willful disobedience, he realized the loss of the innocence and purity of his former life; also that peace of mind, which results from a continued sense of the divine presence; so that no audible voice was needed to convince him of sin. In the change of his whole nature, immediately following his transgression, he was self-condemned: therefore, in pronouncing the curse God only made man's external circumstances to correspond to his inward condition. "Cursed be the ground for thy sake;" but a far worse blight had already fallen upon the mind. "Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee;" but far sharper thorns and thistles had already sprung up in the heart. "Thou shalt eat thy bread in the sweat of thy face;" but a far more arduous labor had already engaged the soul in its conflict with evil.

Then the man and his wife were driven from Eden, and a flaming sword was placed to guard the way of the Tree of Life. Such was the beginning, but alas! not the end of the work of sin. For no one descending from Adam by ordinary generation, has ever been free from the vile presence who lurks at the fire-side, in the counting-room, in the church pew, in the pulpit, in the chamber of state. Wherever man appears, there sin forces her misshapen form into view, whose breath is poison to hope, and whose loathesome touch defiles the fairest fruits life has to enjoy.

Now there is a time, when objects animate become inanimate as stone. If questioned then as to their condition, we say, "they are dead." Their forms are as perfect as they were before; but something is wanting, without which they lie motionless and cold. We call that something—*physical* life. In like manner there is the death of the soul, described above in the case of Adam and his descendants, which is the penalty for sin. The constitution of human nature seems not different from what it was before the fall; but something is wanting, without which there is an incapacity for true holiness. We call that something—*spiritual* life, the source of Christian graces, the ground of Christian privileges, and of a possibility to hold communion with God as with a friend.

To restore this spiritual life—was the mission of Christ: as he said Himself, "I am come that ye may have life:" (again,) "ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life." From this it appears, that with acceptance of Christ comes a living germ, whose development constitutes Christian experience.

"Nor can the vain toil cease
 Till in the shadowy maze we meet
 One who can guide our aching wayward feet
 To find himself our way, our life, our peace.
 In Him the long unrest is soothed and stilled ;
 Our hearts are filled :"

filled with the consciousness of a power never possessed before, of a re-animating of all spiritual energies, of a mighty movement of the soul upward toward God, of a passing from death unto life.

Thus in being the Truth and the Life, Christ is the way, and our simple duty is to heed the exhortation which saith, "this is the way ; walk ye in it." Let us cling then to the truth which will make us free ;—free from the power of sin—in the world, in the flesh, in the adversary ; free to fulfil the high design of our creation ; free to seek God, who alone is sufficient to satisfy our wants. Let us never fail to frequent the fountain, where alone can be found the elixir of life, which, not only perpetuates existence, but makes the dead to live again, brings back the prodigal to his father's embrace. By thus regarding the truth and the life, we shall walk in the way ; the way, not devised by human wisdom,—but by that wisdom which created the world ; the way which leads man back to more than was lost in Paradise ; the way from despair to hope, from sorrow to comfort, from unrest to peace, from defilement to holiness, from enmity to love for God, with which comes every possible good.

The Star of Bethlehem guided the wise men from the East, resting above the manger where the lowly Jesus lay a helpless babe : and having found him, they rejoiced, worshipped, and presented unto Him

their gifts, gold, and frankincense and myrrh. Now to the eye of faith that Star still shines; no longer casting its beams earthward but heavenward, whither Jesus hath gone as king of kings to "prepare a place for us:" therefore let us seek Him, and having found Him, rejoice, worship, and present unto Him *our* gifts, not only our gold, and frankincense, and myrrh, but our lives and our hearts. Thus God may be reached; and the shining way is through Jesus; Jesus, who with a hand gentler than woman's, wipes from the cheek all bitter burning tears; with a manhood united to Godhood, allures to virtue's highest ideal; with a knowledge extending to omniscience, guides the mind through endless mazes of eternal truth; with a power reaching to omnipotence, strikes down every opposing foe, and taking the time-tired soul in His arms, bears it safely home.

Brethren, "there is a way which no fowl knoweth, and the vulture's eye hath not seen;" but it may be found by every humble disciple of Jesus. Therefore arouse you and come; let us rise so far on our way, as to be above the attraction of earth; let us be hastening on our journey; for the day is far spent, and the night is coming on. Besides, though the way is open *now*, who can tell, oh! who can tell how soon it may be closed. May God abundantly bless, and direct us all to walk in the way:—a way, not always strewn with flowers and the pleasant things of life, but where piercing thorns often force from the soul agonizing cries of pain, where trials often seem too grievous to be endured. Nevertheless, along the path there are gleams of sunshine from generous thoughts and deeds: here and

there we catch the fragrance and beauty of a flower,—planted by the hand of love: now and then we bathe the fevered brow in some cool refreshing stream from the presence of our God; and almost every hour is marked by some fresh, new song from sweet voiced Hope.

“Then let my way appear, steps unto Heaven;
All that Thou sendest me in mercy given;
Angels to beckon me—
Nearer my God to Thee,
Nearer my God to Thee,
Nearer to Thee.”

THE IMPORTANT CHOICE.

“Choose you this day whom ye will serve.”—Joshua, xxiv: 15.

It is a proof of wisdom, and genuine interest in the welfare of a people, that a statesman, before relinquishing his office, should endeavor to eradicate existing evils, confirm advantages already secured, and, as far as possible, provide for the future always rendered uncertain by a change of administration. Thus Joshua when about to die, following the example of his noble predecessor, assembled together the people of Israel, and made one last effort in their behalf by recalling them to the worship of the true God. God, he said, had chosen out their father Abraham, had led him to the land of Canaan, had given him a son Isaac, had given Isaac, Jacob and Esau, had sent Jacob with his children down into Egypt, had brought them out when a mighty nation by the hand of Moses and Aaron, had cared for them in the wilderness, and had conquered their enemies in the land of promise, giving them cities, vineyards and olive-yards, on which they had bestowed no labor.

The conclusion from all this is expressed in verse 14: “Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord.” But for the purpose of bringing them to a decision in the matter, he added the exhortation in verse 15: “And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose

you this day whom ye will serve ; whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell : but as for me and my house we will serve the Lord." At the first glance one might suppose, that the choice here was between two classes of idols ; but if they had forsaken the worship of the true God, of what concern was it to Joshua, whether they adopted the more refined idolatry of their Chaldean ancestors, or the grosser type among the Amorites. The whole context indicates, that the people were called upon to make a choice between the true God and idols. But to place the matter still more fairly, the exhortation was really equal to this : Choose ye this day to serve the living and true God.

The appeal comes with equal force to those of the present day ; therefore we beseech you, my friends, to choose this day to serve God. If we were disposed to speak of gratitude, it would be proper to remind you, that your every breath, your life itself, and all the blessings you enjoy are gifts from God's hand ; but, if possible, we wish to present the subject in a still more practical form. Small matters should not be in the least neglected. A mind well cultured, will attend to things of little account as well as to those of greater concern. But it is a principle of common sense, that different objects should receive attention in proportion to their importance, that is, should command more interest, more exertion, and precedence as to time, if any necessity exist. Accordingly, we urge you to make your choice of God this day, because of the magnitude of the issues at stake.

The trade or profession which a youth should choose, is a subject of much consideration with his parents and himself. In like manner, the maiden, when about to trust herself to another, thinks much about the character of her future home, whether it will be one of love, therefore of happiness, or one of indifference, therefore of discontent. And in general, when men are about to engage in any project; the cultivation of a piece of land, the taking of a journey, or the performance of a business transaction, they spend long seasons in deliberation, so that the best results may be secured, and that afterwards there may be no occasion for regret. All this is very commendable. We like to see people thus wise and prudent; for those who are careless in things temporal, are not those to be relied upon in things spiritual.

Yet Oh! how strange, my friends, to think so much of *this* life, and never of the life beyond! How strange to take such wise precautions for *time*, and never for *eternity*! How strange to provide so well for the *body* and for the *mind*, and never for the immortal *soul*, hungering and thirsting after God! Are men insane that they will act thus? Are they so much under the power of the world, the flesh, and the Devil, that they do not realize how much is involved? no less a matter than the salvation of their souls, for the loss of which nothing would be a compensation. For what if the wealth of India were piled at their feet! what if the whole world were their possession! all this, in time to come, would not destroy the sting of the worm which dieth not—all this would not heal the burn of the fire which is not quenched,

Calm, sober reflection is what is wanting, an asking of self the questions: What am I living for? Where will I spend eternity? If men would thus consider, we think there would be no doubt as to the result. Knowing is one thing, but realizing is another. Men know that they are immortal, but Oh! they do not realize the fact. "Immortal! If were but one, how would others envy—how would thrones adore! Because it is common, is the blessing lost?" Alas! to those who persist in their course of sin, immortality, as a source of *happiness*, will be lost; but, as a source of *misery*, it will be terribly present; so that the hour will come, when they will curse the day of their birth, and cry with Job: "Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul; who long for death, but it cometh not; and dig for *it* more than for hid treasures." But serving God brings far different results, an eternal ascending from height to height of peace and joy, ensured by the divine promises which can never fail.

