

LIFE LESSONS

IN THE

SCHOOL OF CHRISTIAN DUTY.

2.9.02

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for
E. B. WALSH

THE aim of this volume is practical throughout. It is designed to conduct the mind of the reader onward from a state of religious indifference to a sober contemplation of the objects and duties of life, and to urge them upon the heart and conscience. Without entering minutely into the obligations that pertain to our several relations as social beings, its main theme is, Life and its Duties. Hence its title, LIFE LESSONS.

Some portions of the volume have been published in different forms, and, by some readers, will doubtless be recognized. They have here been restored to their proper place in the chapters to which they belong. If the anticipations of the individual at whose instance the work has been prepared for publication shall be fulfilled in the useful service which it may render to the cause of Christ, the author's labor will be more than requited.

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LIFE LESSONS.

I.

A PICTURE OF LIFE.

"They walk on in darkness."—PSALM lxxxv. 5.

IN one of our New England villages is a graveyard—in most respects not unlike scores of others—in which sleep the remains of hundreds, and perhaps thousands, belonging to past generations. Many a moss-covered gravestone is there, and "many a holy text" is sculptured on those monuments which, ever sinking deeper in the sod, or already fallen to the earth, seem themselves to envy the oblivion of the dust they cover, and by their own crumbling and decay, as well as their inscriptions, "teach the rustic moralist to die."

But human enterprise has for many years been busy, encroaching upon that sacred enclosure. A valuable quarry, cropping out on the neighboring bank, offered that temptation which to the industry and thrift of our countrymen is irresistible. The rock was quarried and carried away, leaving as the excavation approached the graveyard, a precipitous wall from thirty to fifty feet high. Still pressing on, the laborers cleared the rock away, till only at a single narrow point could the graveyard be approached, and at last, this too was assaulted, threatening to change the peninsular into a rock-walled island of the dead.



What a spectacle ! Human enterprise sweeping around such a spot as that, sparing it indeed, but leaving it isolated and inaccessible, chafing against it as a barrier, and shaking the sacred dust of its graves with the shock of its explosions, disturbing the hallowed silence appropriate to it, by the echoes of rude voices and the din of pick and chisel, and desecrating, to the extremest verge of possibility, the scene where friendship had found sad pleasure to linger, and affection had been wont to weep ! From morning till night, human industry is intensely active, almost beneath the shadow of the monuments, but it has itself built up the wall, that keeps it, although so near, from all contact with them, or any chance to peruse the stone-graven lines that speak the solemn lessons of the grave. Unheeding toil takes no thought of the voices that seem flung back to it, in every echo of its blows, from those rocky walls within which the dust of the dead finds repose.

Who can regard such a spectacle without feeling that it is emblematic—that a painter, turning from the picture of Cole's "Voyage of Life," might have been warranted in selecting this as the picture of life itself—its energy, activity, and enterprise, rolling on like a torrent, till it touches the realm of the dead, then pausing only to circle around it, and sweep away every approach, every foot-path by which human thought draws near to meditate on human destiny, or by which the toiling laborer himself might mount up to read the lessons of his own mortality ?

It is a sad truth, that the industry and energy of man too often work just to wall him out from ready access to the sphere of serious thought and religious meditation. He digs and mines and excavates, only to rear higher and

render more insuperable the barriers that shut him out from converse with his higher interests or communion with his God. There he is—his life long—under the very shadow of graves and monuments, the dust of the departed crumbling around him, as it shakes with the stroke of enterprise encroaching on its domain ; and yet every hour, as he plunges deeper for new treasures, he is but building higher that precipitous wall which shuts him out from access to what is so near, and casts ever deeper and darker shadows over his scene of toil. Thus he forgets *where* he is ; he forgets *what* he is. He heeds not that soon the waves of enterprise will roll and chafe around his own grave.

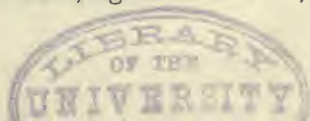
If there is anything that may well occasion surprise it is the thoughtlessness of dying men—their thoughtlessness with regard to their spiritual and eternal interests. They traverse seas. They explore continents. They pry into the secrets of the wilderness. They climb the snow-capped mountains. They mark the transit of distant planets. They unroll antique parchments and pore over moth-eaten volumes. They excavate buried cities like Nineveh and Pompeii. They decipher old inscriptions and scrutinize Egyptian hieroglyphs. They study the fossil autographs of dead ages, on the rocky pages of the earth, till the globe becomes their library, and cataracts and currents cut the leaves of long sealed volumes that they may be read. They question the microscope for the minute wonders of creative skill in the structure of a sand grain, an animalcule, or a snow-flake. They dissolve air and water into their original elements, and unfold the laws that govern the combination of these elements. They track the lightning to its lair, tame it and teach it, charged with messages, to leap along their iron

wires. They penetrate the invisible realm of mind, search out its constitution, the order of its faculties, the methods of their operation, the laws by which they are governed. They give wing to fancy and revel in the strange, weird domain of imaginary existence, surrendering their being almost to the spell of fiction and romance, and yet—while the mind is thus roused to intense activity, while the waves of the sea of human thought roll on and cover almost every thing tangible or conceivable—the one great theme which towers above others like the Alps above their valleys, is left, like a mountain island of the ocean, neglected and unexplored. Men are intent to study the world around, but not the world within them. They read the doom of nations and forget their own. They decipher old crumbling monuments of stone, but translate not the inscriptions on the living tablets of the heart. They linger spell-bound over the poet's page. They sit at the feet of the philosopher. They listen to the sagacity of statesmen. They are kindled to enthusiasm by the creations of the artist, or by the magnificent span of cathedral domes, and yet when a "greater than the temple," a "greater than Solomon," he that "spake as never man spake," opens his lips to reveal the secrets, of the life eternal, they turn away, with stolid indifference or cold contempt.

Can this be so? Can it be that man can so regard all things else, and forget himself? Can it be that the one subject of thought, which to him is most important, most vital, which transcends every other, which confronts him perpetually wherever he turns, that is suggested in all the forms of nature, the buried seed, the fading flower, the ripening harvest—that is whispered in all the seasons, in the springtime that bids him sow the seed, in the sum-

mer that shows him a thousand symbols of that higher beauty which the soul may win, in the autumn with its harvests, asking him what from all his years angel reapers shall gather, in the winter that speaks of age that will need a shelter and support which nature cannot give—can it be that this one subject thus suggested, and suggested ever also by his own experience, by the cravings of the soul, by the aspirations of hope, by irrepressible longings for immortality, nay, by his failing strength and tear-dimmed eye, by the badges of mourning, the funeral procession, the graveyard mound, the dull echo of the clods as they strike the coffin lid—can it be that this one subject of his own personal spiritual destiny thus pressed on his notice, thus whispered in every breath, thus photographed in every scene, is just the one of all others which he banishes from his thoughts, and which for him is left to stand amid the surging ocean-waves of human activity precipitous and inaccessible like the island of the dead? It is a humiliating question to answer, but it is not a difficult one. The answer is before us, in what we see and hear and feel. That which justly claims human attention first, is neglected till the last. How it must be thrust upon men before they will entertain it! How it comes knocking at the door, and is left unheeded! How it speaks but gains no reply! How men turn their back upon it, and haste away, one to his farm and another to his merchandise! How thorough is their practical oblivion of their spiritual destiny! Sabbath after Sabbath traces solemn words on the memory, but the first ripple of week-day traffic rolls over them and shows that they have been traced on the sand.

What a wondrous art of forgetfulness! What a perfection of heedlessness! There, right before them, like



the Alps to the traveler's eye, looms up this great theme, in a grandeur and magnificence which pour contempt on all the little toys and vanities that rivet their gaze, and their busy ceaseless activity only clouds them about with dust, till they stand all unconscious beneath the awful shadow that comes down over them from those sublime heights to which thought should soar. Thus they often live, and thus, often too, they die. The voice that admonishes them to better things, is as the voice of one crying unheeded in the wilderness. Friends by their side drop away and disappear, but no earnest questioning peers into the nature of that unseen world that is brought so near. Their houses crumble over their heads and need constant repair, but they seek no title to "a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens." They are all absorbed in the petty losses and gains of business, and seek not to lay up treasures where moth and rust cannot corrupt.

See them in varied spheres pursuing various objects, and only agreed in rejecting one, persistently pressed on their notice! There they are, poring over the ledger. There they are, bending intent over "the chequered board;" they have come back from a friend's grave, perhaps, to renew their game. The Sabbath comes—that hallowed day which seems the golden link between earth and that better land of the eternal Sabbath, yet how its hours drag, and how amusements crowd out devotion, and how the sanctuary, visited possibly once, is thenceforth shunned! It would seem as if religion was as repulsive as a heathen Dagon—as if the light which it kindles and flings in loving missionary beams of mercy along the pilgrim's way deep into the shadows of the dark valley, was unwelcome—as if the language in which it speak

of "the glory to be revealed in us," was that of unmeaning speculation—as if the best thing for a man, a possible heir of immortal blessedness, was to keep himself as unconcerned and indifferent within the cheerless walls of his earthly prison-house, as the worms that crawl around him, or the spiders that spin their webs to curtain the barred windows of his cell. Is this wise? Is it rational? Is it becoming? Is it the part which *he* should act who knows, beyond all shadow of doubt, that soon his work on earth will be done, and the seed-time of the life immortal will have forever fled? Should he give thought free range on all other topics, but forbid it to touch the one of most momentous concern? Should the mind soar in every other sphere, but crawl only when it enters the sphere of spiritual truth and religious duty? Should years be piled on years in order to climb and grasp a wreath or fortune that ere long will slip like sand from the cheated fingers, and only the scattered dust and fragments of time be left for the foundations of the life everlasting?

Each one must answer these questions for himself. Each one knows how he has lived, and whether the guilt of inconsiderateness can be laid to his charge. You can look back and scrutinize what has secured your attention. You can see the current and direction of your thoughts and the channels they have traced. Have they been such as your calm judgment approves? Are you satisfied, if the claims of religion have been uniformly and persistently neglected? Do you justify such neglect, or do you condemn yourself? Do you class yourself with the brute or with the man, with the unreflecting or the thoughtful? Do you count your final destiny a matter of no account, or one of infinite moment?

II.

TWO TYPES OF LIFE.

“Better is it to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.”—PROV. xvi. 19.

OF that great Roman Emperor, Augustus Cæsar, it is related that on the morning of his death, sensible of his approaching end, he called for a mirror, and desired his gray hairs and beard to be decently arranged. Then asking of his friends whether he had played well his part in the drama of life, he muttered a verse from a comic epilogue, inviting them to greet his last exit with applause.

Perhaps the world had never seen a greater ruler die. The Roman Empire, excluding the more barbarous nations, was the empire of the world. With some peculiar advantages, yet with art and arms, Augustus had grasped it and ruled it, and made it his own. He had acted an imposing part in the great drama of history. He had reached the highest point of mere earthly ambition. He had been neither a debauchee nor a tyrant. One might have said of him, that nothing that this world could give was wanting to render his lot enviable. Yet who does not gaze in pity on that—an emperor's deathbed? Who does not feel a painful contrast between his last hours, as he gazes at his gray locks in the mirror, and talks of having played his part well in the drama of life, and the exultant triumph of “such an one as Paul the aged,”

writing with manacled hand from his chill prison, on the eve of martyrdom—"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?" One seems to be thinking of the applause of men. He wants the voice of praise and flattery to cheer his dying hour. The other is looking forward not to the praise of man, but to the "well done" of the great Judge. One feels that his jeweled crown will no longer cover that gray head, ripe for the sickle of the great Reaper. The other is assured of an everlasting crown, such as senates cannot grant, nor death take away. One looks back on a life of successful, but selfish ambition. The other has the testimony of a good conscience that he has lived to serve God. One has climbed the heights of power and surrounded himself with the pageants of wealth and feasts and splendor, only to die like a play-actor. The other has deliberately chosen a path which, through mobs, and prisons, and scorn, and hardships unnumbered, leads him to a martyr's death, but a martyr's triumph. Both wrought with rare ability and rare energy. Both exerted a powerful influence on the history of the world. Each in a measure attained his end. But in the final result the sceptered hand grasped a bubble, and the manacled hand grasped a crown.

It might seem a vain question—which of these men is most to be envied, for no one of us could by any possibility be the one or the other. Only one in all the millions of the ancient world could have been an Augustus. Only a few could have been like Paul. Each of us has limitations, not of our own choice or appointment, affixed to his lot. But taking the two men as types of classes—the successful man of the world and the self-denying

Christian, the one who lives to be applauded and dies thinking what men will say of him, and the one who is content to forego all if he may but have the testimony of a good conscience and the smile of God, and we can say for ourselves which is to be preferred. There is a vast difference. It is plain to every one. In show and parade they are quite unlike, but if one glitters like isinglass in the noonday of its own splendor, the other is no less a jewel though you have to mine for it in prisons, or wash off from it the mud of slander and contempt.

There are some men who seem to have no ambition to be the one thing or the other. They live *extempore*. They have very little of plan or purpose. They play truant for seventy years, and never learn the first lesson of shaping life. They are like straws floating with the stream. The friendships they form, and the circumstances in which they are placed mould them like wax. They have no more moral shape or stability than water poured into the hollow of a rock. They do not really live; they just stagnate. Their hope is ease; their dread, work or starvation. They are candidates for temptation and crime, and if saved from these, it is to sink into moral cyphers. They are men who think little, and who dream life away in a dull routine. Ingenuity itself would be taxed to put anything but their names on their gravestone. The biographer would only be able to write of them, they were born, they ate, they drank, they fell sick and died. No high purpose roused their energies. No noble or generous aim broke the even tenor of their selfishness. In the harvest-field of life, they are stalks that never headed. Morally considered, they are mere chaff and stubble.

Does this seem like caricature or irony? It is the

simple truth. There are men who have no more idea apparently of shaping their lives by any recognized standard than the ox that ploughs in the furrow. But is not this a crime against reason? Is it not a criminal stupidity for any one capable of reflection to find himself in a world like this, and never ask—what am I here for? Does it not become him as he opens his eyes thoughtfully to the light of this world, to consider with himself that he is here for some purpose worthy of the powers with which he is endowed, and the privileges with which he is favored? Everything is valuable for what you can make out of it, or what you can do with it. So it is with human life, and there is nothing else that can be made either so worthless or so precious. You may cut the ivory into beautiful shapes. You may mint the gold into shining coin. You may chisel the marble till it seems to embody the grandest ideal of the majesty of intellect. You may polish the rough-looking stone till it glitters as a jewel fit for the brow of beauty, or the kingly crown. You may subject the tangled, rocky waste to culture, till it becomes a Central Park ; but neither ivory, nor gold, nor marble, nor fertile soil, nor diamonds of the mine have such a native capacity as these years of life. Charity can cut them into shapes as beautiful as the ministry of a Howard, or the pity of the Good Samaritan. Faith can mint them into deeds of piety and devotion, bearing the image and superscription of Jesus of Nazareth. Self-denial may chisel them into the statues of goodness rising to the stature of a perfect manhood in Christ Jesus. Integrity and fidelity to duty can make them resplendent with a loveliness, and precious with a value that belong not to even a Koh-i-Noor jewel, while he that cultivates them in the fear of God can turn the soil once covered

with the weeds of vice and the brambles of sin, and the rocks of depravity, into an earthly Eden, in which the music of a conscience void of offense will chase all care and fear away, and over which angels will delight to linger and to gaze.

It is indeed a surprising thing to think of what the humblest life is capable. It does not need a throne for its pedestal. Its real value does not depend on its being conspicuously exhibited. The little flower that blooms in the wilderness is as exquisitely delicate and fragrant as if transplanted to royal gardens. The solitary traveller—some Mungo Park perhaps—alone is cheered by it, but the gaze and admiration of thousands would not add to it a single grace. So it is with the moral beauty of lowly life. Its value is in itself, not in being the centre of some elegant nosegay. To be is more than to seem. The great good man wants no echoes of mob applause. God's eye can supply the place of admiring crowds. You might put some Robinson Crusoe on a lone island of the sea, but even there, if his heart glows with love to God, and he learns submission to his lot, and soars on the wings of faith to the heights of holy thought and divine communings, how under the good man's tread, the lone isle becomes a Patmos, and his own heart a living temple, and his devout meditations the lofty worship of sanctuary service.

Go into the obscurest walks of life ; leave senates and pageants and the echoes of fame far behind, and see what the most unpretending can do in works that cheer the sufferer, that strengthen the tempted, that minister the oil of sympathy to bleeding hearts, that whisper hope to the despairing—and whose spirit, in the fragrance of goodness is as "ointment poured forth." See that cheer-

ful self-denial that reminds one of the two mites of the poor widow—that unswerving attachment to all the friends of Christ that recalls to mind the Moabitess of old exclaiming, “thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God,”—that gentleness and meekness and charity that calm the turbulence of passion, like oil poured on the troubled waves—that tenderness of conscience which seems to hallow all around it, like “the burning bush,” so that no sandaled foot may tread upon it—that unwearied prayerfulness which sanctifies every duty and transforms it into an angel service—that patience and submission which are the loftiest heroism, and which without a murmur exclaim, “not my will, but thine be done,”—that kindly beneficence which, radiant as the morning’s light, carries hope and smiles to the home of sorrow, and that sublime faith which has power to change the shanty, the garret, or even the prison cell into a Bethel, and bring down all around them such a hallowed presence that angels seem to hover there, and unceiled rafters or damp walls seem to echo the voice of the master—“my peace I give unto you.”

Here are attainments within the reach of all who are willing to walk by faith. Here is a success that is within your grasp, which no calamity can foil. I would not say,

“Lives of *great* men all remind us
We may make our lives sublime.”

I would put *good* in place of *great*. You do not want an emperor’s chances, or a Paul’s chances. You do not need purse or scrip, a scholar’s lore, or an orator’s eloquence. You have now all that is essential; you would have if you were only a poor Lazarus at the rich man’s gate.

What then, with the help of God always, will you make of your own life? What standard will you set up, what plan, what model will you adopt? Will you say it is not worth caring for? It is mere rubbish, seaweed, vapor. True it is brief, transient. It fleets with every moment. But this only admonishes you to snatch the passing hour, to work while it is day. But it is a grand mistake to say it is valueless. There is nothing else on earth more precious. The man that built great Babylon accomplished less for himself than the man who by God's grace is built up on the foundation of Jesus Christ into a living temple. The time will soon come when the rich must leave all their possessions, and the king must lay down a sceptre which his dying grasp can hold no longer. Then the only treasure of the soul will be found in itself. All else, however inviting once, will be only like the blossoms that fall off when the fruit ripens. We shall *have* only what we *are*. What we have made of our life will be all that we can carry with us out of this world up to the judgment seat. An emperor, breathing his last, comes down to the common level of mortals. The test of success will be what survives our dust.

And that which is most precious does survive. . And what is it? The results, the harvest, for good or evil, for weal or woe, of these fleeting years. What shall these be? They are your inventory for eternity. They are your portion forever, to rejoice in or regret. What they shall be, you are determining now, you are determining even while you hesitate to determine. The artist who has a block of marble put into his hands that he may shape out of it a Nimrod or an Angel, may defer to do anything, till to him, though he shapes no Nimrod out of it, the block is worthless. So, only worse, it may

be with you. For the block is crumbling. Every moment chips off a minute fragment, and already perhaps its integrity is gone. It is time to determine between the Nimrod and the Angel, the Emperor and the Apostle.

Yours is a solemn trust, a fearful responsibility. The burden is upon you and you cannot lay it off. An "inheritance incorruptible" is staked upon the issue. Just to live involves the necessity of accepting or rejecting it? Shall it be yours? This is the momentous question which you are to answer for yourself. The issue cannot be evaded. It must be met. Will you not meet it manfully, fairly, intelligently? Your welfare demands it. Your reason demands it. Your conscience demands it. Your Maker and your Final Judge demand it.

III.

THE VANITY OF LIFE.

“Vanity of vanities.”—Ec. ii. 1.

WITHOUT the Christian hope, and the truth upon which it is based, what is this world but emptiness and vanity? Grand processions, mighty armies, the trains of enterprise and caravans of commerce sweep over it, but they flit by and vanish like shadows. Great men arise, and their names are borne on the echoes of fame around the globe; but when the bubble of their greatness bursts, and the current of time rolls on, nothing is left but a transient and vanishing memory. There is a magnificent dirge-like music in that passage in which Jeremy Taylor describes the humiliating end of earthly hopes:

“Many men, by great labors and affronts, many indignities and crimes, labor only for a pompous epitaph, and a loud title upon their marble; whilst those, into whose possessions their heirs or kindred are entered, are forgotten, and lie unregarded as their ashes, and without concernment and relation as the turf on the face of their grave. A man may read a sermon, the best and most passionate that ever man preached, if he shall but enter into the sepulchres of kings. In the same Escorial where the Spanish princes live in greatness and power, and decree war or peace, they have wisely placed a cemetery, where their ashes and their glory shall sleep till time

shall be no more. And where our kings have been crowned, their ancestors lie interred, and they must walk over their grand-sire's head to take his crown. There is an acre sown with royal seed, the copy of the greatest change, from rich to naked, from ceiled roofs to arched coffins, from living like gods to die like men."

You do not need to look up to the heavens in their magnificent array of revolving worlds to be prompted to ask, "Lord, what is man?" you may just look around you and see the various living forms that are flitting to darkness and oblivion, or you may look beneath your feet at the earth already furrowed by graves, yet ever opening to take new treasures of affection to its cold bosom; and even then it will be difficult to repress the thought suggested by the exclamation of Edmund Burke, speaking of the sudden departure of his compeers and rivals, "What shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue!"

"We turn to dust, and all our mightiest works
Die too. The deep foundations that we lay—
Time ploughs them up, and not a trace remains.
We build on what we deem eternal rock,
A future age asks where the fabric stood,
And in the dust, sifted and searched in vain,
The undiscoverable secret sleeps."

What thoughtful mind can fail to be impressed by the lesson of human frailty that seems traced out before our eyes wherever we turn? Think of Nineveh's glory, and all the splendor of Assyrian kings, and then think of a Layard excavating the crumbling marbles on which Assyrian victories were inscribed. Think of Tyre, once mistress of the seas, whose merchants were princes, and then see the fisherman spread his nets on the rocks half

covered by the rubbish of her palaces! Think of Egyptian pyramids, the tombs of kings, and the rock-hewn vaults where the embalmed bodies of princes were laid, and then see the Arab strip them of their cerements to light his fire and cook his scanty meal! Walk over the great battlefields—a Waterloo, an Antietam, a Gettysburg—where beneath the green turf, with no memorial, unless perhaps a mound, the remains of thousands are sinking back to the decay that mingles them with their kindred dust, and who can withhold the exclamation, “Lord what is man!” All nature sympathizes with these sad objects. The withered leaf of autumn rustles upon the listening ear parables of human decay. The flowing stream floats onward, and away forever the foam that once sparkled in bubbles brilliant as the hues of youthful hope. Setting suns are daily recurring emblems, and the shadows of night foreshadow the night of the grave. Who can look at the lonely monument that affection rears, and see it standing clear, and cold, and solitary, only now and then visited by the curious wanderer, who reads its inscription with little more emotion than a name on a box of merchandise, and not feel the force of those lines of Gray’s elegy :

“The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e’er gave,
Await alike the inexorable hour,
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.”

What are all biographies, but more extended funeral inscriptions—what is history but the graveyard of past activity in which philosophy loves to muse? And what is all our learning, but threads which we spin off from

the cocoons of dead men's thoughts which they wove around them with life-long toil, as the shrouds of their own mortality?

Surely, it is not mere fancy which reads parables, and more than parables in the life and the end of those who command the world's language. One after another rises and moves along before us on the stage of human action, but each, as he goes down amid the shadows of age, moralizes on the emptiness of the pageant in which he has played his part. I cannot envy the feelings or disposition of the man who sees without emotion the change that soon passes over all human greatness—a Newton prying into the mysteries of the heavens, and exploring spaces from which the swiftest beam of light, starting while he lies in his cradle, could not reach him before his body is laid in its grave, and yet at last with enfeebled intellect poring over a problem of which he can only say, "I knew it once"—a Duke of Marlborough, the greatest general of his age, receiving almost royal honors and the world's applause, yet at last exhibited for so much *extra* by his servants to the curious visitor of those magnificent grounds which his taste and wealth had changed to an earthly Eden; and finally, when death comes, and honors wait on his crumbling dust, and the funeral car is covered with shields whereon are inscribed those victorious battle-fields—Blenheim and Ramillies, Lille and Tournay, Bethune and Ruremonde—vanishing from among men, only to have the after world criticise the meanness that was combined with his valor, and the penuriousness and treachery that were allied with his sagacity—or a William Pitt, as Prime Minister of England, wielding in his hand almost the destinies of nations, sinking in the midst of his years from his place of power

to the helplessness of an invalid, his body, within a few hours of his decease, left unattended in a lonely tenement, from which every living occupant had vanished—or a Napoleon setting up or overthrowing thrones by a stroke of his pen, at last a neglected prisoner on a far-off ocean island, forced there to speculate in bitterness on the instability of all human greatness, and the uncertainty of all human prospects.

And what a sad story—upon which Solomon, if living now, might well moralize—comes to us from across the ocean, setting before us the scenes that followed the recent departure from earth of one of England's most gifted minds, the critic humorist Thackeray, whose writings have delighted both hemispheres, and whose words had such power—to use his own language of another—“to light up a rascal like a policeman's lantern.” Worldly journalists could not but comment upon the change that passed over the scenes which he had made so attractive. Scarcely was the dwelling on which he had expended his taste, and which he had made so exquisitely inviting, complete, when its owner was called away, and in a few days more, those rooms in which he had spread around him the luxuries of thought, and in which he had enjoyed the pleasures of converse with the most gifted and intellectual, were filled with a lot of customers, a motley group, which only his pen could describe—strangers to one another, shrewd, coarse-minded men, hanging on the auctioneer's hammer, anxious to pick up at the lowest price the best bargains, and handling with business coarseness what the author's mind had linked to precious or sacred memories.

Looking at such scenes as these, recurring every day, who that asks—what is man?—does not feel that if he is

to judge him only by the show or pageant and its humiliating sequel, he must concede that he is only the plaything of chance, the bubble of time, the rocket of ambition. Who is not ready to turn aside and exclaim with sadness, "and is this the sum, the scope, the goal of man's eager hope? Does he shine for a moment only to give a meaning to the emblem of the glowworm spark? Does he flourish for a moment, only to give the plucked and withering flower a deeper significance? Does he pass before our eyes and then vanish to be seen no more, only to humiliate his life by its contrast with that of the oak of centuries that spreads its broad arms over his grave, and survives every memorial of his crumbled dust?"

It is not strange that when a king of England with his barbarous chieftains were gathered to listen to the message of the first Christian missionary, who told them of the Great Father and the life eternal, one of the more serious, as a swallow entered the tent, flew about it and then sped away, should take up the parable and say—"Lo! O King! a symbol of our life here! We are like the swallow that enters the tent, flies about and then soars away we know not whither. If these men can tell us of our future, or throw light on the unexplored darkness, let us hear their words." Does any one listen to that barbarous yet thoughtful chieftain without feeling that the words find an echo in his own heart? What is life? what is its meaning? Is the grave the final boundary, the goal of human hope? Do you say yes? What a mortifying littleness then there is about it! How humbling are its vicissitudes and changes! How unsatisfactory its highest honors, its amplest fortunes! How the very height to which the boldest and strongest climb, is but the edge of the precipice—the Tarpeian rock—

from which they must inevitably plunge to a deeper and deeper oblivion!

The man who takes this view of life degrades his privileges, degrades himself, and degrades God's purpose in his creation. Most appropriately may he say, let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die, and so revel his few fleeting hours away—hours that have no more meaning, and will have no future resurrection for judgment, when once they are gone. Or still more appropriately, scorning all that he sees as the pageant of an hour, and feeling that reason itself, setting forth his capacity and his doom, his power to soar and the grave to which he is chained, is but the expositor of his conscious misery, he may exclaim—"let me escape from this farce of existence and drown hope and disappointment alike in the stream of oblivion."

But who can acquiesce in such a conclusion? Who does not feel all the instincts of his being rising up to protest against it? And who can take this view of life, which the word of God reveals without feeling that that alone ennobles existence—that that alone is worthy the end which God had in view in creating man—that that alone gives dignity to the lowliest lot, and lifts man up to that platform of hope and effort and aspiration for which he was designed?

Then it is that we may hope to see realized what the seraphic Howe has so eloquently described—"That lofty soul that bears about with it the living apprehensions of its being made for an everlasting state, so earnestly intends it, that it shall even be a descent and vouchsafement with it, if it allow itself to take notice what busy mortals are doing in their (as they reckon them) grand negotiations here below. . . . He hath still the image

before his eye, of this world vanishing and passing away : of the other, with the everlasting affairs and concerns of it, even now ready to take place and fill up all the stage, and can represent to himself the vision (not from a melancholic fancy and crazed brain, but a rational faith and a sober well-instructed mind) of the world dissolving, monarchies and kingdoms breaking up, thrones tumbling, crowns and sceptres lying as neglected things. He hath a telescope through which he can behold the glorious appearances of the Supreme Judge ; the solemn state of his majestic person ; the obsequious throng of glorious celestial creatures, doing homage to their eternal King, the swift flight of his royal guards, sent forth into the four winds to gather the elect—the universal silent attention—the judgment set, the books opened, the frightful, amazed looks of surprised wretches, the equal administration of the final judgment, the adjudication of all to their eternal state, the heavens rolled up as a scroll, the earth and all therein consumed and burnt up.”

IV.

THE DIGNITY OF LIFE.

“The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them.”—JOHN xvii. 22.

“**T**HE vanity of man as mortal” is one thing, and his dignity as immortal is quite another. One is as the candlestick, the other is as the light set in it which gives it use and value. One is the perishing husk of the seed, the other is its living germ. One is the chaff and stubble, the other is the precious and garnered grain.

Regard man’s existence simply as bounded by the cradle and the grave, and wonderful as it is, it is still more pitiable. Its bloom is as the early cloud and the morning dew. Its hopes are narrowed to the prospects of an uncertain to-morrow. Its soaring aspirations are chained down to the clod, or shut up like an eagle in a canary bird’s cage. Make it gaudy as you will, and it is only like a garlanded victim, marching in pomp to the sacrifice. It is a magic lantern picture that vanishes forever when death puts out the light of genius and energy within.

All the memorials that it can leave behind it are only like inscriptions traced on the sand that the rising tide will soon cover. The waves of oblivion are ever dashing their foam nearer and nearer. In a little while all will be buried or obliterated forever. How the great primæval forests have been crushed down and compacted till in the coal mine of to-day you cannot discern limb or trunk, and only here and there is the imprint of the leaf that once spread out its gaudy beauty to the sun! So it is with the generations of human genius. They overlie

and crush one another, and the scholar, digging up the lessons of the past, is exploring fossils, is bringing up from unsunned depths what the world had forgotten. History has not pens enough to record more than just the outlines of national progress or decay, and if she had, her memorials would be given over to cobwebs, dust, and worms.

A great ship goes down on the ocean, and the waves roll on over it with unbroken sweep just as they did before. So it is on the sea of time with the great and gay, the man-of-war and the pleasure yacht. What if here and there there are a few floating spars! They only inspire sadness. They are fragments that tell of ruin, soon to be beached on the lone desert shore.

Looking at man as mortal, there are beasts that survive him, and whose long-lived existence makes more humiliating the span of his uncertain three-score years and ten. There are trees that his hand plants that continuing after he has vanished, will perhaps be rooted and fed from the sod that covers his dust. His life is an apparition. His memory is the vanishing blaze of the meteor.

And is this all for which man was designed? Did He who placed him here and set him on the pinnacle of this lower world, only design him for the same doom with the clod he treads upon—only endow him so wondrously that he might see his vanity and feel his misery, and gaze down helpless into the gulf of annihilation that awaits him? Did he fit up this globe with all that it contains, and make man the lord of it, only that he might more keenly feel what a mere straw is his broken sceptre, and how hollow is the homage that just furnishes him his funeral equipage as life itself becomes a march toward the grave? Did he make each dying seed with its living germ an emblem of the resurrection, only to suggest hopes

of immortality that are doomed to blight? Did he frame the plan of our life so that these years should become an education for a future we are never to know? Did he set an intelligent soul in this exquisite mechanism of the body, as a mere engine to keep it in motion till it sinks with the worthless hulk to a common decay? Did he endow it with faculties to look through nature up to nature's God, and with affections that can rejoice in His love and call him Father, only to leave it abandoned at last, a more than orphan outcast, only privileged to say to corruption "thou art my Father, and to the worm thou art my mother and my sister?"

Then indeed, human existence becomes a troubled dream, and all our inward agony of thought, our reproofs of conscience, our strivings and struggles after a higher life and a moral blessedness, are but a useless incubus of woe, a bitter nightmare for which the oblivion of the grave may be a welcome relief. Then does the globe itself become, instead of the perch from which we spread our wings for an immortal flight, the tomb of human aspiration, the slough of our despond in which hope sinks forever stifled.

