

THE HOMILETIC REVIEW.

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REVIEW SECTION.

I.—CHRIST'S VIEW OF THE DIVINE FATHERHOOD.

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OLD TESTAMENT.

THE doctrine of the Fatherhood of God is, it may perhaps be said, the popular doctrine of the day. It is proclaimed by almost all schools of theology. It is sometimes declared to be virtually a new discovery of the last half century. It is set over against previous doctrinal systems as being so different as to constitute a revolution in religious thought. Especially is it contrasted with the Calvinistic tenet of the sovereignty of God, according to which God is to be regarded primarily as Creator and Ruler, rather than as Father and Friend.

The doctrine of the divine Fatherhood is a true and wholesome one. It is well to emphasize, more than was formerly done, the genuine personality and love of God. Many theologians of the past have been so jealous of the immutability of God that they made Him practically incapable of real feeling; and tho they could not be so untrue to the Bible as to deny the reality of God's love, yet their conception of it was so dominated by that of His immutable justice that the love came to occupy a limited place, and indeed was often so conceived that it was divested of practical power.

Let, then, the doctrine of God's Fatherhood be welcomed, defended, and enforced. But let it be also carefully and wisely defined. There is danger, in reacting from one extreme, of going over to the opposite extreme. The paternal love may be so conceived as to leave no room for sovereignty and justice. Sin may indeed be made to seem all the more exceeding sinful when it assumes the character of indifference or defiance toward the yearning love of the heavenly Father; but while it is this, it is also transgression of divine *law*. God in being a

NOTE.—This periodical adopts the Orthography of the following Rule, recommended by the joint action of the American Philological Association and the Philological Society of England:—Change *d* or *ed* final to *t* when so pronounced, except when the *e* affects a preceding sound.—PUBLISHERS.

SERMONIC SECTION.

REPRESENTATIVE SERMONS.

THE TEST OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH.*

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And Abraham said: My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering!—Genesis xxii. 8.

THE pathos of these words should melt even a heart of stone. From the promise of Isaac's birth, the venerable patriarch had waited through five-and-twenty years before its accomplishment. And for twenty or twenty-five years more, after Isaac had grown from infancy into the strength and pride of his early manhood, Abraham is called to find all these hopes, cherished through half a century, dashed to the ground. It was in that seed of the Covenant that all the nations of the earth were to be blest. But how shall this be accomplished when Isaac is dead? Now the dread command falls upon his ear: "Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah and offer him there for a burnt-offering, upon one of the mountains which I shall tell thee of."

Fathers and brethren of the assembly, and Christian friends of this large audience, place your soul in his soul's stead. What a dark night was that on which Abraham slept by the side of his beloved Sarah! Shall he tell her of the dreadful secret? And how fearful the necessity which compels him to hide it in his own bosom! But early in the morning Abraham rises, cleaves the wood for the sacrifice, brings his servants together, with his son, and they prepare for the distant journey.

During those three long days as they past toward Mount Moriah, what thoughts must have agitated the heart of this venerable servant of God! "What can it mean? Has God through all these years strained my faith while I have waited for the fulfilment of the great prediction? Now must all these hopes expire in the despair and gloom of this tragic event? What can it mean? Jehovah, who has been so angry with all these idolaters of Canaan, as finally to drive them from their heritage in order that it may be given to His church, especially grieved and angry because they presented their sons through the fire to Moloch, and shall Jehovah now justify human sacrifice when this Isaac, the only son of my love, is laid upon the altar?"

His faith staggered not, for, as we are told in the Epistle to the Hebrews, he believed that God "was able to raise him up even from the dead; whence also he received him in a figure." But, brethren, God's way with His children is to lay all that it can bear upon their faith, and Abraham's faith must not be spared the strain until it comes to its final test. On the morning of the third day he lifted his eyes, and there before him rises the solemn mount of sacrifice. And as they approach beneath its shadow, leaving the servants behind, the two, one bearing the wood upon his shoulder, eminent type of Him who was to suffer for the sins of men bearing His cross upon His own shoulder—and the father bearing in his hand the fire and the knife. As they draw near beneath the shadow of that awful mount, the son pierces the heart of his father with the question: "Behold the wood and the fire, but where is the lamb for the burnt-offering?" Now the faith of Abraham comes forth: "My son, God will himself provide a lamb for a burnt-offering."