Thus "the part and rank of the soul," to all eternity, are determined by its conduct in time. The echo, of what is done now, will sound through the ages of the beyond; and therefore every moment is unalterably shaping human destiny, either for *evil*, or for *good*. Why—the mariner, whose vessel is near a dangerous coast, does not delay to take every precaution to ensure his safety. Men are terribly indifferent only in regard to the welfare of their souls, in comparison with which, loss of physical life is altogether insignificant.* A sincere choice to serve God is all that is required. Union with Him is security against all evil, and a pledge of all

good. For He, who tinges the rose with her delicate blush, paints the colors of the beautiful bow of peace, guides the planets in their ceaseless course, and holds the universe in the hollow of His hand, will fully provide for those who love Him, and will make all things work together for their good.

But again : We urge you to make your choice of God this day because of Him, from whom the exhortation comes. Would we heed the advice of one who is ignorant of our condition ? by no means. Would we heed the advice of one who is not in sympathy with us ? Very seldom. In this whole matter then, we are governed by our estimate of Him who would exercise the privilege. Now it is not chiefly the preacher who bids you make your choice, though God knows that we earnestly desire that every one should come to a saving knowledge of the truth : nor is it merely Joshua, the writer of the text, who speaks to you in this exhortation : but it is none other than God himself, possessing every qualification to exercise the right.

He has thorough knowledge of your condition ; nothing is hid from His gaze. As the Psalmist saith : “ O Lord Thou hast searched me and known me.” He knows not only your sins, but your trials, difficulties and temptations, your sufferings, sighs and tears, your longings for rest and peace. Accordingly also, it is known unto Him, not only how to deliver from the guilt and power of sin, but also how to afford strength for the task of life, to pour balm upon the wounded heart, and to satisfy all the desires of the soul.

But still farther, God regards you with a boundless love, which found a touching expression in those

tears wept by Jesus, with the sorrowing sisters over the death of their brother ; whose full depth, however, only the sacrifice on Calvary adequately exemplified. Human love gives a charm to this existence of ours, drawing one out of the narrow circle of self, affording the purest pleasures earth may know, and so inter-blending the experiences of hearts thus united, that joy becomes more joyous, and sorrowless sorrowful, by being shared. If so, how should we value the love of Christ! which cannot be prompted by any selfish interest, has wondrously existed from all eternity, and if possible, is intensified by many sweet, though chastened memories of earth.

But this is not all. With God there are infinite resources of power, by whom all things were created and all things consist. "Who layeth the beams of His chambers in the waters ; who maketh the clouds His chariot ; who walketh upon the wings of the wind." Who said to the sea, "Hitherto shalt thou come but no farther, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." "Who laid the foundations of the earth that it should not be removed forever." Is he not, then, able to help you, O ye of little faith! Come then to God as a refuge from the storm—as a shadow from the heat. Is it better to rely upon your own weak arm—alas! so weak that it often falls powerless to the side? Is it better to rely upon your own deceptive judgment—alas! so deceptive that error is continually regarded as truth? God has an arm which can never fail ; God has a directing spirit which will never lead astray. Thus knowing, loving, and able to help

you to the uttermost, God warns and persuades you to choose at this time whom you will serve.

But lastly—we urge you to make your choice this day, because of the uncertainty of life. We all know that we must die. “God for our improvement gives us daily warning, and everything around us speaks of dissolution. The falling leaf, the passing cloud, the bursting bubble, the expiring wave, the setting sun, the sunken moon—yea all things in nature, point to the end of animate and inanimate objects. And when we fail to observe in nature, death enters the domestic circle and wrenches from our arms the fondest object of our affection, blasts it before our eyes, withers it when perhaps it appears in its greatest vigor, or else gradually turns it into corruption.” And so it is; we live now, but who is sure of seeing the light of another day? We know not the hour when the awful summons will come; for when they say, peace and safety, destruction is near. But he who waits always on God, is ready whensoever he is called; and happy they are, who so live that “death at all times may find them at leisure to die;” for at any time—at any age, the terrible crisis may come.

The old of course must die. The whitened locks, the wasted cheeks tell only too plainly of the approaching change. In respect to those, therefore, who are so far advanced in years, prudence has but one thing to urge: “Prepare to meet thy God;” for when the summer has come, the wild grass may be growing over their last resting place, and children’s faces may be wet with tears for those, who will never return again. We do not remind you of this, aged men and women, to cause you pain;

we would only warn you to be ready for the solemn hour of passing away from earth. The Queen of England, though she had lived seventy years, was not prepared for death, and said when dying: "I would give all my kingdom for one inch of time;" but too late. Besides, a death-bed should be altogether free from anxiety as to one's salvation. A matter of so much importance should never be left till the last stroke of the great enemy is about to fall.

To the young, life stretches away far down the vista of years, thronged with countless images of what may be experienced and accomplished; and that it is thus, it is well. We would never say a word to sadden the pleasant dream-life of youth; for, as some one has said: "It is the duty of young people to be always delighted and delightful." But, my young friends, we would not have you rest upon a false security. Death comes in the morning, as well as in the evening of life. The grave is full of the young and strong. What is fancied to be in the distance, may be very, very near.

Both for youth and old age, "to live holy is the way to live safely," and at any hour to die happily. For innocence is bold, and will strengthen you to face danger, while, on the other hand, wickedness is cowardly, suspects that every bush conceals a foe, and trembles at the sound of every passing leaf. But to the servants of God, old age will not be a source of much regret. With them the conflict is all but over,—the victory nearly won, God and heaven almost reached. Their senses are failing to note the objects of earth, but the glory of the things, which God hath prepared for them that

love him, is beginning to dawn upon their souls. Then also, to the servants of God, youth is not a source of great exultation as affording opportunities for pleasure, but opportunities for vigorous effort in the cause of truth—to augment its power in one's own heart, and to extend its benign influence in a world, where error has made sad havoc of human peace and happiness.

Thus spent, life will be a success, inasmuch as it will insure a preparation for death; so that, whether one be called away while still ascending the sunny hillside—still advancing toward the summit of middle life; or when he is descending the other side into the vale of years, the answer may always be, Master, here am I.†

We have endeavored to give the reasons, not only why you should choose to serve God, but why you should choose to serve him this day. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. The Lord's feast is ready. Each one of you has a special invitation, Come, ere it be too late—ere the doors are closed, exclaiming with Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

THE MOUNTAIN SERVICE.

“And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain: and when He was set, His disciples came unto Him: and He opened His mouth and taught them.”—St. Matthew, v : 1, 2.

HILLEL, Gamaliel and the other distinguished teachers of the Jews had their seats in the schools and synagogues, within convenient reach of all the various helps which those well furnished establishments afforded, in the communication of knowledge; but that nature should afford a preaching place to the Saviour—was in keeping with the fact that, though the foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, the Son of Man had not where to lay His head. The green earth was His only resting place, and the objects of nature about Him, his only helps to instruct the people; yet thereby our hearts lay hold of the precious truth, that God does not confine the manifestations of His presence to certain locations, but will meet with His disciples in the open air, as well as in the sheltered inclosure; in the humble meeting-house, as well as in the magnificent temple. This was contrary to the idea of the Jews, who supposed that Palestine was the only land; Jerusalem, the only city, and *their* temple, the only house of worship, which God would favor with His presence; as if the world existed for them only, and the rest of mankind were deserving of no attention.

Not far from the ruins of ancient Capernaum is an eminence, known as Mount of Beatitudes. It was here in all likelihood, that the Sermon on the mount was delivered ; for, besides the significant name just mentioned, which has been transmitted by tradition, the elevation is the only one of any considerable height, on the western side of the Sea of Galilee in that locality, and is quite near the shore, where the calling of the disciples occurred just before the delivery of the Sermon. The Master associated much with the people, their spiritual and temporal wants being His constant care ; but He often withdrew Himself from the hurry and confusion of the world to places of quiet and seclusion ; and owing to the mountainous character of the country, opportunities for retirement were numerous and inviting. These mountain scenes in the life of Christ stand out prominently into view, each of special interest to believers ; and they really constitute the most important events in the Saviour's experience ; as for example, the night of prayer, the Transfiguration, the Ascension, and not least, the occasion under consideration.

As the Mosaic law was given on a mountain, it was appropriate that its full development (the Christian law,) should have had a similar place for its exposition ; but we cannot fail to note the striking contrast. Sinai was in the midst of a rough and burning desert, and its sides were clothed in hard and barren rock ; surroundings well befitting the stern character of the Jewish dispensation : while the Mount of Beatitudes was in the midst of a populous and fruitful region ; its sides clothed in waving fields ; and not far from its base, laving the

shore with a pleasant music, and sparkling in the bright sunshine, was the Sea of Galilee. Clouds and thick darkness enveloped Sinai; so terrible the sight, that Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake:" while the calm, clear light of a cloudless sky bathed, as in a sea of glory, the Mount of Beatitudes; and we imagine, that even the eagle who built her nest among the rocks above, was scarcely disturbed by the peaceful scene.

The scene to which we refer, was—Jesus sitting in the midst of His disciples, above the tumult of busy life, speaking quietly, kindly, yet Oh! how earnestly, as one who knew the importance of His message; and the great multitudes gathered from Galilee, from Decapolis, from Jerusalem, from Judea and from beyond Jordan, in profound attention, as the words of life came from His lips. Yes, the scene was peaceful; yet, who may conceive of one more sublime; the preacher, God Himself; His congregation, the world; His text, the Old Testament; his church, nature's grand cathedral; its pulpit, a mountain; its benches, the green earth; its lamp, the sun; its dome, the boundless heavens. A service more divine, more impressive, was never held. Its echo is still sounding through the ages; its influence is still felt among men; and its recollections will continue to gladden many a heart long after time has ceased, and the universe itself has passed away.