Then, as I walk the earth, it rings hollow to my tread, calling me down to its sunless realms. As I gaze on ruined desolation, it sympathizes with my woe. As I tread the empty halls where splendor revelled, the cheerless echoes of my footstep are the funeral dirge that accompanies my march to the tomb. The stars that look down upon me are the sentinels of my despair. History has no meaning. Probation and discipline, and retribution are empty words. I am a floating atom drifting to oblivion. I am gifted with reason and consciousness only to read with keener sagacity and keener torture the humiliation and anguish of my final lot?

But is this the design of God? Dare I impute such cruelty to his benevolence, such folly to his wisdom? Must I not feel that man is of higher destiny than the worm that crawls under his feet? Must I not respect human life as I cannot that of the brute whose flesh feeds me, or the tree whose fuel warms me? In a word, can I stop short of accounting man immortal, and recognizing in him one whom God deigns to own as a child?

“Shall man be left forgotten in the dust,
 When fate relenting bids the flower revive?
 Shall Nature’s voice, to man alone unjust,
 Bid him though doomed to perish, hope to live?
 Is it for this fair virtue oft must strive
 With disappointment penury and pain?
 No! Heaven’s immortal spring shall yet arrive,
 And man’s majestic beauty bloom again
 Safe through the eternal year of love’s triumphant reign.”

And now it is that I can recognize the dignity of man. I can discern the beautiful consistency, harmony and order of the divine plan that makes this life the seed-time of being, the germ of an immortal destiny. I do not need thrones and palaces or pompous pageant to confer distinction on the short-lived superiority of man to the brute. He is throned in his immortality. He is crowned by his destiny. His greatness is not measured by the toys and playthings of earthly ambition, by rank or title, or wealth or dominion. His own great birth-right of immortality pours contempt on all other legacies. By the side of that which is common to all, the things in which men differ are of small account. Human life is sacred because it is God’s allotment of a probation on which the issues of the life immortal are suspended.

Man is great as man, not because he is in high station, not merely because he has powers that can study the universe, and weigh the mountains in scales, and survey the heavens, and unfold their mechanism, but because these powers are destined to an infinite and eternal development, because God owns him as a child, because heaven may be his home.

Now you may see what he is, and what homage is paid him, and how time and nature, and revelation, declare his greatness. Mark his capacity and discern what it really is, and what is its scope—not to build palaces or swift ships, to span rivers, to lay iron tracks, to tunnel mountains, to decipher the fossil rocks, to trace the progress of art or pioneer its march, or classify the facts of history—not to unfold the mysteries of his own being, or analyze the operations of his own mind—but in doing all this to discipline his powers for a higher service, and by the consecration of all his aims make the ladder of human attainments, the ladder by which the soul mounts to a more comprehensive survey of the works and providence of God. He is great, not in the strength of affections that idolize child, or husband, or wife, or parent, or country, and that welcome hardship and the risk of life to serve them, but in affections which cling to the Almighty Father and to a covenant God, and twine themselves with deathless tendrils to the props of the everlasting promise.

Away then with all the baubles that amuse the fancy or minister to a shallow pride. Away with all distinctions that cover up the one grand distinction of man as the heir of immortality. Let rags and broadcloth be alike transparent that I may recognize the man—the heart beneath them all, that God will deign to make his living temple, and that shall ring with songs of deathless

praise when the last minster spire or cathedral dome is wrapt in the final flame.

It is this recognition of man's immortality that justifies his position where God has placed him as the lord of this lower world. All things on earth are made for him. This globe is the stage on which he is nobly to act his part. All its changing phases are the revolving chart on which he is to study his Father's lessons. Its seeds and flowers and harvests, its clouds and sunshine, its mountains and valleys, its dawn and twilight, its silence and its song, its discord and its music, its rests and tempests are all of them emblems. He and he alone has a mind to read and a heart to feel them. How the great heavens seem to come down at his bidding to map themselves on his eyeball! How the mountain ranges and the fossil strata keep back their secrets till he questions them! How history unrolls its chart to his steady gaze till he sees in the light of revelation the grand outline of God's wonderful and eternal providence. How the discipline of temptation and trial subdues his vain confidence, rasps away his follies, and perfects the jewel of his faith. How sun and stars to his thoughtful eye beam with a light which no prism can dissolve, and the shadows beneath which he walks, teach him to hold firmer by the word which is a lamp to his feet and a light to his path.

It is to him, subordinate to God, that nature pays her homage. For him winds blow and waters roll. For him the mine has kept its treasures safe through uncounted ages. For him the earth is carpeted with verdure, and for him the forests and the harvests wave. The sea and land alike lay their treasures at his feet. Beast, bird and insect, defy one another, but yield to his control. Canvass and marble wait his touch to glow with some

lofty ideal. Even the wilderness beckons him to its possession, and the ocean wave teaches him daring. Society itself is, normally, the school of affection and of virtue. The family is God's nursery for the young immortal. The state is the gymnasium of civil integrity, ordained of God to school men in the alphabet of that very justice, and order, and legislation, and retribution, which illustrate his own moral and infinite government.

But the revelation of Jesus Christ in declaring the dignity of human nature, even in spite of the apostacy and the unspeakable ruin that must finally overtake the perverted guilty soul, leaves all else behind. An imprisoned monarch may buy his ransom by ceded kingdoms. An Inca of Peru may seek to redeem himself from arrest by halls piled up with solid gold, but the blood that flowed on Calvary is more precious than mines or empires, and that blood was shed as a propitiation for our sins. This is the last, great, crowning gift of divine love, declaring in the preciousness of our ransom the dignity and value of the soul.

Recognize then, your true, your real greatness, not that of beauty or wealth, or taste, or learning, or gifts; not that of charities, or self-righteousness, or good deeds; for in all these things, our highest attainments leave us whelmed in dust and humiliation—leave us only to reflect on the vanity of man as mortal—but consider your birth-right of immortality. Consider how God has put you here in training for the skies, how he seeks to reclaim you from all that is low, and sensual, and selfish, that he may lift you up to himself and teach you to set your affections on things above, that you may be, more than the heir of kings, more than the wielder of sceptres—God's own child.

V.

THE COMPASS OF LIFE.

"A conscience void of offense."—Acts xxiv. 16.

OUR life on earth has been often compared to a vessel on the ocean. We are afloat on the waves of time, and if we ever reach the port of peace, it will be, as the vessel reaches the harbor, not by drifting, but by steering aright.

But the emblem of the vessel is only too weak. We bear with us a treasure richer by far than the holds of famed India fleets or Spanish galleons. A human soul freighted with the hopes—the possibility of immortal blessedness, is such a prize for the great Infernal privateer, as corsair or pirate never seized. Rich in faculties, affections, privileges, opportunities of sublime aim and virtuous effort, capable of doing and enduring and loving till its very presence is a joy and benediction, it would only be degrading it to class it with silver plate or California gold. It is sad enough to look at the skeleton frame of a noble vessel flung crushed upon the rocks, its timbers sinking to decay, the ooze and mud of the sea carpeting deck and state-room—but what is this to the sight of a soul flung wrecked and helpless on the rocks of eternal judgment, going down, amid the requiem of its own moans and anguish, to the deeps of gloom and darkness—the prey of desolation and utter despair?

And the dangers that threaten the human soul are paral-

leled by none which the sailor meets upon the sea. The records of probation would show a percentage of loss such as would force an underwriter to decline all risks of insurance. How few of life's voyagers reach the harbor without loss and in triumph! How many sink outright—how many are left castaways as it were on the desert shore!

There must be something terrific in a storm at sea,—when the waves come rolling on like watery avalanches, and the oak-ribbed vessel quivers under the shock; when the loud trumpet shout that should convey orders is drowned by the thunder's and the tempest's roar; when the cordage snaps and the masts are swept by the board! There is the great floating coffin that sinks in the trough of the sea as if it were a grave, and just beneath are those fathomless depths so deep that the light goes out as if in caverns, and there is no landmark, no beaten path, no glimmering lighthouse to guide the vessel's course.

And yet there is another sea whose face is swept by fiercer tempests, whose deeps are more unfathomable, whose shores are all lined with broken spars, and whose bottom is covered with countless wrecks which no human eye may explore. To many it is one wide waste of waters, a scene of ever tossing agitation, tempestuous with temptation, and its rock-bound shores stern as retribution wait to crush human hopes flung upon their mercy. Who can enter into that inward struggle through which the soul must pass to reach in triumph the peace of God, and see it whelmed beneath the waves, or striking on hidden rocks, or sinking visibly to the awful darkness beneath, and not feel that the perils of our life are not those of a Kane among Polar icebergs, or a Speke among barbarous

African tribes, or a Sedgwick and Wadsworth under the battle-field's hail of death, but rather are to be found everywhere, where a human spirit quails before the tempter, or wavers in its allegiance to God?

If a painter with the most consummate art should draw you two scenes—one, that of a Columbus returning triumphant from his voyage of discovery, with the riches and treasures of a New World in the hold of his vessel, and the crowded docks alive with men shouting his welcome home—the other, that of some foundering Arctic, going down with its freight of human life amid the rush of waves, the blaze of lightnings and the thunder of the storm,—the contrast would but symbolize the different fate of human beings, starting from the same harbor, with equal capabilities, with common hopes, and with the same favoring breeze. One passes away as it were in the triumph of a successful voyage, with words of lofty cheer in his feeblest whispers, while the port of rest greets and cheers his dying eye—the other sinks silent and hopeless beneath the waves and storms of life, leaving no memorial perhaps behind but the bubble of his parting breath. One stands on Pisgah conversing with angels. The feet of the other stumble on the dark mountains. One leaves behind him such memories of goodness as make every place of his earthly sojourn fragrant for generations—the other is thought of only as a Pilate, a Gallio, or a Demas.

What makes this difference? Why does the world never weary to hear of Mount Vernon, the tomb of Washington? Why does the latest generation keep still well-worn the path by which for centuries the noblest of earth have hastened to lay the freshest flowers on the graves of the martyrs; while of one of the very ablest of England's

gifted statesmen (Walpole) the historian has been constrained to say, "No enthusiasm was ever felt for his person; none was ever kindled by his memory. No man ever inquired where his remains are laid, or went to pay an homage of reverence to his tomb." The explanation is not far to seek. In one case *duty* ruled; in the other only a selfish ambition, so inherently mean, that no poet's strains could ennoble it, and no stars or ribbons blazon over its infamy. I do not wonder, in view of the contrast between the soul walking the earth but treading on it with the high resolve of duty, and the soul mining mole-like among the low elements which are given up to clods and worms, that the poet Wordsworth should apostrophize that by which alone life can be redeemed from contempt:

"Stern daughter of the voice of God,
O duty, if that name thou love,
Who art a light to guide, a rod
To check the erring and reprove;
Thou who art victory and law
When earthly terrors overawe;
Give unto me, made lowly wise,
The spirit of self-sacrifice."

Who would not respond, "Amen?" Who would not say,
let duty be to *me*

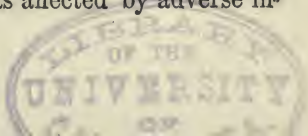
"victory and law
Whom earthly terrors overawe."

Suppose a native of some heathen land should approach the pilot of a vessel in a dark and stormy night, and see him often turning to gaze upon a glass-covered box, within which a long iron needle is poised! He

knows not what it is, and he cannot understand this frequent gaze. He inquires, and is told that under all changes, in every sea, and in every latitude, that iron needle will still point unwavering to the pole. When the darkness sets all human calculations at defiance, and the keenest sagacity cannot even guess whitherward the vessel moves, that little piece of senseless metal knows more than pilot, crew, and royal and scientific societies.

"How wonderful," perhaps he replies; "but is it absolutely infallible?" Why, no! Another piece of iron laid alongside of it, which the heedless observer might not detect, would turn it out of its course, and make it utterly untrustworthy. It might only mislead. It might just excite confidence only to betray it. And yet we do not throw it away. It is something above and beyond all reason and all calculation. Without it the sailor would be lost in the darkness. The clouds would spread like a pall over his vessel. But with the compass—satisfied that no unwarranted attraction draws it aside—he steers on by night and by day, in storm and sunshine, and feels assured that all is right.

Well, conscience is the soul's compass. On our voyage it points steadily to the pole of truth. It is not indeed infallible. It may be drawn aside from its true direction. Persecutors have dipped their hands in innocent blood and thought they did God service. Men making gain by mean or mischievous pursuits have warped their conscience round into line with their business. Many a crime, many a strange fanaticism has pleaded conscience. Men have engaged in the slave trade and persuaded themselves that they were carrying out the designs of the Almighty. But in every such case the conscience was not void of offence. It was affected by adverse in-



fluences, by self-interest, the love of pleasure or gain. The purse, with its metal contents perhaps, was too near this needle of the soul.

But he that would be safe at last must regard it. He must steer his course by the intimations which it gives. It is possible that ships abandoned by polar navigators should drift down to some southern coast and be again recovered, but he who drifts on the sea of life is lost beyond all recovery. And what is a career of pleasure but drifting with the breath of jesting and amusement, and what is a career of selfishness, but scudding without a helmsman before the blasts of passion and interest? Does any man imagine that thus he will ever reach the port?

No, he needs the compass, he needs it free from all disturbing influences, he needs to study and heed its pointing finger, and steer as it directs. Unless he does, he is lost. The man without a conscience, if such a thing could be, would be the greatest wretch on earth—the most amazing object of pity, and is he less so, who, with a conscience, heeds it not, or allows it to be subjected to influences that pervert it?

And yet what is any continuous course of evil but a steady, systematic perversion and offending of the conscience? It is like a straining of the eye till the power of vision is lost. It is a tampering with those convictions of duty by which the soul is held back as by a cable from the maelstrom of perdition.

What would you think of a man who on board a vessel should tamper with the compass, should allow scraps of iron to be left near it, and then throw some covering over them, that they might not be seen? He would imperil the vessel and its cargo, his own life and the life of all

on board. And yet this is what that man does who allows his conscience to be perverted, who brings his purse or his business or his pleasure so near to it as to draw it from its true line. He imperils his soul with all its precious interests. He imperils his everlasting inheritance and the welfare of all that are associated with him or are influenced by his example.

Or what would you think of a man who should throw the compass overboard, and should choose to be drifted with the winds and currents whithersoever they might bear him, to strange seas or to hidden rocks. And yet this is no more than what that man does who throws conscience overboard, and allows himself to drift on the current of pleasure or be driven by the blasts of passion or interest. He is afloat on a stormy sea, and he will never reach the port. We need no spirit of prophecy to be assured that his life will be a tragedy, and that ere long he will become a sunk or stranded wreck.

Above all things, then, tamper not with the conscience. Never allow it to be warped by unhallowed influences. A little thing, like a mote in the eye, may irritate, if not injure, it irreparably. One great attainment of Probation is a properly educated conscience. It is the monitor of duty; it is that which echoes in the soul the voice of its Maker. If it speaks doubtfully, if you have stifled its utterance, if you have perverted it from its true direction and scope, then you are risking the results of life on a false compass—false through your complicity, or by your own act.

VI.

DUTY — THE LAW OF LIFE.

“These things ought ye to have done.”—MATT. xxiii. 23.

THE word *ought* implies duty. Is there such a thing as duty? Is there any thing that should have control of a man above his own personal interest—above his pleasures and his tastes?

Thousands live as if they fully believed there was not. They are governed by self-interest. The great question with them—the maelstrom that swallows up everything else — is, What will contribute to *my* gain, to *my* pleasure? The world they live in, and the world they live for, centers in *self*. Their morality—if they are moral—is a matter of education or taste. Not to be honest would be a loss of reputation or standing. Not to be sober would risk health and success in business. All their virtue is simply natural amiability, or a matter of habit or calculation.

Such men often go through the world with a fair reputation, and do some good on their way—good, however, not of the kind that springs from design, or holy purpose, but good like that of a wheel in a piece of mechanism—for God’s providence, without reference to their own plan, makes them wheels in the social organism. Sheltered by honorable associations, the tornado of temptation spares them. They stand visibly upright to the last,

and no stain attaches to their names. But have they answered the end of life? Have they been governed by right motives? Have they built on the rock, or on the sand?

Sometimes they give back an answer themselves which contradicts their life. Sometimes, as remorse coils its folds about their sinking frame, they confess with inward agony that they have committed a great and life-long mistake. They spurn as mockery the soothing flattery that they have been upright and moral. The memory of their self-indulgence is to them like the "hand-writing on the wall." They see nothing high or noble or pure to redeem their life from the blight of a wasted probation.

And yet men will say, If I interfere with no man's rights, may I not consult my own convenience or pleasure? May I not do what I will with my talents, my time, my wealth? What good will it do me to be a hermit, or an ascetic, to crucify ease or comfort or taste by self-denial?

Well, let us suppose that a man need recognize no law above his own convenience or interest. What one may do, all may do. Duty is dispensed with. No man asks, What ought I to do? There is no *ought* in the case. Every man's interest, taste, or pleasure is his rule. What follows? What is the result in the family, in society, in the state? You have dissolved the whole framework of social order. The parent neglects the child, and the child disobeys the parent. Every brother is a Cain, every mother is an Herodias, every neighbor is an Ishmael. Will you remonstrate against this? How can you do it? You must appeal to that obsolete principle of duty. You must recognize the fact that we are not

independent of one another—that we owe to one another, without respect to what we receive, love and service.

Introduce the principle into the State. It repeals every law, for civil legislation is swallowed up by individual caprice. It reduces social order to chaos. It inaugurates anarchy and revolution and endless civil feuds. It sanctions tyranny, and theft, and murder, and the will of the strongest. Ambition, avarice, and revenge abolish courts, and bludgeons and pistols take the place of sheriffs. And what becomes of patriotism? The State cannot claim that a man should forego ease or personal gain, to serve either in its councils or in its armies.

But this is not all. If there is no such thing as duty, no promise is binding, no oath is inviolable. Why should a man observe truth or justice if there is no such thing as moral obligation independent of taste or interest? And without truth between man and man, where is society, where is the State? The drifting sand, every grain independent of its fellow, is cohesion and solidity itself, to a system in which every ruler is a Nero, and every subject an Ishmael.

Yet all this flows forth as the legitimate result when you dispense with the cement and the authority of duty. The veriest despotism that barbarism ever constructed could not hold together an hour without some respect for the obligations of duty. The Dey of Algiers, or even the King of Dahomey, is forced, in spite of the fiendliest passions, sometimes, at least, to keep his promise, to fulfill his engagements.

There is, then, such a thing as duty. There is something which claims the right to govern a man, above his own taste, or caprice, or interests. Nay, his own nature, scared and flawed by sin till it threatens to crumble to

absolute corruption, is still—like the rock interfused with silver—veined with conscience. In spite of the most confirmed and desperate depravity, the soul bows unconsciously before the majesty of the truth it hates, and Felix trembles at the look of his prisoner, even while his words mingle their tones with the clanking of his chain.

If you examine piecemeal a steam-engine, in its operations, you come to what is called the governor, which is designed to regulate the engine in all its motions. You have no more doubt of its design than you have of the existence of the engine itself. So if you take the human mind to pieces you find that this—ininitely more curious and complicate than any structure that human genius ever contrived—has its governor also. It has that which assumes to guide, and judge, and control all a man's actions — that which grasps the helm of the mind as unhesitatingly and boldly as the captain of a vessel directs how it shall be trimmed—issues its orders, as it were in conscious mastery—looks the soul in the face when it yields to low, base self-interest, and says: "You mean, dastardly wretch! blush to hold up your head among decent men." That governor is the human conscience. A man may not like its control or company. He may abuse it, and violate it, and spurn it, and stupify it with vice and drunkenness; he may put it under the heel of his lusts, and bore out its eyes with sophistry, and smother its voice with the loud tones of revel;—but, torn, bleeding, dishonored, gasping in whispers—it lives yet, and it claims its rightful throne, and it maintains still the tone of a king; and sometimes it flings off all the murderous lusts that trampled on it, and rises up like a giant to reassert its control over a wrecked and trembling nature. It can

not be destroyed. It can not be exiled. To the very last, when the flesh crumbles, and the limbs shake with weakness, and reason itself is ready to give way, conscience speaks in the soul with a voice as much more authoritative than all other voices, as God's thunders are louder than human revels.

And whence is conscience? Is it an accident? Was it dropped in as a fragment to fill up the seams or round out the intellectual or social nature of man? Nay; is it not the very substance of our moral nature, and does it not bear as plainly the stamp of design as the governor in a steam-engine? And was it not put there by the great Builder, and does not its very presence declare louder and plainer than words, that man, in all his faculties, tastes, sympathies, and purposes, is to yield to its control? It is the constitutional sovereign of the empire of our faculties. To disregard it, is treason; to disobey it, is rebellion. To set up pleasure, or convenience, or gain, or personal or selfish interest, in place of it, is to dethrone the rightful monarch; it is, as it were, to release Barabbas and crucify Jesus.

Man, then, is made under law; he is created subject to the law of duty. That law is supreme. It is as much above lust, passion, and interest as the laws of the United States are above the resolutions of a caucus of secessionists—as the laws of Sinai are above the rules of etiquette at Belshazzar's revels or Dives's feasts.

If any man could yet doubt it, he would only need to compare the results of a life of duty with a life of pleasure—the lofty heroism of a Daniel faithful to his God amid all the allurements of a heathen court, with the selfish aspirations of a Haman climbing up to swing from his own gallows—the sublime fidelity of a Washington to

the sacred trust his country reposed in him, with the baseness of an Arnold selling himself to a golden infamy—the truthfulness of unswerving integrity under whose shadow the wronged finds shelter and the wretched pity, with the trifling, vain, heedless indulgence that degrades a man to the level of a peacock or a swine. Placed side by side, even a fool might be struck by the contrast. One is sunlight, the other fog; one is the fragrance of Eden, the other a stench. The study of one inspires and thrills us beyond the note of drum or trumpet or martial strain; the sight of the other makes us sick of human nature. We turn away as from a slough of filth and loathing. Yet one is duty incarnate, the other selfishness gone to seed.

The great question, then, which is to determine the plan and destiny of a man's life is this: Shall I yield to the supreme law of duty? Shall I bow to the mandate of conscience, and of God speaking through the conscience? Shall I put base or selfish interest foremost, or shall I simply ask, "What ought I to do," and make the answer final?

On that decision depends more than pen can write or tongue can tell. On that hinge the results of probation and the issues of eternity. By that is to be determined whether these years shall be carved into the statuary of noble and godly deeds, or whether they shall be ground down to the sandy rubbish with which Satan strews the pathway of blinded thousands to hell—whether your example shall be a moral lighthouse which the storm-tossed shall see and bless, or a rocket, whose charred remnant shall be trod under the heel of contempt, even by its once admirers—whether you will mount upward or sink downward—soar or crawl—be Godlike or beast-

like—be the world's benefactor or its curse—grow up to the stature of a sanctified manhood or be dwarfed and shriveled to the littleness of base and selfish aims.

Can any man hesitate with such a choice before him? He might almost as well hesitate between an angel's crown and a felon's cell, between the benediction of Heaven and the agonies of despair.

And now the question meets him, What is duty? It is not a difficult one to him who is ready to deny himself and take up his cross—to one who has made up his mind fully to shrink from no task which he *ought* to meet—to him who stands resolved to thread every deed and thought on the string of right. Such a man will soon find that all authority centers in the will of God, that morality has its true and eternal basis in religion, that he cannot begin his course without first asking, What do I owe to that great Being in whose hand my breath is, and whose are all my ways? And he cannot long consider this without being brought to feel how grossly he has sinned already, and how much he needs the pardoning love and grace of God.

And then may he find in the volume of God's revealed will a release from all his difficulties, and a solution of all his doubts. He will find provision made for all his need. The path of duty will open before him, and he will see that its very starting-point is just where the penitent sinner bows in humble confession before the cross of Christ.

VII.

LIFE SERVICE DUE TO GOD.

“Will a man rob God?”—MAL. iii. 8.

AS morality—in a general sense—is duty toward man, so religion is duty toward God. Both are demanded of us, and we cannot be just if we deny the claims of either. If we allow one and refuse the other, we stand condemned by our own act. We are inconsistent with ourselves.

And yet there are thousands who claim—and perhaps justly, as they understand it—to be upright and moral, whose religion is but a form and many times a mockery. They are honest with men—as they measure obligation. They are dishonest toward God. If they admit that they ought to obey and serve and love their Maker, it is an admission that dies on the lip and never affects the heart. With little or no anxiety they tread their own convictions under foot; they press on in a course which their consciences condemn, and which conflicts with all the principles which they avow or even cherish in social intercourse.

Such is the career of thousands and tens of thousands. They palliate it. They excuse it. They offset it by an array of their own virtues, their integrity or morality. But what is its character? What is the proper name for it? It is robbery—robbing God.

But “will a man rob God?” There is something atrocious in the very thought! To rob a stranger is

criminal, and the law of the land reprobates it. To rob a neighbor is more repulsive. To rob a friend, one who has done us kindly offices, is still more heinous. To rob a parent is accounted the height of baseness as well as, guilt—but to rob God, who is not only our great heavenly Friend, our Ruler, our Maker, but our Father in heaven, infinitely transcends it all.

But can the charge be brought home to us? Is it true? What is the verdict of every unbiased conscience in view of the evidence? Let us see.

And first, *can* a man rob God? The whole universe is his, and man is his creature. You may say that he can carry nothing off the premises, and it is true. But can there be no robbery save that which succeeds? The owner of property sits unseen by the intruder, sees him enter and seize his plunder, is ready to recover it again at the proper moment, or perhaps knows that the robber is too weak to carry it off, will in fact drop exhausted and helpless in the attempt. But is the deed any the less a crime for all this? So God's eye is on the culprit. He sees not only the outstretched arm, but also the very thoughts of the soul. He can resume anything that guilty man may choose to appropriate just when he will; nay, he knows that life itself, like a palsied hand, must soon sink too enfeebled to grasp or retain its prize. But the spirit of the deed yet remains. If not successful, it is yet robbery.

But God has so made man as a free and accountable agent that he can at will retain and withhold what is due to God as his in right and justice. He is put in trust with that which belongs to God, and is justly to be rendered back to him—which cannot be withheld from him or his service without great guilt.

Man is God's creature, his intelligent creature, capable of studying, and by instruction of understanding the end of his being, and devoting himself toward its attainment. God has a supreme right to demand of every man that he shall enter into the divine design and co-operate heartily and steadily in carrying it out, and to withhold that devotion or co-operation is to rob him of the duty which an intelligent creature owes.

Man is God's subject, made under law, born under authority, bound to obey and to render every duty of loyalty and fidelity. He can rebel in spirit and purpose, and refuse obedience, and withhold loyalty. And what a robbery is this! Ask the statesman or patriot. How can a value be fixed on that of which it is said "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

Man is God's child, and owes him a child's duty of love and affection. That love and affection belong to God. They are his by right. No one can be justified—can justify himself in withholding them. And what is their worth? Love is the treasure of the heart; it is that which we prize the most. It is that on which God sets the highest estimate. A man might steal your purse or rob your dwelling, and you might perhaps forgive him, but suppose he stole away the affections of husband, wife or child, would you not feel that the robbery was one which no gold could compensate? Would you not say that this was the very height and atrocity of robbery? And what in the sight of Him who owns creation and can make millions of worlds at a breath, are all the treasures of mines and kingdoms, to the love and affection of one who can say—"My Father God?" That little prattler on your knee cannot think as you think,

cannot speak as you speak, cannot earn a penny to add to your store, but its smile is the sunshine of your home, and how much you should prize its unbought kiss you may never know perhaps, unless called to look at death's seal on its marble brow and its closed eyelids. Ah! what a robbery, when God, with a God's authority and a parent's affection, says to his wayward child, my son give me thy heart, and the heart is denied!

God rightly claims your influence and example on his side. There is a controversy going on between sin and holiness, and he that is not with him is against him. The worldly wealth you may have to give to promote the spread of Christ's kingdom may be small, but a consecrated life he has a right to claim—a life of prayer, a life that commends religion to others, a life that tends to check the tide of overwhelming sin, and draw lost men to the cross of Christ. Here is something that you either give or withhold. If you withhold it, then you rob God.

God rightly claims the service of your hands—the consecration of all the fruits of your toil. These belong to him as the great proprietor, and you are but his steward. Some men make an unwarranted distinction between what they use for themselves and what they give away in charity. But God recognizes no such distinction. What you expend for your own comfort you are to expend for him and his glory, as well as what you give to spread the Gospel. God entrusts his own wealth to you for both, to use in either case for him. His wealth furnishes that garment. His wealth spreads that table. Do you recognize it as his? Is it consecrated? is it all consecrated? Do you read the image of God as well as of the goddess Liberty on the coin—the image of Jesus

overspreading that of the President or the Secretary of the Treasury? Or like Ananias and Sapphira, are you keeping back from God a part of what you acknowledge to be his? If so you are robbing God.

God rightly claims the service of your intellect. His name as owner is stamped on your every faculty, more than burnt or branded in. He is its absolute proprietor. Has it been devoted to his service? Has it been enlisted in his army? Has it taken the oath of allegiance? Do you think, plan, purpose for the glory of God?

And if there is anything which is God's beyond dispute, it is these hours of probation. Every year, day, hour, moment, belongs to God. Have you given them to him—not only the Sabbath, not only the hour of prayer, of consecrated thought and meditation, but each moment—have you given it back with holy service; have you used it as not your own, but entrusted to you that you might do the work of life, might prepare for eternity, might lay up treasure in heaven?

If in any of these respects you have failed, then you have robbed God—robbed him not as a clerk robs his employer of money—not as a traitor robs his country of loyalty—not as a child robs a parent of the love and affection it owes—but you have as it were robbed him of his own glory, you have lived as if He were such a being that he could claim nothing at your hands, and was only to be—if not simply dreaded—neglected and despised. The evidence is full and complete. It is written on the memory. It is traced on the conscience. It is recorded in the book of Omniscience. The stolen property is perhaps in your hands, or your spendthrift policy has not pawned it beyond recall as a witness against you.

What will you do? Confess your sin. Look at it in its full enormity. See yourself at the mercy of an offended God. Confess your guilt at His bar. Select Christ as your advocate, and then plead the merits of atoning blood.

But is there nothing, hitherto withheld, that is to be rendered back to God? Has he not a right to say—"My son, give me thy heart?" Can you evade the force of that appeal—"if then I be a father, where is my honor? and if I be a master, where is my fear?" God is entitled, as God, to your supreme love and your cheerful service. Will you withhold them? And what is that but robbery?

"My Maker and my King,
To thee *my all* I owe;
Thy sovereign bounty is the spring
Whence all my comforts flow.

"Shall I withhold thy due?
And shall my passions rove?
Lord, form this wretched heart anew,
And fill it with thy love."

VIII.

LIVING FOR OTHERS.

“Bear ye one another’s burdens.”—GAL. vi. 2.

BY the very constitution of society, as well as that of our own being, we are placed under obligation to seek and promote the welfare of others. Out of the circumstances of our mutual relations, the sense of duty is necessarily evolved. These circumstances are not of our ordering. They are due to the design of the great Maker himself, who has ordered our lot. Rightly read by the thoughtful mind, they sustain by their analogy the natural authority of those divine injunctions which require us to “deny ourselves,” to “bear one another’s burdens,” to be “our brother’s keeper,” and, in a word, to discharge those missionary obligations, so often branded as fanatic, which the Gospel of Christ enforces upon us.

Some beams of this great truth evidently dawned, before the advent of Christ, on the heathen mind. It is significant that Cicero should write a treatise *de officiis*, and bring to view the mutual obligations of men and citizens—that he should say so emphatically that “the true, the simple, the sincere was that which was most suited to the nature of man,”* that self-interest should yield to justice, that we are not born for ourselves alone.

* Quod verum, simplex sincerumque sit, id esse naturæ hominis aptissimum.

Such conclusions may have been drawn simply from the study of the constitution of man, or the constitution of society. But, whether the fact is recognized or not, these have God for their author, and the wise study of them reveals His design, and lends His sanction to the obligations that had, perhaps, been already inferred. The relations of parent and child, of ruler and subject, and, indeed, all those which grow out of our social existence, must be referred to Him. Our well-being is identified with the proper discharge of duties which we owe to others.

This does not happen by chance. It is not a mere incident of our probation. Created as we are, social beings, our own natures could not be developed, except through intercourse with our fellow-beings. Nor is it left to our choice whether this shall be the case. We could not change the order of things if we would. Society is constituted into families, neighborhoods and states. The family is the school in which first of all the race is trained. Each helps to educate the other. The child educates the parent as really as the parent does the child. A new order of affections, anxieties and efforts is called forth by the necessary discharge of parental duty, and many a virtue is evoked by the discharge of parental fidelity in protecting, guarding and educating the child.

First of all there is forethought for those who are entirely and absolutely dependent. The infant, unable to tell its wants, or even to know them itself, silently appeals for help and kindness and care. It is an appeal which no parent can resist. It comes with a kind of divine authority. In yielding to it, the parent is compelled to consider what is adapted to the circumstances of the

child, to observe its varied wants and exposure, to study what is adapted to its bodily comfort and mental improvement, to train and educate it for future usefulness and to take care of itself.