* Communion sermon at the First Presbyterian Church, New Orleans, La., during the meeting of the Presbyterian General Assembly, Wednesday evening, May 25, 1898.

And then the altar is built, and the wood placed upon it, and the unresisting Isaac, in the strength of his early manhood, able to cope with his aged father in the wrestle for life, representing Him who was willing to bear our sins and carry our griefs, thus filling up the entire picture of the type, is laid upon the wood, and the sacrificial knife in that father's hand gleams in the sunshine over his head. When that faith had reached its last strain, there came a voice from the skies, saying: "Lay not thy hand upon the lad, for now I know thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me." And Abraham, turning around naturally to catch the voice, sees caught in the thicket behind him the ram which comes in the place of the martyred Isaac, and is slain upon that altar.

Ye ministers of God's holy word, who have with me these many years been living among the blest symbols of the Old Testament, are you not able to interpret it? How comes it to pass that the simple sacrifice offered immediately after the first sin in the Garden of Eden, in the offering of Abel as over against the naturalistic worship of Cain, presents at the very beginning of the world the two antagonistic religions which are in conflict to-day—Deism and Christianity? The religion which will exhibit God as the Creator and the Benefactor, but will not recognize Him in His awful holiness frowning upon sin, and in His infinite mercy providing a redemption?

And now for 1,500 years that simple sacrifice flows down the centuries until you reach the flood and the second renewal of God's grace with Noah, when he builds his altar coming forth from the ark. Then for 400 years still remaining the simple aboriginal sacrifice, until you come to Abraham and the promise of the seed in which God shall create His visible church upon the earth. And now for 500 years more that earliest sacrifice of Abel, and afterward of Noah, and still later of

Abraham, widens out into the grand sacrificial ritual given upon the Mount to Moses. Right between them all and in the bosom of them all comes the interpretation of the whole Mosaic economy, in the knife that shall take the life of a human son by the hand of a human father, arrested only to introduce that animal sacrifice through which God must still be worshipt, until the great prophetic day shall come when the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world shall appear to take away the sins of men. How blessed the truth that here, in this connection of the sacrifice of Isaac with that ram caught in the thicket, 500 years before the Mosaic economy, is established in the wilderness the interpretation of the whole Mosaic symbols, which shall have had their completer solution in the revelation of Jesus Christ in the writings of the New Testament!

And so we learn that this reply which Abraham makes to his anxious son, "God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering," is the eminent prediction of that Lamb which should come from the Father's bosom in the heavenly glory to bear the weight of that Father's displeasure against sin, and through His human suffering to work out the redemption of the lost world.

We are now prepared to see how it is that God alone can provide Himself a lamb for a burnt-offering; and it is to answer that question that I solicit your attention to-night.

I. Evidently, and first of all, it is only God who can determine whether a sinner who has broken His law can possibly be redeemed; whether it is possible for a righteousness which shall cover his sin to be provided; upon what terms redemption shall be accomplished; and whether it is possible that man can be saved through a vicarious righteousness—the righteousness of another.

All the antecedents and precedents in the covenant of the Most High are

against it. Sin did not begin in this wretched world of ours. It made its appearance first in the very presence of the throne, when the angels, the elder sons of God, rose some of them in revolt against the divine authority, and were cast, as Jude tells us, from their high places, and are reserved in chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. There the precedent was that law must be vindicated in the infliction of the penalty. Justice must draw her awful sword, and those that have resisted her authority and sinned against the holiness of the law must perish. Now in the face of this precedent how is man to know whether he can be saved, who has sinned after the similitude of the same transgression? And so God alone must provide the lamb for a burnt-offering, since God alone can determine what that law requires which flows from His own nature, and which has been twice outraged in the disobedience and fall of two separate races in His vast empire.

II. Then granting that that difficulty is solved, and we ascertain that it is possible under covenant of an unchangeable law that a sinner can be redeemed, the question recurs a second time, Where shall that Redeemer be found?