Peter, in addressing the Jews, spoke of Jesus of Nazareth—as "a man approved of God," and numerous facts in the Saviour's life confirm this testimony. A heavenly host proclaims His birth. The Spirit rested upon Him in bodily form at baptism.

Angels ministered unto Him after His temptation. Moses and Elias communed with Him on the Mount of Transfiguration, when a voice came from heaven, saying, "this is my well beloved Son." Death was not permitted to retain His body; and forty days after His resurrection a cloud received Him up to God. But as to His authority it is written, "the Father hath sent me;" as to His preparation, "the Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings;" and as to His consecration, "my meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work."

Thus thoroughly competent for His work, Jesus preached through the length and breadth of Palestine, ready alike to make known His message to the ruler coming to Him at night, and to the woman coming to Him at noon-day; to the Nazarenes who sought His destruction. and to the multitudes who were astonished at His doctrine; to the crowds who followed Him because He had given them bread, and to the sisters who sent for Him because he whom He loved was sick; to the high priest, whose demand for proof of His identity was prompted by a base desire to put Him to death, and to the disciple whose similar demand was prompted by a desire for the truth. Accordingly, there were such acknowledgments as these; "we know that Thou art a teacher come from God:" "Sir, I perceive Thou art a prophet:" "Yea Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, who should come into the world:" "My Lord, and my God."

Thus we reach the divine character of Christ. He was not only a man approved of God, but God

Himself; and from this fact what a new interest gathers about the Preacher, what a new significance is given to His revelations. It is not strange therefore, that the people heard Him gladly, that the Nazarenes before their jealousy was excited, wondered at His gracious words, and that the officers sent to take Him, when asked, why have ye not brought Him, answered, "never man spake like this man." For other teachers among the Jews appealed to the traditions of the fathers—to enforce what they said; but what *Christ* taught, was not drawn from books or observation, but from the depths of his own mind, and was a part of the perfect knowledge belonging to Him as God. The testimony is, that "He taught as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes."

He was a great scholar; but His scholarship was not the learning of the schools: it was the knowledge of things unseen and eternal. He was a great student; but His study was not the arts, sciences and literature of men: it was meditation upon the new heavens and the new earth. He was a great theologian; but His theology was not the discussion of mere questions: it was the doctrine of life and death. He was a great orator; but His oratory was not the display of the rhetorician: it was the simple eloquence of truth. He was a great philosopher; but His philosophy was not an aggregation of trifling subtleties: it was a deep, true insight into men and things, the requisite most essential to success in any pursuit, but especially in preaching the gospel, whose object is the restoration of mankind to communion with God,

Thus gifted, with a cause to maintain and a purpose to fulfil, Jesus seeing the multitudes, went *up* into a mountain—in striking contrast to the time when God came *down* upon a mountain: “and when He was set, His disciples came unto Him: and He opened His mouth, and taught them.” Previous to this time He had delivered short addresses to small assemblies in the various synagogues He had entered; but now He began the longest discourse in His ministry—perhaps to His largest audience; and as He advanced into His subject, as He perceived that interest was increasing, and as He became inspired with the hope that out of so many some might be saved, how He must have uttered His words more impressibly! how he must have regarded the people more anxiously! and in the inmost depths of His soul, how He must have prayed more earnestly—that the truth might be received!

Immediately surrounding Jesus were the twelve disciples, and beyond these, on the grassy slopes of the mountain were the multitudes, gathered from all the surrounding region. We may suppose that the business places in the neighboring city of Capernaum were closed, that the traffic on the sea shore was for the time interrupted, that travellers paused on their way, and that one and all were eager to hear the Preacher, whose fame had gone abroad throughout all the country. Not the mere desire to hear some “new thing,” as in the case of the Athenians, brought this vast multitude to the preaching of Christ; but they seemed anxious to be instructed in a doctrine which gave them hope of a change to their advantage, dissatisfied as they

were with their condition, and no such general interest had been excited since the baptism of John. As described by Christ, the people were as sheep without a shepherd, and it was so perhaps—that in *Him* they thought to find relief.

The first reason for the presence of the twelve, however, was their *call*. Out of the large number of his followers Jesus had chosen them to be his constant attendants. To many of them he had only said, “follow me;” and they had left their boats and nets (in one case a father) to obey the command, and now they were receiving from Him the needed instruction to increase their faith, and to prepare them for their future work. Accordingly, as Jesus proceeded with his discourse, there was at least this much encouragement, that as far as his *disciples* were concerned, his words would not be in vain. He knew that at least in their hearts the seed sown, would bring forth a rich harvest to their own salvation and to the glory of God. All but one remained with him until his crucifixion; all the eleven returned to him after his resurrection; all these (it is said) excepting St. John died in defence of the truth first heard, to any extent, on the Mount of Beatitudes, and they are now enjoying the rewards of the kingdom of heaven.

Many of the people had come with a hope—that they would be cured of their diseases and torments, a hope fully realized; for Jesus healed them all; but there was far more than this to be obtained; for they also found the physician of souls. They had only expected to procure *physical* relief; but an opportunity was also afforded to obtain *spiritual* peace; and we cannot but think—that the sermon,

directed immediately to the disciples but intended for all, made a deep impression upon the multitude. It is recorded—that they were astonished at the doctrine; and when Jesus came down from the mountain, they still followed him, as if desirous to hear more of the truth. Surely we may cherish the hope—that of that vast throng some are now rejoicing in heaven, and look back to that hour, as the time when first impelled to give their hearts to Christ.

The Sermon on the mount is the most important on record. It demonstrates to us—that the law and the gospel are not opposed to each other, and are parts of the one grand revelation of God to man. It is true—that in one *justice* predominates, while in the other, *mercy*; that in one God chiefly appears as a judge, while in the other, as a father: but mercy without justice would command no respect, and a father without law would be false to his trust. Accordingly, Sinai and the Mount of Beatitudes must be viewed together; the latter of course reaching nearer heaven, so that more of God is seen, and more of divine light clothes all objects in greater loveliness and increased attractiveness to the soul. In fact, *God* in the cloud and *Jesus* sitting in the midst of the people must be regarded as *one*, and having given the law, he now came to complete his revelation.

Now what is *our* concern with this sermon? what have *we* to do with what was said nearly two thousand years ago on a far off mountain in obscure Galilee? “Much every way,” just as much as had those then, and there assembled. For we are also under the guilt and power of sin; the *law* is also

insufficient for us ; we are also the objects of redeeming love ; therefore the message is also to us : and so then, we are also either *wise* or *foolish*, we are also building on the *rock* or *sand*, just according as we regard, or disregard the sayings of Christ. We do not hear the Saviour speak, and we do not experience the influence of his bodily presence, as did those on the Mount of Beatitudes ; but his doctrine has been put on record, has lost none of its meaning or value, and is the source of hope and life to mankind.

“I am come to fulfil.” In this declaration which occurs in the Sermon on the mount, is the interpretation to all scripture. All that came before Christ, in the way of type and symbol and prophecy, was a preparation for his coming ; and all that has come after Him, in the way of teaching and preaching and Christian work, is only a development of what he did and was. How precious then are the words of Christ, and how careful we should be to discover and profit by their meaning. “The almost Christian words of Socrates—the best of the heathen men—are scarcely remembered, by even the few ; the wisdom of Solon is musty with oblivion ; the idealist philosophy of Plato is but a half remembered dream ; the misty moralizing of Seneca, charmed but those groping on the dark border land between heathenism and Christian faith ; while the gospel of Christ is the grand stately cathedral of wisdom and truth, from whose lofty belfry the blessed words of Jesus chime forth sweet and captivating as silver bells on the hushed evening air.”

THE CHRISTIAN'S EXPERIENCE OF SIN.

“For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do, I allow not: for what I would, that do I not: but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warning against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.”—Romans, vii: 14–25.

THE primary object of the law was doubtless to restrain from sin, but it was also a school-master to lead unto Christ; and one of the ways by which it performed the last mentioned service, is learned from this chapter. “Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin; working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.” That is, that sin might be set forth in its full extent of existence and influence, as completely pervading human nature, and as possessing a power not to be overcome by *human*

efforts ; so that men would be compelled to accept the offer of salvation by faith in Christ, because of their utter inability to get the mastery of sin, and as its penalty is a burden too grievous to bear.

But the verses under consideration demonstrate the fact—that acceptance of Christ does not liberate from *sin* in *this* life : it justifies the sinner, however, in the sight of God, ensures to him divine favor, and inspires him with the hope—that at the last he shall come forth from the ordeal as gold seven times purified. The great conflict between good and evil principles in the mind of the Christian, is here portrayed, and the description is made much more impressive by the use of the present tense, together with the first person which St. Paul often employed, not merely to give expression to his own experience, but that every one might become more acquainted with his own condition, better prepared to endure the hardships of the Christian warfare, and appreciate its triumphs.

The two antagonistic forces are first mentioned. On the one hand, there is the "*law spiritual*," that is, holy, just and good ; while on the other hand, there is *sin* to which the apostle acknowledges he is in subjection, using the very strong expression, "sold under sin." The effect of the encounter is given in verse 15 ; doing what he allows not approves not ; doing not what he would, but doing what he hates : and how precisely all this answers to the experience of every one who is striving to live above the world. For passion and appetite war against high resolve and desired purity of heart ; evil inclinations oppose themselves to good intentions ; the darkness of error obscures the light of

saving truth, and suggestions of the great adversary of souls impede the work of the Holy Spirit; so that life is one continued struggle to get farther away from self, and nearer to God, with whom is boundless sufficiency, therefore infinite rest, peace, love and happiness.