Nor is this all. Each member of the household must be thoughtful for the welfare of others. This is the necessary law of the well-ordered and happy household. An exclusive selfishness is intolerable. It would turn the domestic scene into a theatre of hostile and warring passions. Perverted as humanity is, the family is the school in which we are placed first of all—placed by God—to unlearn the depravity of our selfishness, and make it part of our life to take forethought for others.

Turning now to society at large, we find that for our own good we must toil and care for one another. Society itself is a mutual league of help. There is no formal or expressed, but there is an understood alliance. We work, plan, invent, not for ourselves alone, but for one another. Others share the benefit of our industry and virtue, and we share the benefit of theirs. Life itself is valuable or worthless, a joy or a burden, largely in proportion as we have around us those whom we love or whom we distrust. By society we are educated to that which we call public spirit, that is, a disposition which rises above considerations of narrow, private interest. Let society become organized, as it must be, into the form of government, and every citizen is trained to consider the claims of the state, or, as it is called, the commonwealth. By the very vote we are called upon to give, we are educated to think of the whole social body and what will be for their benefit.

Nor is this all. Government represents the national

mind, studious not for the profit of those who compose the administration, but of those who compose the state. It has to consider the wants, the exposure, the burdens, the defence, the prosperity of all. So in the neighborhood. Even our own peace, and prosperity, and security are the motive if all others are wanting, to study the intelligence, morality and well-being of others. We want them educated and we build schools for them. We want them reformed, and we build penitentiaries and houses of refuge. We want them brought under religious restraint, and we form bible and tract societies to furnish them religious reading, or build houses of worship in which they may be taught of God.

And these social and civil duties are such that we neglect them at our peril. If we selfishly abandon all consideration for others, if we concentrate all care and anxiety on our own aggrandizement or emolument, we take the surest way to destroy our own security and comfort. If we, in our avarice or selfishness, leave others to grow up ignorant or vicious—if we leave them uncared for in their vagrancy or vice—if we withhold the means needed for their reform, we educate society itself to become a den of human wolves—we leave it to sink to a level with the revolting order or rather anarchy of savage life. All the forms of wickedness that fester in the lanes and alleys of great cities till they breed a moral pestilence—all the crimes that, nursed in moral neglect and social corruption, at length stalk forth infernal Nimrods, to rule and ruin, and trample on those who did not trample them out by kindness at the opportune moment—all these are the penalty for remissness in social duty and social virtue.

Again, the most attractive forms of human excellence

are those which are produced from the soil of our social relations. Man is never so admirable as when he forgets himself to bless others. There are no deeds that so kindle the heart to admiration and enthusiastic praise as those in which we bear others' burdens, or volunteer to suffer and endure in their behalf. It half redeems from rebuke the vices of the savage parent, when we see him risking his own life to save that of the child, and who can read without tears of sympathy of those struggles of honest poverty by which the self-denying parent endeavors to clothe, and feed, and educate a child? Those sleepless nights, those tiresome days, those anxious hours, those welcomed hardships—adding new wrinkles to the brow, and bending the frame with other burdens than those of age—these mark a heroism, hidden indeed from the eyes of the great crowd, but not less noble, generous, or admirable than that which on battlefields wins the plaudits of the world.

And what is the charm that invests the annals of philanthropy but just that cheerful charity which foregoes ease, and gain, and selfish advantage, to promote the comfort and welfare of those who have no legal claim to such service? The deeds which redeem from contempt the broad desert of selfishness which constitutes the waste of human history, are those in which generous spirits, postponing all selfish considerations, have labored, suffered, endured hardship, or peril, or death for others. The world may not be commercially richer for the search for Sir John Franklin. Its map may not have been much altered by the generous valor of a Wilkenreid or Tell, and many a patriot and many a martyr may have fallen without seeing the cause consecrated by their blood triumphant. But we, at least, socially, morally,

spiritually, are the richer for them, and the portrait gallery of history holds upon its walls, bidding them gaze down upon us from the canvass, features that impress themselves upon our remembrance, and which force us, to aspire to a loftier standard of thought and endeavor.

Even war, with all its stern, forbidding aspects—war that is wont, like the fabled Gorgon's head, to change the hearts of those that long gaze upon it into stone, finds here almost its only redeeming features. When men forget themselves for their country's sake, and for the love of others breast the surging tide of battle, and risk life and everything on earth at the call of patriotic duty, it is impossible for us not to admire and praise. Such deeds rise like the Alps above the lowlands and quagmires of selfishness, and cold and dead must that heart be which does not gaze up to them with the awe and reverence due to moral greatness.

Thus it will be found that in all the deeds or courses of action which most constrain to admiration, the real element that commands homage is the forgetfulness of self in order to promote the well-being of others. He that takes forethought for those who cannot or do not take forethought for themselves, for the widow and orphan, or even for the depraved and vicious, is the moral hero. And yet without going out of our way we may find in our own homes, neighborhoods, communities, those who challenge our sympathy and care. God's providence, therefore, sets before us in nature the very lessons of His word of grace, teaches us to bear one another's burdens, incites us to self-sacrifice to promote their well-being, calls upon us as we have freely received freely to give, urges us to look not every man on his own things, but

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every man also on the things of others, echoes in our ears the great lesson—no man, no true man, liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

To the disciple of Christ I need not say, your Master's example rebukes once and for ever everything like an absorbing selfishness. He went about doing good. Your business is to follow in His footsteps. You have no right to think only of your own ease and comfort. God is educating you every day by the lessons of your probation to care for the well-being and blessedness of others. While you are pleading to yourself your own ease or comfort, while you are careless whether your example cheers and encourages your Christian brethren, whether they find you at, or absent from, your post, you are violating not only the solemn injunctions of your Master, but the very laws of the social constitution enacted by the Author of nature itself.

But can it be a duty to study the social and moral welfare of others, and not their spiritual good? Would you consider it a criminal neglect in a parent to clothe and feed his child, yet leave his mind untaught and his heart untrained? Does that deserve the name of education which leaves uncared for all which constitutes man human and immortal? Am I taking true forethought for one whom I send on a distant journey where he will be exposed to damp and cold, if I just furnish him with an umbrella to shield him from the present rays of a scorching sun? Surely, in truthful fidelity I must consider what he needs most, what he *will* need. And what does man need most? What do you need yourself? Bound to eternity, bound a sinner to the judgment-seat, aspiring to everlasting blessedness in a holy world, what is it that is all essential—what but a new heart, a regenerated and sanc-

tified spirit, full and free forgiveness through the channels of mercy opened by sovereign grace.

Your duty then, your highest duty, is to lead others to Christ—to think of their welfare, not as creatures of to-day, but as heirs of eternity. They are ever with you. They are fellow-pilgrims. They are children of the same Father in heaven. As guilty and wretched, they are entitled to your compassion. As human, they demand your sympathy, and the heart that denies that sympathy will be burdened thereby. It is made cold, stern, repulsive. The very features of it at last bear the imprint of their own cursed selfishness, while the loveliness of charity cannot remain hid even by the veil of its modesty.

“As the rivers furthest flowing,
In the highest hills have birth;
As the banyan, broadest growing,
Oftenest bows its head to earth—
So the noblest minds press onward,
Channels far of good to trace;
So the largest hearts bend downward,
Circling all the human race.”

IX.

ATHEISTIC EVASION OF DUTY.

“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.”—Ps. xiv. 1.

THE only consistent method of evading the claims of duty, is that which is pursued by the Atheist. In denying the existence of a Supreme Ruler, he leaves man to all that measure of freedom in his self-will and his self-indulgence, which circumstances will allow. Instead of quarrelling with specific obligations, or meeting and setting aside the claims of duty in detail—he would annihilate at once the authority which enjoins them all. Instead of cutting down the tree—under the shadow of which he cannot bear to sit—piecemeal, instead of lopping off limb after limb, he strikes boldly at the trunk itself, and it is neither the fault of his will or purpose that he does not succeed. In all this—though “a fool,” he is a logical and consistent fool. He does not take the Universalist’s position and pretend that the Scriptures—a bed of thorns to him in his sins—is as soft as down, fighting with a thousand texts of Scripture and finding it but a cheerless task to smother them one after another, when they come to life again so soon. He does not stop at Deism—still a half-way house on the road to a broad denial or evasion of duty—finding in that the ground of a more than possibility, that all he dreads may be true—but boldly, if not honestly, he strides at once to that

position where alone he can consistently reject the claims enforced by conscience and the Bible. Calling himself an Atheist, with any life that he pleases to lead, he is incased and shielded from all assault. You may exhaust the magazine of motive, and you cannot reach him. He is proof against all. Archimedes said, Give me a *pou sto*, a place to stand, and I will lift the world. The Being of a God is *pou sto*, the place to stand, to move and control the mind of man; and when that is denied, your resources are gone, you have nothing on which to rest your lever. Sometimes a man is shrewd enough to see this, and in his aversion to duty he leaps at once into the fortress of Atheism, and defies you. He puts himself beyond the reach of argument or remonstrance. What can you say to him? You might as well attempt to reason with one who denies your presence. He climbs the Babel tower of infidelity to its topmost turret, where no arrow of truth can reach him—but if there be an earthquake—his grave would be the deepest as his fall would be greatest. But this much we may say for him, while he puts himself up so high—so near the lightnings—that it is the only place where—with an impenitent heart, fully set in resistance to the claims of duty—he can consistently be at peace. It is the only place where his life and principles will not quarrel.

But to all this there is an offset. There is something horrid in the sublime theory upon which Atheism plants itself—assuming thence to look down on the existence of a God as an idle fantasy. Grant the principle of the Atheist, and Nero's wish for Rome is realized for the universe. It has but one neck that may be severed at a blow, and without a God it is severed. You have nothing left but a headless trunk—a mere carcass fit to moul-

der and rot. Other errors rob us piecemeal—this does its work by wholesale. Others hew off here a thumb, or finger, or arm, or pluck out an eye, this tears out the living heart as it beats. It is a great loss to have one of God's grand and precious truths torn from us, but nothing to losing God himself. How do you think one of the blessed martyrs would have felt, to have been robbed, while hunted in mountain or glen, of any one of those pillars of immortal hope which he finds in the word of God?—any one of those beams that shone full from the Sun of Righteousness in upon the darkness of his bosom? And yet, would it have been anything to be compared with having all those pillars wrested away, and the fabric overthrown—or having that sun itself blotted out with all its beams in eternal night? Atheism is consistent with itself when, as in the French revolution, it writes over the gateway to the grave, "Death is an eternal sleep." It is consistent with itself when it annuls every restraint that is exercised over wicked men by the apprehension of a Supreme Judge and a final retribution. It is consistent with itself when it closes every temple of worship, and rends to atoms all those hallowed sympathies and hopes with which the soul of man is inspired to do and suffer on earth. It is consistent with itself when it leaves the unaided reason of man to grapple in blank despair with the fearful problems of his existence and destiny—when it sends him to the grave with all the racking uncertainty and doubt that invest the possibilities of a hereafter—when it robs the injured sufferer of the last hope of redress in the justice of heaven, and at the same time unbars the gates of every lawless passion and impulse, emancipating it from all sense of accountability or dread of retribution. If there is any one con-

ception into which all these elements of the terrible, the sublime and the despairing, are compressed and combined, it is that this scheme of existence, this moral and physical universe, is without a controlling mind—without a God. We stand appalled at the blind working of this immense mechanism of worlds, where one jar or accident hurls the whole to atoms, and makes the vast chaos one common grave for all that lives. Suns and systems rush along no iron track with a speed that mocks the grasp of our conception, and there is no engineer with his hand upon the throttle or the break. The structure of human society, of human justice and legislation, is without any divine sanction. Its corner-stone is crumbled, and every hour it runs the risk of destruction and extinction.

The security of an oath is but a fable—and the administering it a jest. The laws of justice are but the rule of expedience, and crime is merely the blunder of him that commits it. All the punishment that the guilty needs to dread is just that which he has to fear from an equal, and all the encouragement that the innocent can hope, is that which is doled out to him in the scanty and fallible allotments of the accidents of human justice. You have taken away all that strength to resist, and that encouragement to endure, and that sense of responsibility forbidding to swerve, which are found in the thought, "Thou God seest me." You have annulled all those cheerful, hopeful springs of effort which find their strength in the complacent smile of an approving God. In the hour of calamity and darkening anguish, you have taken away the last resource on which the child of sorrow and affliction can lean. Life is only a brilliant dream, lighting its own way to the grave, kindled just

long enough, to flash upon the gloom that is to cover it. Man is an orphan—or a helpless child of uncertainty, want, guilt and anguish. The world is a desert and a graveyard. Eternity is a terrible unexplored chaos, the more terrible because unknown. The lofty hopes inspired by the Gospel are like itself, *ignes fatui*, brilliant only to mislead and betray. The fond affections that would follow their loved object to the grave, and will not desert it even then—these are but the implements of our torment, the chains that we must wear to gall us. No hope lights up the parting hour of earth; no possible prospect of a blest reunion can extract its sting. We must stand shuddering over the fathomless gulf of annihilation, and feed our fancy on the shadows that imagination summons out of its darkness.

“Behold, then, man, the creature of a day,
Spouse of the worm, and brother of the clay,
Frail as the leaf in Autumn’s yellow bower,
Dust in the wind, or dew upon the flower;
A friendless slave, a child without a sire,
Whose mortal life and momentary fire
Light to the grave his chance-created form,
As ocean wrecks illuminate the storm.
And when the gun’s tremendous flash is o’er,
To night and darkness sink for evermore.”

If a man can embrace such a theory—a theory whose open arms wait to press him to its bosom of hidden daggers—a theory that sacrifices all that we love, and scorns all that we respect, and blasts all that we hope, and desecrates all that we worship—if he can embrace such a theory and find delight in it—and feel no humiliation at the nothingness to which it reduces him, and no

pain at the robbery which it inflicts, we will consent to except him from the common lot and sympathies of man, but in disavowing him, we must disavow his theory too, and own that such an attainment as his is beyond and above the reach of our envy.

Such, then, is the gloomily sublime position which the Atheist occupies—and often is proud to occupy, as though there were a merit and a triumph in the bold achievement of mounting to that height of scepticism from which he looks down contemptuously on all that is dear, or honored, or sacred in the life and hopes of man. Then he lays claim to a mind more impartial, an intelligence more searching—a science more extensive and accurate, than that of other men; he speaks in a tone of pity of their religious weakness and errors, their superstitious scruples, their bondage to worn out and obsolete notions. But what is his achievement, save the gloomiest conquest of all? what his triumph but the triumph of despair? If he has searched beyond the ken of others—if he has read with a keener vision the mysteries of nature, if he has explored the realms of thought which others have never trod, what is the result that he brings back? what is the conclusion of all, that he is proud to announce? That there is no God!

“Are these the pompous tidings ye proclaim,
Lights of the world, and demigods of fame?
Is this your triumph, this your proud applause,
Children of Truth, and champions of her cause?
For this hath Science searched with weary wing,
By shore and sea each mute and living thing.
For this constrained to utterance earth and air,
To waft us home the message of despair.
Then let her bind the palm, her brow to suit,
Of blasted leaf and death-distilling fruit.

Then let her read, not loudly nor elate,
The loom that bars us from a better fate.
But sad as angels for the good man's sin,
Blush to record, and weep to give it in."

The Atheist's presumed conquest is that of disaster and defeat, his boast is one over which his heart might break.

But by what strange method is it that the Atheist climbs to this rocky height, where, like Satan on the throne of hell, he sits "supreme in misery"? How are we constrained to wonder at the immensity of his resources, by means of which he can reach that position from which he can look down upon the being of a God as an exploded and obsolete notion—from which he can look abroad through the immensity of suns and systems and feel warranted to declare, "They had no author; they have no guide." Before such an immense and wonderful intelligence as this, all the learning and attainments of the greatest scholars and philosophers of the world, become diminutive and insignificant. The mind of Newton had a wonderful grasp and sagacity, but all that he attained only led him to bow the more reverently before the throne of the Great Ruler, and the poet has traced his epitaph in those words:

"Sagacious reader of the works of God."

Milton was read in classic lore, and he possessed a genius to make classic whatever flowed from his own pen; but from his broad survey of earth and man he turned back, exclaiming:

"One Almighty is from whom
All things proceed and up to Him return."

Bacon, with an intellect that seemed made to pioneer the ages, uncovered with a mighty hand link after link in the chain of causation; but instead of reaching the lofty position of the Atheist, he had to be content with a humbler measure of attainment, and the feeble light that he kindled was only enough to extort the confession: "I had rather believe all the fables of the Legend, and the Alkoran, and the Talmud, than that this universal frame of things is without a God." But all these minds, great as we measure them, are but pygmies to the Atheist, and all their attainments leave them on the first round of that ladder to whose top he climbs!

Who does not wonder, then, by what power of genius that height is reached—what hands have framed the ladder or hewn the staircase, by which the brain of man, without reeling or growing dizzy, has mounted to it?

The basis on which the wisdom of all other philosophy has been constrained to rest, has been the existence of a great first cause on which all others depend; but Atheism, outrivalling the Almighty himself, who hung the world on nothing, presumes to suspend all secondary causes on no hook at all, and sustains them all without an upholding hand.

What other minds consider as absurd, and repudiate as folly, the Atheist receives as reasonable, consistent and wise. He can believe in a design without a designer, a creation without a creator—a government without a governor, a system without a devising and ordaining mind.

What other minds in their paroxysms of unbelief are constrained to confess, they can only attain to doubt, he boldly and habitually denies, asserting as established that of which they can see not the barest possibility of proof or evidence.

What other minds deem incredible, because outfaced and overwhelmed by a thousand contrary and invincible probabilities, he declares to be true, running in the teeth of other men's reason and common sense.

While other men can go back in the history of the worlds only to the creating fiat of Jehovah, he can declare their eternal existence, or put the "genesis of chance" among the rationalities of his creed.

While everything else in the universe animate or inanimate, according to its grade and nature, declares like a witness, "there is a God," and the very structure of the Atheist's body and soul confirm the evidence, his voice rises discordant and gives them all the lie.

What then must be that immense superiority of intelligence, that surpassing grasp of mind, that unparalleled learning, which shall warrant a man to take this position, with every sun and star in heaven looking down with an eye of rebuke upon him, and every sand grain and dew drop flashing back the remonstrance, and then and thus assert, there is no God? Such a man should possess, in himself, not only the lore of ages, but the history of eternity, not a narrow acquaintance with a single world, but a minute familiarity with all worlds, not a shrewd suspicion of what the soul may be, but a positive knowledge of all its mysteries, its origin and destiny. He should have the power of reasoning surpassing any thing that mortal man has ever developed, a glance that can not only penetrate the mysteries of nature, but discern the secrets of eternity. And when you can bring me such an one denying that there is a God, in other words, present me with God himself in audible voice, disavowing his own existence, then, and not till then, will I consent, not to be an Atheist, for that would still be impossi-

ble, but to confess that to be one admitted of some palliation.

Surely that intelligence that presumes to have reached such a point as Atheism, has overshot its object, and only embarrassed itself by its presumption. It has assumed so much that we can yield it nothing. It has claimed such wisdom that with the warrant of God's word, we can call it nothing but *fool*. And what has it accomplished, what has it aimed to accomplish, but to achieve death and demonstrate despair, and assure annihilation? Sadly, sadly do we contemplate such triumphs if they were real, rejoiced rather to think and sing :

“Thou art O God, the life and light
Of all this wondrous world we see;
Its glow by day, its smile by night,
Are but reflections caught from thee;
Where'er we turn, thy glories shine,
And all things fair and bright are thine.”

The absurdity of Atheism has but one parallel and that is the disastrous nature of the conclusions at which it seeks to arrive.

But Atheism is not the product of intellect ; it does not, unless in some very rare cases, originate in the brain. The fool has said in his *heart* “there is no God.” He has gone down, down into the deepest, darkest chambers of imagery within, that there without discovering a blush, and hidden from the scrutiny of reason, he might assert, there is no such thing as light, “for God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.” It was in that den, where all manner of evil thoughts are born, thoughts that are robbers, and extortioners, and adulterers, and murderers, long before the guilty deed is done,—it was

there that Atheism drew its first breath. It was born of rebellion and of crime. The dreadful wish was father to the thought. Man hated God before he denied Him. He broke His law, before he attempted to dethrone Him. There must be a strong impulse to Atheism from within, before reason can be driven to the bold assertion that contemns the evidence without. The heart must be a tyrant before the head can become a slave to lie for its master. Then it puts into the lips of reason, words whose utterance degrades it, sentiments with which reason has no relations but of antipathy. Of rabid sceptics this has in many instances been the history. By some sin or course of sin they had first committed themselves to a life with which Atheism alone was consistent, and they were impelled by all the memory of the past, and every foreboding of the future, to patch up some device that could shield their conscience, and cry *peace, peace*, even though there was no peace.

The true remedy for Atheism therefore, as might be supposed, is not evidence or argument addressed to the intellect, but moral truth and duty brought home to the conscience and the heart. The whole Bible has not an argument in it addressed to the reason of man to convince him of a God. That point is everywhere assumed. And there is no need of plausible suggestions to show that in this it is right.

The man who will swallow the absurdities of Atheism, that will believe that any other intellect than his own is the crude product of chance, that will count the world and human existence things undesigned, must be impelled by a something within him too mighty for reason to master. The heart is wrong, and, first of all, he must be made to feel and confess it. We say to such a man,

look in upon your own being, and see if you have never felt that you were a sinner, if you have never heard a still, small voice speaking within you as experience never speaks, with a more than mortal majesty, reminding you of duty and enforcing it by something more terrible than the fear of human justice. Look and see if upon your whole moral nature there is not stamped a deep sense of accountability that you cannot shake off ; ask that nature, whether it be not true as the most noted of all French revolutionists was at last constrained to declare, that if there were no God, it behooved man to invent one ; ask yourself if the sense of your dependence and accountability does not plainly declare, that your own soul is in an unnatural state, when it does not look up in glad and grateful recognition of a God above, in whom you live and move and have your being ; ask yourself if that life which religion, or the recognition of a God, calls upon you to lead, is not the one most suited to your state, condition and hopes ; ask whether the daily mercies that overflow your path do not call forth an involuntary and spontaneous burst of gratitude, and to whom does that gratitude refer, who is or can be its object but God.

Surely that life of man out of which the element of religion is excluded is at war with reason, with conscience, with the peace, and condition and hopes of man. The suffrage of all ages condemns it. There is nothing to defend it but the absurdity of Atheism.

Let one thing then remain fixed and solid among the eternal principles by which life is to be guided—there is a God. There is a great eternal power above us all, under whose eye we live, whose will is our law, and to whose tribunal we are accountable. Live then under the solemn consciousness of this great and fearful truth, and

in forming your purposes, and cherishing your hopes, let them never clash with it, for whosoever shall fall on this shall be broken, and on whomsoever it shall fall, it shall grind him to powder.

It is only the perverse heart that rebels against the authority of God. It is only the guilty heart that wishes Him not to be. But holiness triumphs in the assurance that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. The soul panting for a higher than any earthly good, cries out for God, for the living God. The pure spirit exults to contemplate the perfections of that great Being whose name is a terror to the evil-doer, but to whom the wronged, the sufferer, the penitent, humbled prodigal turn, casting themselves with hope and joyful trust on "the Fatherhood of God."

X.

THE GOOD OF LIFE.

“What is good for man.”—Ec. vi. 12.

SUPPOSE a man in the full vigor of his matured faculties, but without previous knowledge or experience, to be placed in just such a world as this. He cannot—at first, at least—converse with others, and so he is dependent for all he can discover on himself alone. What are the questions that will press themselves on the attention of such a man, and what are the conclusions he will be forced to adopt?

As he begins his explorations, he finds that this world is fitted up as a dwelling place, and an appropriate dwelling place, for man. It furnishes him food, shelter, and endlessly varied materials for his ingenuity to shape into forms for use and comfort and beauty. In the most secluded valley his prospect is as boundless as the distant stars, and his gaze pierces into the depths of immensity. The light is adapted to the eye, and the eye to the light; the air to the lungs and the lungs to the air, food to the system and the system to food. Every joint of the body is a mechanism of most wonderful art, and the inexplicable control of the will over the muscles is a perpetual miracle of goodness. The riches of the earth, in soil, mine, forest, vegetable and animal life, are inexhaustible, and all these are placed under the control of man. The broad domain is all his own.

“What does all this mean,” he asks. “I had no agency in placing myself here. I did not originate my

own being. And yet here I am in a world wondrously constructed, while I myself am a greater wonder still." Would not the conviction flash upon him inevitably—"I am placed here for some purpose, and my first business is to know what that purpose is? I can think and feel and reason; I am not like the brute grazing yonder, that is only intent on its food. I am not like the acorn falling unconscious to the earth, to root and germinate where it falls. The reason within me demands a problem to grapple with, but where is one to be found like this—why am I here, and what is the object of my creation? Till this is solved, every other is impertinent. A traveller needs to know his goal before he sets out on his journey. I cannot take a step till I know my real mission."

And now—without any revelation as yet that speaks to him directly—he seeks to know what that mission is. First of all he sees that it must be an important one—that the world itself is evidently made for man. Everything is subservient to his comfort and advantage. He is the lord, the world is his domain. He is the flower of the stalk—the apex of the pyramid. He is the central orb around which all the others revolve. Everything finds its highest use and value in serving him. Take him away, and the world is a kind of headless trunk. What is his inference? Is it not that the great Maker creates and works and governs with reference to man, that the end for which all these wonderful things exist, is to be sought where it centers—in the man?

"Here, then," he says, "am I fearfully and wonderfully made, and everything I see around me seems to say, we exist for you. The sun says, I shine for you. The flower says, I bloom for you. And the harvest says, I

wave for you, and the birds say, we sing for you. The world is the garden, but I am the vine, and by what I am, or what I can do or produce, creative wisdom is to be justified.

“And what can I do or become? I can live like the brute and die like the brute, but then all my superior faculties would be superfluous. I can live to eat and drink, and jest and sport years and opportunities away in wanton pleasure. But I feel that this would be making myself a barren fig-tree, useless alike to God and man. Better that I had never breathed. I can carve statues and pile up palaces, and build swift ships, but ere long the statues will crumble, and the palaces will fall, and the swift ships go to the bottom of the sea. I must do some other work than this. I must sculpture something beside marble. I must quarry something beside granite. I must build with something better than elm or oak or pine.”

And would not such a man then be driven to ask—as Plato did—what is *the good*? What is the best thing? What above all else is the richest jewel of this great mine of human enterprise? It is not beauty. That fades. It is not strength. That decays. It is not learning. Over-crowded memory lets it spill and waste. It is not honor or fame. A breath makes these, and at a breath they fade. It is not show or splendor. The pageant vanishes like a vapor, and moths consume the wardrobe. It is not even disciplined intellect. That may be the tool of ambition. It may be used to poison the fountains of human thought. The man that has it may curse it at last, if an evil heart makes it but an instrument of mischief, or if it gives him to see only too clearly what he is.

All these things are the husk, but what is the grain? Is there none? That cannot be. Winnow away the chaff and stubble, and what is left? Let a man's body crumble, let his fortune be scattered, let the works he built go to decay—has all then perished? Possibly. And yet if that man was true to conscience and to charity, every one feels that he was richer than his fortune, and greater than all his works—that he was the building and they the scaffolding—that he was himself the treasure, and they the box that guarded it. The integrity that millions could not bribe, we all feel to be worth more than these millions. A Luther at the Diet of Worms, planting himself on the authority of Scripture alone, and declaring, “here I take my stand; I cannot do otherwise; God help me”—a Bradford or a Winthrop sacrificing ease and comfort, and the luxuries of English homes for the perils of the wilderness with the privilege to worship God—a Hampden standing up manfully to contest the tax of a few shillings, but which invaded the freedom of the English constitution—a John Howard or Robert Raikes, or Oberlin or Felix Neff, studying out new methods of Christian charity and putting them into execution—who does not feel that such men as these show us in what the worth of human existence consists, and how, just as rain and sunshine and damp soil and decaying matter are by Nature's chemistry changed into the majestic tree that spreads out its broad branches in bloom and strength and beauty, so by the true chemistry of virtuous aims, these hours of service, this soil of probation, and this wealth of transient privilege are transformed or absorbed, and so incorporated into that human career which by self-denial and charity and holy purposes, is made a tree of life, and under the

shadow of which earth's weary pilgrims, invoking blessing on it, lie down to rest?

The world, too, whatever other ends it may be designed for—and in everything from the insect to the eagle, from the sand grain to the mountain, it glorifies the great Maker—is specially designed to educate the soul. You go into a school-room, and though built of logs, yet by all its arrangements, you recognize its design. There are benches, desks, books and diagrams, and charts, perhaps, on the walls. Is not the globe a broader school-room, with “tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, etc.”? Is it not covered over with diagrams and parables and emblems? Is there a thing that blooms or fades that does not preach its silent sermon to the listening ear? Do not the deep-set rocks and the giant mountains become to us speaking types of the deep-set foundations of justice, and the towering greatness of incorruptible virtue? What is history, as generations make it and write it, but just the register of human attainment—the scholarship of those who have learned to teach others and become eminent themselves, or who have excelled in mischief? What do these centuries turn out but the graduates of probation—and what is experience working out every day, even where human science is unknown, but new measures of moral attainment? A man may succeed or fail in business, he may be distinguished or obscure, but one thing is always true of him, he is receiving a moral education. He is under discipline. He is studying the fruits of good and evil deeds. His eye is directed inevitably at the career and fate of others, and he is forced to consider what will be the consequence of his own action. Thus is he forced to deliberate, to weigh mo-

tives, to calculate results. This is true of all, and almost the only thing that is. How it proclaims the nature and scope of our existence here! Just as the scholar would attain the ends of scholarship, just as he feels that for these he seeks the halls of science and learning, and that sportive indolence and dissipation are foreign to his purpose, and that rich dress and sumptuous feasts cannot promote it—so we, pupils under God's tuition, are educating for moral ends, are under discipline to learn lessons of truth and duty, to perfect ourselves in virtue, to become such in life and character as to justify the outlay for the advantages we enjoy, and the price of divine tuition.

And what a new force and pertinency is given to this thought when we consider how short our stay here on earth is? A few years at school or college seem to those who look back on them from the distance as a type of life itself. We stay here only to be educated—only to complete our moral lessons, only just long enough to make it plain that we have improved our privileges, or that we never would if they were prolonged a thousand years. And then we go away. We go as the scholar does, carrying away nothing but just his education itself. He sells his furniture, quits his room, parts, perhaps, with his books, breaks off from all his old associations, bids farewell to all his intimate companions, and goes forth without any *visible* remnant of all his toil and application, to what is as it were a new world. The result of all his efforts is to be found in himself alone, in his knowledge, his disciplined powers, his education—in nothing you can weigh or handle, or offer for sale in the market.

And who can fail to see the parallel of our life? Is

it not stupid not to see the difference between a well-stored study and a well-stored mind? And is it not stupid not to see that our privileges on earth are valueless except as they educate the soul and discipline it for moral service, and fit it, as it bids farewell to earthly associations, to enter upon others more enduring, fitted already for the world for which it was preparing here.

Now suppose a man reasoning from the facts of his own experience, to come to such a conclusion as this, and then to fall as it were accidentally upon the word of God, even without knowing it as yet to be divine—what, as he peruses it, will be the impression it will make? Will it not rivet his conclusions, yet infinitely enlarge his views? Will it not put beyond all doubt the question as to life and its meaning? Will it not force him to say—"I am here to prepare for a higher life? I am here a probationer for eternity. The great end for which the world has been made and man placed on it, is to be attained by the shaping and education of the soul, and responsible for this, I am bound to make it my first and greatest care."

Nay, will he not feel that the only real good of life must be sought in the attainment of the end for which it was bestowed? Must he not count everything else subordinate to this? Must he not feel that it becomes him above all to apply himself to understand in what a proper education for eternity consists, and what is the method by which it is to be secured?

XI.

IGNORANCE OF THE GOOD OF LIFE.

“Who knoweth what is good for man in this life?”—Ec. vi. 12.

IF a little child should assume to set aside all control and educate and govern itself—if it should be allowed to indulge without restraint its likes and dislikes—it would shortly become a little willful tyrant, a specimen of ripe, full-grown depravity. His will would not only master his own judgment and conscience, but would spurn alike the counsel and the authority of others. He would present an embodied definition of the folly and the wickedness of human nature left to itself.

The result is due to two causes, though they co-operate as one, like the weight and the speed of stroke in the momentum of a murderer's club—one is the child's absolute ignorance of what is best for itself, and the other is his indisposition to the good even when he knows it—that is, his perverting persuasion that what he wishes is best, and that what he dislikes is evil.

But men are only children of a large growth, and in them both these causes are also more or less at work. In our ignorance of what is best for us, we are too often like children, and in our attempt to make that our good, by the force of will, which can only tend to mischief, we act the part of children whose erring fancies tempt us to smile, or whose more deliberate errors we sternly correct.