Who in all the universe is able to take the sinner's place and bow his soul under the penalty of the law which has been broken? Bring all the angels, cherubim and seraphim, in an assembled senate, and lay the problem before them; where in all their ranks shall the creature be found who can become the substitute for him who has transgressed the perfect law of God? Not one created moral being, however exalted in intelligence and power, can undertake the mighty task. Neither can angel nor archangel, neither cherubim nor seraphim, nor any of the powers that worship around the throne of the Most High, answer the challenge which goes forth, "Whom shall I send, and who shall go for Me?" No creature can undertake the responsibility of redeeming a sinner, because no crea-

ture has power over his own life to dispose of it at his own will. Life is given to the creature as a solemn trust. It must be held immediately from the hand of Him that bestowed it; and only as He that breathed the life into the creature shall call for its surrender, can any creature undertake to dispose of that life which is not his except to use for the glory and honor of his Maker. Hence you remember that language of our Lord when He said: "I have power to lay down my life. I have power to take it up again, and this commandment have I received of my Father." "Full authority from Him who is supreme in the administration of law, to take that life which is created to be used for this purpose, and lay it down; for I have power as Mediator to lay it down, and I have power as Mediator to take it up again."

No creature can possibly become the substitute for the transgressor of the law, because every created moral being owes obedience for himself, and for himself alone. And he owes obedience to the law under which he lives to the full measure or extent of all the powers with which he is endowed. There is no surplussage whatever in the obedience of any creature, either in the heaven or the earth beneath. Every creature of God, possessing intelligence and placed under the jurisdiction of law, must cover that law with his own obedience; and it can not be transferred to another, simply because the law claims it immediately from himself as that which is eminently due. No mere creature can ever undertake to become the substitute of a sinner, because no creature can, in the exercise of his own will, lawfully assume any guilt and bring himself under condemnation of law. He is bound under law to be holy and unblamable in his character and conduct. He can not, therefore, consent to come under the discipline of the king, who in the exercise of administrative justice must inflict upon him as guilty under the law the penalty he has incurred.

You perceive from the very nature of the case that you may search the universe throughout, take the census of all these worlds which shine as glittering stars in the firmament of heaven, and if they be inhabited by intelligent races, yet being creatures, not one of them all, nor all of them combined, can furnish a being competent to take your place or mine under the law, and endure the penalty on our behalf. What remains? When the question goes forth, "Whom shall I send, and who shall go for me?" there can come no answer to that solemn challenge except from Him who sits upon the middle throne of the Eternal Three. Only in the Godhead Himself can there be found the being capable of rendering obedience unto death for a sinner that is condemned. And only God, who alone knows what the relations are subsisting between the persons of the Godhead, can know upon which of the three must fall this solemn trust, undertaking for a lost race and providing redemption for the same.

III. But another difficulty emerges. The Son of God, the only-begotten Son, who had been His Father's delight through all past eternity, can not die. How can He who is Himself the source of the very law which He must obey;—for need I take the time to say that the law springs right out from the nature of God, and is what it is because God is the Being that He is: not merely dependent upon the exercise of will which might be supposed to be arbitrary, but upon that which lies back of the will in the very character and attributes and nature of the Godhead;—how can the Son, springing from the bosom of the Father, recognizing the law as emanating from Himself and springing out of His own attributes and reflecting His own perfect holiness, come in His divine nature under that law to suffer the penalty?

Nay, more. It was man that had sinned, and the Redeemer must belong to the race of the transgressor. Now the difficulty arises, how shall

the Son of God become man? Shall God create this substitute, as in the first instance He created Adam, from the dust of the earth? That would never have made Him a member of the race. He could not, by a separate act, have become bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, our elder brother, having thereby the right, by His birth, to mediate for us and undertake our cause. And so the great mystery of Godliness rises before you, God manifest in the flesh. How shall the Incarnation be accomplished so that this Son of God, who alone has that infinite power which will enable Him to sustain this law which has been broken, be yet man, so that as man He can stand for man, and bear man's responsibility and assume man's obligations, and discharge them all in the sight of law?