Even men of the world are much disturbed by the promptings of passion and prejudice, in opposition to the dictates of sound judgment; as it is expressed by Ovid, "Desire prompts to one thing, but my mind persuades to another: we see and approve the good, yet pursue the wrong." Such being so with the unregenerate, it is not strange that Christians should suffer from the same cause; for in both cases human nature is corrupt, and while men of the world have the voice only of the moral law to make a feeble remonstrance against their sinful desires, men of God have all the power both of the moral law and divine commandment to oppose their evil inclinations, and therefore the contest is severe and prolonged; for each must work out his own salvation with fear and trembling, though of course always encouraged by the precious truth—that it is God who worketh in them both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

In addition also to the unholy desires which day by day force their way into consciousness, previous habits of inclination, feeling and thought, continue to exert a debasing influence long after they have ceased to be regarded with favor. The reformed debauchee often sighs for the pleasures he has forever renounced; the convinced skeptic is often troubled with the doubts which once he cherished; and the infidel of former years is often tempted

amid the strange dispensations of providence, to say, "there is no God;" or if there be, He is so far removed from all the affairs of earth, as not to be concerned with human fortune and destiny. Yes, as some one has said; the very "passage of an impure thought through the mind leaves pollution behind it; where sin has been indulged it leaves its withering, desolating effect upon the converted soul, and produces that state of conflict, with which every Christian is familiar."

In the following eight verses two facts are set forth. First, St. Paul not only consents to, but delights in the law of God. Now there is no higher test of the regenerated heart than its delight, that is, its love for divine commandments; the ability to say with the Psalmist, "more to be desired are they than gold, yea than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." For though the Christian often wavers, and may even sin grievously in an unguarded moment when the power of temptation is very strong, yet, if he be able to say to God with sincerity: "Thou knowest that I love Thee," which indicates a love for God's commandments, he will not be cast away from the divine presence, nor deprived of the comfort of the Holy Spirit. What most concerns the great Searcher of hearts, is the heart itself; and therefore whoever loveth much, whose heart is all given to Christ, much is forgiven. Thus David, though guilty of some of the most inexcusable transgressions, was accepted of God because at all times he could say in truth, "with my whole heart have I sought Thee; O let me not wander from Thy com-

mandments.” “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee.”

Brethren, do any of you ever doubt your effectual calling? If so, let each ask himself this most important question. Do I delight in, do I love, do I cherish all the commandments of God? Then if the unmistakable response be given, “Yes, with all my heart, mind, soul and strength,” be not discouraged; for your doubt is not occasioned by the absence of the Spirit; the great Shepherd of the flock is still watching over your welfare; and rest assured He will never leave you nor forsake you, that in tempest and in sunshine, in life and in death, nothing will be able to separate you from His presence.

Secondly, the conclusion at which St. Paul arrives from a full consideration of his condition, was—that the sin he committed, would not be laid to his account; for his language is, “If I do that I would not, it is no more *I* that do it, but *sin* that dwelleth in me.” Mark you, however, my friends, the unconverted man has nothing to do with this conclusion. It does not justify him in his sins; it affords him no hope of safety; for he has not accepted the terms of salvation; he does not do what he would *not*, but what he would, and the wrath of God abideth on him. So then, no use is to be made of the Apostle’s declaration for the encouragement of sin. The effect of such presumption would only be to increase the condemnation of the soul, and destroy the hope of heaven. But what to the sinner is a savor of death unto death, to the Christian is a savor of life unto life; and in fact, owing to the impossibility of making the

inner and outer life perfectly conformable to the will of God, some assurance is actually needed, not of divine approbation, but divine pardon of sin, in order that the child of God may not be overwhelmed by despair. This assurance is afforded, and in no place so much as in this recital of St. Paul's experience.

What comfort, what encouragement, what strength is in the truth that the believer has nothing to fear from the past, present or future, whose record of sin the great and merciful God, rather the gracious and loving Father has blotted out from remembrance, and who at last in the presence of all angels and men, will acknowledge every faithful disciple as an heir and joint heir with Christ. But my friends, let it never, never be forgotten that only he who is earnestly and persistently striving to master self, to subdue the inclinations of his corrupt nature by a constant reliance upon divine strength and aid, is admitted into the number of the glorious redeemed; blameless because he has accepted Christ, and pure because to him the Spirit is sent to sanctify and seal unto the day of redemption.

In full reliance upon the great atonement St. Paul rejoiced in the testimony of a clear conscience; but to him it was a continual source of regret, that he should be compelled to struggle with sin; not that he ever feared defeat, but there was something so repulsive in its very presence after his acceptance of Christ whose every thought, desire, word and act mirrored the perfect sinlessness of his nature and life, that he longed to be altogether free from its influence. Accordingly, he exclaimed in verse

24th, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" a figure drawn from the practice of lashing dead bodies to captives taken in war, and which strikingly reveals the apostle's detestation of sin. The answer immediately comes, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." The phrase is elliptical, but the meaning is plain: the author of pardon is the author of perfect redemption, of sanctification. Jesus was his all in all, and the last clause of the verse indicates a spirit of resignation to his condition: for he knew full well that the time would soon come, when the earthly house of his tabernacle would be dissolved, and that then he would have a building of God, a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens, that he would soon be able to say, as did Luther many years afterwards on his death-bed, "Thank God! tempted no more."

Brethren, with earnest prayer to God for His help, let us do our utmost in the conflict with sin; let us fight the good fight of faith, and never despair, but patiently endure, knowing that *now* we are blameless through the precious blood of Christ, and that in the world *to come* we shall be perfectly pure in the atmosphere of His love. Among the last words of the grand old apostle were, "I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." God grant that they may also be ours!

JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER.

“And she said unto him, my father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the Lord hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, *even* of the children of Ammon.”—Judges, xi : 36.

The narrative of Jephthah's Daughter contained in the 11th chapter of Judges, has given rise to much controversy and difference of opinion. The majority of commentators have advocated the view—that the maiden was only kept in seclusion by her father, and in *that* way consecrated to the Lord; but in opposition to this—there have not been wanting distinguished thinkers who have maintained—that Jephthah offered up his daughter to the Lord in actual sacrifice upon the altar. The following statement is made by a modern writer, deserving of consideration: “That the daughter of Jephthah was really offered up to God in sacrifice—slain by the hand of her father and then burnt—is a horrible conclusion, but one which it seems impossible to avoid.”

Arguments may be adduced in support of either opinion, and the original text is capable of either interpretation; but it seems to us that the extreme view is correct; and the record of the period being one of cruelty and bloodshed, goes far toward its confirmation. Here in our own enlightened country—but a short time ago, a child was put to death by its father (a religious fanatic,) who supposed that he was doing the will of God: and is it therefore

strange that—in the age of Jephthah—a father should act in like manner, especially when human sacrifices were so common among the heathen, the influence of whose example upon the Israelites is so often denounced by the sacred authors? the fact—that St. Paul makes reference to Jephthah's *faith*—is no argument in refutation; for deficiency as to one quality of disposition is frequently accompanied by excellence as to others, and this is the case with many of the characters of the Bible. Whichever view is taken, however, the lesson of obedience, of submission, of resignation, to be drawn from the narrative, is the same.

Exiled from his father's house, deprived of his inheritance, and bearing the shame of a dishonorable birth, Jephthah led a daring life with the "vain men who went out with him. Robbery and pillage" were doubtless the occupation of the band he commanded, and it was thus he established a reputation, not for high courage displayed in noble conflict as in defense of freedom, but for that reckless hardihood devoted to conquest and destruction. Recorded in history, inscribed upon monuments, celebrated in song, how many names there are, whose success and renown have only been acquired by the homes they made desolate and the lives they sacrificed in forcing their way to power and possessions! The *world* is faithful to cherish the memories of its distinguished men; and it is peculiar but true—that moral and spiritual excellence does not command an equal consideration from *those*, to whom it should be a subject of care.

When the children of Ammon made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead desired Jephthah to re-

turn, and be commander of their army. He did not fail to remind them of the former treatment received at their hands ; saying, “ Did not ye hate me, and expel me out of my father’s house ? and why are ye come unto me now when ye are in distress ? ” and knowing his position of advantage, he only consented to return upon the condition that, if successful, he should continue to be their ruler. “ And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, if Thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord’s, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering.”

It is just as true that fortune is the architect of man, as that man is the architect of fortune. Times and occasions make men, that is, they reveal and develop the base or noble tendencies of character. Napoleon was the offspring of a people careless of freedom, because long accustomed to tyranny ; while Washington was none the less so of a nation, pledged to liberty or death. Catiline was the child of Rome in her hour of luxury and vice ; while Demosthenes was none the less so of Greece in the hour when the purity of her institutions and the liberties of her people were endangered by an ambitious King. Judas Iscariot embodied the degraded spirit of his age, when he sold his master for money ; while St. Paul—who counted “ all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ,” only gave expression to the holy zeal which early fired the Christian heart.