A child wants certain toys. He gets them ; perhaps pays an exorbitant price for them. How soon they lose all their charms, and are cast by as rubbish. Who does not read in that a parable of more advanced years, men seeking certain objects to insure their happiness, but soon satiated, and casting them aside as unsatisfactory.

The child sees a beautiful butterfly and chases it. Only to secure it will fill his eager desire. He follows it perhaps in vain, or if he grasps it, he crushes the frail treasure which is cruelly injured. What is this but the chase of men for the objects of ambition.

A little child has two large apples given it. Benjamin Franklin, to teach a lesson, says, give it another. In trying to grasp the third, it loses both. What is this but human avarice grasping more than it can hold, not satisfied with enough, and losing what it has to gain more ?

Again, the child longs for some toy which it is not fit to manage, a knife or a pistol, or some such dangerous thing. It gets it only to maim itself and bitterly regret that its wishes were ever gratified, or that its parents ever indulged its wild humor.

Still again, it longs for something that shall minister to its vanity, some ornament or some article of rich clothing. It moves abroad in its rich array, feeding on the admiration it excites, and its thoughts are set on the light trivialities of dress, or the praise or notice which these follies may secure. Who can tell the mischief that is thus done ? Who can tell how long that moral poison of vanity and self-conceit, that is thus introduced, will rankle in the soul ? But how much more dignified or becoming are the thoughts of thousands who are eager for display, or who seek the praise and honor of men !

Many a one that attains these is intoxicated by them, and only acts the part of a gaudy human peacock, to the disgust of thoughtful and the pity of anxious observers.

How often does one say to himself, if I could only attain such a position I should be satisfied and happy. He struggles for it. He sacrifices his peace to gain it. Perhaps he condescends to mean or dishonorable acts ; he risks and perhaps loses his reputation for fairness and honorable dealing to attain it. And after it is gained, it only draws him into the very path of the tempter. It throws him into the society of the unprincipled or intemperate or profane to which he feels forced to conform. Henceforth his path is downward, and the career to ruin dates from the very success which he coveted. If his aims had been defeated, he might have died an honest man.

It is the story of the gambler's first success over again. He is lured to his ruin. He sees what he calls good, and eager to grasp it plunges over a precipice.

Many a man might have lived safe and useful in some humble sphere where Providence had cast his lot. He might have been happy there. But restless and dissatisfied he flies from one object to another. He climbs some strange height to be dizzyed there. He plunges into some mine of intrigue only to be smothered in its stifling damps. He hurries from one enterprise to another only to fail in all, and pile wreck on wreck.

But suppose a man by shrewdness and energy to succeed in all he undertakes—suppose him to become all that his worldly ambition could covet. Is that best for him? Has he the true good? His short years know scarcely a sorrow or disappointment. He is like Job in his first prosperous estate. Thousands perhaps regard

him with envy. They see not the secret cares that are wrinkling his brow. They read not the inward wretchedness that can wring so little happiness out of such large possessions and such marked triumphs.

But what does it all amount to when a few years are flown—when the hand trembles and the steps totter. Perhaps this present good kept a future and eternal good out of sight. Perhaps the man was so well satisfied with what he had, that he sought no more. He had houses, but no conscious title to a house not made with hands. He had wealth, and that deluded him into neglect of the treasure laid up in heaven. He had the respect of men, and that allowed him to think lightly of the honor that cometh from God only. Too late he wakes up to the fact that he is poor in all that constitutes the riches of the soul, unprosperous in all that constitutes true success. His prospect is dark as the grave that no promise illuminates. He has no hope. He has no trust or peace in God. He feels, if there is a judgment to come, he is all unprepared for it. If there is a future retribution, he can only fear. How, perhaps, he envies the poor invalid that is dependent on charity for bread or a grain of comfort! How he exclaims—"O that I had never known such success as I have met with, such rewards as I have gained. In a harder lot I had been a better man. Under the smart of affliction, my pride had been humbled and I had been taught to rely on God."

How this reminds us of the lament which Milton puts in the mouth of the great fallen arch-angel :

"O had his powerful destiny ordained
Me some inferior angel, I had stood
Then happy; no unbounded hope had raised
Ambition."

No man—so far as worldly attainments or possessions are concerned—can tell what is best for him. The things he covets most may do him the greatest harm. They may be the very ones which, if he could see the end from the beginning, he would pray to be delivered from. Sometimes his prize turns out to be an infernal machine. His arts of gain prove the rust that eats his soul as it were fire. The society which he successfully aspires to secure, is but an honorable escort to dissipation and perdition. His very genius, securing him the applause of others, is only the rocket's blaze lighting him up to heights from which pitying eyes shall mark his fall. In the end it may even be, and sometimes is the case, that he would give all his wealth and honors just to be put back where he might begin anew a different life. Like Richard Cour de Lion at his father's bier, he feels all the sad regret compressed in those stinging, remorseful words :

“Alas, my guilty pride and ire!
 Were but this deed undone,
 I would give England's crown, my sire,
 To hear thee bless thy son.”

If one thinks of the life to come, to how brief a space does this vain life, transient and fleeting as a vapor, shrink! How unimportant appear its outward circumstances! What matters it to the sojourner for the night whether the roof that shelters him is canvas or a dome of gold? What matters it to him that no sumptuous feast frowns contempt on his meaner fare? These years fly by like the wastes of the traveller's journey, and as each day vanishes, how little concern does its show or parade excite? For a little while to be cheered or hissed

for a little while to be in want or to abound, for a little while to stand on the pinnacle or in the valley—what does this amount to? And who knows which is best in the end? To be where the lightning strikes—to have that as an ornament which grows into a cross, heavy to be borne—to be one of a circle which are linked together to drag one another downward—who might not pray, from all this, “Good Lord deliver us?” The steep path which energy may climb may be edged with the precipice. The sumptuous fare that appetite craves may confirm a glutton. The sunshine of prosperity may wilt and wither the fresh, green hopes that would have thriven in the shade.

The wisdom of man is to confess that so far as worldly circumstances are concerned, he does not know what is best for him. A nation does not know. Judah in captivity was learning lessons that restored her to the favor of her offended God. The civil war of England was the stern discipline that bore fruit a generation later in the Revolution Settlement and Act of Toleration. We are passing now through the Red Sea and Desert of our history. Who can tell whether hereafter even short-sighted men shall not pronounce it the most important and profitable period of our career, teaching us lessons that would have been too faint-lined unless written in blood!

So no man can say that his hardest trials are not the most profitable for him. No man can fix his heart on any worldly good whatever, whether of property or station or knowledge or power, and say, That will bless me; that will make me happy. There is nothing left for us but to bow our ignorance in the dust before God’s infinite wisdom, and to say like the child conscious of his weak-

ness, Lead me as thou wilt, I know not what to ask. Not my will, but thine.

Yet is there no good that is such beyond all questioning or doubt? Is there not something attainable by man in this his brief, vain life, which by the concession of all is of vast importance, and of unutterable value—something which is not granted merely to a favored few, the exclusive favorites of fortune, but which the poor and rich, the learned and ignorant alike may be warranted to seek? Is there not something which is to all outward blessings like the wheat to the chaff, like the gold to the dross! Is there not something without which a Croesus is but an object of pity, and with which a Lazarus might be the envy of kings?

I had not completed writing the foregoing paragraph when I received a letter written by one who for months had been steadily looking forward to his decease, and who while yet he was able was dispensing charitably and wisely the wealth with which God had blessed him, in which he says—"My flesh and strength are much wasted, and I am very feeble. I can only walk or tottle to my chair. . . . But I feel calm and resigned. . . . My Saviour appears beautiful and glorious to me. The Gospel and the promises thereof never looked better or brighter. There is full provision for *all* our wants." The questions of that paragraph were thus answered—ere they were asked—by this testimony from the bed of a dying saint. It was testimony from a truthful pen—a pen tremulous in the feeble grasp that held it, but clear and unhesitating in its avowals. Was there room longer to ask whether—in this brief, vain life of man—there is not something attainable which is of vast importance and infinite value? Was there room to question the supe-

riority to all things else of a living faith in the Son of God? The testimony only added another drop to the full overflowing stream of evidence. It was but one more voice confirmatory of the chorus of the "great cloud of witnesses." We know, that ignorant as we are of what is best for us as to our outward lot, there is a good, the possession of which may well make the soul forget all earthly want.

Most assuredly there is. There is a good without alloy—which does not betray with a kiss, which does not offer a cup of blessing drugged with woe. It is religion—pure and undefiled—that religion which bears the fruits of hope, faith, love and joy. Its presence makes the heaven of the soul even in this vale of tears. It gives us God for our present and everlasting portion. It sanctifies sorrow, and roofs the wanderer's unsheltered head with the guardianship of Jehovah. It is a possession which no man ever regrets. It leaves no sting in the memory, no gnawing worm in the conscience.

And it is offered to all. It is offered to you. It is urged upon your acceptance. You are besought by all that is precious in hope or fearful in judgment to make it yours. The price that purchased it was the blood of God's own Son. Are you eager for worldly good—for ease or comfort? Let them go, till this is secured. They are but straws, while this is the everlasting crown.

XII.

NEED OF A REVELATION.

"A light shining in a dark place."—2 PETER i. 19.

EVEN a heathen, with the ripe fruits of Christian experience before him, may feel and acknowledge that the true good of man is not of a material but a spiritual nature. He may be led freely to confess that the path of holiness is the path of blessedness. A voice within his own soul may respond its amen to this conviction. But without the results of a Christian life before him, would he ever have discovered the true good of man, or have been won by the attractions of holiness?

A man may accept unhesitatingly the results of astronomical research, and he may hold the convictions which the revelations of others have wrought in him, with unshaken tenacity. He may see and feel their truth, while yet by his own unaided efforts he never could have attained to an apprehension of them. It is not so with the conclusions of our moral and spiritual astronomy? Reason may be utterly inadequate to discern truths which when once disclosed, seem to carry their own evidence with them, and which the conscience of the little child accepts unquestioningly as the simplest spiritual axioms. Yet let us by no means depreciate that elementary knowledge of God—that A, B, C, of theology—or those monosyllables which reason spells out on the pages of creation. All this is valuable. As reason's alphabet, it is inestima-

bly precious, and yet it is only an introduction to our ignorance. It gives hints and suggestions of problems, buried deep beyond the reach of reason's plummet. It catches a view of the great and ominous shadows, cast around our path, from the realities of the invisible world, and only spurs our curiosity—and our interest too—to know more about them than reason teaches. For beings that are by their very nature and constitution, accountable, we are possessed even by reason's light, of a fearful mass of knowledge—enough to make us tremble at what we are—and are to be—enough to render our guilt inexcusable and our condemnation just—but not enough to assure us of hope, or clearly define the objects of our faith. Our condition in the absence of revelation is that of a man groping in the dark, feeling his way, and by the slow and tedious process of touch, learning what the light might teach him in the twinkling of an eye. The Gospel is therefore præeminently “a light shining in a dark place.”

The feebleness with which reason apprehends—if at all—some of the most important subjects of human thought and destiny, calls for a revelation that shall make them plain. Here in this world, with Nature's lamp only to guide, we are like the traveller groping his way at midnight with a lantern in his hand, now climbing the almost precipitous height, now gliding along the edge of chasms, or sinking in the bog and marsh, till his limbs are weary and his patience worn out, and his success more than doubtful. We feel that we want the broad light of the noonday sun, flung in a flood of splendor over hill and valley, lofty crag and deep ravine, till the whole landscape stands out distinct to the eye, and the path we are to take is clearly and fully before us. It is true

there are some eyes that can see better in the dark than others ; there are some minds that might have read by reason's aid far more than others ; spelling out important truths inscribed in hieroglyphics on the ruins of this great temple of our human nature. But such minds are few, and even they see very indistinctly, and when pride does not forbid it, speak like Socrates of old with the full confession of their ignorance and doubt. Let one grope for a while under the guidance of the ancient philosophers, and he will begin to learn the value of a solid basis of knowledge and a definite apprehension of the state, object, and prospects of human existence. There are questions innumerable that throng about our path, asking for a solution, and the oracles of reason are well nigh dumb, or if they speak, they are but Delphic shrines. Even the probabilities, which we settle down upon, are shaken by counter-probabilities, or if undisputed, ask for a clearer confirmation. Reason tells me there is a God, but how worthless is that great fact, till I know what he is, and learn his disposition toward me ! By Nature's light I can discover my own dependence and subjection to law, but I ask, in vain, for the clear and definite idea of that moral government which is over me, and there is even room to question how far I shall be held responsible. From the works and providence of God I discern a general expression of his friendliness to virtue and reprobation of vice, but how far this is to take effect hereafter I cannot tell. Reason teaches me that I am a fallen being—a transgressor of the law, and throws out many hints of how terrible a thing it is for any one to place himself in the way where the wheels of God's legislation shall roll over him, but she is silent when I ask, what is the penalty, how enduring, and in what shape will it come ?

No man needs a labored instruction in regard to the sin and misery of the world. The apostacy of man is sculptured deep on the heart and the life of the race. But there is a problem as to how this guilt and woe shall be removed and man stand justified before his Maker, which transcends all the powers of mortal discernment. My own constitution, speaking through its aspirations and instincts, tells me that I was made for happiness, but nature shows me nothing worthy to feed this inward hunger—she opens no path to that blessedness for which I feel that I was made. Reason teaches me how guilt is incurred, and that condemnation may not improbably fall upon me, but says nothing of any full assurance of pardon and deliverance from the curse. No man needs to teach me that the world is full of want and anguish, misfortune, pain and disappointment, but I do ask for a solution that shall reconcile all this with the character I love to ascribe to my Maker—and reason fails in the attempt to furnish it. Surmise and probability are not enough. Exposed every moment as we are to accident and death, we want a ground for the *assurance* that our present afflictions are light—light because they shall work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. The light of nature suggests, and to some minds doubtless, enforces the conviction of a future judgment, but the great features of this foreshadowed fact are only to be found on the pages of Revelation. We may gather up also many hints in regard to a future state from the aid of reason—but still we want something to scatter the dimness of doubt, and bring life and immortality to light. We may puzzle ourselves not always vainly, but most unsatisfactorily, over the strange methods of that Providence which distributes the allotments of life in seemingly

unequal measure—but we feel that we want a revelation to clear up all, and make our faith intelligent and firm. The picture of a thoughtful man in the mazes of ignorance, seeking to understand himself and God, but seeking in vain for the want of light, is exceedingly affecting. But is that of the thoughtless multitude less so, blindly acquiescent in their ignorance, and dropping into their graves insensible as the brutes, and making death, the catastrophe and issue of a dream? It is not in the nature of the human mind lightly to be satisfied on themes of such importance as those which should naturally form the burden of a Revelation, and which so intimately concern all that we have to hope or fear forever. We want the dim and shadowy outline to become distinct. We want the fleeting shapes and coloring that pass before us in the prospect, arrested, and fixed down visible and definite, giving substance to the transient imagery, that sweeps before the field of our reflection.

For a mind constitutionally timid and distrustful, the light of Nature furnishes but a feeble solace. It is more inclined to look on the dark than on the light side, and dwell on the extent of our ignorance rather than the reach of our knowledge.

What must be the reflections of such a mind scarcely venturing to rest on the bare probabilities with which it is forced to be satisfied? Yet with them alone, and holding them too by an uncertain tenure, it looks around it in the absence of revelation, upon the great mystery of life and probation.

Every question it asks, every struggle after a firm footing which it puts forth, only sinks it deeper in the mire. It dares not trust even its clearest and boldest reasonings. Perhaps it has once relied upon a fallacy, and past expe-

rience of its error confirms its tendency to doubt. It looks about it like a solitary traveller who has lost his way in the wilderness, and vainly searches after a familiar object, some track or tree, or distant hill-top that shall furnish a clew to extricate him from error. The questions are innumerable that throng upon the mind. It finds itself on this broad ocean of being, without chart or compass, or experience, with the broad bright heavens indeed above, but with none to translate their mysteries, with none to point to Bethlehem's guiding star. The facts that are plain only make the mystery of man's state still more wonderful and trying. He lives, to die. He looks forward, to fear. He reasons, to tremble. He hopes, to apprehend disappointment. "What am I," he asks, "what is the object of my being, what my state, what my relations to a surrounding universe, what my prospects for the present or the future? My present home is a world of graves where the survivors dance over the dust of the departed, and where death and life meet in a strangely near relationship. I too am mortal, and when my body crumbles to the dust where will my spirit go? Will that too be dissolved or absorbed, sent forth an everlasting and homeless wanderer, or imprisoned in chains of darkness? If it survives, on what sort of a field will it enter, with what associates will it mingle, or what will be the nature of its employment; will it be happy or wretched, will it live over again such a life as it lived on earth, or a far higher and nobler one? or possibly one far subordinate and degraded? Shall it ascend or descend. rise to the angel or sink to the clod? In what will the nature and object of it consist, will it be spiritual, refined, and holy, or polluted, sensual, and brutish? Will it carry with it there the taint of earth,

and be followed by its works, and words, and thoughts, as persecuting avengers? What is the connection between this life and that to come, and what shape shall be given to this, so that there shall be no room for after and vain regret? Where can a sufficient guide be found in our error, a sufficient remedy in our disease, a support in the hour when heart and flesh shall fail?"

To these interrogations and a thousand others, reason makes no full, no clear reply. She surmises; sums up probabilities; forecasts results; but pronounces nothing definite and certain, ventures no direct assertion, but leaves us still in the attitude of expectation and suspense. We know enough to excite our fears, to waken our curiosity, to urge us to investigation, to excite our apprehensions, but just there Nature closes her volume, and leaves us in the dark. Something more is necessary now, than would have been if the moral order of the world had never been disturbed. The clearness of our own reason and judgment has been somewhat blinded in the shock. We have been disqualified for application to the problem by the same cause that has, if not created it, involved it in deeper difficulty. We cannot occupy with all the powers of the largest reason, the position which a sinless being might, nor are we prepared by nature's light to say what course the infinite wisdom of God will adopt, or what his measures will be in regard to us in this unprecedented state of things to which the world has been brought by sin.

And as we might beforehand suppose the light of natural reason insufficient, experience has proved it to be so. "The world by wisdom knew not God." Every page of the history of the race demonstrates our need of a revelation. Its enlightening, its purifying, its restraining influences were all called for. Read the popular mythol-

ogies, we can hardly call them religious systems, of the Old World, and see what vast magazines they were, of wayward fancy and distorted truth, of cruel superstition and grossest error, yet swaying the minds of men by their strange and terrible spell. They were evidently the growth of darkness, of ignorant fear, or, possibly, sometimes of ingenious and tyrannic fraud. They were limited to no one age or nation. They disgraced the fame of Greece and the civilization and learning of Rome, as well as the pride of Egypt and the fame of the warrior race of Odin. In here and there an instance, no doubt, their authority was repudiated, but the exceptions were rare. Take up the writings of the wisest men of antiquity, and see how they stumbled on some of those elementary principles of religious knowledge which pass unquestioned *even* by the modern sceptic. These truths on which they doubted are some of them such that the simple statement of them carries with it well nigh the power of demonstration. And yet if no revelation came, no clear and plain instruction of God and His will, how long would these errors maintain their hold? We know that of old they yielded only as Christianity progressed, and they yield to-day as they did then, not to the ridicule of a Lucian, or the contempt of philosophers, but to the light of the Gospel. The most odious and horrid vices disgraced the noonday of Roman and Grecian achievement, and were intimately associated oftentimes with the celebration of their mysteries and religious rites. By their most distinguished men, they were sometimes shamelessly avowed, and formed a fitting counterpart to a mythology which seemed the creature of a polluted fancy revelling in its own shame. If the light of reason could have sufficed, these things should have been as

transient before it as the mists of the morning. They should not have waited for the sun of Christianity to rise and dispel them. But they maintained their ground in spite of art, learning and culture, till this appeared. Nor need we be surprised at it. Look at the most eminent men of old and see whether their reason could have been more than a rushlight amid the darkness around them. "Epictetus bids you temporize and worship the gods after the fashion of your country; Pythagoras forbids you to pray to God, because you know not what is convenient. Plutarch commends Cato of Utica for killing himself amidst philosophic thoughts, with resolution and deliberation, after reading Plato on the immortality of the soul. Cicero pleaded for self-murder, in which he was seconded by Brutus, Cassius, and others who practiced it. Customary swearing is commended sometimes by precept and often by example of their best moralists." Some maintained that right and wrong were mere conventionalities, just as the Lacedemonians legislated ingenious theft into repute.

Surely, with all the wisdom of antiquity, the knowledge of God was not there, and where is the man to-day that can point to a tribe or nation that renounced idolatry till it came in contact with at least the reflected light of revelation.

Then look at the sanctions and restraints of human law, and how weak *they* are as well as moral considerations generally, till they are enforced by the clearer declarations of revealed truth, quickening the public as well as private conscience to renewed sensibility, and rebuking all manner of crime by the solemn and fearful expectation of a just award, of sanctions that are drawn from beyond the grave.



Socially, intellectually and morally, man needs a revelation. Nature's light is insufficient. The world has proved it so. If it had not, our own feelings would out-run the necessity of argument. We want light, light to shine in a dark place, light for our souls.

And what is it that makes our want of a revelation so urgent? The reasons may be found in God's character and man's condition.

What reason teaches us of God forbids us to imagine that we are placed here except with a wise design. We see a plan apparent in all his works, and man, too, except he be a discord in the great harmony, has an end to subserve. Unlike the physical and brute creation he is to be intelligently active in attaining it, and instruction of some kind is highly necessary to this end. He must know God's design in order to be able to enter into it and coöperate with it, and the perfection of this design itself seems to imply that he should possess this knowledge to such an extent as to render neglect inexcusable.

Then man's condition, also, is such as seems to call for the compassion of such a thing as reason is willing to conceive God to be. There are times when ignorance is woe, and doubt anguish, and when the mind hungering for knowledge is as much an object of pity, as the poor victim of disease, or the starving wretch pining for bread. And what other than this is the state of man when in the absence of revelation he becomes conscious of his want? Place him where he is often found, in circumstances of bitter trial, where one by one each earthly hope fails him till they all give way, and the forlornness of his lot sinks deep into his soul, and with no light or hope from heaven what can he do? He knows of nothing yet in reserve to

sustain him. The future is all blackness unpierced by a single cheering ray. No beam of hope traverses the tomb or smiles upon him from beyond the grave. He is shut up to a present robbed of consolation, or given over to a future bounded by despair. What is there now on earth to cheer or aid this struggling soul? The stoicism of reason is a poor physician. It nauseates the mysteries of science. All the treasures of learning cannot charm away its anguish. It needs a divine consoler, it asks a guide who will show the way from earth to heaven. It is man's sensibility to his want and woe that urges the demand, a demand which human wisdom has proved itself unable to supply. We feel, after all, that the suicide's argument cannot satisfy us, and it poorly reconciles us to our lot, if in the refuge of the grave we are to find nothing but its oblivion.

What again must be the feelings of the sensitive mind, clinging with a lingering fondness to this its conscious being, yet girt about by the gloomy doubts that invest the hour of its departure from these scenes? Have you read the story of the dying Hindoo questioning his Brahmin teacher what would become of his soul after death? The doctrine of its transmigration from one body to another, now tenanting a beast, and now a reptile, was but a poor consolation. No wonder he asks, "what then will become of it," and with every new change continues still to ask, "what then?" It is very possible for persons even in a Christian land so to shut out the light that shines around them that their death too is heathenized, and like the dying Rabelais they feel if they do not exclaim, "I go to seek a great *Perhaps*." Without a faith whose eye is enlightened by revelation, it must be so. How sad the farewell song of its departure :

“Over the dark, dark sea
I must go, for the hour has come.
But where shall my wandering spirit rest
In its final home ?

“My life is a dim *Perhaps*.
From the rock of faith I'm driven,
No shining light in my clouded breast,
No star in heaven.

“What if this vital force
Shall be spent when this last breath flies,
And thought and feeling vanish in night,
As the lightning dies !

“Or what if the conscious soul
Should be damned, as was taught of old,
To live in body of bird or beast,
Years manifold !

“Into the gloom I go,
With *perhaps* alone before,
The great sea rolling all around
Without a shore.

“Shall I rise to the Christian world,
With the pure and the good to dwell,
To live forever in joy and love ?
I cannot tell.

“Shall I be hurled in wrath
To the penal flames below ;
For endless years to suffer and sin ?
It may be so.

“Farewell—my eyes now close
On the light of the certain day ;
And into the dark of death, my soul
Plunges away.”

Who does not feel all the sympathies of his soul drawn forth toward the tried and struggling spirit, arguing with doubt, but arguing in vain. What want can be more trying than the want of that revelation which can bring life and immortality to light, and which solving the puzzle of our being here, points us to the realms of glory, and a home in heaven. With this, and only with this, can we hope for guidance for our stumbling steps. On our dark path to eternity reason alone is but a rushlight, and genius is but a glowworm's spark. What a question then, with the antecedent probabilities of divine mercy and human need, is this, Have we a light to cheer and guide us? one that God Himself has kindled, one by the teachings of which the once troubled soul can exclaim :

“But darkness and doubt are now flying away ;

No longer I roam in conjecture forlorn ;

So breaks on the traveller, faint and astray,

The bright and the balmy effulgence of morn.

See Truth, Love and Mercy, in triumph descending,

And Nature, all glowing in Eden's first bloom ;

On the cold cheek of Death, smiles and roses are blending,

And Beauty Immortal awakes from the tomb.”

XIII.

THE LAW OF NATURE.

“The work of the law written in their hearts.”—ROM. ii. 15.

HAS God given a law to men? That is, has he made known rules of life or action for men to which penalties are annexed?

He has unquestionably enacted what is sometimes called “the law of nature,” that is the law which the nature or constitution which he has given to man, requires or enforces.

Such a law results from the very fact of creation. The Creator is necessarily to a certain extent a legislator. By calling a thing into being, he determines what it is, how it shall be constituted, upon what it shall act, and how it shall be acted upon. As created it has its qualities, capacities, adaptations, or in other words, its nature, and the conditions or modes in which these are designed to act are the law of the nature of the thing. It is the law of the seed to germinate, of the vine to produce grapes, of the oak to produce acorns.

So if you take the human body, it has its laws of healthful action. The eye is for sight. The lungs are to breathe, the feet are to walk. This is the law of their creation. Their proper and healthful action is dependent on certain conditions, or laws of health, which must be met or complied with, and the penalty of non-compliance

is pain, disease, or feebleness. So there are physical laws of sobriety and temperance, the penalty of which is dissipation, suffering and infamy. These laws belong to the code of nature, and any man, except the fool, can read them by observation, and the fool reads them at last in his own experience as if they were written in large capitals.

So there are laws which govern man's intellectual and moral nature. The mind must be used or it will rust. There is law and penalty. Certain conditions in the use of the intellect must be observed, or it will be made narrow, or bigoted, or sophistical. The moral nature has its laws. Integrity is required, or distrust will be produced, conscience will reproach, the calm of the soul will be broken. There must be simplicity of purpose, or one must be double-minded. The will must be held in check, or a man will become its serf and the slave of passion.

So each faculty of mind and of the moral nature has its own laws. They are cut into the very constitution of things like the name of a temple sculptured on its portico.

Every thing that exists has its peculiar constitution and relations. The nature of the tree or shrub governs its growth and development. The instincts of the brute govern its action. The intelligence and conscience of man govern, or are designed to govern his acts and career.

These laws, therefore, are very diverse. Some are simply physical, others are moral. Some secure inevitably the desired result; others simply impose obligation on the creature, impelling him, but not absolutely necessitating him to act. But in either case they are alike the laws of the Great Maker. No man can doubt the

fact of his legislation. Intelligent creation is *ipso facto* legislation.

But what is the character of this law of nature as regards men? It is to man's constitution that we must turn for an answer. This shows the design of his being, and the design of the Creator suggests the end which man is to attain. If you look at any mechanism of man, you find out by study, or the explanation of others, the use for which it was designed. That designed use determines how it is to be employed. A spade can be used as a bludgeon. But plainly this was not the design of its maker. Man can be perverted into a chattel, a glutton, a sensualist, a knave, but evidently this was not the design of his Maker. The plain and safe rule of interpretation here is, that a thing or being is designed for the highest and most useful purpose for which it could be employed. It would be absurd to suppose one to invent a curious and complicated machine exactly fitted to sow or reap, which should be employed to level furrows by dragging it over them, when a simple bush or roller would do as well. So if a man lives like a brute, it does not follow that he was meant for a brute, or that this is the law of his being. If he has passions whose excessive indulgence would make him a glutton, a sot, or a tyrant, it does not follow, if it is possible for them to be checked and moderated, and answer a good purpose in a subordinate sphere, that they were meant for unlimited indulgence, but rather the reverse. The design of the maker is to be learned by inquiry of what a thing is susceptible, or what is the highest and most important end which it can evidently subserve. That design, so far forth as it is manifest, is of the nature of law, and failure to attain it is of the nature of penalty.

Here then is man made, not like a stone, subject to the simple law of gravitation ; not like a human machine to expedite the processes of industry, of science, or of art ; not like the brute, to be subjected to a superior will and intelligence, guided only by blind instinct, but with an intelligence that allies him to his Maker ; with a sense of right and wrong that enables him to sit in judgment on human action, others, and his own ; with a power of reason and judgment that qualifies him to trace causes to results, and determine the consequences of different courses of action ; with sagacity to perceive what is wisest and safest among proposed measures ; with a will that can carry his designs into execution, and renders him accountable for his acts ; with capacities and means to make others happy, or influence them to what is pure and good ; with susceptibilities for virtuous enjoyment infinitely superior to all the pleasure of sense ; with a power of thought to soar into the great realm of the unseen, and power of feeling to be moved by all that is great, or good, or sublime in moral action ; and with such possibilities of intellectual and moral growth and development, that his standing point on earth seems but an eagle's perch for far loftier flights ; and all these wheels, all these complicated mechanisms of his moral being are so adjusted to each other, and to the sphere in which he is to act, that he is stupid, beyond comprehension, who does not respond to the sentiment of the psalmist, " I am fearfully and wonderfully made ;" or who does not while he responds, stand awestruck before the majestic design of his Maker, sculptured as it were in legible letters in his own constitution.

That design reveals law—the highest law of Nature—that law that should govern the purposes and aims of

every man. He who degrades himself by low, base, or selfish aims, who uses his intelligence to make himself only a lettered brute ; his sense of right and wrong to condemn others and not judge himself ; his reason and judgment to excuse his evil or plead the cause of vice ; his sagacity to discern how his own selfish lust and passions may be gratified ; or his will to execute purposes that build up his despotic supremacy, on the ruin of others' independence ; or his sensibility to the good and great as a foil to his own baseness of heart, such a man violates the very law of Nature. He has no right to pervert his intellect, his conscience, or his affections. He has the capacities which, rightly used, can approximate him to an angel, and he violates the law of his creation and constitution, when he uses them to assimilate him to a despot, or a sot, a brute or a devil. Every step in this direction is a step in transgression. Every leaning to such a result is a leaning against the sharp piercing point of the statute of the Eternal Lawgiver.

Now some may object to this law, on the ground that it is not proclaimed. But here we take issue with them. We say it is proclaimed, even by the light of Nature. You might as well take the statute book of the state, that condemns your crime, with you into the cell or dungeon, and because of the darkness and gloom which your wickedness has brought upon you, say that there is no law because you cannot read it. Man's sin has blinded him to the law of Nature, and his guilt has made its republication by revelation necessary. But though republished, and more fully and clearly drawn in the Bible, it does not follow that it has not been proclaimed. Laws in various
• ages have been variously published, sometimes graven in stone, sometimes by the voice of the herald, sometimes by

reports of others, sometimes by obscure handwriting on pillars, sometimes as unwritten, or common law. The law of Nature is the common law of the universe. It is written at least in the conscience. It is embodied even in the moral judgments we form of one another, and the man who complains that it is not published, and imagines that he has reason for what he says, only argues that his own sin or moral blindness has blurred and blotted the handwriting till his own copy is almost or quite illegible.

We admit that it is sometimes almost illegible. But the fault is not in the proclamation or publication, but the guilty suppression of it. This suppression, extensive, general, and, we may say, universal, has made a fuller and clearer republication important, but that republication could not be claimed. God has graciously made it, but that grace was not our due. And if now by the light of the revised statute, we can better read the old, spelling it out letter by letter, we only infer, first the great evil of the sin that obliterated the old, and then the infinite obligation which is imposed by the giving of the new.

XIV.

THE REVEALED RULE OF LIFE.

"Thy testimonies are wonderful."—Ps. cxix. 129.

HAVE we in our hands an actual revelation from God? Have we the authentic utterance of His will and character and purpose?

There are several works in the world that lay claim to the character of sacred books, but I presume no one who has the faintest knowledge of their real character would allow consideration, even for a moment, to the claims of any but the Bible. Some flaw—as scientific error, imperfect morality, absurd legends—stamps all but this as counterfeit. The Bible, and the Bible only, can plausibly challenge attention as a revelation from God.