Brethren, let us pause, and in solemn devotion prostrate ourselves before the dread yet blessed mystery. The angel, speaking to Mary, says: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee. The power of the Highest shall overshadow thee, therefore that holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Adorable mystery! A divine Redeemer becoming man through a human maternity, and yet by a divine paternity. A member of the race by being born of it; the woman's seed as promist of God in His first revelation of His grace to us, conceived in the womb of a virgin, thus breaking the connection with the first sin and causing that human nature of our Lord to be itself sinless, so that to the end of His career He could be holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. A true human nature because brought into the world under the law of conception and of birth, and yet that conception itself a creation by the mighty power of the Holy Ghost; the immediate author of all life that exists throughout the universe; and so the two natures, the divine and the human, are brought together in that mysterious personage of our Lord. Distinct, never commingled or blended, neither

opposed nor absorbed the one into the other; and here you have a divine-human Redeemer.

Ah, my brethren, that I had the night to enlarge the topic and dwell upon it until the day should dawn! See how this obedience which the divine-human Christ renders to the law of God is just what it is—an obedience absolutely unique, surpassing in its dignity and its value the aggregated obedience of all the mere creatures of God's intelligent workmanship if they were consolidated into a single obedience and presented before the law.

IV. The law has two parts—precept and penalty. The precept guides, the penalty binds. They are both indispensable to law. Take away the penalty and leave only the precept, and your law degenerates into advisory counsel. Take away the precept and leave only the penalty, and your law becomes simply an arbitrary threat. But it is the union of precept and penalty, indissolubly connected, that makes law what it is. Now when and where in all the range of creation can you find an obedience that has been distinctively rendered to both parts of the law? Angels in their retained holiness obey the precepts; they were never brought under the penalty to suffer. Devils in hell, if you can predicate obedience of them, render no obedience to precept; but it is only in the person of our Blessed, Blessed Lord that you find an obedience covering the whole extent of the law, and which goes down in its depth to its very extreme; an obedience which magnifies the law and makes it honorable. Our risen Lord, when He came up from the tomb and ascended into His Father's presence, nailed His own perfect obedience against the walls of the heavenly city, that there angels and men—all who are forming the hosts of the glorified—shall be able to read in His unique and perfect obedience an absolutely perfect commentary upon the law of God.

Ah, what a righteousness is yours,

my brethren, if you are in Christ! What a robe you wear, and with which you will be adorned when you stand at the right hand in the solemn judgment! How glorious that righteousness which hides and conceals all your sins! And it will be your wedding robe when you sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb in heaven; and on, and on, through all the opening ages, as eternity spreads out its endless cycles in eternal succession, you, redeemed and believing in Christ, shall stand more than the peer of the angels, being clothed upon with this righteousness which has never been offered except by your Head, and which becomes yours through His offer and by your willing acceptance.

Do we not see in all this that God Himself must prepare the lamb for a burnt-offering? Who else can find an adequate mediator? And who else can link that divine Mediator to the race which He must redeem, and enable that Redeemer to work out the righteousness such as no mere creature can possibly afford?

Brethren, this perfect righteousness which Christ wrought out in His human nature through a human obedience to a precept and through a human endurance of the penalty—this obedience was perfect; viewed in the relation to our Lord's human nature, in addition it has shed down upon it all the glory which belongs to His divine attributes as the eternal Son of the eternal Father. It is the obedience of the God-man; and when that Mediator offered up His life in the stead of our life, it was the sacrifice laid upon the divine altar and made unspeakably glorious by the glory which was shed upon it, by the glory which belonged to that divine Person of the Godhead, who assumed this nature and made it His own in order that He might render it a sacrifice to the justice and law of His Father.

Men speak as tho it were impossible for God to justify a sinner through a righteousness which he did not himself

work out, and therefore it is only by an immediate personal obedience to the law that any man can hope to be saved. Brethren, I can not explain or expound it to you, but we shall stand for ages upon ages clothed in that righteousness which is rendered to the whole law, precept, and penalty, and that righteousness illumined and glorified by having shed upon it all the glory and excellence which belongs to the divine nature of Him who rendered the human obedience.