Now to the Hebrews the times of the Judges were times of peril and suffering. From the fact, that they had to a certain extent been dispossessed of their land by the Israelites, and that they regarded the chosen people with a deadly hatred engendered by a radical difference in religion, the surrounding nations were a constant source of danger and disquietude. They were always endeavoring to regain what they had lost, and if possible, to destroy a nation—the belief in whose God required the denial of their deities. Accordingly, it was a time when a spirit of patriotism—a love of home and zeal for the true God developed nobility of soul; a time when unselfishness and self-sacrifice brought their possessors prominently into view, made them a blessing to their generation, and gave their record to history for the encouragement and elevation of those to follow; a time when heroes and heroines lived, among whom there was none more attractive than Jephthah's daughter.

Jephthah put to flight the children of Ammon, and was now the acknowledged head of the people of Gilead. Soon after the battle his daughter had doubtless heard of his success. In all likelihood he had immediately sent her the glad tidings of his victory; for she was his only child, and perhaps the only being in the world whom he loved. As the days came and went during the interval before his return home, her heart was joyous with anticipations of the happy meeting: and in proportion as he had been dishonored and rejected by his countrymen, so was her pleasure in the knowledge of his now exalted position and extended influence. No more an exile; no more a fugitive with her father

from their own ; she would now command a respect and consideration not hitherto enjoyed ; she would now receive an homage due to the daughter of one who had saved his people : and if in her girlish imagination there were pictures of princely display and magnificence, she was not to be condemned ; for evil is to those who evil think, and the most resplendent surroundings are perfectly in keeping with humility of spirit, whose reward is the kingdom of heaven.

At last the triumphant procession appeared in the distance, headed by the victorious Jephthah, whose mighty valor had not only won for him the distinction of saving his country, but had also redeemed him from a condition of shame. His daughter lost no time in going forth to meet him, followed by her damsels with music of timbrel and merriment of dance. It was not a woman of the world, as Cleopatra, endeavoring by her seductive arts to subdue an ambitious conqueror, but a modest maiden, aglow with filial pride and love, advancing to greet her father whom God had preserved from danger and crowned with success. She thought no more of regal honors, no more of self, and the dream pictures faded from the canvas of imagination. She was conscious of but one thought, namely, that her father was safe and almost in reach of her caress. He would soon clasp her to his bosom, and her weary watching and waiting would yield to the joy of his presence.

They met ; but not as those who think to separate no more ; not as those whose earthly joy is complete ; for the shadow which rested upon the countenance of the father since he first beheld his

daughter coming to meet him, now saddened the countenance of the maiden. Did any foreboding of his intention creep into her mind? Was she strengthened to meet the shock by a kindly intimation from an unseen source? Perhaps in that moment divine mercy partly revealed to her what was to follow, that she might not be overwhelmed by the sudden revelation of the whole truth. Yet, as she heard the utterance of her father, which instead of a rapturous salutation, was the knell of a fearful death, her very soul must have grown sick with horror, and for the instant a cold tremor must have chilled the blood in her veins. "Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back."

Oh! cruel thoughtlessness of man, to which so much lovely innocence is sacrificed! not more so in the case of Herod's oath, than in that of Jephthah, who rashly made his vow regardless of how precious might be the offering which its fulfilment might demand. Why did he not know, that his only child would count his very steps on the homeward way? Why did he not know, that her heart was with him in his absence and that her eyes would early catch the sight of his advancing host? Why did he not know, that she would be the first to welcome his return? Strange perverseness, to forget in the hour of ambitious hopes the dearest object of affection! God said of Israel, "my people doth not consider." The same fault in Jephthah stained his hands with his own daughter's blood; it extinguished the single bright star in his household sky,

and darkened the remainder of his life with a sorrow language may not tell.

What did the daughter do in this hour of trial, brought upon her by him who should have been her shield from care? Did she violently protest against her father's purpose? or endeavor by flight to escape its consummation? If the answer were in the *affirmative*, it would not be contrary to duty and reason; for a sense of justice and the precepts of revelation concur in teaching, that an individual may rightfully guard his or her life under *all* circumstances, excepting when forfeited by the commission of crime. Cross-bearing is indeed commendable, because in that case the necessity for suffering arises from the constitution of things, and is in accordance with the Divine will; but innocence is under no obligation to suffer, when the necessity is occasioned by the whim of man. Nevertheless, self-sacrifice under such a provocation, may be a most beautiful exhibition of the Cross, if, not the cause of suffering, but the spirit with which it is endured, be taken into consideration.

In point of fact, not the feeblest remonstrance came from the lips of the maiden. That she was terribly shocked by the hideous enormity of her sentence, was true; but even a degree of weakness, which would not be unmanly in earth's mightiest warrior, did not appear. We marvel at the moral grandeur of her answer, and search in vain to find its equal in secular history. What Coriolanus said to his mother, "Thou hast saved Rome, but lost thy son," was certainly sublime; but that was forced from him by entreaty, and does not approach in sublimity the reply of Jephthah's daughter;

“My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth: forasmuch as the Lord hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the children of Ammon.” Truth is here found more wonderful than fiction. Reality here needs no adorning by imagination.

How perfect the obedience which is indicated by the above recorded words! It was the result, not of sudden impulse, but of long established principle, of a life accustomed to self-denial. The parent's wish had been a rule of thought and action for his daughter from her childhood. She had constantly endeavored to resign herself entirely to his direction. She had determined to obey at whatever cost it was required. And now, when she learned that a sacrifice was to be made, she did not ask as did Isaac; “where is the Lamb for a burnt offering?” but was ready to give her own life, if the vow made this demand. Submission, such as this, was to an earthly father, what Christ's “Not mine, but thy will be done,” was to the father in heaven: not the slavish surrender of all individuality: that would have been deserving of no commendation: it was conscientious obedience to a higher power, a submitting to the guidance of a judgment regarded as superior to one's own.

The reason for the maiden's ready submission to the will of her father, as given in her own language, was, “the Lord hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies.” The translation is, if *thine* be *joy*, *mine* may be *suffering*. The civilization, refinement and Christianity of the present age can cite no example superior to this. It was of this

unselfishness of soul that St. Paul wrote ; “ Love suffereth long and is kind : ” “ Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. ” Such purity and depth of devotion as shown in Jephthah’s daughter, did honor to human nature and foreshadowed the fulfilment of the law. It is difficult to understand, why Jephthah did not make an offering of himself, rather than stop the beating of a heart whose only desire was to minister to his pleasure. But *his* apparent want of feeling heightens the loveliness of *her* affection, and twines about her memory a brighter wreath of unfading flowers.

She made but one request, namely, for time to mourn that she could not be the possible ancestress of Messiah, a hope inexpressibly dear to every daughter of Israel. Thus was shown her faith in the promise of God, that Shiloh would come ; and accordingly, as love for her *earthly* father was the motive to her sacrifice, so love for her *heavenly* father strengthened her to meet the trial. “ And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her according to his vow. ” We are then told, that the daughters of Israel were accustomed to go yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah four days in a year. They delighted to pay their homage at a tomb so hallowed by self-denial, whose martyr was not a strong man, who fell upon a field of battle in the endeavor to destroy his fellow-men, but a gentle girl, who sought death for the sake of another in reliance upon God.

Deeds may be more expressive than language, and with more force and clearness the lofty, or de-

graded spirit may reveal itself in action. Job desired that his record should be inscribed upon the rock with a pen of iron, that future generations might know and respect his integrity of character; but there was no need of this in the case of Jephthah's daughter. We enjoy not the privilege to yearly visit her tomb, like the daughters of Israel: nor do we even know the place where her ashes were laid: but her conduct is honored, her worth is acknowledged, her memory is treasured; and what is of most importance, we are taught the useful lesson of endurance and submission. It is characteristic of the Bible—to so engage our interest while conveying instruction, that its teachings are impressed upon the attention; and this is especially true of the few verses, relating the circumstances under consideration.

It is indeed a pleasure to linger in contemplation of a character so lovely as Jephthah's daughter. We read her story with ever increasing interest: for as the mind apprehends the truth, the heart glows with that enthusiasm inspired by the portrayal of noble deeds. We advance from stage to stage toward the climax of the tragedy with mingled feelings of regret and admiration: regret, because the blight of a cursed death fell so early upon a beautiful life, and admiration, because the heroism displayed was equal to the occasion. Her passing away was a great loss to friends and all others who came within the circle of her personal influence; but regarded in another point of view, it was gain to humanity; for her example is testimony to the Cross; and forever enshrined in our memories and hearts, she marks for us the way from the Cross to

the Crown. Her place now is doubtless among those nearest the throne, who have been disciplined by the tempter's snares to be meet for the master's use, who have been wearied by the sorrows of earth to be enraptured by the joys of heaven.

RUTH.

“Orpah kissed her mother-law; but Ruth clave unto her.”
Ruth, i : 14.

THAT history is a mere narration of facts—is by no means the whole truth; and as is often the case, the half truth leads to injurious results. According to the above definition history is gossip on a large scale, for the entertainment of those who regard the disclosures of the village tattler, as restricted to too small an area, and concerned with persons of too little significance, to be deserving of attention. There is no underrating the value of a full acquaintance with the actions, the events and effects, presented by the past; but it is far more important to seek the discovery of the motives to actions, of the connections of events, and of the causes of effects: for this study, while imparting the highest species of knowledge, is a means of education to the intellectual, the moral and spiritual in man. The world is most in need, not of encyclopedias which thousand of libraries may furnish, but of intelligent, practical men: and no study is so well adapted, as *history*, to supply this want.