What is it, then? It will help us to weigh its evidences if we know what it is. We can understand at least what interest, in examining its evidences, its contents excite. The Bible, then, is made up of history, doctrine, morality or laws of duty, devotional utterances, prophecy and the declared purposes of God's providence and grace.

It is first of all history. This is the largest element of the whole. Here are sixty-six separate books or treatises, written by nearly forty different authors, and their dates are spread, as near as we can judge, over the

space of fifteen centuries. The earliest writers had been dead more than a thousand years before the last took up his pen. Each was independent of the others. The styles are distinct, and the volume cannot have been forged by a single hand. Nor can it have been got up by collusion or conspiracy, for the different writers belonged to diverse ages, and could never have met and consulted together.

Yet they have written conjointly the most wonderful history in the world, fully as remarkable for its unity as for its diversity. It gives us the first, the earliest, and the only record that we have of the creation of the globe and its inhabitants. It gives us the sketch of succeeding centuries, and an authentic narrative of the peopling of the world, through a period which all other histories abandon to myths and fable. Nowhere else can we learn anything of the actual origin of the race. Nowhere else can we trace the original divisions and settlement of the human family. Nowhere else during this period can we feel that we tread the solid ground of reality.

But on this common trunk of all history, a peculiar history is grafted. It is the history of God's dealings with men, and the successive steps by which He has carried forward his providential design for the restoration of a fallen race. Here we have the central line of march of the world's progress, the great highway into which all the lanes and by-roads of history converge. Here is the channel of the river of which other histories are but eddies, or at the best, tributary rivulets. This keeps ever distinctly in view the sublime object of original creation and subsequent redemption. Elsewhere, even from the pens of Gibbon and Macaulay, of Bancroft and Prescott and Motley, we have only fragments chipped off from the

obelisk of time. Here we have time's very statue flung out in bold relief on the background of eternity. Other writers give us links, but here by prophecy and history combined, we have the great chain which reaches down from the staple of creation to the final regeneration and completed judgment of the world. Men are learning at last that the cross of Calvary is the pivot of the destiny of the race. Christianity is the motive and moulding power of the world. The real history of time is just the history of the process by which it has been evolved and brought to bear upon individuals and nations. The forays of a Nimrod, the conquests of an Alexander, or the triumphs of a Cæsar, are but episodes, incidental chapters, subordinate in importance to Abraham's faith, Moses' leadership, Daniel's career, or the labors of Christ and his apostles. The Jewish theocracy was the scaffolding to the Gospel temple. The history of their erection gives us the channel current of time, while other writers have busied themselves with the waves or foam.

Here then, is the most wonderful and unique history—the true history of man—the true history of the race—the true history of its relation of God. From first to last there is one object in view—and with this the recovery of the world through the mediatorship of the promised Messiah, before us; every fragment of this volume takes its place in a pre-arranged and divine harmony. The book of Leviticus is no superfluity. The ceremonial law prefigured the facts of our redemption. The book of Ruth is not an episode. It is an important link in the chain by which the genealogical descent of the Messiah is traced in accordance with prophecy. The book of Daniel is no digression. It sets up a notable landmark in our progress from Eden to Calvary.

Thus, sift it as you will, the Bible history has from first to last a wonderful unity, not formal, not paraded or obtrusive, but real and radical. It is written by nearly two score authors of different ages, and yet but for the varied style, it would seem that a single mind guided the pen. The sublime simplicity of the books of Moses, the rigid annalism of Judges, the ceremonial preciseness of Chronicles, the graphic imagery of the Prophets, the simple narrations of the Galilean fishermen, and the earnest, glowing utterances of Paul—all blend together in harmony like the colors of the rainbow in simple light, so that one idea, running along beneath all forms of expression and all shades of thought, masters unconsciously annalist and preacher, poet, seer and evangelist, insomuch that they elucidate in wonderful correspondence the same great theme, conspire unwittingly to unfold the same great plan by which infinite wisdom is carrying forward to its conclusion the purposes of human redemption.

Where is there another such history as this—so grand in conception, so perfect in outline, so triumphant in conclusion—where each book, though a fragment in itself, fills its own niche in the perfect structure, and all harmonize together like the varied limbs of a living creature, instinct with the same spirit and vitalized by the same energy? Who is not constrained almost to exclaim already, Human pens may have written it, but the Eternal Mind was its author!

But the Bible is not mere history. It presents the doctrines of religion, the facts of theology, the elements of the grandest and most perfect system of religion ever propounded to man—one that has no rival, or the shadow of a rival in all human speculation. The most elaborate

systems of Deism, or natural religion, are to the Gospel system only as a worm to a man, only as the wigwam of a savage to a civilized home. This system, historically presented in detached portions, but harmonious to the eye of the devout student who takes it into view in its proper connections, is simple but sublime. A child shall apprehend it, while an angel cannot comprehend it. "God is a spirit!" what a flood of light does this throw on the nature of God and the worship he requires! "Our Father which art in heaven!" what lessons are unfolded in a word concerning the character of God and our relations to him! "By nature the children of wrath!" "The carnal mind enmity against God!" "The heart deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked!" What volumes of meaning concerning man's apostasy from God, and its bitter fruits! "Our hearts condemn us, and God is greater than our hearts and knoweth all things!" What a humiliating exposure of our condition as transgressors of the divine law, and expectants of deserved vengeance! "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten and well-beloved Son!" "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly!" Who can fathom the grandeur of this demonstration of divine grace toward us, this wonderful display of infinite compassion for the guilty. "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him!" How amazing the extent, how glorious the sufficiency of that mediatorship by which Christ becomes our perfect Redeemer! And then a judgment to come, the blessedness of heaven, the retributions of the world of woe—how they stand forth sublimely conspicuous on the pages of the Bible, casting into shadow all the high thoughts of the proud, all the splendor and pomp, all the crowns and dominions of earth.

How wonderful the volume that thus boldly presumes to draw the curtain of the eternal world, and lets frail, toiling, trifling, dying man walk on in the full blaze of the infinite glories, so that if he will, his pathway to the grave shall be irradiated with the light of immortality, and the night of Probation's day shall be the twilight dawning of heaven!

But the Bible is also a code of law, a system of morals, claiming the divine sanction for its injunctions. And here, simply as a moral text-book, it has in all literature, not a peer or rival. The skeptic has acknowledged its superiority, and with the sagacious wisdom of a Franklin, the polite suggestions of a Chesterfield, the teachings of Socrates and Seneca, codes of law, codes of honor, sentences, maxims and proverbs, all at his command, has thrown them aside that he might put into the hands of his children the words of the Author of the Sermon on the Mount. The instincts of his affection were truer than the elaborate pleadings of his perverted reason. As you read this book, you feel all evil rebuked, as if an all-seeing eye were looking right through the soul, till all wicked designs, fraudulent deception and selfish schemes are searched out by its beams, and the very chambers of sheltered darkness and sin have all their imagery exposed. This book—the good love it; the bad hate it. To the one it is a guide, to the other a detector; so that in spite of themselves, the instincts of sin, strangely unite with the sympathies of holiness to attest its power; the first trembling at its rebukes, the last strengthened by its sanctions.

Of the prophecies of this book, I have not space here to speak at length. But when you read them, and note the austere standard of duty, which the overpowering

glory of the divine character portrayed, the thunders of rebuke that roll forth with each succeeding sentence, the stern denunciations of iniquity that they utter, the glowing and superhuman imagery with which they are often clothed, you feel that either these are expressions of the sublimest impudence of which man could be guilty, or the very messages that have come down to the world from the throne of God.

But what shall be said of the devotional spirit and breathing of this volume? In this respect it is neither surpassed nor equalled by any other. Good men have written good books—books that set forth truth and duty eloquently—that kindle the soul to flaming zeal, or bow it in deepest self-abhorrence—that inspire it with Godly aims, arouse the energies of its consecrated powers as the notes of drum or trumpet stir the soul to harsher deeds of arms. I would depreciate none of them. I would bless God for such messengers of piety and devotion as Bunyan's "*Pilgrim's Progress*," Baxter's "*Saint's Rest*" and "*Dying Thoughts*," Howe's "*Blessedness of the Righteous*," Rutherford's *Letters*, Romaine on Faith, Legh Richmond's *Tracts*, and scores of others, and I would lend them new wings to visit on angel errands the homes of God's sorrowing or toiling ones; but all of them are only—in the presence of the Bible—like planets around a central sun. They shine only by a borrowed light, and if I must have but one—I say give me that which makes my day rather than that which merely adorns my night; give me the diadem instead of the single gem. For who can go up with Abraham to Moriah, or with Moses to Sinai and Pisgah, or hear David sing in memory of his own past, "*The Lord is my shepherd*," or pray the words the Saviour taught, or lean with the

beloved disciple on Jesus' bosom at the supper, or yield himself to the upward currents of devotion poured forth in the aspiring praise and supplication of the Apostle Paul, and not feel himself wafted above the world, borne as it were on eagle wings to a height where the eloquence of a Chatham or Webster, the genius of a Milton, the philosophy of a Bacon, shrink to the sparkling insignificance of sand grains gazed at from the mountain's brow? Our sweetest lyrics have been gathered from the Hebrew Psalms. One of our greatest statesmen pronounced that beginning, "I love thy kingdom, Lord," unsurpassed in literature; and where can the bowed, crushed, broken heart find such expressions as in the Penitential Psalm!

And now is it wonderful that such a volume should have had such a history—that it should stand for centuries as it stands to-day, as powerful as it is venerable—the spiritual battery to electrify nations and the world—the moral lighthouse to illuminate the career of individuals and of governments—the lever to lift fallen humanity from the pit of its misery—the guide-book of the erring and the lost, to bring them back to their Father's house? It helps us to know the book better—to know what it is—if we turn and see what it has been, where it has gone and what it has done. It has enlightened ignorance, dispelled doubt, chased away superstitious fear, and been a fountain of light and hope to the despairing. It has transformed character, changed the lion to the lamb, the brute to the angel, and the humbling confession of the penitent publican has been wrung by it from the tongue of the desperado in guilt, the felon in his cell, and the blasphemer breathing out once the vernacular of hell. Men whose vileness has been proof against all human persuasion have been subdued by the power of the cross.

Robust and hard-hearted iniquity has been made to tremble like Felix before Paul. Lips slimy with oaths have become redolent of praise. Tongues loaded with imprecation have caught the music of the new song, and over the form of the prostrate persecutor angels have bent, to soar aloft with the exulting announcement, "behold he prayeth."

Human eloquence has never won such victories, or exulted in such triumphs as have been achieved by the living words of the Bible. It has slain the enmity of the human heart. It has disarmed the persecutor and subdued the strength of malice by a stronger love. It has gone into dens of vice and pollution and turned the foul spirits out. It has entered the temple of the soul and overturned the tables of the money-changers, and restored the prostrate and neglected altar. It has laid consecrating hands on the faculties and powers of the whole man, till, instead of the slave of selfish gain, he became "eyes to the blind and feet to the lame." It has touched the indolent spirit and made it flame forth with active, self-denying love. It has sent those whose educated tastes led them to spurn all contact with vulgarity, into streets, and lanes, and alleys, and hovels, where they might stretch out to the wretched and degraded the hand of sympathy and of brotherhood. It has evoked the sublimest illustrations of moral heroism, and you may safely credit the generous self-denial, the large-hearted charity, the bravest and the gentlest deeds that have enriched the story of the past, to the power of the Bible. Evangelists, missionaries, martyrs, drank from this inspiring fountain, and along every nerve thrilled the new energy which made them more than conquerors amid hardship, peril, dungeon and the flames.

No other book has ever wrought out such results. Into the solitary bosom, into the social circle, and into the broad sphere of our common humanity, it has borne the whispered message of the angel of the covenant. As it spoke, Care smoothed his wrinkled brow, Pain forgot his agony, Age shook off the burden of years, Sorrow discerned rainbow hues, memorials of the everlasting covenant in its falling tear drops, while Passion hushed its raging waves, and the dying sufferer seemed to catch echoes from the music of the golden harps mingling with the pathos of love's last earthly farewell. Human affection borrowed an unutterable sweetness and grace as lessons from this book subdued every tone, while the timid spirit, through the inbreathed energy of divine truth, became more than a Leonidas, became a Christian martyr.

Where is the institution of humanity or benevolence not indebted to it? Where is the Christian state which it has not brought under infinite obligation? Where is the legislation that it has not leavened, the schools and colleges and asylums which it has not nurtured? It has been the strength of the world's strongest men. It has furnished the watchwords and mottoes that have kindled the enthusiasm of the Christian heart. The stars and stripes? Here is the star of Bethlehem, the glorious salvation of Him by whose stripes we are healed. The Bible has been Protean, not to curse but to bless. It has been the Christian's guide-book, the soldier's armor, the sufferer's consolation, the believer's charter to a heavenly birthright. It was Luther's armory, Baxter's panoply, Bunyan's library, Knox's battle-axe, the pilgrim's guide-book, and everywhere for all time the herald of pure learning, social morals, just laws and religious life. It lit the star in the west that guided the Mayflower. It sent

Elliott and Brainerd to the savages of the wilderness, and over broad continents and the islands of the sea it has kindled the pioneer watchfires of the millennial advent.

But, is this all? Nay, there is scarcely a great writer, or great thinker, or great actor of these last centuries, whose debt to the Bible, in a mere intellectual point of view, is not immense. It has quickened the life of nations, and given to enterprise a new, if not original, impulse. Milton studied its grandest lyrics before he penned his own immortal song. Bacon gathered its brightest gems to set in the frame of his own golden thought. Addison in every page betrays his obligation to its lofty morality as well as its majestic diction. Cowper suffused his lines with odors from the bruised flowers of Gethsemane, and who doubts that Washington was a braver and abler leader, and Wilberforce a more reliable statesman, and Chalmers a mightier thinker, through the power of this book?

Thus through literature, legislation, moral reform and all industrial enterprise its spirit has gone abroad. Not a sail unfurled upon the sea but owes something to its influence. Not a law on the statute book but has felt its shaping pressure. Not an iron wire that thrills with the mandate of a nation's will, or an iron track which bands a continent together, that exists independent of the impulse which the Bible has ministered.

And how endeared it is to millions of hearts! It is cherished with unutterable affection by those who would feel its loss like the blotting of the sun from heaven. They heard it read in early years by saintly lips now sealed in the silence of the grave. Its very words have that familiar yet solemn tone which distinguishes them from all others. They have been preached in the pulpit,

they have been paraphrased in song. The music of their speech has been heard at the bridal and at the burial, in the sanctuary and by the fireside. The volume itself was, perhaps, the very earliest memorial which affection bestowed, as hope gives the fond assurance that it shall be the last to fall from the trembling hand. A solemn awe, a reverential fear attended its first perusal, and every subsequent call to listen to its words has confirmed the impression that was then made. Its sentences are imbedded in the memory. Its promises are enshrined in the heart. What childhood repeated, age loves to rehearse, and graven on countless tombstones are traced the holy texts "that teach the rustic moralist to die," or speak the sacred hope of blessedness beyond the grave.

Thus highly is it prized. And is it all a mistake? Is this book the delusion of the soul? Is it a false guide? Is it a forged charter? We may, at least, presume not, so long as,

"What none can prove a forgery, *may* be true,
What none but bad men wish exploded, *must*."

XV.

TERMS OF THE LIFE ETERNAL.

“What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?”—MARK X. 17.

WHAT a wonderful book the Bible is! The marvel of literature, the text-book of the world! Where is there anything like it in all the writings of men? It is the only book extant that can be called a book for all, or that is equally adapted to all. You put it into the child's hand, and he grows old reading it, but it has new charms to the last, and is unexhausted still. The hoary head bends over it—not less intent than the eyes that gleam out under the fair young brow—tracing lines that have been traced a hundred times, but which are still as fresh and bright as ever. Childish simplicity is taught the deepest truths, and readily apprehends them, while separate books or even chapters of the volume task the ingenuity and exhaust the learning of deep-read scholars. The peasant pores over it in his hovel and the nobleman in his palace, and it is alike a teacher for both. The thankful heart finds in it the language of praise, and the penitent heart adopts its forms of contrition. The soldier reads it in the camp, or in the intervals of battle, and the widow reads in it as she comes back from the new-made grave, “The Lord is thy husband.” The patriarch of four-score reads it by his

fireside, and the lisping prattler on his knee is charmed by its stories from the old man's lips. How could you teach youth a simpler petition than our Lord's prayer, and how could the profoundest learning frame anything more comprehensive, appropriate or sublime?

Suppose you invited all the wisdom and genius of the world to-day to combine their energies to produce a text-book of morals and religion which should go alike to the Englishman's castle and the Hottentot's kraal, with Kane to the Polar Seas, and Livingston to African deserts, that the professor of law should tell his students to read for its style, and the very infidel should teach his child for its sublime morality—a book that should do more than the wisdom of all codes to shape the legislation of nations, and more than all science to overthrow the temples and the idols of pagan nations—a book that a mother should put in her boy's knapsack when he goes forth to the scenes of battle, and to which she turns herself for consolation when she learns that he sleeps with the untombed dead—a book that shall guide the footsteps of erring youth, and pillow the hope of the departing spirit—a book that shall cheer the prisoner in his cell, and that shall raise up Judsons for the heathen, and Howards for jails, and Wilberforces for the enslaved African—a book in which a Newton, a Herschel, a Brewster, and a Mitchel shall devoutly confess they discover truths more glorious than their telescopes reveal, and which shall have power to change the savage to a man—and does any one imagine that the ripest civilization of the nineteenth century, garnering up all the lore and experience of ages could produce such a book? Philosophers read Lord Bacon, and scholars study Plato, and in these men you find the ripest thought of centuries and of generations;

but what are they to the laborer or the school-boy—nay, how their brightest thoughts die out as a meteor-flash, when you read the wonderful parables of the man of Nazareth, or listen to the utterances of his Sermon on the Mount!

No wonder that the book is cherished. No wonder that precious memories of it are twined about the past, and that the brightest rainbow hues of the future are borrowed from the hopes it inspires. It is associated with all that is dearest to the human heart. The old family record grows almost sacred, interleaved with these pages. The dying parent goes to this fountain to find words of farewell counsel to those he leaves behind. Here is what we repeat at the bridal, here is what we read at the burial. Here is the chapter for family devotion, and here the text for the sanctuary. The richest bequest of parental piety comes from the teachings of this book, and with the last memorial of the departed we trace on the tombstone some "holy text" which it has enshrined.

What is the meaning of all this in connection with a book penned largely by shepherds and fishermen? There is but one answer. Here is God's text-book for the race, adapted to every capacity and to every lot. This tree of wisdom beneath whose shadow we gather to learn lessons beyond all that was taught in Platonic groves, is a tree of God's planting. It is rooted in the soil of the distant centuries. It spreads its fibres beneath Sinai and Calvary. The Spirit of God breathes through its whispering leaves, and the songs of prophets, and apostles, and martyrs yet wake living echoes beneath its branches. The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations, and its fruit is the fruit of the tree of life. Humanity itself pants for a place beneath its shade.

And what is the object of it? Not to teach art or science or philosophy—not to please or entertain, but to educate the soul for heaven. It answers for every man the question "Good master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" It answers it for the Jew. It answers it for the pagan. It answers it for the Christian. Different classes want different text-books, but here all are taught from one. The shepherd boy and the King of Israel, the fisherman and the pupil of Gamaliel, Nicodemus and Zaccheus, Milton and the ploughboy, Job and the jailer of Philippi, may take their place on the same benches, and say alike, "A greater than Solomon is here!"

Just as a well-arranged text-book carries a pupil on step by step to the highest problems, so God by revelation has educated the race. The types and shadows of the old ceremonial law were the alphabet of the atonement—the rudiments of the Gospel. In the profoundest sense the law was a schoolmaster, a child-guide to lead us to Christ. The commandment of duty comes logically before the sense of transgression, and with the confession of sin comes that cry for mercy which the Gospel answers.

And as it is with the race, so it is with the individual. If the Jews were taught as children, so is the doubting, trembling inquirer even now. Does he ask, What shall I do to inherit eternal life? he is told to keep the commandments. This is first of all. Why? Because it is wisest. Because no man is capable of seeing the beauty and grace, and feeling the preciousness of the Gospel till he has tried to render obedience, and has been humbled into the dust by his confessed failure. He needs to know the law—to feel its spirituality, to understand its extent,

to know what it requires, and to feel how far he has come short. It was to this end, that Christ would sweep aside from the eyes of the young man his blinding self-flattery, and show him to himself. For this he gives him to understand that his wealth is yet his idol, dethroning and shutting God out of his heart. He is not fitted to follow the Saviour, till he can learn to sacrifice all else to do it.

This is the first great lesson. In vain is the Gospel preached to you if you refuse to learn this. We say, if you will attain eternal life by your own exertions, keep the commandments. You are bound to do it. Every fibre of your conscience responds to the claim—thrills with the sense of obligation. You are bound to love God with your whole heart, to keep His commandments—to seek His glory. You are bound to hold all you have and are subject to His command. You are bound to subdue every unhallowed and selfish passion, to drive out every evil thought, to love your neighbor as yourself. You are bound to have a heart holy and pure and free from sin. You have no more right to do wrong, to speak or do, or even think or wish, an evil thing, than an angel in heaven. The very same law binds you that binds the seraph, that binds the highest archangel. Back of all the sophistries of the heart, beneath all the apologies with which conscience is overlaid, you can read upon it, as if graven with a pen of iron and the point of a diamond—Keep the commandments. Breathe out your soul in prayer. Make your life a hymn of praise. Let all your affections be set on things above. Live as Christ did. Carry heaven's own atmosphere of holiness and charity with you to your daily tasks. Turn every hour into a season of worship, of holy service. Act, speak, think always

just as you should to be ready to stand at the bar of a heart-searching God. Make every moment of these years a fitting introduction to that glorious sequel, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Why not? Are you not bound to do it? Has not God a right to demand it? Has He not in fact demanded it? Can He be God, the God of his creatures, and require less? What is the use of a conscience if it does not say *Amen* to the justice of this command?

Begin this obedience, then. Begin it now. Do you fancy it is an easy thing? Try it! Commit your whole soul to it, and see whether you are ever like to reach heaven. Ah! then you will see what you never saw, perhaps, before. You will find that you have an evil heart of unbelief, of disobedience, of rebellion. You will find that the law is wide and broad. You will find the truth of St. Paul's words, "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified." Every step of your effort will carry you lower down in your own self-esteem. You will see what you have done—what you have failed to do, what disobedience you are guilty of, what fatal infirmity clings to your sin-palsied soul. You will be brought to the verge of despair. You will be cast down into the dust before God. You will see the just terrors of a holy, but a violated law. You will begin to feel what a transgressor deserves.

But there is no Gospel hope for you till you are brought to that point—till that holy law you have broken has struck your hand loose from all your false props, so that no human hope is left you on which to lean. Then possibly you may be ready to cry out—"Lord, save or I perish!" Then you may exclaim, with the tremulous

emotion of a sinner just ready to sink to hell, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

Ah! this is the extremity to which every sinner needs to be brought. Then, perhaps, he will plead for mercy. Then, perhaps, angels bending over him with agonizing sympathy, may shout back to heaven the glad intelligence—"Behold, he prayeth!"

Then, too, you will be prepared to appreciate the Gospel. You will see the love of God, and his readiness to forgive, manifested in that provision by which He can be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. And it may be that then the glory of Redemption will burst upon your view. It may be that Christ will appear—no longer as "a root out of dry ground without form or comeliness" but—as "the chief among ten thousand, and the one altogether lovely," and you will no longer wonder that Paul should exclaim, overwhelmed by the grandeur and grace of the scheme of Redemption, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

XVI.

THE FATAL LACK.

“One thing thou lackest.”—MARK X. 21.

ONE thing thou lackest! *One thing!* Only one? What is that among many? Perhaps it is one among fifty, all of equal importance, but neither essential, and so may be dropped out of account.

But sometimes the lack of just one thing, is virtually the lack of all. A ship on the ocean might lose a sail or even a mast, and still keep on its way. But what if it should lose its rudder? One might chip off great blocks from a large granite arch, and the pile might still stand firm; but what if it should lose its keystone? So a man may lack many things. He may have a scant wardrobe. He may lack many a comfort. He may be exposed to hardships, but what if he lacks religious faith? What if he lacks the warrant to say, God and Heaven are mine! Is it not like the loss of the rudder? Is it not like the loss of the keystone?

The one thing which meets man's great want, which alone fits him to live and prepares him to die, without which he is orphaned from hope, and with which no calamity can more than temporarily depress him, the one thing which leads him to live with a right purpose, which consecrates all his aims, which gives him a constant refuge, which gilds with light the darkest cloud, which

brings relief to fear and foreboding, which brings with it down to the darkened stormy spirit the light and peace of God, which makes the weary journey of life a pilgrimage to heaven, and which alone teaches the triumphant song, "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?"—the one thing that does all this, is religious faith, the faith by which being justified, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is but one thing, but how many ends does it subserve! The light of the sun is but one thing, yet what would the world be without it, but a drear, barren, frozen desert? It thaws the ice. It softens the clod. It kindles life in the sleeping seed. It calls up the grass blade. It opens the bud. It spreads out the leaf. It ripens the harvest, and it cheers all nature and all the scenes of human life with its genial beams. What that is to this visible world, that the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus is to the redeemed soul. Will you put out that light; or will you shut yourself from it? Yet without that faith which a lost and ruined sinner is called to exercise in the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour, he shuts out by the clouds of his guilt those beams of love and grace which alone will thaw his cold and frozen heart, and turn it into the Eden of peace and holiness.

So the air you breathe is but *one thing*. Yet what would life be without it? You would only gasp and die! Every thing would sink to the motionless repose of the grave. In one instant the earth would be wrapped in the pall of death. Yet what is the soul without the atmosphere of faith and prayer?

"Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air."

Let him lack that alone, and of what avail is all else? A man rich, and wise, and learned, and honored, and robed, and sceptered if you please, that cannot pray!—who denies himself the atmosphere of spiritual life,—whose instinctive longings make him gasp for the unseen blessedness, but who gasps only to die!

The lack of one thing then may be a fatal lack! It may be as that of a tree without roots, a desert without water, a house without foundations, a painting without colors, a state without laws, a world without a God!

Religious faith, though but one thing, implies much. It implies knowledge of God, the sense of guilt, repentance, faith in Christ as the only Saviour, a new heart, pardon, peace, and the hope of eternal life. It may be compared to a crown, with all these jewels in it. The lack of one is, for the most part, the lack of all. What is it then to lose the crown itself?

Without religion, or religious faith, you have no proper sense of your condition and guilt in the sight of God. If you had, you would not continue in it. But what means this lack?

A man unused to the cold of the polar regions sinks down under it, becomes almost or quite insensible. He feels an irresistible inclination to sleep. You know his danger and what do you do? You try to rouse him. You tell him to sleep is to die. He needs to know and realize his danger, or he is lost. Is it not so with the sinner? He is disinclined to bestir himself, to awake, to repent. He would be let alone, and sink to lethargy. What is the result?

So without religion, there is no repentance. And what is a sinner without repentance? You visit a prisoner in his cell. He is guilty and depraved. You seek to soften

his hard heart. You array before him the features of his crime. But you make no impression. You feel that that iron insensibility is a coat of mail wrapped about his sin, and while it remains unpierced, you have no hope of him.

But are not you a sinner against the Majesty on high? And has your heart never been melted in shame and sorrow under it? Have you never thought of that wonderful, infinite goodness of your heavenly Father against which you have sinned? Have you refused to look on that infinite loveliness and gentleness that have been arrayed before you from early years? Has nothing, not even the love of Jesus, or the pathos of that deathless affection exhibited on the cross, been enough to win your heart? Must we not say, in vain is all else, genius, art, energy, worldly blessings, while that heart, hard as the granite, is impervious to the love of God?

Again, faith in Christ as the only Saviour is a necessity, the one thing needful. A man, we will suppose, has fallen into a deep pit. He cannot climb up its steep sides; he cannot contrive by any art of his own to escape. But from above a rope ladder is let down to him, evidently by some friendly hand. He sees no one, but he hears a voice calling to him, and telling him to lay hold of it, and climb up by it. What shall he do? What must he do? Suppose he should call out, will it hold me?—and gets no answer. Suppose he waits long, and watches to see whether it will be withdrawn. How you stand ready to rebuke his folly, and tell him, linger not; it is your only hope.

But sin has plunged every one of us into the pits of guilt and hopeless condemnation, from which there is no escape by any art or device of our own. We have fallen

to the depths of guilt, of ingratitude and disobedience, from which we can be delivered only by help from above. How we are constrained to look up and see if any one appears to help us! And while we watch, behold a ladder let down to us, a ladder shaped as if from the cross, and a voice is heard bidding us cling to it, and climb by it. Is it rejected? What a lack there is of this obedient faith! We are left without atonement, without a Saviour, without help or relief, and sink only to despair.

Again. Pardon is needed. A man becomes a criminal or a traitor, and so is outlawed. He shrinks away in fear of apprehension. What is necessary to calm and disperse his fears but pardon? And have not all of us incurred the guilt of rebellion against the King of kings? Is it not written, he that believeth not, is condemned already? But upon a man without religion, or religious faith, that condemnation still abides. Nothing but the grace of a pardoning God can ever take it away. But to lack pardon, to remain here and drift on to Eternity and the judgment seat unforgiven, to have the load of guilt still resting with crushing weight upon the soul whenever it ventures to think, or is made to feel, what can compensate for all this? There is the guilty one, under sentence of the court. See him, while the words keep ringing their echoes in his ear, trying to master and control himself! What will all else avail him? Well-born, well-bred, gifted with genius and taste, with friends, that yet plead for him in vain, with wealth that yet will not buy his ransom; what does all this avail without pardon?

What is the lack of religious faith then but the lack of what is vital, of what you need most, the sense of your condition as a sinner, a penitent spirit; the faith that can say

Christ is mine ; peace with God your Maker ; the sense of pardoning love, and the hope of immortal blessedness ? These constitute the life of the soul, and how does Scripture describe your condition except as that of one dead in trespasses and sins ?

One thing ! But who can tell its importance ? You stand by the bier of one you loved. You lean down over the coffin lid. What do you see ? The form and features, the same that have long been familiar, all are there. There is the brow calm, but still suggestive of the thoughts that once glowed beneath it. There is the eye, closed indeed, but the same that once beamed with love. There are the lips that once breathed forth the music of speech and the tones of affection. But though you call there is no answer, though you gaze there is no answering smile ! What does it mean ? One thing is lacking. Only one—but that is life.

Here is an emblem of the soul without faith. Is it an emblem of your soul ? Is it true of you that you have not the life of God in you ? Can you be content with such a lack ; you who labor to supply the ten thousand wants of your perishing body ; you that spare no pains to secure a single comfort ; you to whom the Lord of Life comes with the offer to supply your greatest need ?

Are you amid these solemn privileged scenes an attendant as it were, at your soul's funeral ? Oh that you might heed now His words, the words of Him who once by the bier of the dead, said, *Arise !*

XVII.

LIFE FROM THE DEAD.

“The power of God to salvation.”—Rom. i. 16.

NOT long since I heard a man describe the manner in which he arrested a thief who attempted by night to rob his money drawer. The criminal was a young man whom he had befriended, and whose character, till that time, had been regarded as reputable. When detected, he begged piteously that he might not be exposed. But he was given over to the police and lodged in prison. The man whom he had attempted to rob went the next morning to see him, and he found him a picture of despair. His pale lips, his tortured features, his agonizing look, told of the terrible anguish that he was enduring.

Surely it was a fearful sight. The man who had been ready to shoot him down on the spot when he arrested him, was melted to pity. Every revengeful feeling was gone. But he knew not what to do. He wished to be merciful, and yet he felt that he must not defraud justice. He wanted, if possible, to save the young criminal, and restore him to the paths of integrity and usefulness. He could refuse to appear against him, but the question was—would this answer? It might save him from being sentenced to prolonged imprisonment, and from attendant disgrace, but would it make him that he should be—would it *save* him?

There were two things that he needed—to be saved from condemnation, and to be saved from himself, and a complete salvation would include both. If, released from prison, he should carry back with him into society all the vices of the past, it would only be to plunge into deeper ruin. The loss of character and self-respect and self-control; the habits of evil, strengthened by indulgence and familiarity with sin—all would combine to precipitate his fate.

Thus we see that if a man has done evil, two things are necessary to his recovery—deliverance from the condemnation which that wickedness brings with it, and deliverance from the wickedness itself. Both are necessary to a complete salvation, and that complete salvation is what every sinner needs.

In the first place, sin is the violation of law, and that violation calls for sentence and penalty. This is the universal rule. In God's domain, penalty is just as sure as sin. It may be speedy, or it may be slow, but it is sure to come. Just as sure as the seed ripens to the harvest, just as sure as the stone falls to the earth when you let go your hold of it, just so sure is the penalty of violated law. All nature and all history are alike crowded with the evidence and the warnings of this truth. If frost will wither leaf and flower, if dissipation will ruin health, if lack of principle will incur contempt and loss of character, every violation of God's statutes is sure to be visited with judgment. Human courts may not take the matter up. Public opinion may overlook it. The guilty deed may be buried in darkness—it may have been done by stealth, without a human witness; but it cannot finally escape. The soul will witness against itself. Memory will keep the guilty record. The hour

of reflection will come at last, and if a too early death adjourns it over to the unseen world it will be only—so all earthly analogies teach us—to make the final reckoning more terrible.