V. God Himself must prepare a lamb for a burnt-offering, because He alone can constitute that relation between this Redeemer and His people whom He redeems as to impute that righteousness to them as their own, through the exercise of faith in the promise and in the offer which is made in the Gospel. And so our Lord, when He rose from the dead, rose in the possession of a new human life; a life which is henceforth guaranteed to Him by the law which He has satisfied; a human life which He must retain as the head of all His people. And there in His glorified humanity He sits at the Father's right hand in glory, as the trustee of all His redeemed, holding in His possession that life which He has recovered from its forfeiture under the law, in order that it may be conveyed into the possession of His redeemed in all the succession of generations in which they are to be born.

The same life, which the law guarantees to Him upon the ground of His perfect obedience to the law, is your life and my life; and He, our trustee, holds that life in possession for its conveyance to us by due process in due course of time. You know how often legacies fail by the change of those who administer the bequests. Let a human being, a mere man, make a bequest, and then die in order to make that a valid testament, and afterward rise from the dead only that he may administer upon his own estate and execute his own bequest; and live not to repossess the property of which he

has divested himself, but only that it may be faithfully administered and conveyed according to the terms of his will—and I have only presented to you, under that illustration, the facts in reference to the intercession and kingly authority of our Blessed Mediator at the Father's right hand: living to-day, living on and on until He shall come a second time, and then appearing on the judgment-throne in order to fulfil the promise made to all His struggling saints: "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

Ah, think of it, brethren: the very first word that you and I shall hear after the Resurrection morn, when we are gathered in that vast throng before the throne upon the clouds, will be the old Gospel call: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." And forever and forever, He, the head and trustee of those whom He has redeemed with His own blood and life, shall live to execute the terms of His own testament by breathing upon us His own spirit, and blessing us with the enjoyment of His own love. What a Christ! And what a God, to give His own Son to be that Christ! And shall we ever falter in any of our earthly trials, even when this earthly frame is being battered by the last enemy at the gate of life? Shall we distrust the precious promise and covenant of Him who lives exalted in glory in order to see that all the blessings of the covenant shall be ours forever and forever? All along since Christ went up into glory, and until He shall come a second time unto salvation, we shall hear the echo of His priestly prayer—"Father, I will": a testamentary word; a word which carries, even tho in the form of prayer, an absolute and controlling authority. "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." And when we shall lie upon the bosom of that Blessed Lord and He shall stoop

to give us the kisses of His love, and we shall look up into that smile of infinite benevolence and grace which has so often cheered us, in the bare hope of it, in our conflicts and trials, we shall enter upon the inheritance which has been purchased for us with blood.

VI. Lastly, we are to share the life and the glory of that mediatorial King which the Father has the right to proclaim in His Gospel, as He does—an assured salvation to any and every sinner that will believe and accept Jesus Christ, His Son. It can not be otherwise. He has authority, and has proclaimed it from His throne: "All that the Father giveth to me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." What a privilege, my Christian fathers and brethren of the ministry—what a glorious privilege is ours to preach this Gospel! Will you preach anything else? Is there anything in the range of human literature that can compare with a single promise of God's blessed word of salvation? Is there anything in the entire range of philosophic thought that can compare with the doctrine of Christ? Is there anything in the discoveries or conjectures of science, when men seek to make a Bible out of the physical creation, as tho it could perfectly reveal to us the will of the Father?

Ah, let us take this Gospel and bury it in the chambers of our own soul! Let it be a Gospel that shall fill the imagination; a Gospel that shall feed the affections; a Gospel that shall satisfy and control the conscience; and a Gospel that shall guide and energize the will—so that all the powers of our nature shall be brought to bear upon the spreading of this Gospel until it shall overtake the ends of the earth.