If what has been said be true, the historian is under no special obligation to give biographies of kings and queens. A knowledge of the immoralities, intrigues and tyrannies of royal families, is of no more benefit to the public, than like revelations of those less known to fame. Not only so, but in

any case, even for example, when a pure character, as Alfred or Victoria, occupies the throne, the constant confining of the attention to one class of individuals does not present that broad view into human nature, needful in shunning evil and pursuing the good; does not beget the liberal spirit which acknowledges the brotherhood of man; does not afford the enlightenment and discipline suited to the powers and capacities of the mind. The manners and customs of a nation, their ruling virtues and prevailing vices, their habits of life, and general condition as to the appreciation and observance of their duties to themselves, to others, and to God, are the subjects most worthy of the historian, and of most profit to his readers.

Despotism can find no place in a land, whose homes are blessed with intelligence and religion; while freedom cannot exist, where ignorance and idolatry prevail: and thus it is true—that as the *home*, so is the *state*. The germs implanted in the nursery and at the fireside, but into weal and woe in a country destiny, and the character of its families determines a nation's condition. Appreciating this fact, the sacred authors have given us narratives of a private domestic nature, in which nothing is said of the misconduct of kings, nothing of the deceits of statesmen, nothing of the chicanery of political combinations, nothing of the sacrifice of human lives at the shrine of ambition, nothing of the oppression of the many for the gratification of the few; and their great value consists in shedding light upon the *inner* life of the Jewish people, in disclosing the influences which deter-

mined the national character, in making known the causes of the nation's failures and triumphs.

The position of the book of Ruth in the canon, has never been called in question ; though the date of its production is unknown, and its authorship is a matter of conjecture. It is really an introduction to the historical books, inasmuch as it gives the ancestry of David ; and for the same reason (as Messiah was of the house of David) it may be regarded as a connecting link between the Old and New Testaments. No mention is made of war or any form of violence, and there is no allusion to the disturbing affairs of public life ; so that our conceptions of the excesses of the age, derived from the account of the Judges and the record of the Kings, are much relieved by its quiet pages, and we turn to the book of Ruth as to a place for rest and meditation. Ruth, gleaning in the fields and taking home her gatherings to Naomi in the evening, presents a contrast to the troubled lives of her descendants on the Jewish throne, which cannot fail to be impressive, as suggestive of the changes brought by change of fortune. Far better to remain in humble station, commanding the love and respect of the few ; if wealth and position are to bring oppositions to our fellow-men and greater sins against God.

Now true poetry is beauty, not the beauty which is seen and temporal, but that which is unseen and eternal ; the beauty of noble action, of elevated thought, of pure sentiment. Accordingly, mere rhyme or verse is incidental : it may or may not be present ; and the fact is, there is more unwritten poetry and a greater number of poems in prose language, than have ever been produced by those enjoy-

ing the reputation of poets. There is a higher charm than harmony of expression : there is an attractiveness of which none of the senses can take knowledge. It lies in worth of spirit and meaning, of character and aim ; to be sought below the surface, where the pearls are found which only the soul can discover and value.

This charm, this attractiveness distinguishes the book of Ruth. It appears in the writer, who tells his story without any attempt at embellishment by fancy, a temptation seldom resisted by the profane historian. It is seen in Naomi, who did not forget her God and country in a foreign land. It is observed in Boaz, whose honorable deportment toward his kinswoman should put to shame many modern representatives of domestic economy. And lastly, it shines in Ruth, to whom idols and kindred and native land were not as dear as the mother of her dead love, and Jehovah whom he had led her to reverence and obey. Character so engaging excite all the more interest, as existing in the rude warlike times of the Judges, when might made right, and brute force did not shrink from the destruction of innocence and virtue.

It may be said therefore, that the book of Ruth is a *poem*, in the reading of which the mind is not concerned to know whether the rules as regarding long and short syllables have been observed ; in which the cadence and versification demanded by art, are wanting : but this deficiency is more than supplied by the beautiful simplicity, the loving tenderness and devotional character of the narrative. It is not a grand epic from the cultured imagination, often wearisome from the uniting of

feebleness of execution with greatness of undertaking ; but a simple drama in real life, authenticated by inspiration, hallowed by the lapse of ages, and endeared to all by the spirit of home, sweet home, that gives to the composition its peculiar interest to the kind hearted and true.

The subject and language, the conception and development seem the products of nature ; that is, are without an appearance at effort, as if spontaneous in their origin. They come to us, not as though to plead for attention, but as a rich melody to take possession of the heart, as an entrancing landscape to which nothing can be added or taken away ; so that criticism is silent, and when the book is closed, the feeling that remains, is one of faith and peace. The Bible contains many examples of this peculiar style of composition ; and the only explanation is found in the fact, that " holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

The territory of Moab was at first of considerable extent ; it was much reduced, however, by the Amorites, who crossed the Jordan, subdued the land, and were still celebrating their triumph with Sihon their conquering king reigning in Heshbon, when the Israelites came from Egypt. Much of the rich, elevated country east of the Dead Sea, was thus lost to the Moabites, and they were compelled to take refuge south of the Arnon. The change was really an advantage ; for the kingdom was now more secure, so that the people were able to resist invasion ; and being settled in their habits, and of a peaceful disposition, they devoted themselves to their occupation as shepherds. Accordingly, the Moabites became very numerous, to a certain degree

civilized, and accumulated much wealth, as is evident from the enormous tribute paid to the Ten Tribes.

Here, by the green bank of some murmuring stream, on the sunny side of some vine-covered hill, or in the quiet recess of some lovely valley, as fancy may suggest, was the home of Ruth. We are not told whether it was a home of plenty or need. Fortune may have strewn her pathway with all that makes life agreeable and attractive; the privileges and comforts of riches may have been her's to enjoy; while on the other hand, it may have been, she experienced the hardships of want, compelled to glean in the fields, as was afterwards the case in Judea. In those early times, however, the presence or absence of wealth had little effect upon one's standing in the community. This was especially true in Israel, where the Mosaic law tended to fraternize the people; and even in other countries the same spirit generally prevailed, except in regard to freemen and slaves.

Nothing can be affirmed positively about the associations of the maiden's early life, excepting that her parents must have been of good moral worth; and though worshippers of Chemosh, were perhaps not altogether strangers to the claims of Jehovah. It is not possible that they were ignorant of their ancestors' escape from the destruction which overwhelmed the cities of the plain. The knowledge of so miraculous an event was preserved by tradition; and this fact, together with the proximity of a nation who served the true God, may have blended much truth with their idolatry. At all events, their daughter's marriage with an

Israelite, and subsequently the resolute determination to cast her lot with the people of God, are effects, for which a sufficient cause is not found in the circumstances of the time.

The instructive, solemnizing influences of the surrounding mountains and of the Dead Sea, had doubtless a share in the formation of Ruth's character. They must have made her thoughtful and earnest, if not with perfect conceptions of duty. at least with some impressions of the responsibilities of life; if not with genuine convictions of religion, at least with some knowledge of her obligations to a supreme being. It is thus that the finest habits of thought and the noblest qualities of disposition are acquired independently of books, of home-training, of social relations, and of prescribed formulas in Ethics and Theology. An inward illumination and a capacity to profit by the teachings of nature, have been special gifts to many in heathen darkness; as if it were determined that divine manifestations should not be confined to those blest with revelation. Accordingly, the prayer of Milton for celestial light to shine inward, and the mind, through all her powers irradiate, has often been answered, where the petition has been one to the unknown God.

So Ruth grew to womanhood; not with the symmetry of nature and life which a systematic education in what is true and good would effect; not with the high endeavor and the patient spirit which a practical acquaintance with religion would secure; but with tendencies to progress unfrequent in more favorable surroundings, and needing only an occasion for development into forms of loveliness. This

occasion was in a measure supplied by her marriage with Mahlon, who with his parents and brother went to Moab to escape the famine in Canaan. Ten years of wedded life with one of God's people, did not fail to improve her spiritual condition; for often she must have been impressed with the truth, that the great Jehovah was a covenanting God, whose promise was not only to Abraham, but also to his household, and to his seed after him.

The death angel's visit decided the destiny of the Moabitess forever. He who had won her heart, who had given a meaning to her life, who had directed her thoughts heavenward, died, but with faith in the coming Messiah; so that with disturbing sorrow, came peaceful hope, whose theme was of a day when the divided should meet again in the ecstasy of immortality. Hence there was grief, but not the anguish of despair; for she realized that "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away," and that the whole duty of man is to "Fear God and to keep His commandments." Suffering is a teacher whose lessons are hard to learn; the soul labor required is beyond estimate; yet when once learned, they are seldom forgot, and are of far more service than all the science and philosophy the world has ever known.

Now, after the loss of her husband and two sons, Naomi resolved to return to her native land: "For she had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread. Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah." When they had proceeded some dis-

tance, Orpah yielded to persuasion and “kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clave unto her.” Naomi said, behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people and her gods; return thou after thy sister-in-law. Then came from the lips of Ruth that declaration which for touching eloquence and beauty, for intensity of love and devotion, has never been excelled: “entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.”