Besides, no sin, no evil thought or desire can escape the notice or fail to meet the disapprobation of God. It cannot escape his notice, for to his eye every thought and feeling is as palpable as the hills and rocks are to us. It cannot escape his disapprobation, for everything—every moral act—is to him either good or evil, either to be approved or disapproved. It is, therefore, forever under his judgment. And that judgment, covering every deed of life, is an eternal judgment. It is the judgment of an eternal God—the same yesterday, to-day and forever. So that he that believeth not, is condemned already. Sin implies condemnation.

And what is the condemnation that God pronounces on sin? It is the condemnation of the law against every violation of it. It is the sentence due to a disregard of the end for which man was made; due to treason against God's authority; due to the abuse of his goodness; due to the contempt of his mercy; due to the debasement and degradation, and ruin of a soul entrusted as an infinite treasure to our keeping. And let the sinner himself say what that ought to be! Say what is due to your own guilt for defeating the end of your being, for turning as it were, to a crawling worm, what should have soared beyond the eagle's flight on the wings of faith and love; for having transformed God's temple into an idol's shrine; for having stifled in the dust of sensuality and worldliness, aspirations that should have stopped at nothing short of a heavenly birthright as a child of God? What do you deserve for having dethroned God in your affec-

tions, for having trodden under foot the blood of redemption, for having grieved the Spirit that would convince you of sin and lead you to the mercy-seat as a suppliant? What do you deserve for restraining prayer and withholding praise, for giving to the creature what is due only to the Creator; for spurning the duties and the privileges of an heir of heaven; for disqualifying your soul utterly for the service and worship of the sanctuary above!

If some one had undermined and blown up with gunpowder some great structure like St. Paul's Cathedral, or the Tower of London, what would have been said of him? But the ruin of a soul is more than the ruin of a tower or cathedral, for it is designed as God's spiritual temple. What could sting and torture you more than to have some worthless favorite steal away the affections of husband, or wife, or child? What robbery could compare with it? Yet what is the condemnation due to robbing God of your love, turning his glorious name by your sin into a word of terror, offering him scarce the mockery of a passing recognition, and living without any reference to his will?

Condemnation for all this is ensured by God's own justice. The law does not go beyond what a properly enlightened conscience approves. And yet its sentence—the sentence that overhangs all sin—that is suspended over the head of every transgressor—is fearful indeed. He is to be shut out from the glory he scorned. He is to be denied the mercy he refused to seek. He is to hear the words, "depart ye cursed." His lot is to be with the enemies of God forever. He is given over to everlasting self-accusation, to bitter remorse, to the anguish of despair. The wrath of God abideth on him. There is no place for him in all the realms of light and glory, in all

the mansions that Christ has gone before to prepare. There is not a pure heart in heaven, not a sinless or ransomed spirit before the throne, with which he can sympathize. His portion is with those that forget God, that are cast into outer darkness, that are left to reap the eternal harvest of their own sin, to eat of the fruit of their own way. All is summed up in this, the soul that sinneth it shall die! It is dead thenceforth to all that constitutes the proper life of the soul, dead to the joys of holiness, to the attractions of Christ, to the life of the redeemed.

Who can contemplate this unmoved, and yet who can call it in question? Who is not forced to confess, "all this by shutting God out of my soul, and taking the world in, do I deserve—all this is my rightful portion?"

But where is deliverance? The law cannot be repealed or set aside. It is as eternal as God himself. His existence as a Holy being makes the law of holiness the law of the universe. That law is imprinted on every man's conscience, like letters so inwoven into a flag that the flag must perish before the letters will fade. The conscience must be annihilated before it can fully and finally give up its trust. You must lose your consciousness as a moral agent before you can cease to feel the obligations which bind you as a creature of God to his service. And as sure as the law exists, so sure is its penalty, unless deliverance can be found, which, without putting aside the law, provides pardon for the guilty.

Is there such deliverance? Does it not become every one to ask? Is not this the one great want of guilty man? There is the tribunal before you, only a little way off. You are moving toward it every day. Each passing moment, each returning Sabbath, brings you nearer.

There is the judge, before whose presence the heavens and the earth shall flee away. The hour is at hand when your doom must be determined. Can you doubt what it must be, if you can offer there no plea for mercy? Is it not time to ask whether you can find such a plea; whether pardon may be secured, whether deliverance is possible? What sort of conduct is that which says, "I know that God is holy and that I am a sinner against him, and that I must be arraigned at His bar, and that no man can say how soon the summons may come, but I am resolved to give no heed to it, to dream on to the last, to rush blindly upon that awful future, and take all the consequences?" Is this language, though practically the language of thousands, that of wisdom or folly, that of prudence or desperation? Is it possible that you can be guilty of it? Should not rather everything else yield to the question of your salvation? Should not all the powers of reason and reflection be concentrated here? Have you any right to rest content till you know that there is no such thing as salvation from condemnation?

Either there is, or there is not. If there is not, then all the messages that suggest it are false, and all the hopes that aspire to it are vain, and all the thousands who have cheered themselves in the joyous confidence that God had forgiven their sins, have been mistaken. We may sit down in the dust and wrap around us the mantle of despair, or we may madly make the most of the few transient joys that flash like fire-flies through the twilight of our woe, and say to ourselves, "let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die!" We may stupify conscience and brutify reason, and settle down to an irresistible fate, but surely, even there, our very despair would bear about it some shreds of sense and propriety, and

we might have the consolation of feeling that we endure and await nothing which it was possible to avert.

But if deliverance from condemnation is possible, where is one who claims to exercise the reason and the thoughtfulness of a man who can afford to regard it with indifference? Who should not inquire into it, and learn how he may himself be saved?

But the very end and scope of the Gospel is to declare that deliverance found, and to reveal its method. A Saviour has come to our world, and we are taught that whosoever believeth in him is not condemned. The convicted jailer, like the thousands on the day of Pentecost, cries out, inquiring what he must do to be saved, and the reply is ever, "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." Hear the Apostle himself, once a persecutor, exclaiming, "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, that walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." And as the centuries pass, thousands take up the strain, and other thousands catch it from their dying lips, and roll it on till to-day from distant lands, from souls once bound down in heathen despair, comes up the fresh and living testimony, the testimony of what they know, and what they have felt themselves, that it is gloriously true. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

Have you no desire for this deliverance? The Gospel comes to tell you of it. Jesus is speaking of it to you through human lips. Do you listen indifferent?

XVIII.

"THE WONDERFUL."

"His name shall be called Wonderful."—Is. ix. 6.

A WONDERFUL Being must He be, one for whom no history of man can find a precedent or a parallel, who presumes to interpose in behalf of a lost race, and who in doing it, proclaims Himself "mighty to save." He must be one who is warranted to interpose—one who while he pities the lost, is fitted to appear in their behalf before the majesty on high—one so lowly that he can take us by the hand—one so exalted that He can bear us with Him to heaven.

And as such is Christ revealed to us. Scripture showers upon Him titles which it would be impious to address to a creature. He is "the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the mighty God, the Father of Eternity (everlasting Father), the Prince of Peace." He is "the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last," "the King of kings and the Lord of lords." In Him dwells "all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." He is "head over all things to the Church," "the word that in the beginning was with God, the word that was God." He is the Son of man, yet the "Lord of the Sabbath." He is "God manifest in the flesh," and has "power on earth to forgive sins." He heals the diseased, gives sight to the blind, raises the dead, quiets the storm, feeds the multitude, lays down

His life and takes it again. He needs no one to tell Him of the human heart, for "He knows what is in man." He is "the Messiah that was to come," who could tell His hearers "all things," who could say, "before Abraham was, I am," thus claiming the *Jehovah*-power of the great I AM. He is the one whom "all men are to honor even as they honor the Father," the one "to whom every knee is to bow and every tongue confess." It is He who alone has ever ventured or felt warranted to say, "Ye believe in God believe also in me." We may not speak of any one's falling asleep in Moses, or Paul, or David, but we do speak of their "falling asleep in Jesus." He is "the resurrection and the life." He is that Shepherd who gives his flock that follow Him "eternal life," and He has such power that no one can pluck them out of His hand.

Such are only a few of the passages in which the greatness of Him who "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," though He took upon Him the form of a servant, is described to us. In these I can see nothing by which to institute a human comparison. We are dealing with the infinite and the divine, and no mortal measure can span its compass. To make Jesus merely a greater Enoch, or Isaiah, or Peter, is to do violence not merely to the history of His sinless and heavenly life, but to every description of Him in the Bible which does not speak specifically of His human nature, His growing in wisdom and stature.

We may, then, assume His divinity while we proceed to consider the appropriateness of His name as "Wonderful." And surely each attribute, each office, each quality is the more wonderful when you throw around it the vesture of the infinite, when you clothe it with the

divine. It is more wonderful when you multiply it by the measurelessness of deity, by the limitless and the eternal.

Christ is the Wonderful then for the offices, and the variety of them which He assumes and discharges.

He is the *second Adam*, for as the first was the father of the dying and introduced death into the world, so He is the Father of the living, for He is the resurrection and the life, and "whosoever believeth on Him shall never die." He stands, therefore, as a new Adam at the head of a regenerated race.

He is "the *Amen*, the faithful and true witness." All that He has testified of God, of heaven, of hell, of sin and judgment, shall be verified. Heaven and earth may pass away, but not one jot or tittle of all He has ever uttered.

He is the sinner's *Advocate*; for "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ, the righteous."

He is the *Angel of the Covenant*; for through Him a covenant of mercy is made and confirmed between God and man. He is "the arm of the Lord to be revealed" to all nations, the exhibition of His power and grace combined. He is "the *Author*, and at the same time, He is the *Finisher of our Faith*. He originates and He perfects it. He leads us to the strait gate, and He brings us to the gates of glory. He says, at first, "Come unto me ye that labor and are heavy laden," and at last, "Come ye blessed of my Father."

He is the *Branch*, that is to grow up out of His place, that is to build the temple of the Lord, and that is to give salvation to Judah and safety to Israel, and is to be known as "the Lord our Righteousness." So He was foretold and so was it fulfilled.

He is the *Bread of Life*. It is the truth that is symbolized to us by His broken body and flowing blood, that is our nourishment. Our souls would die if they could not look to a crucified Saviour and be fed.

He is the *Captain of our Salvation*. He leads the way as we march through temptations and trials to the noblest conquest. He marshals all the means that are necessary to secure our salvation, and then as our Captain makes the traces of His own footsteps our path to triumph.

He is the *Chief Shepherd*; for while his servants watch for souls as those that must give account; while they are diligent to lead their flock, He is diligent to lead them. He watches over all.

He is the *Consolation of Israel*. He consoles His Church in all her trials and disasters. He makes light arise upon her darkness. He gives the oil of joy for mourning and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

He is the *Chief Corner-stone*, the foundation on which prophets and apostles, evangelists and martyrs, and the whole structure of the Church from first to last reposes.

He is the *Counsellor*. "In Him are hidden all the treasures both of wisdom and knowledge." He can give that counsel which can meet all the wants and emergencies of life, the counsel that is always suited to all our wants.

He is that *David*, beloved one, of whom David was the type, that should save the flock of God and be their Shepherd. He is the *Root and Offspring of David*, his descendant and his original—to whom David could say at once, my son and my king. He is the *Dayspring* from on high that hath visited us, that chases away our night

of ignorance and despair, and brings us the dawn of heaven. He is the *Sun of Righteousness that rises on us with healing in His beams*. He brings us the noonday of hope and life, He makes this desert, this wilderness, this vale of tears, radiant with the light of heaven. And yet He is the *Star* that should come out of Jacob, and the *Sceptre* that should arise out of Israel. He is the *bright and the morning star*, the *Star of Bethlehem*, for He leads our way in the darkest night to the hope of salvation. He is the *light of the world*, without which the gloom of ignorance and guilt, and foreboding, and condemnation, and error, and delusion, would have covered the nations. He is the *true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world*, the true fountain of enlightened reason, and piety, and devotion, without whom we should ever, living and dying, only stumble on the dark mountains; the true light in which there is no admixture of falsehood or error. He is the *brightness of the Father's glory*, the revealed image of Him who dwells in light which no man can approach unto, the truth and holiness and love of God transcribed in living expressions upon the tablet of that human nature which Christ assumed, for "he that was in the bosom of the Father, he alone hath declared Him." He is the *desire of all nations*, the one whom all nations need and long for, for "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now," and "the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." He is *God's elect one*, chosen for this, that "He shall not fail or be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for His law." He is a *witness to the people*, the *faithful and true Witness* who testifies to a sinful, guilty, and dying world the things of

God. He is *our forerunner*, who has gone before us, entering into that which is within the veil, the object of our hope, and requiring us to meet no foe, but what He has already met and vanquished. He is *our leader*, who marks with His blood-stained footsteps the path of our cross and self-denial. He is *our example*, the pattern for our lives, the perfect standard, the one who could say, “I have given you an example that ye should do, as I have done unto you.” He is *our Lord*, the Lord of all, the Lord of glory, the Lord God of the holy prophets, the Lord God Almighty, and yet *our servant*, for He “came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many.” He is “the *chief among ten thousand*, the one altogether lovely;” He is “the Rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley,” for in Him greatness and humility, majesty and loveliness are combined. He is the *Lion of the tribe of Judah*, and yet the Lamb, *the Lamb of God*; for while His power is resistless and terrible, and He can prevail where no others can, yet “as a lamb was he led to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so opened he not his mouth.” And with all His meek innocence, He is *our Passover*, *our Paschal Lamb*, whose blood of sprinkling, like that of the Passover of old on the door posts of the dwelling, stays for us the hand of the avenging and destroying angel of justice. He is the *way, the truth and the life*. By Him we come to God, by Him we have the promise, and through Him we live. He is *that eternal life*, the *fountain of living waters*, “of which if a man drink he shall never thirst, but live forever.” He is *our Shiloh*, *our peace*, the *Prince of Peace*, who could say, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth give I unto you;” for it is through Him

that the offending rebel is reconciled to his offended Sovereign ; through Him that he attains to " that peace that passeth all understanding." He is *our high priest and Intercessor*, for He " enters for us into the holiest place," and presents the sacrifice in the name of His whole people. He is Himself the voluntary sacrifice for our guilt, He is *our ransom*, He is *our Deliverer*, He is *our Jesus, Saviour*, He is *our Redeemer*, " the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only but for the sins of the whole world." He is the *Good Shepherd* " that lays down his life for the sheep." He finds us captives, He breaks our chains, He pays our forfeit, " not by corruptible things as silver and gold, but by His own precious blood." He pledges His life to secure our ransom. Thus He becomes *the horn of our salvation*, the strength and security of it. He becomes *our Mediator*, standing between us and God, to open the way for our petition, and hand us down our pardon from the throne, screening from our eyes through the veil of His own flesh, that terrible majesty which no man can see and live. Thus, too, He becomes *the door* through which alone we can enter the home of heaven, the dwelling of our Father from which by sin we are self-exiled, and within which alone we find peace, and pardon, and blessedness. Thus, too, He becomes the *Resurrection and the Life*, the *Prince of Life*, and bestows upon His followers immortality, and makes " death to be swallowed up of life." He is the *Rock*, the *Rock of Ages*. Who-soever builds his hopes on Him is safe.

He is, moreover, our *prophet*, for he speaks to us the word of God, he draws the veil of eternity and lets us look beyond the grave, at the judgment and the scenes behind that are to follow it. He is our *King*—" the King of Israel," " the King of saints," " the King of kings,"

to whom we owe perfect and entire allegiance. He is our *Lawgiver*—his life and example and instructions and commands are our highest law, and to present them secures the acknowledgement of their justice. He is our *Judge*; his words judge us now, and in the Last Day the world shall be arraigned at his bar.

Thus do we see how appropriate, from the varied titles and offices of Christ, is the language of the text, in which he is described. He is truly "the Wonderful" in whom all these things meet.

But he is "the Wonderful," in the second place, because of the life which he led of self-denial and benevolence. Look at that life, incomparable and unparalleled in all the records of time. See how every thought, word and deed was made to point to the specific end of his mission, the glory of God and the salvation of the race. The Lord of Angels takes the form of a servant; the Maker of the world had not where to lay his head. He whose word stills the troubled elements of nature, and hushes the tempest to repose, sleeps fatigued in the vessel, or sits down weary to rest himself at Jacob's well. If he could say "before Abraham was, I am," almost in the same breath he speaks of tearing down the temple of his body. The King of kings becomes the man of sorrows. The proprietor of the universe accepts the hospitality of the humble family of Bethany. He who controls the seasons, and could perfect or blast the harvests, hungers and thirsts. He whose eye could take in the universe at a glance, comes down to the falling sparrow and the fading lily for his lessons. The poor Syrophenician woman; the centurion; blind Bartimeas; the little children, whose bearers, as they presented them for a blessing, were rebuked by his disciples; the poor widow of Nain—and

that other who cast but two mites into the treasury while the rich cast in of their abundance ; and that other still who prevailed on the hard and unrelenting judge ; the beggar at the rich man's gate ; the penitent prodigal ; the poor humbled publican ; the weeping sisters at the tomb of their brother Lazarus—none of these are beneath the notice of that Eye that sees through the darkness of the grave, his own resurrection, and the bringing home of innumerable sons and daughters unto glory. Thus the whole life of Jesus is a continuous miracle, a wonder of self-denying benevolence. There is no turning aside, no digression through human weakness, but he presses on straight forward to the accomplishment of his life-work. Every step in his career was wonderful. The powers of earth and hell, the Scribes and Pharisees combined with the hosts of darkness—Pilate and Satan in league—do not force him to swerve from his career. Persecution fronts him as he goes. Treachery delivers him to the enemy. Death with all its lingering tortures of crucifixion stares him in the face, but still he presses on, and the last words of prayer for his murderers sealed the perfect and beautiful consistency of a life devoted to God's glory and the good of man.

But Christ is "the Wonderful" from the lessons which he taught. He is the great Teacher, and all the records of the world present us none who can boast of what his forerunner John declared himself unworthy to do. No one that has ever lived could say, "I am worthy to unloose his sandals." "He spake as never man spake"—was the testimony of his prejudiced hearers. Human lips never uttered before or since a sermon to be compared with that upon the Mount. His parables are cyclopedias of truth, every sentence a volume. He spake

as one having authority, and not as the Scribes. Throngs followed him by thousands, and yet he shunned observation and rebuked praise. No shady grove or porticoed temple, like that of Athenian philosophers, was selected as the special site of instruction ; the seashore, bordered by the harvest field, the mountain side, the desert, the streets of the city, were hallowed by words too powerful and sacred to need halls or temples of human fabric to lend them a sanction. He spoke beneath the dome of heaven, and no encircling walls were to confine a speech that was to go abroad through all the earth, and its sound to the end of the world. And the place where he spoke was typical of the truth he uttered. It was open to all. It was free to all. It acknowledged no peculiar respect for birth, race or clime. The great Teacher, first of all, glanced over the partition walls of nations and religions, and taught what he alone had comprehended—the religious unity of the race.

And then look into this truth which his prescient mind directed in purpose to Jew and Samaritan, to the age that then was, and the ages that were to come. It is the truth of heaven. It is solid instruction. It is fact, not theory. The earnest glance of this Teacher pierced through all speculation, all sophistry, and swept them aside, that he might gather the wheat into the garner. From what lips but his did such words, such truths, such lessons, ever proceed—just what we want to know, just what we should know, truths that take hold on eternal things, that open the volume of our immortal destiny, that reveal God to us as King, Father, Judge, and Proprietor of all—that open bright prospects of pardon and hope and blessedness for the penitent, and gloomy abysses of despair unutterable for the guilty—truths that dawn upon our

night like a heavenly morning, that kindle the whole soul in all its faculties to a new life—truths that seem by an electric power to reach at once distant continents and far-off ages, that have nations for an audience and centuries to echo their tones that ring on like the pealing thunder along the hills, till they lose themselves in eternity—truths that do not sleep in the soul that receives them like dry logic, or fruitless science, but are a seed, a leaven, a life within ; that renovate the whole nature ; that like Christ, their Author, cast out demons, and restore a man to himself, to his home, and his God. Where is the teacher whose words work such a transformation, make fishermen apostles, change the persecutor into the herald of the cross, burn into the hearts of thousands with such intensity that the martyr's flames are unheeded ; that in some obscure dwelling sink deep in the soul of its humble occupant long centuries after they were uttered, and make men of feeble, unlettered simplicity like the imprisoned Madiab, calmly defiant of tyrannic power, mightier in the strength of their discipleship to Jesus, than all the terrors of sovereign and intolerant authority ?

Wonderful Teacher ! No man ever spake like this man. The person, the utterance, the manner, the circumstances, are all passed away. The eloquence of the occasion has fled. We may indeed conceive the charm of that personal presence—his finger points to the lily while he declares that Solomon was never arrayed like it. The sower was on the hillside before Him when he made his seed to typify the word of God. He sat by Jacob's well when he spoke of the living water. All this has passed away, but the eloquence of truth remains. Through the middle ages Aristotle had his commentators and interpreters in the schools and universities of Europe. His

name now has lost its power ; but millions are listening to-day to hundreds and thousands that speak in the Saviour's name, and reiterate his lessons. And the time will come, it is coming now, when on continents and islands, on every shore and in every clime, Christ's truth shall spread, and he become the Teacher of a renovated world ; a ransomed race shall be his disciples.

But He is "the Wonderful," for the ends that He seeks to accomplish. What these are, as they reach beyond time and interweave themselves with the interests of God's universal government, it is not for us to declare. But we may speak of what is now revealed, the mystery of godliness, "God manifest in flesh." The Gospel is a wonder, its author is the Wonderful. He sought no selfish aim. The world has seen ambition and grasping avarice and self-seeking intellect elsewhere ; for a wonder, it saw in Him of these no trace. His object was one that lofty minds may have dreamed of, but it towered above all they could hope to realize, like the Alps above molehills. He fixed His purpose on the renovation of the human heart and race, the re-building of its ruins, its redemption from sin's thralldom, its translation to an angel's sphere. And if the steps that He took to this end were arduous, they were firm and wise ; they were fact, not fancy ; they were cut in the granite, and a race might mount by them. Let a man look at that end which the Saviour had in view, for which He laid aside His glory, for which He took our nature, for which He taught, suffered and died, for which He chose His disciples and sent them abroad with His great commission, and he will call that mind "wonderful" which originated the vast and glorious plan ; how much more when it solved the problem of devising means for its accomplish-

ment, when it called into being the mechanism and motives, and opened the way by which it might be secured—when life is sacrificed and death with ignominy and torture are welcomed to secure its accomplishment. Angels may wonder, but we will adore.

We can join with the poet :

“And *who* is great?

Alas! the teeming earth has seen but one.

The lowly Bethlehem shadowed his infant brow, the
manger there

Pillowed his infant head. Yet who like him

Has come from palaces and walked the land

With such a crown upon his golden hair?

Is greatness from the glory of our sires

Or the emblazoned page of heraldry?

His Father was the God of all the earth—

His generation from eternity.

Is it from life, or life's great deeds, that stir

The heart to admiration, prayers, and tears?

His was a life devoted to the world—

A life that battled with eternal death.

Is it from glory? His was that of good—

Not marshalled by the clarion and the trump,

But by the silent gratitude of earth.

Is it from eloquence? His wondrous lips

Stirred the great elements, and mount and sea

Trembled before his words, and wind and storm

Sank at that magic utterance—*Be still.*

He spake, and thrones before his startling voice

And kings that filled them in their robes and crowns,

Shook like an aspen in the coming storm.

Is it from power? His sceptre was o'er all,

And the wide world bowed to his lifted hand.

Is it from lofty love—that love for man

That dares the tempest of a maddened earth,

The malediction of the human heart

For which it bows it to the sepulchre?
His was the great philanthropy of God.
Alone He trod the winepress, and alone
In red Gethsemane he bowed and bled
Great drops of agony, and cleansed the world."

It is easy now to discern why the Saviour is *called* "the Wonderful," or rather why He *is* "the Wonderful."

It was for a wonderful end—the salvation of undone and ruined men. When we look at this we find everything full of wonders. The soul of man is a wonderful thing. It has wonderful capacities, a wonderful lot on earth, a wonderful destiny hereafter. Its estrangement from God is wonderful, its degradation and sin are wonderful, but its restoration is a still greater wonder—it is a miracle of grace. It needed a wonderful mind to contrive it, a wonderful power to execute it, and the history of the results that follow it, is a history of wonders. The redeemed soul exclaims with Wesley :

"See a bush that burns with fire,
Unconsumed amid the flame,
Turn aside the sight admire,
I that living wonder am."

It was to rescue us, to work in us a wonderful transformation, that this wonderful Jesus-Saviour appeared. It was to ransom the captive, to give sight to the blind, to make the dead in trespasses and sins live, to make this worm of the earth, covered with the slime of sin, a white-robed angel—to bring the lost wanderer back to his Father's house. We needed one, wonderful to save—combining almost conflicting elements in harmony—our King and our Brother, our friend and our judge—human

and yet divine—sinless, yet compassionate to the guilty—authorised to forgive, yet purchasing our pardon with his blood. We needed One to whom kings should bow, and who yet would hear and receive the beggar—One infinite in perfection, yet a perfection transcribed upon a human life that we might imitate—One who could suffer like us and be tried like us, but whose flowing blood could cleanse a world. Such a One—"the Wonderful"—has been provided. To the strange depth of our guilt and woe, a strange arm has reached a strange deliverance.

Consider again what our feelings should be to this wonderful Saviour. They should be those of wonderful love. It is for us that His life was wonderful, His teachings wonderful, His death wonderful. For us he combined all those strange titles and offices in himself. For us he led that strange career of self-denying benevolence, humility and reproach. For us he spake as never man spake. For us He laid down his life amid the torture and shame of the cross. What ought our feelings to be toward Him—our Friend, Redeemer, Brother, Saviour? What gratitude, devotion, attachment should we exhibit! And what sort of a remembrance should that be of Him, which we cherish, when assembled at His table, and handling the emblems of His broken body!

"He that loveth me will keep my commandments," said Christ. "He will, he does," should be the echo of every Christian heart—the history of every Christian life. Wonderful Jesus, we will obey Thee.

"Remember thee—thy death, thy shame
Our sinful hearts to share—
O memory leave no other name
But His recorded there."

Reflect, also, how wonderful and entire should be our faith and trust in this wonderful Saviour. He is worthy of it in all its fulness. Think of what all these titles mean, and what they make Him, as an object of confidence. He is "able to save to the uttermost." He can fulfil all our hope. Think of his truth and fidelity. He will not falsify that wonderful promise worthy of its wonderful author—"Whosoever cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Think of the wisdom of His teachings—the sagacity of Omniscience—that can lead the lost wanderer home. Where is there such a guide? Think of His power—no one can pluck us out of His hand. Think of that love that pillowed on its bosom the beloved disciple, that wept with the weepers at Lazarus' grave, that met the abandoned outcasts with a mingled truth and kindness that broke their hearts. Will you not lean in humble and implicit trust on the Saviour's arm? Will you not commit your soul into the Saviour's hands? Will you not forego every vain reliance on yourself, and rest your hope in the Saviour's blood?

Consider, too, how wonderful must be the condemnation of those who refuse such a wonderful Saviour! Now you have presented to your view a great and wonderful Redeemer. He is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by Him. Spurn His offer, let it alone till death withdraws it forever, and what becomes of you? The condemnation of the cities of the plain was wonderful, but they will rise up in judgment to condemn you.

And, finally, ask what that world must be where He that is "the Wonderful," shall be fully revealed to our perfect vision. That will be glorious and wonderful indeed. There we shall "behold Him, whom not having seen we love, and in whom believing, we rejoice with joy

unspeakable and full of glory. The wonders of His being will be there unfolded, and to our adoring gaze they will appear more wondrous still. We shall appreciate the meaning of that name as we cannot now.

A wonderful scene indeed transpires when, unseen by the outward eye, the King of kings comes down to feed the famished soul with the bread of life. Pardoned rebels gather to the table to meet the smile, and cherish the memory of their dying, risen Lord. Hopes full of immortality cluster around the sacred emblems of His broken body. But there is another scene to come, of which this is but a feeble type. From the east and the west, from the north and the south, shall come the thronging myriads of ransomed spirits, to sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God. And "the Wonderful" will be there, the Redeemer with His redeemed, and at that table of infinite love and perfect holiness, Eternity itself will be the feast-day of the soul. Every want will be met, every desire satisfied. Even now the Saviour Himself is giving out His invitation to meet Him there. Will you not accept it?

XIX.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE—WHAT IT IMPLIES.

“Be ye therefore perfect.”—*MATT. v. 48.*

IT is an old saying, too little regarded by many, that we have but one life to live. It is common sense, it is wisdom, it is religion, therefore, to make the most of it. To accomplish this is the true philosophy of life.

What rule, standard, model, then, shall we adopt ; for there is an infinite variety. You turn with disgust and loathing from the type of life set before you in the drunkard, the glutton, and the sensualist. You do not want a trough for a table, a sty for a dwelling, or a gutter for a bed. And yet, perhaps, you are lured by feasts, pageants, Brussels carpets and four-story palaces. You have a taste for flutter and fashion. You adore ease and comfort.

But is there not something better than all this ? Which would read best on a grave-stone, a rich merchant, a smart lawyer, a greedy pleasure seeker, or an earnest and devoted Christian ? Who commands the most respect, even from a godless world, the man that prays, or the man that jests ? And which is the greatest and noblest achievement, to train the soul for heaven and enrich it with memories of goodness and self-denial ; or to eat, drink, sleep, and drift with the fashions ?

I have no hesitation in saying with the poet, “A Chris-

tian is the highest style of man." Plaster the body with tinsel ; teach it genteel manners ; store the mind with learning ; educate it to exquisite taste ; make a man upright and moral, a true friend and kind neighbor, and you yet fall vastly short of the Christian standard. You have fashion's idol, but the soul of piety is not in it. You may have the golden candlestick but no light ; the frame, but not the picture.

It is well to be moral and upright, but principle without religion has simply the force of education and habit. These plant it like a cedar post in the earth, but religion makes it live and grow, and turns it into a cedar of Lebanon. There can be no solidity of character, it is true, without morality. A man becomes like a tree with a hollow trunk, fair without, but ants, squirrels, and rotten wood inside, and reeling till it falls prostrate beneath the tornado. And yet moral principle is to Christian faith only as the dry channel of an aqueduct to the living fountain that can fill it and supply the thirst of thousands. Aspiring merely to morality, I level the arrow of effort at a height like that of the "Crow's Nest," but concentrating my energies on a life like Christ's, I lay my hand on a crown of hope beyond the stars.

Piety implies morality, and morality of the highest standard. Without this, it is but like a body bled to death, or a frame with the bones expunged. But a Christian life requires not only fair morals, but a renewed heart ; not only just dealings with men, but truth and duty to the God of truth ; not only integrity and justice, but charity, humility, and holy consecration. Morality says, "do no man any wrong." Religion says, "do all men good." Morality says, "keep off the stains of vice." Religion says, "put on the robes, not of virtue

only, but of angelic holiness." Morality bids, "pay your debts to your neighbor." Religion urges, "accept as a bankrupt sinner the free grace of God in Christ, and live as one bought with a price, no longer your own."

We feel that it would be a great thing to bring the mass of men up to even the lower standard. They suffer themselves to be governed by their pleasures and their tastes, till a slave-driver's whip and chains could not impose a more hopeless bondage. They have no higher aim in life than just self-gratification. They can hate, envy, cheat, deceive, offend, riot, carouse, all within the limits of a morality that keeps their names out of the newspapers, and their persons from the police courts. They drift through life with no more moral pilotage than what is necessary to keep clear of the rapids of vice or the snags of the law.

Some, again, belong to that class whom Cowper describes, "whose ambition is to sink." All that constitutes the dignity of the human soul—reflection, conscientiousness, soberness of purpose,—is thrust aside to give place to recklessness, frivolity, amusement. The soul is disfigured, like an Indian tattooed for his war-dance. To say a funny thing, however stupidly foolish, to master the legerdemain of fashion, to win some frivolous game, to gain admission to some gay circle, this is the height of their aspirations. It seems as if the instincts of butterflies and peacocks had been lodged by mistake in human bodies, or as if the owners of soul were ashamed of their property, and panted to supplant the image of God by some gross caricature.