It has pleased God to spare me through a long ministry, and my brethren in their overflowing kindness are each day exhibiting tokens of their affection for a life which they regard as having been usefully spent in the cause of God. I desire to say that never have

I so felt the preciousness and power of this Gospel until it has pleased God to so close my eyes against the sight of books and other things that I have been shut up almost entirely to thoughts of Him and His grace. And I think that there is no heritage upon the earth equal to the heritage of that man whose privilege it is to live long enough, by a life of consecration of duty, to exhibit in practise as well as by precept the nature and the power of that grace which God offers to a lost and ruined world. Let us live for the second coming of Him who shall again stand upon this earth; for guilty as this earth is, and rocking as it does upon crimes and iniquities which it must bear upon its bosom, it is nevertheless a redeemed earth still; and the blessed feet of its Redeemer shall stand upon its soil; and there shall come a transforming power that shall make it a new earth and a new heaven above it, in which shall dwell forever this perfect righteousness of a perfect Redeemer.

Ah, who can tell but that it may be your destiny and mine, when we have past beyond these clouds into the far beyond, to be made the Apostolic race that shall fly more swiftly than angel's wings, from star to star, and tell the worlds of redeeming love and the power of that grace which has made us new creatures in Christ Jesus—working out that grace by which I believe the very angels themselves have been confirmed in holiness and blessedness forever!

What a spectacle is presented to your eyes in the fifth chapter of the Book of Revelation, when the redeemed are drawn in the inner circle around the Lamb as He stands, and the voices of these redeemed and glorified saints lift up the first note of the new song of Moses and the Lamb, "Worthy is the Lamb that is slain, for he hath redeemed us and made us kings and priests" unto God in His temple forever. And then the angels, ten thousand times ten thousand, and thou-

sands upon thousands of them, with all the living creatures, take up the song and render back the chorus: "Glory and honor and blessing and power and might and dominion be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and forever." We, redeemed from sin, struggling through our several conflicts, working out in our soul the one nature which is to be perfectly conformed at last to the image of grace, made the body-guard of our ascended and glorified King forever, and teaching the angels, those elder sons of God, that higher note of joy, when God, through the unfolding of His grace, has revealed to the whole creation the infinite fullness of His grace and of His love.

God prepare us for a place in that throng, and give to us such an experience of the preciousness and power of this grace that each of us may add an individual note in that mighty anthem which shall swell forever, and make the arches of heaven ring with the praises of our King!

WOMAN'S GOOD INFLUENCE HANDED DOWN.

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The unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois.—2 Tim. i. 5.

IN his pastoral letter which Paul, the old minister, is writing to Timothy, the young minister, the family record is brought out. Paul practically says: "Timothy, what a good grandmother you had! You ought to be better than most folks, because not only was your mother good, but your grandmother was good also. Two preceding generations of piety ought to give you a mighty push in the right direction."

The fact was that Timothy needed encouragement. He was in poor health, having a weak stomach, and was a dyspeptic, and Paul prescribed

for him a tonic, "a little wine for thy stomach's sake"—not much wine, but a little. If the wine then had been as much adulterated with logwood and strychnin as our modern wines, he would not have prescribed any. But Timothy, not strong physically, is encouraged spiritually by the recital of grandmotherly excellence, Paul hinting to him, as I hint this to you, that God sometimes gathers up as in a reservoir, away back of the active generations of to-day, a godly influence, and then, in response to prayer, lets down the power upon children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

The world is wofully in want of a table of statistics in regard to what is the protractedness and immensity of influence of one good woman in the church and world. We have accounts of how much evil has been wrought by a woman who lived nearly a hundred years ago, and of how many criminals her descendants furnish for the penitentiary and the gallows, and how many hundreds of thousands of dollars they cost our country for their arraignment and prison support, as well as in the property they burglarized and destroyed; but will not some one come out with brain comprehensive enough and heart warm enough and pen keen enough to give us the facts in regard to some good woman of a hundred years ago, and let us know how many Christian men and women and reformers and useful people have been found among her descendants, and how many asylums and colleges and churches they built, and how many millions of dollars they contributed for humanitarian and Christian purposes?

The good women whose tombstones were planted in the eighteenth century are more alive for good in the nineteenth century than they were before, as the good women of this nineteenth century will be more alive for good in the twentieth century than now. Mark you, I have no idea that the grandmothers were any better than their granddaughters. You can not get