This was the important epoch in the life of Ruth; the time when she was weighed in the balance, and happily for her, not found wanting. She was brave and resolute and strong enough to give up all things for God, even the example of her sister being without effect upon her choice of the right. For years it had been evident how the battle would go. Step after step had been taken, and now the summit of victory was reached. A heroine she proved to be in the hour of the greatest trial; and nothing can be said against her conduct toward Boaz; for it was in perfect keeping with the usages of the times, and reflected only credit upon all concerned.

And now, “If posthumous fame be of any worth, who would not be Ruth, in the memory and admiration of the world, rather than Orpah;—Ruth, parent of Israel’s sweetest singer and most illustrious king;—Ruth, parent of the Messiah;—Ruth, whose simple story sinks in sweetness into millions

of hearts in every age, and moves to deeds of gentle virtue and religion ;—Ruth, rather than Orpah, whose only history is, that she went back unto her people and her gods? ”

“ I cannot promise you, that making the choice of Ruth, you shall receive an equal share with her of this world’s renown ; but I can promise that you shall receive a portion of everlasting good, of which her reward on earth is but a feeble type. Hear the words of the blessed Saviour, and let them stimulate you to every sacrifice necessary in his glorious servicè,—hear the words of Him who was the truth itself, and in whom all the promises of God are Yea and Amen: Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel’s, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions, and in the world to come, eternal life.”

NO SEA IN HEAVEN.

“There was no more Sea.”—Revelation, xxi: 1.

HAVE you ever stood by the sea? have you ever had the sense of being lost in the contemplation of its wonders? have you ever seen, and heard, and realized what it has to reveal? if so, you have been admitted to one of the grandest privileges known to the lovers of nature. It seems impossible that even the careless should pass by the sea uninfluenced: there is so much to engage the attention; so much to compel interest; a very spell, a fascination in its presence. To the thoughtful it is most impressive; unfolding to consciousness mysteries of thought and sentiment that banish the common things of life; that produce an experience beyond language to define; that give, as it were, a new being, with other motives, other powers, other ambitions. These impressions come again when the sea is far away, as we fancy that the night heavens of the Orient recur to the traveller, who has once enjoyed their sublime magnificence; as the splendors of royalty haunt the mind of an exiled Napoleon; as the awful meeting of contending armies is recalled by the old veteran, when the war has long been over, and he is resting with his little ones about him in his peaceful home.

The sky, the forests, the mountains, all have attractions peculiar to themselves; and so has the sea. Behold the giant waves, crimsoned with sunbeams! or silvered by the light of the moon! how

majestically they rise and fall! Now raging under the lash of the storm demon, now moving in calm with long measured roll, they seem impatient of restraint, as if possessed by a spirit of life; as if some mighty force were rocking the cradle of the deep. Hear the rush of waters, the waves struggling and dying on the sands, the deep thunder of the breakers on the shore! and strangely with the deafening tumult mingle the wild shriek of the seagull and the soft note of the curlew. For miles inland upon the hush of night comes the monotone of the ocean. It is as the sound of a distant, heavy-rolling train. It is an unbroken anthem of praise to the great Creator. The beach is strewn with shells of every size, and shape, and color. Have you never kneeled upon the hard, white sand to gather these bright offerings washed up by the surf? and when a larger one was found, have listened with a child's delight to the whisper of some far off sea, laving the shores of some distant isle, or continent? These shells are nature's beautiful playthings, adorning the frame-work, in which she has placed the master-piece of her art. What a setting! what a picture! commanding the admiration not only of earth, for the hosts of heaven delight to mirror themselves in the boundless, blue expanse.

Amid this variety of sight and sound imagination cannot be restrained; we therefore go abroad upon the wide, desert waste, where footprints are never left; where in every direction sky and water bound the horizon; where the elements, regardless of human gain or loss, madly contend for mastery. We are driven by terrible gales, and move gently

before mild zephyrs. We visit Arctic continents, where man can scarcely exist, where eternal ice and snow tolerate few things of life; and we stop at tropic isles, where the air is laden with the odor of spice and the perfume of flowers, where birds have the richest plumage, and ever lingering summer is lavish with luxuriant fruit. We pass by dangerous cliffs, where the waters dash fiercely against hidden rocks, where many a strong bark has met its doom; and we draw near river, and bay indented coasts, where fertile soil and pleasant climate invite habitation and commerce. We behold the kingdoms and empires which line the shores of the great sea. Here, where civilization and Christianity make men free. Here, where ignorance and idolatry make men slaves. Here, where avarice and ambition make men to forget that they are one father's children. And we cannot but call to mind Assyria, Greece, Rome, and all those mighty nations where wealth, dominion and a brilliant culture were once known, but have long since passed away.

Nay more, we descend into the deep, the dark, the unknown, the mysterious abyss dividing continents, the old, from the new world, monarchies whose days are numbered, from our own glorious republic destined to exert the most powerful influence in giving freedom and the religion of Christ to all mankind. *Here* we discover countless wrecks of human hopes and fortunes, gems and treasures of priceless value, myriad forms of animal, vegetable and mineral production, mountains, planes, valleys, rocks, caves, currents, and profound depths reaching down we know not how near earth's centre. Then, as with one tremendous effort, we en-

deavor to conceive of the length, and breadth, and depth, and magnitude of the ocean, we are lost; infinitude seems to open up before us; and in our weakness we can only exclaim, O sea! Not only man, but thou also art wonderfully and fearfully made.

It is thus evident, that the sea is not the source of a perfect joy. Far from it! It has features, occasions and associations which are productive of sadness and suffering. Has it beautiful shells and pearls? It has also loathesome weeds and reptiles. Has it fairy isles and safe harbors? It has also dangerous Scylla and Charybdis. Has it warm streams, that moderate climate and contribute to human comfort? It has also floating fields and mountains of ice, which are a terror to man. Do its waves appear fair and bright in the sunshine? When clouds gather and the wind spirit goes abroad, they are terrible to look upon. Is there majestic music in the roar of the surf? to the mariner whose vessel driven from its course, is hurrying toward the breakers, it is a knell of death. Does it bring to us the treasures of India and other lands? alas! it sometimes bears away dear treasures of our hearts, and returns them no more. Hence, as we learn from our text, there will be no sea in heaven: for "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

At the centres of the old civilizations there is much to testify to the perfection attained in art many centuries ago. Wonderful productions of the

ancient engraver, painter, sculptor and architect, in whole or in part, still remain ; and such as the catacombs at Rome, or the pyramids of Egypt will in all likelihood continue, until time shall be no more. There are the ruins of ancient cities, and cities now in the zenith of prosperity, renowned battle fields, vast libraries containing curious manuscripts and archives of the past, other peoples, other manners, other customs, other conditions of society, and a thousand objects in art and nature, inviting study and admiration. We hear and read about them ; we meditate upon their attractions ; but the most of us do not enjoy the privilege of being present with them, do not derive the pleasure and instruction of actual perception : for between *here* and *there* a great gulf is fixed, and from one cause and another, the majority of men do not cross the sea.

Many, some of you perhaps, have friends or relatives in foreign lands. There are vacancies at the table, at the fire-side, at the family altar, in the church, in the counting room, in the social circle. The absent cannot reach home in a few hours ; they are far away on other shores ; the ocean rolls between, and they can only return by being for days and nights upon the deep. As God said to the sea, so the sea says to man, " thus far shalt thou come, but no farther." Accordingly, lives and hearts and interests that should be united, are divided ; and thus the sea brings *separation*. Separation, that is, absence from loved ones ; therefore, dreary solitude perhaps in the midst of many ; therefore, a painful sense of need perhaps in the midst of abundance ; therefore, wretched discontent perhaps in

the midst of what would otherwise ensure happiness.

But the distance which here on earth divides those near and dear to each other, making months of weeks and years of months, causing eager watching and longing, keeping a sigh in the heart, in heaven will not prevent communion. There, mere space will not separate spirit from spirit. Moreover, the *selfishness* which often puts men far asunder, restraining the noble impulses of their natures, and making them regardless of the claims of those about them, there, will not be known. Men will still be themselves, but without ambitious schemes of their own to bring regret to a brother's experience. The truth, that the highest pleasure is secured by ministering to the pleasure of others, will then be fully recognized and made the governing principle of life. Moreover, the *misunderstandings* which here often divide men, making foes of friends, wrenching apart in anger those at peace, destroying mutual respect and confidence and love, there, will not occur. All the members of Christ's body will then acknowledge their dependence upon one another. Then also, poverty, necessity for toil, mortality, and all such evils which here occasion so many partings, here cause so many farewells, here erect so many barriers, here divide so many united lives, there, will not be permitted to enter.

Redeemed by the same precious blood, made holy by the same divine spirit, singing the same songs of praise, heirs of the same inheritance, united in Christ, the pure in heart will be in sweet companionship forever. There, vows will be uttered to be kept. There, pledges will be given ensuring death-

less constancy. There, circles will be made complete, to be broken never again ; and a universal sunshine of undivided love will prevail throughout a nightless eternity. No sea in heaven ; therefore, no *separation*.

But again. A storm is upon the deep. Wild and fierce and grand is the rush of the waves, hurrying over and under and by each other in ceaseless succession. The vast surface is marked with heights and depths, ever losing themselves in each other only to appear again. The waters seethe, and whirl and foam, as if frenzied by the storm, as if under the power of volcanic influence. Now it is calm ; yet, though not so tumultuous, or rapid, or varied as before, the waves are still in motion. They *cannot* rest. Old ocean seems to have within it a great heart, whose throblings are seen in its ever heaving bosom. Then, there is the tide, with its continuous flood and ebb ; ever coming and going with a regularity equal to that of day and night. In other words, never since God gave it a place, has the sea been in perfect repose ; and thus it is suggestive of *restlessness*, *discontent* from a constant desire for change.