To bring such persons up to a decent moral standard, would be carrying them—not above the tops of the Alps or the Andes, it is true, but it would be lifting them—out

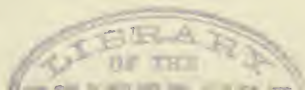
of mines and caves to the light of day, out of quagmires to the solid ground. A strictly moral man ought to be sober enough to see that there is something serious in life, that it means more than an empty pageant or a reeling dance. He ought to be prepared to say, "this valley of existence bounded by the mountain ranges of an eternity past and an eternity to come, with only the gates of death and the bar of judgment for its outlet, is not the place for an heir of immortality to doze and carouse, jest and banter. The great heavens over us stretch themselves out to an immensity which they beckon the amplitudes of our expanding thoughts to fill. This soul itself, the wonder of creation's wonders, within whose impalpable grasp whole centuries are gathered up, and millions of memories are stored, which by a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen, travels back from the seen to the unseen, from nature to God, which soars aloft till poised on the brink of its own doom, it speculates on eternal ages when every earthly memorial of itself has vanished—this soul, capable of knowing God, and filling an angel's sphere, is too great and glorious a thing to be kicked about as the football of fashion, too capacious to be measured by the jester's standard."

But Christianity is not content with this. It demands more. Its aim is loftier, more comprehensive. It demands, to attain its objects, the enlistment of all the powers of the soul. For some men, to attain a fortune, may be a high aspiration; for others, the fame of successful generalship; for others still, a reputable character; but he who aims just to live a truly Christian life, aspires to a higher and more arduous as well as a holier attainment.

Such a life implies the subordination of all selfish pas-

sions and lusts to the divine will. This is the true mastery. A man does not own himself till God owns him, and that ownership is solemnly acknowledged. He is a slave to his baser nature, even though his chains are inviting as diamond rings and bracelets of gold. While a passion against which reason revolts domineers over him—while a lust which conscience rebukes scoffs at conscience, he is a bond-slave of satan. He is ruled by a tyrant as vile and base as his own deformity. To overcome this tyrant, it is not enough to make a declaration of independence. A more than “seven years’ war” must follow it, a life-long struggle to establish the ascendancy of virtue and the law of God. He who maintains it to the end, who “falls but fights anew”—till even death becomes his standard-bearer and waves over his prostrate dust the flag of triumph—he is the true hero. “He that ruleth his own spirit is better than he that taketh a city.” The man who turns his own soul into a battlefield for God, resolved never to shrink or flee till the victory is won, is braver than the veteran of a hundred fights. How easy to love those that love you! How hard to turn your other cheek to the smiter! How easy to glow with indignation at even imagined wrong! How hard, but how noble to forgive as you would be forgiven yourself! A Hannibal in boyhood vows upon the altar eternal hostility to the Roman people. Jesus on the cross prays for his murderers, “Father, forgive them.” All ambitions are mean and contemptible by the side of that which would enthrone the purity, meekness, humility and charity of the Gospel within the soul.

A Christian life implies, moreover, a humbling acceptance of Christ’s Redemption as the only ground of hope for the sinner. It costs something for proud human na-



ture to stoop to this. It costs something to strip off the robe of pride, of trust in our own fancied goodness, and falling prostrate in the dust confess that in ourselves we have nothing to avert the descending stroke of divine justice, and that as helpless suppliants, as guilty wretches, all our appeal must be simply to sovereign mercy. Yet this a Christian life requires, and the man who stoops to this, humbles himself only to be exalted. He is not only pardoned, but he is delivered from his own pride. He has the greatness of one who forms a low estimate of himself. He has attained to this—to see his own heart as it appears before God—to know the weakness and depravity of his fallen nature. It is a knowledge beyond any that is taught in the schools—beyond the knowledge of the student, or the artist, or the historian, or the philosopher—it is the knowledge of his need, and the knowledge of his Redeemer.

A Christian life implies, again, a consecration to a holy service, to the work of God. In whatever it is engaged, it serves him. To stand by the anvil, to follow the plough, to serve at the counter, to sweep the streets, becomes a hallowed employment, for it is cheerfully performed at the mandate of duty ; it is done to glorify him by whom it is imposed. It is done because it is due—because he that does it confesses that he is not his own, but the creature of God, the redeemed of grace, a pensioner on the divine beneficence, and so with holy aims, he strives to put God's will in all things in place of his own, turning life into a prayer, and making each daily blessing a note in the sweet music of adoration, each hardship a step by which he climbs up toward God.

A Christian life is one that necessarily seeks to do good. And herein it finds a field for glorious achievement. Not

in days like these may any one speak in scorn of the blood-stained banner that waves over the soldier of freedom and native land, but the expansive aims of a true philanthropy reach abroad to take the whole world in the embrace of their sympathies. One cannot love God without loving his brother also, and when you look on the humblest hero of charity, out of love to God seeking to teach the ignorant or uplift the degraded, what a shrivelled and contemptible caricature of greatness is the richest miser, the greatest warrior, the most surprising genius, a Croesus, a Pharaoh, a Cæsar, by his side.

A Christian life is the only one worth living on earth. Any other soon foams away to dregs—and such dregs! what they are, let a Dives, a Chesterfield, a Byron tell! Back of all the show and pageant, behind the close-drawn curtain, there are just “the tawdry ornaments, the tallow candles, the wires and pulleys,” which the English nobleman described. A bubble’s life is dignity to this. An actor’s part is sincerity to this. To be true, earnest, effective—to make existence here anything else than tragedy or mockery, rubbish or crime, we must adopt the Christian’s standard.

XX.

THE FIRST AIM OF LIFE.

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness."—MATT. vi. 33.

SOME of the gravest mistakes of human life grow out of one fundamental error—putting first something that should be put second, or putting second what should be first. There can properly be only one thing put first, and that is, religion—the fear of God. It is the foundation of character, and effort, and happiness. Nothing else will endure and sustain the superstructure of a true life.

Few, perhaps, will dispute this in words, but they do in deeds. They seem to me like one who in the winter time, when he proposes to build himself a magnificent palace, goes, not to the granite quarry, but, to the mountain glacier, and hews out, perhaps, enormous blocks of beautiful ice, and lays them deep and firm as a foundation. On this, he piles all his life-wrought materials, and within the structure he places all his treasures. Every thing he has, and his life itself, are staked on the durability of the ice blocks. For months there is, perhaps, no sign of yielding, but, at last, it may be suddenly, the whole structure sinks into a mass of rubbish.

Is this fancy? Is it not rather parable coined out of fact? What is the foundation on which thousands build?

What lies at the base of all their schemes and efforts? Are they not building on to-morrow's uncertainty, on some dream of success, on some fond imagination, ice-blocks all, that will melt under the heat of trial, and leave all that rests on them to sink to ruin?

No one can build, no one has a right to build, till he can build on the Rock of Ages. We are all building, whether we know it or not, for eternity. We may put up wigwams or hospitals, tents or temples, but our aims and deeds, whatever they are, are the soul's palace, under the shelter or shadow of which it will dwell forever. The question with what we build is a grave one, but the question on what we build comes first. It matters little whether I use hay, wood and stubble, or marble and granite, if in either case they rest on quicksand. A great genius with splendid attainments makes a more imposing ruin, but a ruin nevertheless. He seems to me, without religion, like a magnificent arch supported on a wooden frame, with the keystone left out. It *may* stand for years, but its fate is just as sure as that of the props that support it.

Your first great duty is to shape your life to the great end for which it was given. Let religion draw the outline and then fill it up wisely and well. See that its scope is right. You may journey at railroad speed, but if you go the wrong way, there is no progress. You may toil long and hard, but if you weary yourself with vanity, it will amount to nothing. A life made up of rambling and zigzag will do very well if it ends where it began. One who spends his life in gazing at rockets will see little of stars and sun. Thousands live *extempore*, watching for the next meteor of politics, gain or fashion. Their future, so far as they note it, is just a

mirage of fancy, all this side the grave. They never ask, why am I here, what is my proper business, what is the great end I should ever keep in view? They ramble on with little thought of where their last yesterday will leave them. Life has no more shape to it than the gravitation of indolence, taste or circumstance gives it.

Or, if there is a plan, how often is it a false one! It would make a meteor of what should be a star. It would debase an heir of heaven to a millionaire, a tidewaiter, or a fop. It would draw off talent and probation and even the river, "the streams whereof make glad the city of God," into currents to turn the machinery that saws logs and weaves cotton. It would put the Bible under foot that it may stand on it and so reach higher to grasp the prize which the Bible forbids to seek. It would substitute gold for grace, and gain for godliness. It would fill God's temple with money-changers. It would sacrifice the soul's everlasting birthright to pamper the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.

This is a "Comedy of Errors" beyond any that the genius of the great dramatist ever invented; comedy that runs into deepest tragedy, that begins with a jest and ends with a sigh, that lulls to heedlessness and wakes to remorse.

All this would not be of so much account if you could satisfy yourself that there was no God to judge you, no future existence for the soul, no high and glorious destiny to which God invites it, no capability by God's grace of turning this life into an introduction to the everlasting blessedness of heaven. But if any one to gratify you should attempt to prove this, with what horror would you regard him! You would feel that his argument was atheism and his logic despair. With a shudder you

would say, "to corruption thou art my father, and to the worm thou art my mother and my sister."

Ah! it is not in man calmly and complacently to look upon such a doom. The soul shrinks from it as the flesh does from torture. We feel that we were made for something better. The instincts of our being crave immortality. There are moments when the bounds of time seem to us like the shell of the bird ere it spreads its wings. We can rise heavenward. The stars seem but the milestones of everlasting progress. The soul aspires to freedom from its fleshly chain. This life is the childhood of being, this world the perch whence we are to soar away.

Shall man then, when the light of revelation confirms all this and more, be content with a meaner ambition than the heathen artist who said, "I paint for eternity?" Shall you, a child of God, be content with the heritage of a slave? Will you, with lips that can lisp "Our Father," pawn your birthright for a prodigal's portion? Will you, who may be even now a king and priest unto God, kindle the fires of Baal and do sacrifice to mammon? With joys even now offered, sweeter than Eden's fragrance, and with treasures in the love of God richer than gems and gold from uncounted mines, will you choose rather the sands of the world's deserts, and its apples of Sodom that are ashes to the taste?

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Sixty centuries empannelled on the jury give in that verdict. It pronounces him a fool who presumes to live without God and has no hope. He has not truly began to live who has not yet met the claims of his Maker. He may count his years by the score; his success by honors; his wealth by thousands; but these are all only autumn

leaves, without one living bud among them all, if the heart is still given up to the world.

Take all the materials which time and earth can afford ; exhaust mine and prairie ; summon enterprise and energy ; call in genius, and taste, and talent, and learning ; blend with all every social grace, every moral virtue and every refinement of art, and out of all these build up the completest human life that your resources will allow, yet without the grace of God it is but a tower of Babel. There are the walls of a temple, but there is no God within. There is an altar, but the living coals are not on it. There is a priesthood, but it is rather of Mammon's hierarchy than of Aaron's lineage. There is the majestic organ, but unhallowed fingers cannot sweep its keys. A crowd throngs its courts, but they wait on the tables of the money-changers. Its spire may point to heaven, but the sordid dust of worldliness tracks all its aisles, and the cobwebs of vanity are hung about its pillars. Many a splendid career is only the mausoleum of a dead soul.

Now, put religion at the foundation, and even with commonplace materials build on that. A man begins to live as one that is to live forevermore. Fearing God alone, he rises above all human fear ; knowing he is to give account, he tries every deed, and he puts into the walls of life nothing that will not stand the fires of the last day. Counting himself not his own, he is grandly generous, living to do good, and not to please himself. Capable of divine joy, he scorns the silly pleasures that would crowd their Dagon idols into God's temple. He prays, he toils, he lives for God. The plan of his life is fixed, clear, definite, and like a tree—every fibre of its roots drawing in nourishment, and every leaf of its

branches drinking in the dew—it shapes everything to its own pattern. Light and darkness ; sunshine, storm ; plenty, want ; all feel the transmuting power of its subtle chemistry, and yield to the control of a consecrated purpose. Such a life will be good and great. You may plant it in the lowliest valley, you may hide it where few eyes gaze, but it will bloom with an Eden beauty ; it will overtop worldly surroundings, as a cedar of Lebanon would shrub-oaks, and the very children that gather to sport beneath its spreading branches will bless it for its green leaves and its cool shade. It is a tree fit to transplant to the Paradise of God.

Such a life will be an evergreen. The frosts that strip the forest that winter may howl its dirge through the leafless branches, cannot harm it. It will bear fruit in old age. Its end will be peace, and the blessing of those that were ready to perish will crown its memory.

Begin life aright then. If you would not have weeds for your harvest or bricks for your toil, give God your heart, and think of the life that never ends. Put yourself in thought far away beyond these shifting, cheating scenes ; soar aloft above this fire-doomed earth, and its shows and pomps ; see the great globe with all its cities and palaces shrinking to an atom ; leave time behind you ; take your place among the angel choir that sweep their golden harps before the throne ; and ask yourself then what this life should be, fitting for an angel's childhood, for the service which the redeemed shall be glad to render forevermore.

If that sphere is ever to be yours, you should begin to live for it now. You should be robing yourself every day for that great Assembly that are draped in the spotless white of heaven's purity. You should put off sin and put

on righteousness. You should learn the lesson of prayer and praise. You should seek to know Him whom to know aright is life eternal, and with whom you hope to dwell forever. You should allow no toys of sense to allure your eye, or divert your purpose. You should say, "with one life only to live on earth, I will not squander it on trifles ; I will not turn it into an episode of folly ; I will not crowd it with bitter memories of sin ; I will not build any immortal hope on shadows ; but I will so live that my farewell of earth shall be my welcome to heaven."

Make your present life then the title page of your immortality. Let there be no word or letter in it which shall belie the contents of a volume that shall record an angel's career. The soul's identity demands, if you aspire to heavenly blessedness, that you shall not burden memory with the everlasting incongruities of a life of sin on earth. If there is anything which in the light of the throne you would not like to recall, shun it now. If there is anything which can fit you for the high sphere of angelic service, now is the time for preparation. If existence has any sphere in which wisdom can be called into service, in which your highest interests demand a thoughtful anticipation of future destiny, that sphere is the one in which you are moving now. In view of a final judgment, by the light of a blazing world, under the eye of the great Judge, face to face with eternity, the soul must yet sit in judgment on itself. Why not act to-day with reference to what you know will be its final sentence ?

XXI.

THE CONFLICT OF LIFE.

"Fight the good fight of faith."—1 TIM. vi. 12.

WHO that has ever witnessed the volunteer soldier going forth to take his place in the ranks in defense of his country, has not felt his sympathies strongly enlisted in his behalf? There was so much to touch the heart—his youth, his inexperience, the fearful scenes before him, the fearful perils he must encounter, the possible fate that may in a moment quench all his young, bright hopes, the exposure and the vices and diseases of campaign life, the sad, perhaps final farewell of parents, of brothers, or sisters, or weeping friends, the grandeur of the cause in which he is engaged, the solemn pledge which he may be called to lay, embalmed in his heart's blood, on the altar of his country—all conspire to make him an object of no common interest.

And yet, more sublime, more impressive, more affecting than this, is the sight of an immortal spirit, entering amid the perils of a sinful world upon the great conflict of life, from which he is to come forth crushed or triumphant, the coward of guilt, or the hero of God. And this conflict is before us all. We must share in it, not as mere spectators, but as actors. Our own eternal interests are staked upon its issue.

There are some aspects of life as a conflict subordinate to the main one which the Bible presents, which ought not perhaps to be overlooked. It is very rare that any man gets through the world without a struggle of some kind. Even indolence, reposing on the lap of luxury, has to conquer the nausea of existence, and plant ever new batteries of amusement and diversion to kill time, and murder the hours as they march upon him. He that will not work has to suffer in his encounter with poverty, hunger and rags. Sometimes he must have a sharp and life-long fight with conscience and his better convictions that steadily harass him. His coveted ease is at best an armed neutrality. While he rests upon his arms he is beset by guerrillas of vice and anxious alarms.

But most men sooner or later learn to submit to the struggle of life, and enter upon it more or less manfully. Sometimes that struggle is narrowed down to procuring the means to keep soul and body together. There are thousands whose life is just a hand to hand fight for crusts, rags, and shelter from the storm. They grow thin and frail and grey before their time, in toil and weary strivings to earn the pittance that keeps them from absolute starvation. It is a very dismal business, and yet the grace of God sometimes makes it glorious, turns it into the school of faith, makes it the furnace of trial, that purges away the dross, and refines the gold of character.

Others struggle for wealth or competence. Day by day, with unremitting toil, they contend with the difficulties that obstruct business success. They fight with their own weariness or indolence, endeavor to master the methods of gain, tunnel the track of their enterprise through the heart of rocky obstacles, besiege the forces

of fraud, competition and design that stand in their way.

Others struggle for political eminence. They fight their way by argument, intrigue, bribery, compromise—in the street, in the caucus, and on the platform. And when they come out at last scarred in honor, bleeding in reputation, with conscience well-nigh shot away, with confidence in them riddled and in tatters, we feel that all their honor and perquisites are but the shroud to wrap about their infamy, the tribute of respect to mere success.

So others struggle for respectability. They envy that position to which some around them have attained. As a general aspires to the palm of victory, so they aspire to possess a rich garment, or win social recognition, or attain genteel manners, and with all the ardor of a pursuing army, they prosecute the campaign of life, and hope soon, by forced marches or persevering assaults, to carry their position against a gold chain or a piece of broadcloth, a flower or a feather. And sometimes there is a generalship displayed in the movements that would do honor to the ablest military strategist, a perseverance and an engineering tact rare even in military science.

No doubt in these and other ways, a great deal of intellectual drill and discipline is secured. Even children, with faculties sharpened by contact with want and crime and schemes of fraud, become premature veterans. They are trained to perfection as unscrupulous intellectual or selfish machines, and they fight out the battle of life, with the tact of guerrillas or the desperation of pirates.

But all this is quite aside from the real conflict of life assigned us in the providence of God. Our business

here is to contend with sin and temptation and the powers of darkness, and to carry our souls unharmed through the assaults of this present world, following close in the footsteps of Jesus, the great Captain of our Salvation. We need bread, and we must work for it. We want established character and confidence, and we must struggle to maintain integrity, and vindicate our good name by a consistent life. We want the comforts of social existence, the means of intellectual improvement and enjoyment, and for those we must strive and toil; but these things imply only the skirmishes incidental to life's great battle. Pervaded by a holy purpose—endured or performed by a faith that looks through them to their spiritual significance as discipline, they become an essential and integral part of the conflict, and yet he that looks only to the attainment of worldly good, and expends no thought on what lies beyond, has not as yet obtained the first proper conception of the real meaning of the conflict itself.

In the first place, we have to contend with the depravity of our fallen nature. Within our souls are our most powerful and dangerous foes. He that is victorious and well armed within is truly a conqueror, and may despise all outward assault. But if within his own bosom are lodged traitor passions that rule there, if his unsubdued lusts carry him away at will, and sway the desires and aims of the soul, then all his wrestlings against external temptations are vain. He is delivered over helpless to their grasp. He is like a shorn Samson in the hands of the Philistines.

First of all, therefore, he must conquer his own heart for truth and God. The kingdom of heaven must be set up within. All secession and treason must be driven

out, that the law of God may rule there. The code of selfishness must be expunged from the soul's statute-book. The anarchy of a lawless will—saying we will not have God to rule over us—must be subdued.

This is a great work, and the soul unaided will never accomplish it. Native resolution is unequal to the task. The instruction and guidance of worldly wisdom alone never yet effected it. The soul matched simply against itself is lost. It must have help from above. The grace of God must come to its rescue. "This kind goeth not forth save by prayer and fasting." The revolution within that throws off the usurped authority of Satan and the powers of darkness, can be carried forward only by a divine energy. He that would fight successfully the great conflict of life, must first of all recognize his dependence on a higher power. He must place himself under the shadow of the Almighty. He must take the weapons of prayer, and call mightily on Him who by the gift of the Spirit can change the nature of the soul and transform it into His own image.

And then he must still pray on. He must guard against everything that would repress his progress in holiness, or obscure his hopes, or separate his soul from God. He must keep the great and glorious example of his Master in his eye. He must be vigilant lest he be surprised by temptation. He must be aware of the foes that lie in ambush within and around him. He must study his own imperfections and infirmities, as a careful general will study and repair the weak points in the fortress which he is charged to defend. He must allow no selfish aim, no worldly suggestions, to creep in and throw open the gates of the soul to the powers of darkness. He must strive to keep the soil of his heart as sacred

from all unhallowed intrusion, as that where Moses met with God, and put off his shoes from his feet.

It is no easy task to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord—no easy task to bring the soul up from its low aims to a heavenly standard—no easy task to crush its spiritual foes beneath its feet. Sometimes, indeed, the battle is more desperate than at others. Strong men have wrestled and struggled mightily against mighty foes. See Peter, with all his impetuous zeal, overcome and led to deny his Master. See Demas betraying his trust, “having loved this present world.” Note the sin of Noah, the distrust of Abraham, the impatience of Moses, the fall of David, the stumblings of Solomon. Read what history tells us of Cranmer’s weakness when threatened with the flames, and Bacon’s intellectual greatness tarnished with the corruption of his bribes.

I have seen and known those who seemed in a position not unlike that of Christ, when the Great Tempter for a sinful compliance promised Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and I have seen them make what I feared was the fatal choice. There, on one hand was the humble obedience and blessedness of a child of God, and on the other were the prizes of worldly distinctions, and these proved more powerful and carried the day.

But more common foes are those which assume a less imposing shape, or which sometimes wear a prophet’s mantle. The ancient seer thought he did well to be angry. Men would resist a plain, unmasked open-faced devil; but if only the schemes of their selfish gratifications are wrapped about with spiritual professions, they are willingly and easily misled. They will sometimes fight Satan’s battle under God’s banner, and think they are doing God service.

But generally the evils we have to combat in the conflict of life are plain enough to him that will understand. The good fight is the fight with sin—sin within and sin without—whatever would overcome us or keep our souls from God. This implies indeed opposition to all evils that come properly within the sphere of our effort—the chronic depravity of the world, the phases of iniquity which corrupt morals, and make gain godliness, and blight the influences of the Gospel, and sometimes we must come to a hand-to-hand fight with these. It may be that, in fidelity to our own convictions, we must like Paul fight with beasts at Ephesus, or attack sin in its strongholds, like John before Herod, or endure reproach from those who blindly or wilfully misrepresent us. And yet we are to fight our way through with the patience of Job and the charity of Jesus, so that abuse shall leave no scar on our even temper, and disappointment shall generate no bitterness of spirit, and our zeal shall not prove a sword on which we fall ourselves.

For it is far more difficult to guard against the thrusts of the Tempter, than to strike blows at solid, organized wickedness outside of us. A man may invoke heaven's vengeance on some outrageous wrong, and yet have the very essence of that wrong enshrined in his own soul, as I have heard of a parent swearing to his child that he would punish him if he swore. The real battle of life is not in the street, the market, the caucus, the hall of legislation—it is in a man's own soul. There, with no eye on it but God's, the fight begins and goes on. As there is success or defeat there, the issue of life itself is decided for good or evil. The conqueror within will be the conqueror without. Who that has lingered over the wrestlings of Luther, that has watched his anxious strug-

gling spirit in the monastic cell, and as he climbed St. Peter's stairs at Rome, or flung his inkstand at the dark shadow on the walls of the Wartburg; who that has gazed upon Saul in the agony of his blindness and self-accusations, waiting for Ananias; or read Bunyan's "Grace abounding to the Chief of Sinners," that makes us feel how real to him were the Slough of Despair, the Hill Difficulty, and the Valley of the Shadow of Death—does not feel that these men, by the grace of God were made victorious in the great inward struggle of life, before ever they were prepared to strike those blows whose echo rings yet in the ears of the world?

Practically, then, the good fight is fought within the soul. Paul fought with the beasts within before he fought with the beasts at Ephesus. He struggled against his own proud heart, before he grappled or was fitted to grapple with the great dragon of Pagan idolatries. In the full impetus of his course he speaks of pressing forward to the mark. He kept his body under, and brought it into subjection. He found a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin. Here was the fight which in the eye of heaven was the Thermopylæ of his life's campaign. Without having been a victor here, he had never made Felix tremble on his judgment-seat, or disputed daily in the school of one Tyrannus, or preached the Gospel to Cæsar's household. But victorious within, he was armed and strengthened for a life-long struggle with principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places. Victories at Philippi, at Ephesus, at Rome, were but the natural sequents of victories won over the lusts and vanities and passions of his own heart.

This good fight is the one to which we are all summoned. You may not feel that there is any to be fought. Satan may be besieging you unmolested and at his leisure. He may have not yet completed his battery or fortifications. He may not yet have succeeded in cutting off the hope of retreat. He may not have yet solemnly and formally summoned you to surrender. He may not yet have brought you hopelessly under the range of your own habits; he may not yet have planted his mortars so as to burst their deadly shells in the magazine of conscience. You may be led by the quiet unconcern of your own spirit to feel that for you there is no struggle.

But this would be a great mistake. The struggle must—it will come. The sooner the better. Every hour's delay to resist diminishes the hope of successful resistance. Even now, is not the foe dangerously near? Have you not already been yielding too long? What effort have you put forth to save your soul? What struggle against an evil nature within you has been yet noted by the great cloud of witnesses? Have you yet passed from darkness to light? Are you ranged under the banner of God and truth? Are you trampling on one after another of those unhallowed desires and feelings and tastes and habits which Christ cannot approve?

If not, it is time that the good fight was begun. It is time that you measured the strength of the foes that withstand your progress toward heaven. A little longer—and you might in vain have worlds given you to purchase the peace of the conscious assurance, "I have fought the good fight!"

XXII.

LIFE AN EDUCATION.

"Reaching forth unto those things which are before."—PHIL. iii. 13.

AN old heathen philosopher was once asked what it was necessary that boys should learn. "Those things," he replied, "which they will need to know when they become men."

There was sound philosophy in his answer. It embodies the true principle of education. The sports and plays of childhood must not crowd out the lessons that fit one for manly duties—the lessons that train the mind, the heart and all the energies and affections of the soul. If they do it they make one first a plaything, and then a wreck. They fling upon society another instalment of human rubbish. They multiply indolence, crime, and misery. The entire neglect of intellectual, moral and religious training for one generation among the most cultivated people, would throw them back hopelessly and inevitably into barbarism and heathenism.

But the usefulness, happiness, and success of the individual for his whole after life, are usually determined by his early training. A mistake here casts a shadow over all his years, that can scarcely be deepened by the shadows of the grave. Leave his mind unfurnished by wholesome truth, and it ever remains, instead of a parlor or a work-

shop, a cobwebbed garret. The vacant apartments of thought are occupied by vermin and rubbish. Leave the passions unsubdued, and they turn the soul into a tiger's cage, and a man grows up a self-willed, capricious, violent, tyrannic being, uncomfortable himself and uncomfortable to everybody else, always in trouble, and practically an Ishmael, domineering or impetuous, a tyrant or a criminal. Let the individual be left to his appetites, let him be indulged in having whatever he craves, and he will always be governed by his impulses, and his thirst for pleasure, till nothing will satisfy him; content will be impossible. He will be uneasy, restless, wretched—in heart like “the wandering Jew,” in life “like a wave of the sea, driven of the wind and tossed.”

It is a fearful thing—the tragedy of the soul here—to drift upon the years and duties of manhood, with the wisdom of a child, but the will and passions of a man. A catastrophe of some kind is sure. It may be spread out over scores of years, or it may be concentrated in some sudden gust of passion or desperation. Sometimes life becomes a long drawn agony, a protracted spasm of unsatisfied appetite, due simply to the fact that the mind was left to neglect. It grew up uncared for, and became like a garden of weeds, or an uncultured thicket.

We know this. We see it. The picture of the reality before our eyes, painted on canvas woven out of human hopes and fears, and colored in blood. We know also the elements of a happy life—a life whose even flow knows neither stagnation nor cataract, firm in duty, beautiful in integrity and virtue, rich in inward peace and smiling memories and pure affections, contented with its lot, cheerful in hope, genial in spirit, and abiding consciously under the smile of God. Such a life is no mush-

room. It is no morning glory. It is no accident. It is as much the result of training and God's grace, as the harvest is of the seed and sunshine.

Even thus—with life bounded by three score years and ten—we feel how important is the education—how important all the influences that shape character, how much depends on the way one lays out in early days the plans for days to come. But prolong existence—make it a thousand years ; make it a hundred thousand—and who does not see that if years to come are shaped by the present, the arithmetic of morals is unequal to solve the problem of the importance of these years that are passing now.

And who can doubt that the future is shaped by the present? All observation assures it. All experience confirms it. The maxims of life assume it. The truth is engraved on the history of character, of nations as of men. "As the twig is bent the tree's inclined." The scarred sappling never forgets its wound. Educate a child in vice, accustom him to falsehood, and hateful as they are, the chances are that he will cling to them, and they will cling to him. He does not, cannot shake off the serpent coil.

When the foundations are laid, it is not easy to go back of them or tear them up ; the bounds of the structure are defined. All that is added must be built on it. It is so with character. Manhood completes the plan of youth—rarely does more than what that foreshadows. But if time is the soul's childhood, eternity is its manhood. The foundations of the structure are laid here, and its bounds are defined. What we shall be for ever we begin to be now, and the shape which the soul takes in time it carries with it beyond the grave.

Now it is the inward disposition of the soul that decides its happiness or misery. It is so here. The body makes little difference. A soul possessed of heaven's own peace, is little shaken by the world's jars, or by the trembling of its clay tenement. A soul morally diseased, or ruled by selfish passions, or at variance with God and holiness, would be wretched in a body of iron nerves, or under features cast in the finest mould. The elements of our real life—the light or darkness in which we walk—the joys or griefs we feel—are not visible in the outward form. So that we inevitably conclude that—in the body or out of the body, it matters not—the happiness of our being depends mainly on the soul. Death will take away nothing from, and add nothing to, what is stored up in the soul. It will only rob the spirit that leaned on material things, and diverted itself by sensual indulgence or worldly association or outward forms, of the staff on which it leaned, and fling it back on itself, on its own spiritual bankruptcy, on its own meagre and dull society and weariness of existence, from which it once fled to the giddiest follies of show and pageantry. This refuge will be denied it. It can no longer go forth like the evil spirit of which we read, even into dry places, seeking rest which is never found. The dry places will be wanting. The soul can no more divert itself by eye, ear, or taste, but only sit down to the banquet of its own thoughts, and pluck the fruits from trees of its own planting.

Here, a wicked man will contrive, by the body's help, to get on with a kind of comfort. He will go out of himself. Intolerant of his own company, and wretched in it, he rushes to books, shows, balls, theatres, pugilistic encounters. He turns his back on himself and goes

abroad. But crumble off the instruments by which the soul converses with the external world, let it sink into itself, and then do you hasten and insure the result of making a man's happiness or misery correspond to his moral being. The image in the mirror will not be more true. Then the passions which, like envy, gnawed the bosoms that cherished them, will have no check.

Now put this disembodied spirit on the track of an endless existence, without any positive infliction, but only just left to itself. Character, poured liquid into the mould of seventy years, has become cast iron. Habit is second nature, and confirms nature. How long must one wait before the soul, self-alienated from God, and thus excluded from every holy and pure joy flowing from divine communion, with tastes and longings and appetites that crave their old indulgence but are denied it forevermore, with habits of diverting and engrossing itself in what the crumbling body denies it access to henceforth—how long before it will sink under the intolerable burden and count conscious existence itself a curse and a perpetual torture?

Will it help the matter to take note how long it takes a man to become disgusted with himself and the world and his own existence here—or rather how soon he runs through the world as he runs through his fortune—how soon with sun and moon and stars and flowers and feasts and dance and jests to help adjourn the crisis, it comes upon him? Was Lord Chesterfield, the prince of wits and gentlemen, a fool? Did he rush on a blind fate? And yet hear him, as if he had caught the echo of Solomon's "vanity of vanities," declaring that as for the rest of his life's journey, he meant to sleep it out in his carriage!

A man wants more than his wit, or fortune, or nobility, or philosophy, to reach hopefully, and peacefully, and cheerfully, the close of his three score years and ten. Old age that follows a reckless youth and a stormy manhood is apt to cling to a life it loathes, and to grow intolerably disgusted with an existence which it dreads to relinquish. Those former delights charm no more. The full soul loathes the honeycomb. The creature of fashionable folly is satiated, cloyed. Nothing but religion can turn the shadows of its declining years into the dawning twilight of immortal day.

If, then, it is folly, manifest and inexcusable, to plunge in youth into those follies and fashions, and indulge those tastes and form those habits, which will turn later life into an arid desert, and fill the soul with restless passions and discontent, how much greater and grosser the folly that wastes this springtime of existence, makes no provision for immortality, and flings the soul unfurnished upon the stern realities and sad experience of the life to come.

You cannot doubt—no man can—that the need of the disembodied spirit is that which gives to the soul here the peace of God and the blessedness of a renewed and holy nature. You cannot doubt—no man can—that the spiritual education which the soul receives on earth will cast its long shadows of curse or blessing over the immortality to come. You cannot doubt—no man can—that before every man is the awful possibility of an illimitable existence hereafter, when every added year shall press with a crushing weight of satiety and loathing on a soul left to itself, with no resources of divine or holy communion, but ever tossed on the restless waves of craving yet unsatisfied desires, and bitter or aching memories.