What a forcible reminder is this of life's ocean ! where perfect rest is never known, either in fortune's storms or calms. Whether driven before the ruthless blast, or sailing under sunny skies, man is not content. Upon the tide of events men fare very differently. *This* one seems to be making but little headway ; while *that* one is moving smoothly on. *One* is said to be a *failure*, the *other* a *success* : and I admit, that as far as mere material gain and loss are concerned, the difference between them may

be great; but as regards contentment, they are very much in the same condition. The peasant in his hovel desires a kingdom, and the king upon his throne sighs for a world. O mariners on the sea of life, seeking rest but finding none; make your reckoning with a view to eternity; take the Bible as your chart; hold your course straight for the Star of Bethlehem; and in the fiercest storm, through the darkest night keep a brave heart, relying upon God: and though the voyage be long, and wearying, and beset with difficulties and trials, peace will be reached at last. At last,

“ When the Pilot of Galilee seen on the strand,
Stretches over the waters a welcoming hand.
When heeding no longer the sea’s baffled roar,
The mariner turns to his rest evermore.”

There will be noble strivings in heaven. The spirits of just men made perfect, will vie with each other in obedience, love and consecration to Him who loved them; who washed them from their sins in His own precious blood; who made them Kings and Priests unto God. The law of progress will demand ambition, increase, change: ambition to be holy, as God is holy; increase in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ; and change by advancing in the divine image: but there will be no sea in heaven; that is, no *restlessness*. no *discontent* with what you are, and have. For earth, with all its petty cares, its fevered dreams, its nameless longings, its unsatisfying pleasures, will have passed away; the realties of the life in God, will bring to the troubled heart profound calm; the Prince of peace will give His own peace to the

weary soul, and not a wave of care will ever disturb the deep serenity of that life in the bright Forever.

But again. It is a glorious pleasure—to be out upon the waters, with your boat dashing through the waves before a freshening breeze in the bright sunshine. It is freedom ; it is expansion ; it is exultation to those, who have a soul for its enjoyment, and to natures, not timid nor dull, there is ineffable grandeur in a storm at sea, when sky and water seem endeavoring to meet in fierce combat. But with all this, there is a consciousness of danger ; for the sea is so broad and deep ; it has ever been so merciless to man and his interests ; it has so frequently occasioned ruin, desolation, despair ; it has swallowed up so *many*, and so *much*. Fortunes and lives go out upon the ocean : traffic and travel move toward every shore : yet, there is always a feeling of uncertainty. Those, who have their bread upon the waters, are fearful, lest it will not return, even after many days : and those, who have loved ones upon the deep, shudder, as they think of what may be their awful fate.

Accordingly, as we stand upon the shore, contemplating the unstable waves, listening to the roar of the billows, and permitting fancy to enter the vast chasm before us, there is an experience of unrest. Why—see yon vessel, with her white wings spread to the wind, and sweeping on like a thing of life ! We cannot but ask ourselves the question, will she reach her place of destination, and take joy and gladness to those who wait her coming ? or, will she go down, as thousands of others have gone down into the *cruel, hungry foam*, and leave

hearts to ache and break over her loss? we do not know, only He, who made the sea and all that is therein, can tell. For the use of man, yet beyond his control; adding much to pleasure, yet also much to sorrow; mysterious, immeasurable, terrible, destroying, sublime, the sea is thus the occasion of *fear*.

Now in human affairs the *possible*, more than the actual, is the cause of distress. Life's fabric takes its sombre colors, more from what may be than what is. In other words, *fear* is the main, disturbing element to human peace: but in heaven there will be nothing of this. There, doubt, uncertainty, danger, and threatenings of misfortune will have no place. We shall know, even as we are known; we shall love, even as we are loved: and perfect knowledge and perfect love will cast out all fear. O the trust and confidence and security that will be the heritage of God's children, when gathered home; when folded at last in the Father's embrace! No sea in heaven; that is, no *fear*.

But once more. War, disease and old age are ever mowing down the children of men; and not far behind these in the work of destruction, is the *sea*. Every precaution is taken to guard against the dangers of the ocean. There are beacons, that flash their light far out upon the waters, to warn against rocks and shoals, and to direct the mariner on his course. There is the compass, to track the way from shore to shore. In order to resist the wind and waves, steamers and vessels are made heavy and strong. Schools are established for the training of those, who are to have them in charge: and

laws are enacted, to secure proper management, and to enforce the requisite discipline. Yet, notwithstanding all this, it is fearful to contemplate the vast numbers, who are continually falling victims to the sea. By fire, by wreck, and by imperfections of human workmanship thousands upon thousand, find a watery grave. Their flesh becomes food for the monsters of the deep; and their bones drift with the tide, or washed up by the surf, lie ghastly and white on the burning sands.

The wharf is crowded with the friends of those about to sail for the other continent: and, as the poet describes the scene at Belgium's capital on the night of Waterloo;

“There was hurrying to and fro,
 And gathering tears, and tremblings of distress,
 And cheeks all pale,” * * * * “and choking sighs;”
 “And there were sudden partings, such as press
 The life from out young hearts.” * * * *

Earnest wishes are expressed for a happy and prosperous voyage; hands are clasped; lips meet, and long farewells are taken. The gallant ship moves away from her moorings, and the parting salute of a deep-mouthed gun booms across the water; but, as its echo dies away, there comes to the heart a strange, wild dread. In a short time the news came, that the Ville du Havre had been struck by a passing bark in mid ocean, and that with hundreds of precious lives, had gone down beneath the waves. We became acquainted with, and learned to love a noble, Christian man who crossed the sea in the cause of God; who endeared himself to many here in America; and who on his way back to his native

Switzerland, perished in that terrible wreck. We have often thought of him, as he awoke from slumber, only to feel that he was going down, down, and that the great ocean was closing above him. We rejoice, however, that only his body went down; for we know that his spirit went above. And thus the sea brings to us *death*.

But is it not written, that "the sea shall give up the dead that are in it, and that Death and Hell shall be cast into the lake of fire?" In heaven therefore, the daughters of music will not be brought low: nor desire fail because man goeth to his long home: nor mourners go about the streets: nor the silver cord be loosed: nor the golden bowl be broken: nor the pitcher broken at the fountain: nor the wheel broken at the cistern. There, there will be no gathering of friends at the bed-side, to be crushed with anguish at the departure of one beloved: no struggling for breath, then a marble coldness: no damp wiped from the brow; no eyes closed by the hands of another. There will be no tolling of bells; no procession in black; no speaking of the words, "dust to dust." There will be no turning away, to leave a father, a mother, a brother, a sister, a husband, a wife, a child, or a dear friend to solitude and night; no going back to the house with the awful feeling, that we have no more a home; no strewing of flowers on fresh, green mounds. Thank God! there will be no church-yards in heaven. No *sea* in heaven; that is, no *death*.

Now we love the grand, mysterious ocean. It is ever in our hearts to sing. "O give me a home by the sea!" "There is a rapture on the lonely

shore." "It is a mingling with the universe." Such are Byron's exclamations. And to us it seems not strange, that Ulysses was compelled to have himself lashed to his vessel's mast, in order to resist the spell of its siren song: but O how much sorrow has it brought to earth! For many a fond mother has grown weary with watching, and has lain down to her long rest, waiting in vain for her darling boy who years ago kissed her good-bye, and went out upon the fierce ocean.

"The sea, the blue, lone sea hath one;
He lies where pearls lie deep.
He was the loved of all, but none
O'er his low bed may weep."

And many a sad one by her lone rock by the sea, has watched, and prayed, and shed bitter tears upon the heartless waves at her feet, but will never again greet her rover's "swift sail home" "I will be back before you know it, Annie," said Enoch Arden. He pressed her to his bosom, then his little Annie, and went away. She watched his sail, growing less and less in the distance, till it faded out of sight; and then waited many weary years: and though the sea at last did bring him back, it had kept him too long; and she never saw him again. Accordingly, we delight to think of heaven, as a *sealess* world: all *separation, restlessness, fear, and death*, gone forever: sweet companionship, peace, hope, and life, eternally continuing far beyond the reach of every destructive influence. And all this because of Him, whom the sea obeyed; who said to the sea, peace, be still; and there was a great calm.

Jesus brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. He has gone to prepare a place, to make ready the many mansions, that where He is, His disciples may be also. Yes, to *Jesus*, and *Jesus* only do we owe our sweet hope of heaven. *Heaven*, that golden clime far beyond life's troubled ocean! *Heaven*, on whose blissful shores no waves ever break! *Heaven*, that land of love and loveliness! *Heaven*, that paradise home, where the pure in heart are joined forever! You and I have loved ones already there. We parted from them, as from our very life. The world has never seemed so fair and bright since they went away. Are we seeking for re-union in that better country? Let us then be sure to take the homeward way. Let us run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. Let us fight the good fight of faith, and sing the victor's song. Let us go forth, and accomplish the voyage, marked out for us on the sea of life: not as the disciple who began to sink because of unbelief; but with unwavering trust in God, that He will not let the waves and the billows go over us; that He will direct our course aright; that He will be our guide and refuge to the last: and O be assured, He will then receive us to that haven of rest, where the sorrows of the sea are no more.