Will you then, an heir of immortality, pay less regard to the eternal years to come than to just this fleeting hour? A child, wilful and ungoverned, may rush into those paths of heedless pleasure which lead through the gates of dissipation to an infamous and wretched old age, if not to an early doom, and to a grave of shame—but will you with your eyes open, scorn the claims of that religion, by the power of which alone, your soul can be received, and your spirit be fitted for the joys and service of the spirit world? Will you, building for eternity, lay the foundation of your immortal destiny on the sands and pebbles of time—on the indulgence of wanton or capricious tastes, on show and pageant and fashionable folly and heartless, godless mirth, which, ere you die, may sink beneath you, and leave you at the mercy of your own vain thoughts and accusing memories?

What will you need most as a member of the great heavenly family, as a citizen of the New Jerusalem, as one of that great throng who cast their crowns at the feet of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and rejoice in the light of his presence and the joy of his smile forevermore! What will you need most in such a sinless and blessed world as you must imagine that of the saved to be, with angels and the Redeemed for your associates, and with no access thenceforth to the sensual delights that amused and diverted on earth?

Will you need that holy education for which the Scriptures are the text-book—lessons from the life and lips of Him who said “learn of me?”—the penitent believing spirit that humbly relies on the grace of Christ, knows no will but God’s, and by discipline has been brought to a loving and cheerful obedience?

XXIII.

CULTURE OF A HOLY LIFE.

“The boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars.”—Ps. lxxx. 10.

IF you had presented you from some kind and generous friend, some very precious shrub or plant which he had brought you from a distant land, and you had planted it in a favored spot in your garden, how carefully would you watch over it, and study how you might protect it from exposure, and encourage its growth! It might not yet have produced fruit or flower; it might, indeed, be little more than a sightless homely root, but assured that it was capable of a bloom as exquisite as nature can boast, or a fruit as luscious as the tropics can produce—how deeply would you be affected by anything which tended to injure it!

Need I say that if the seed of God's truth has been planted in your heart, and the Spirit of God has caused it to germinate, you have there in that invisible garden of which God has constituted you the keeper, a plant that outrivals in worth anything that is brought from distant continents or the islands of the sea. Let it grow as it ought, and its bloom is richer than that of the rose; its fragrance is sweeter than that of orange bowers; and its fruits have no parallel even in the fabled gardens of the Hesperides. It comes from far. It is an exotic

from heaven. It is watered by the blood of redemption. It is fanned by the breath of the Spirit, and its garnered harvests are the treasures of immortal blessedness beyond the grave.

Such a plant as this demands your care. No worm should gnaw its root; no mildew should blight its vigor; no tempest should rend its limbs. No culture of other plants should interfere with your culture of this. Better let them be overgrown or dwarfed, or left to perish, than allow this to suffer from neglect.

It is possible that you have no such plant to care for or cherish. You may possibly never have spent a thought on procuring it. There are many things planted in the garden of your heart, but this is not there. There are domestic affections, love of father, mother, brother, sister, child, or friend—but not love of God. There is delight in pleasure, not delight in holiness; desire for gain, not desire for heaven. What does this mean? Are you giving up God's garden to waste? Are you surrendering to grass, if not weeds, soil that might produce the very fruits of heaven itself? Have you allowed a barren fig-tree to grow where a tree of life ought to be?

I go in the spring time into the little yard where you have what you call your garden. It is perhaps a very small patch of ground—possibly only a rod or two square. I look and see how carefully you have filled it up. You have not been content with the seed that came first at hand. You have deliberated and asked yourself what is it best to put in the narrow plat. You wanted to make the most of it, if it was small, and so you selected the choicest seeds and roots. There is no wild flower there. There is no unsightly or fruitless plant there.

Do you deal so carefully with that little plot of ground, and so carelessly with the garden of your own soul—broad enough for the harvests of coming years, rich enough to support the tree of life? There is no other soil like it. Western prairies are deserts to it. Mind, as mind, furnishes no parallel. The heart is incomparably richer than all. It might under fitting culture produce the fruits of everlasting life.

And have you left it to its own rank and, perhaps, noxious growths? Have you suffered your own natural desires to spring up there almost unchecked? God forbid that such a record should last one day longer!

But I will venture to suppose that there is something there beside the seeds of selfishness and irreligion, and the growths of worldliness. You have a conscience. Have you cultivated that? A man who will not be suspected of fanaticism at least, has said of himself:—“A little boy in petticoats, in my fourth year, my father sent me from the field, home. A spotted tortoise, in shallow water, at the foot of the rodora, caught my attention, and I lifted my stick to strike it, when a voice within me said, ‘It is wrong.’ I stood with uplifted stick, in wonder at the new emotion, till rodora and the tortoise vanished from my sight.

“I hastened home and asked my mother what it was that told me it was wrong.

“Wiping a tear from her eye, and taking me in her arms, she said, ‘Some men call it conscience, but I prefer to call it the voice of God in the soul of man. If you listen to it and obey it, then it will speak clearer, and always guide you right. But if you turn a deaf ear, or disobey, then it will fade out little by little, and leave you in the dark without a guide.’”

Is not conscience something to be cultivated? Guard it inviolate—there is not a more tender and yet more precious plant on which you can bestow your care.

But has not the seed of God's holy truth been planted in your soul? Have you not heard words from heaven unspeakably more valuable than any seed sent from China, or India, or our western coasts—words that in other hearts, under the dews of grace and the breath of the Spirit, have ripened into penitence and love, and self-denial, and Christ-like charities—words that have become the mottoes of Brainerds and Howards and Martyns—the watchwords of missionaries and martyrs—the light of youth and the staff of age—the sword of the warrior or the banner of the victor? You have heard these words. Have you allowed them to take root in your heart, the very soil God designed for them, or are they to-day devoured by the crows or left parching in the sun?

Perhaps you have some faint feeble desire after a better portion. So have I seen the little tender plant under heaps of rubbish, struggling with natural instinct to find its way underneath fragments or through crevices up to the light. Under years of worldliness this feeble desire is almost buried, but a mother's hand planted it, and a mother's tears watered it, perhaps, and it is not quite dead yet. Will you let it die? Will you thwart it still? Oh, beware how you crush it to the dust! Let it perish—and perhaps it is near it now, and what spring time shall ever revive it?

But is there indeed a germ of genuine penitence in your soul? Is love to God rooted there, however feebly? Does the purpose—no dried leaf, no dead fossil—*live* there to serve your Maker—to glorify the great Being in

whose hand your breath is? Then it is more than whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices. He that will not break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax will account more of that than of the cattle upon a thousand hills. The broken and the contrite heart he will not despise. The germ of faith, of the new life of the soul, is unspeakably precious. From the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop on the wall, there is no other like it. Its value is beyond the power of words to express. It is the one thing that turns life's desert sands to more than golden drift. It sanctifies the dross and drudgery of life. Its roots should run their fibres underneath all your plans and draw into themselves the love and energy and strength of the soul, till the crude moisture of the sod is changed into the golden fruitage of a second Eden.

Your great business here is to nurture that germ, to cultivate that shoot, to train it up into a tree of life that shall bear fruit for God and heaven. You can neglect it. Many do. You can leave it unprotected to the robbers of the air and street, the crows of the wilderness or the vultures of gain. You can take no pains to bring the waters of the river of God into channels flowing by its roots; you can let the fiery arrows of the tempter whistle through it and strip its boughs. You can indeed—just by neglect—make it the worldling's by-word, a half-decayed stump that does little more than mark the place where a Christian ought to *grow*! But is this worthy of a soul endowed of God as yours is? worthy of such capacities as yours—worthy the seed sown that was brought from heaven—worthy the blood by which it was watered—worthy the harvest you would hope to reap when death comes to tell you that the seed time of life has forever fled?

Nothing is plainer than that if a man wants to have the plant of piety grow in his soul, he must cultivate it. It is not enough to attend on ordinances. These are needful. They are like light and warmth to the plant. But light and warmth are not enough. Plant your corn, and give it unshadowed to the sun. Will it grow? Yes, but if let alone it will grow spindling, and the weeds will overtop it, and its rich green will change to a sickly hue, and there will be no corn on the stalk. It will, in fact, be stubble and nothing more. So, if you would grow in grace, you must keep the soil of the plant stirred and loose, you must cut down the weeds—root out tares—and see that the parched earth is fed with moisture.

You must meditate on duty, and sin, and God. The hour of meditation is like that evening hour when all nature with open lips drinks in the dews. The patriarch went forth to meditate at evening tide. His soul could harmonize with the scene. That solemn hush of the world, when nature seems to shut her eyelids, and sink to silent repose, has its meaning. The constant glare of the sunshine would kill a plant. You want rest from the glare of business and fashion. You want your hour of sacred repose. Step aside from the busy throng, and think what you are, a sinner—what you need, grace—whose you are, Christ's—what you hope to be, a redeemed spirit before the throne. Let the world's echoes die away, till you can hear the still small voice. Withdraw from all human presence till you feel that you are alone with the Omnipotent. Go up into the mount—higher—higher—till you tread the world beneath your feet, or look down on it as a tinsel'd cheat, or see it lost in the overpowering glories of eternity, like a spot on

the disk of the sun. Then may the dews of grace fall, as the dews of heaven do in the still hour, refreshing, cheering, joyous.

Store your mind with God's own truth. This supplies the vital sap of the soul. Let every fibre of your spirit drink it in, and you shall grow in grace and knowledge at once. "There is but one book," said the dying novelist, when he was asked what he would hear read. There is but one book that is full of God, or which can fill us with all His fullness. Read it. Ponder it. Not Plato or Bacon, or Addison, but He that spake as never man spake—speaks there. Go up with Him to the mount, and hear His sermon. Sit with Him at the table and listen to His words. Walk with Him in the fields and read His paragraphs syllabled in flowers, and *tares* and fig-trees. Take David's harp and sweep its strings to the music, "The Lord is my shepherd." Sit at Isaiah's feet and bow and adore, while he unveils the glorious greatness of Him "who weigheth the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance." Or go visit Paul in the chill prison where he writes for his cloak, but puts forth the jubilant song of the triumphant warrior who has "fought the good fight," and even with his manacled hand is already grasping his crown. That is reading the Bible. That is the work of the soul taking wing on the pinions of holy thought, soaring up to God on the lofty aspirations of the saints, on "winged words" plumed by God's own Spirit inbreathed into his own prophets and apostles.

You may find good books if you seek them—books that will cheer you, instruct you, refresh your spirit—books that, as William Wirt once said of Baxter's "Saint's Rest," are "like a piece of old sandal wood, fragrant as ever after it has exhaled its fragrance for

centuries." But among all these there is no Bible. They are precious indeed; they are like the bayous formed by the overflowing of the "Father of Waters," for they are fed from the "River of Life." They are buckets-full drawn from the well of truth, but Christ alone is the living fountain. He is the vine; they are the branches. Watts may sing his sweetest songs; Toplady, like the dying swan, may breathe into your soul the music of "Rock of Ages cleft for me"; Doddridge may trace for you the "Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul," till the feeble germ has expanded to a cedar in the garden of God, and Baxter, with his "Dying Thoughts," may hold you spell-bound at the very gates of glory or on the edge of the mouth of the pit—but not one of them all can speak like the prophet with his fire-touched lips—can transport you to behold Patmos visions—can awe you with the blended authority and grace of Him, whose dying agony evoked the sympathy of the rending earth and the darkened sky.

Read His words. Read God's utterance through the pens of all the inspired writers. It is like the breath of spring to winter's blasted herbage. The soul freshens and blooms under it, and he that bears the best and noblest fruit of a devoted Christian life is he that is most devoutly conversant with the Divine word.

XXIV.

THE LIFE FOUNDED ON CHRIST.

“If any man build on this foundation.”—1 COR. iii. 12.

THE Christian life is presented by Paul under the figure of a house, the foundation of which is laid in Jesus Christ—the experience of the truth of Christ as our atoning sacrifice and Redeemer. No man can lay any other foundation than this, that is, there is no possible basis of a Christian life which does not rest in the experienced power of the Gospel. Men may go and construct a life of what are called “good works” without that experience which implies of necessity a change of heart, but if so, they are only like the foolish man, of whom our Saviour spoke, who built his house upon the sand. They have, in reality, no foundation. They build on a mere show of one—sand or shadow,—and all their work, however costly, however laborious, however pleasing to the eye, is no better than “the baseless fabric of a vision.” It is a mere picture to look at—made to perish. The man that has it may regard it with much self-complacency. He may sometimes, like the Pharisee in the parable, admire himself in admiring it. But it is mere show ; it will be swept away and perish.

It is essential to a building that is to stand that it have a solid foundation. This is true of the structure of a Christian life. You cannot build it up on the mud and

rubbish of an unrenewed nature. Men that have begun to build without being converted, without having dug deeper than the eye of man reaches, find, at last, that they might have as well ended where they began. They have put them up a mere tent instead of a house, and when the storm comes they are buried in the wreck. That foundation on which the Christian architect builds is Jesus Christ, that is, his experience of Christ as his Saviour. You may call it what you will, conversion, the new birth, repentance, experience of religion, or some other name, the substance of it is the same ; it is Christ in the heart ; Christ the wisdom of God and the power of God to salvation ; Christ our atoning sacrifice ; Christ our Redeemer from the curse of the law. There may be moral men, amiable men, benevolent and charitable men, who do not have this ; but you cannot call them Christian men. Their life, admirable in some respects, is not a Christian life. The structure they build may be a splendid Pantheon or museum, but it is not a Christian temple. They have not the foundation for it, the plan for it. They may show skill and taste. They may use labor and diligence, but the Christian corner-stone is wanting, and when the test hour comes they will find it so.

The necessary basis for us on which to build, is one which implies an entire change of ruling purpose. A man comes out of the darkness into the light. He sees himself no longer an irresponsible, independent, isolated being, but a creature and subject of God. He sees what he was made for, and how he has neglected to live for it. He sees himself a sinner, with the prospect of retribution before him—a transgressor of God's law and God his judge,—and, thus enlightened, he finds Christ a Saviour

opening the way of pardon, pointing him to heaven, setting before him a hope full of immortality. He sees himself arraigned before the judgment-seat, without a refuge save in the blood of the covenant, and now time shrinks to a span, and eternity spreads out into an ocean, and the infinite littleness of earth is contrasted with the infinite greatness of heaven, and he begins with new plans to live as under God's eye, and as he directs. He has found the way of peace and pardon. He has entered into a new world of invisible realities. Christ is everything to him, life, pardon, hope, fruition, blessedness. Christ is his Friend, Example, Teacher, Redeemer, Mediator, Intercessor. Christ's word is his law, and Christ's smile his reward. He can say with Paul, "for me to live is Christ." All that he is or has or can do, belongs to Christ. Christ is his strength, his refuge, his portion.

What a structure may be built on this foundation! What noble piles have some men, by the grace of God, reared on it—monuments of piety which have come down to our day, and before which we stand and gaze with admiring wonder. Select out of all the cities of the old world the grandest structures of architectural genius that have challenged admiration; bring together at a single view all that Thebes, Palmyra, Babylon, Nineveh, Jerusalem, Athens or Rome could exhibit in their palmiest days, all that has combined beauty, and vastness, and artistic proportion, and when all has been exhibited, I will show you something better, something greater, something more admirable. By the side of the dome of St. Peter's, I will bring the life of the ingenious dreamer, the humble tinker of Bedford, and in the life of Wilberforce, I will show you a loftier art than graced the achievement of the builder of St. Paul's. The man that has built himself up

a life like that of Baxter, has done more than the skill of Sir Christopher Wren ever achieved. When Howard wrote beneath his name that characteristic sentence, "Christ is my hope," he pointed out the only foundation on which a life like his can be built. Let me pass along through the streets of the great cities of the world, where splendid piles of architecture in granite or in marble throw their huge shadows across my path, and yet I shall feel that they are a poor sight, a meagre achievement, by the side of what meets my eye when in my walks in humble life, I see the forms of love, and self-denial, and godly devotion, built up by unnoted hands on the rock of our Christian faith. Walk along the path of the centuries from eighteen hundred years ago down to this present, and pass in review "the noble army of martyrs," and Christian confessors, building up out of these hard years of probation, with all their temptations, hardships and discouragements, lives of heroic faith, that have stood, and still stand like pillars of witness, to tell the world what can be built on the Gospel corner-stone. Buried in an obscurity that no antiquarian disturbs, and which will never be dispelled, unless God gives tongues to the stone walls of dungeons, or the rocks of the wilderness, or the scattered dust-atoms of heath, moor and glen—there are, waiting a resurrection, biographies of unknown men, who in toil, and hardship, and self-denial, under the consciousness of God's all-beholding eye have accomplished their lifework, and left in the bosom of their unfrequented valleys the memories of holy faith and love and communion with heaven more precious and beautiful, if we should dig them out even in fragments by our careful research, than anything which buried cities like Nineveh have yielded to the museums of art. If an angel could become

a pedestrian on our planet, we may well believe that while he might pass with a mere glance the houses and palaces of kings, he would find in lives that will have no headstone to record their memory, that, over which he would pore like Old Mortality cutting out afresh the moss-grown letters on the tombstones of the martyrs.

But much as we must admire what some of Christ's disciples have done—much as we may wonder at the structures of penitence and self-denial and charity and beneficence and holy devotion, that have been built by good men on the rock Christ Jesus, who will say that all has been achieved that may be? Who will venture to assert that there is not strength in those foundations sufficient to bear up manifold more than ever yet has been placed upon them? Surely not these men, who, after all they have done, lament their shortcomings—not the Pauls and the Baxters and the Howes and the Paysons and the Brainerds, who could all feel their own deficiencies, confessing—"not as though I had already attained"—even while exclaiming, "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me!"

And what may not, and what ought not, that man to accomplish in living, who builds on the received principles of the Gospel of Christ—the man who takes to his heart the great truth that Jesus saves him from sin and death through the sacrifice of himself, and who regarding him as his example is impelled by love and gratitude and conviction to strive to be like him? Tell me if there be anything in the whole world that ought to make a man so holy, that should exert upon him so benign an influence, as what he finds in the self-denial and condescension and purity and heavenliness of the Son of God? Is there not that glory and radiance in the face of this doc-



trine of an atoning Redeemer, that, shining upon us, ought to change us into the image of the heavenly from glory to glory? And where on earth will you go to find stronger or more effective motives than those which grow out of the conviction that we are not our own, but are bought with a price—motives that ally eternity with time and come bearing down upon us with the force of the infinite? What ought the life of that man to be who feels himself indebted for being, for saving grace and immortal hope, to the love of God in Christ—whose daily if not hourly song of thanksgiving is—"He hath taken me out of the horrible pit and the miry clay, and hath set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings, and he hath put a new song into my mouth, even praise unto our God."

What manner of persons ought *ye* to be in all holy conversation and godliness,—ye who confess yourselves to be indebted for everything to the Holy One who redeemed you—ye who can well be supposed to forget the lighter vanities of earth in view of that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory—ye whose treasures are spiritual, and whose hope immortal, and whose home a house not made with hands; how contemptible in your eyes should appear all the mightiest motives of ambition or of worldly good, before the word and ordinance of Him who "hath the key of life, who openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth!"

When I consider the several doctrines, the reception and adoption of which are implied in a Christian profession—our fall by nature—our state of condemnation under the law, the infinite greatness and holiness of our Sovereign, whom we have disobeyed—the wonderful condescension of Christ—his atonement for the sins of men,

the complete justification that attends faith in his finished work—the hope and peace that flow from the consciousness of submission in everything to the divine will—the immortal portion of the believer in the kingdom of God, after he has been judged and been declared “accepted in the Beloved”—when I consider these several doctrines in their grandeur and the mutual relation they bear to one another, all having an evident reference and adaptation to the death of Christ, I seem to see them all like so many huge foundation stones resting upon and fitted to one another, and all connected with the chief cornerstone, and I feel that he who would build upon them in justice to their true proportions, will rear such a structure of religious doing and enduring, of heavenly-minded beneficence, and of saintly purity and love, as can find nothing but the merest and feeblest symbol of it in all the shapes of beauty and of grandeur into which the marble has been piled, and I feel that no architect, of however exalted a name, can be compared for a single moment with him who in the humbleness of the obscurest lot—true to the plan of his great Teacher—cuts the years of his probation into living stones that will but shine in a brighter and more lasting beauty, when the fires of the last conflagration shall have helped Time to do his work of destruction on the crumbling palaces of the kings and the nobles of the earth.

Can you conceive of a nobler ideal than is set before you in the life to which the doctrines of Christ as our Redeemer point the way—and can you wish for yourself anything better, or more blessed, than to realize that ideal, so that your life shall stand out at last in the full and finished proportions of a temple—ever resounding with praise—ever sanctified by the indwelling of the

Shekinah of the divine presence—bearing the imprint of consecrated purpose upon every fragment even to the topstone laid with shoutings of “grace, grace unto it?”

When I hear men talk in the pride of human reason, and under the guise of a human philosophy concerning a perfect manhood, I cannot but revert to the better philosophy of the Christian system, for I find there the only true and proper basis on which that perfect manhood can rest; I find there the only power that can use the Archimedes lever of morals, and lift man out of the mud and slough of his native corruption and set him on the solid foundation, the rock Christ Jesus. I know that the motives of the Gospel have done and can do this, and I know by the testimony of holy men, as well as from their direct tendency and efficiency, that their power is not exhausted. What they have done, that they can do, and more. Time holds in her repository of the future more perfect types of a sanctified humanity, perhaps, than any she has yet shown us. If nature has not exhausted herself of all her Sir Christopher Wrens and Michael Angelos, grace may, we will hope, yet present us with other Howes and Bunyans, other Dwights and Paysons—men that shall rise to a saintlier greatness while they rest on the Rock of Ages. And should you not be among them?

But let us consider what sort of use is made of this incomparable foundation. All sorts of structures are built upon it—“gold, silver, precious stones, hay, wood, stubble.” You have only to glance at the Christian world to see what this means. Some use this foundation well, others ill. Among the multitudes truly converted, as we have reason to believe, there are great diversities of character. Some go on toward perfection, while others stop short and never seem to advance in the Christian life.

There are some who build with worthless material, and in a most clumsy and unworkmanlike manner. If they use anything, it is the hay, wood and stubble. They throw upon this foundation all sorts of rubbish and become the architects of confusion and ruin, rather than of order. Their lives, if you examine them with a Christian scrutiny, are piles of loose material, without fashioning or fitting of part to part. You could not select a word more aptly expressive, as applied to them, than stubble. They contribute nothing to what should be the structure of a Christian life, but refuse material, straw and chaff that can be shaped to no useful end. What would you think of a carpenter who should go out into the harvest field, instead of the forest and the quarry, and glean up the trampled straw to fashion it into a building? You would pronounce him mad. You would call it trifling and mockery; and so it would be. A spark of fire falling on his gathered rubbish would set it on fire, and turn it to ashes. But if that was spared—imagine him with saw and chisel attempting to put the material together. His foundation is furnished him and he will make a stubble palace. The very idea is absurd; but not more absurd than the course of some, who profess to live for God—to shape their life into a structure of holy devotion, yet only scrape together a mass of straw and chaff. It is obvious that their profession—as to the breadth of it—is a mistake. They are largely after the world. Their ambition is to accumulate so much property, represented by such and such pieces of paper—in other words, stubble. All their energies are tasked and devoted to the accumulation of wealth. Let us conceive of them at the close of their career. Their probation is ended. Their life's work is finished. The structure of their toil

is complete, and what is it? A heap of incongruous, chaffy, worthless material! On a Christian foundation they have built up a worldly life. Vain and unworthy aims have intermingled with it. To be rich or envied or honored of men—to enjoy the pleasures or indulge in the fashions of the world, has absorbed their efforts. Day after day they have seemed to forget that they were consecrated architects. You might imagine that their highest aim was to gather straw like the Israelites in Egypt to make brick. Men look at them as patterns not of Christian living but of industry and business tact. They admire their skill, not their devotion. They quote them as authority in trade, not in religion. It is possible that even this may be too favorable a judgment. They may be more intent on ease and luxury and pleasure than on industry and exertion. Now what will be their view of themselves when they come to die? In that honest hour how will they estimate what they have sought to accomplish? It is sad and mortifying to consider. Will they not wish that the last years of their life had been denied them—that they had been taken out of the world before they had dishonored their profession by heaping on it all sorts of vanity and confusion? Will they not be constrained to feel, if they do not say, like a celebrated French marshal, “My life has been a failure?”

And now shall I give you the image of such a life?—a life that we will suppose has at some time or other felt the powers of the life to come? Paul has done it for you. It is a foundation of rock covered with stubble—and so covered that perhaps it would require some labor to clear away the rubbish and let men see what lies beneath. Am I severe in this? No more so than the Apostle—not half so severe as the unfortunate builders

are on themselves. You would shudder to hear the sentence which they have sometimes pronounced on their own life. With all their years of skill and toil they have only labored to cover up with chaff and all sorts of unworthy things the only precious thing they had—the experience of the grace of God.

But let us turn to others. Few will say, “I have done all I could. I have made of my life all that could have been made of it.” The best men shrink from this. Those who do not, create strong suspicion that they do not know themselves. Still there are those whose lives are precious—Time’s richest jewels. They are gold, silver, precious stones. In attempting to express the value of a truly faithful Christian life, words fail me. I know of no expressions worthy of those that are gems in the Redeemer’s crown, and having turned many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever. Take some humble private individual like Harlan Page, noiselessly pursuing his career of unostentatious Christian action—full of faith and prayer—ever studious of saving souls—dropping a word here or there like a harvest seed—studying opportunities—sparing no effort—tasking every energy for his Master—and when his last work on earth is done, when his last word is spoken, and his last prayer uttered, in the ripeness and symmetry of a perfected Christian character going home to the reward of his Master’s smile—and tell me if gold or silver or any of the precious things of earth are fit symbols of its unspeakable worth, of its untold blessings? You might divide it up into infinitesimal fractions, and every one of these fractions would be of greater positive value than the lives of some men of world-wide fame—and some who profess to be Christian disciples.

There are again some lives that are, if we may say so, valuable and worthless at the same time, and, like creditor and debtor pages, balance off one another. Some men from lack of discretion, or from uncontrolled impulse, undo at one time what they do at another. A man may engage with great zeal in the work of God in a time of revival, only to borrow an authority and influence for his irreligious, or at least worldly example, afterward. You can quote him on both sides of the same question. It is like light and darkness commingled. His life is a dim twilight in fact—for night and day meet together in him. One rash act, or a series of such, counteracts all his better effort. He is at last but a cypher—not always on the right side at that. There are some men of this stamp that we should rather pity than harshly rebuke. The fault seems rooted in their constitution. Their character is, like a ship under sail, impelled by a breath, or like an immense mass of rock, such as you may have read of, poised by nature so delicately that a child's hand could set it in motion. Still it is a man's duty, in spite of the flaws and crooks and contortions of nature, to yield to the power of grace—to control himself and be consistent at least, if not discreet. And still how often on the mind of others will some act of a Christian professor counteract all the good influence he has ever exerted before! His extravagance of dress, perhaps, is an outward denial of his former words—a visible symbol of a false heart. His gay, vain, trifling manner seems to say—"My profession of being serious is a jest too." His conversation and prayers—his conduct and profession look two different ways. His taste for worldly pleasures seems to say—"There are no joys at God's right hand"—his thirst for gain—"There are no trea-

asures in heaven." His readiness to judge others harshly—"I do not expect to be judged by the measure I mete," his readiness to take advantages unwarranted by fair dealing—"The rule is absurd of doing to others as you would have them do to you." Now if in such a life you discover only a spasmodic piety—a sort of galvanic distortion of muscles instead of healthy action—you must not be surprised. There is life enough to be galvanized—not enough to act.

Hence it is that you may find the Church of Christ itself so various and diversified—gold, silver, precious stones—hay, wood, stubble. Walk through the streets of a great city, and you will see the diversified character of its dwellings representing the diversified phases of Christian life. Some are palaces, some are hovels. Some are built of stone—some are mere tinder. Some excite your admiration, others your aversion, if not disgust. Perhaps you will say it must be so. But why? Here is the foundation on the Eternal rock. Why not build upon it that which shall endure?

But the matter is not merely speculative. We are builders, all of us. Some have this foundation—some not. If you are building without it, all you build is sure to perish, and your own soul will be buried in the ruins. Is it not time to know on what you build—whether you have yet experienced on your heart the power of the Gospel—whether your soul has been consecrated to God and His service? How sad the thought that you have only lived to destroy your immortal hope—that you have enjoyed a probation only to be proved a reprobate—built up a structure of irreligion which shall fall upon your head and crush you to despair! There is no other foundation to build on than the rock Christ

Jesus. Everything else is sand or mire. Scheme out your life of pleasure—it is the baseless fabric of a vision. If you know not what it is to feel the power of the Gospel in changing your own heart—you are living to no good purpose—you are wasting—ininitely worse than wasting—all your toil.

But suppose you have the foundation. You have been converted to God. You know what it is to have passed from death unto life. What are you doing now? What are you building on this foundation—what have you built already? Have you followed the plans of the Great Architect? Are you building for eternity? Are you gathering and rearing an edifice of durable material? What will remain of your work when life is over? The man that does his work as a Christian, will rear that which can never perish. Worldly men scratch their names on the sand of the sea-shore, and the next wave washes out what they have done. But if you perfect your own soul in righteousness—if you live a life of devotion and prayer—if you leave the impress of a hallowed influence on the minds of others, your work will endure. The fires of the last day will not consume it. It will attest in the judgment your fidelity to your Master.

But if it be otherwise—even if your own soul is saved, which is barely possible, your work will perish. You will see it all melt away and vanish. It will consume like the stubble. It will be a pile of ashes. The winds will scatter and drift it away. And where will you be—if saved, yet saved so as by fire—like a man escaping from the flames and leaving all behind?

Remember what a firm and noble foundation is yours. It is the Rock of Ages. It will sustain a devoted, faithful life. Let your career, then, be worthy of it.

XXV.

THE LIVING TEMPLE.

“Ye are the temple of God.”—1 Cor. iii. 16.

ONE of the finest passages in the writings of that grand old Puritan, John Howe, is the one in which he describes the desolating, ruining effect of sin upon the soul of man, which he compares to the unsightly remains of a decayed and neglected temple. It was destined to a noble use—the worship and service of the Most High. But it has become desecrated and polluted. Even in its ruins, however, something of its old grandeur clings to its crumbling walls and its fallen pillars. “The stately ruins are visible to every eye, that bear in their front (yet extant) this doleful inscription—HERE GOD ONCE DWELT. Enough appears of the admirable frame and structure of the soul of man to show the divine presence did sometime reside in it; more than enough of vicious depravity, to proclaim he is now retired and gone.”

What thoughtful mind does not feel the truth of this? The soul of man is the most wonderful of all God’s works. It was intended for his special service, and was made the object of his special favor. It has become polluted and desolate, and the object of Christ and of the Gospel is to purify it again for himself.

The soul of man is the most wonderful and admirable of God’s works.

Which is greatest, St. Paul's Cathedral or its architect—St. Peter's, or the genius of Michael Angelo that spanned its lofty dome? There are human works that hold us spell-bound by their beauty or their grandeur while we gaze upon them. What must Solomon's temple have been, which a Roman emperor strove to save from the flaming torch? What is the Taj of India with its massive walls, its stainless marble, and its grand proportions? Yet these are all inferior to the architect's ideal. In his own mind are thoughts greater than can be hewn or piled in stone.

The painter, the sculptor, each produces works which entrance us almost. They are called "masterpieces." But what is the confession of their authors? The rude stone is not plastic enough to yield back the pattern of their nobler thought. The mind, the mind is greater than all.

But what are human works to God's works? What are the pillars of Karnac and Luxor to the pillars of the mountains? What is the painting of the ocean in storms to the grand original? What is a sun on the canvass to a sun in the heavens? What is the cannon's roar to God's thunders and earthquakes? Without lifting our eyes to the broad heavens or surveying the lofty and overpowering proportions of nature's great temple, this earth we tread, with its rivers and lakes, its cliffs and mountains, pours contempt on temples, and palaces, and pyramids, and Chinese walls.

But the soul of man rises sublime above all these. It weighs the globe as it were in scales. It soars to immensity. It travels back to an eternity past, or anticipates an eternity to come. It glows with love, or burns with lofty passion. Its spiritual history is the romance

of creation, before which the story of land or sea, of monsters or earthquakes grows tame; and even in thought it stands on the ashes of a cindered globe, exultant in a destiny that has just begun when worlds have ceased to be. It is grander than the mountains, richer than the mine, brighter than the jewel, and more glorious, when consecrated to its true end, than all the array of suns and stars. It is the crown of creative might. It is "the jewel in the ring of the world." It is the picture for which the wealth of Croesus, the power of Cæsar and the splendors of empire can furnish no fitting frame. Even with all these, it may well seem like a gem set in clay. When its true worth is developed, it pours contempt on them all.

Without man, without the human soul, what is this globe, but a mere curiosity of creative might? It is upon the soul that the very wealth of infinite wisdom, power and love seems lavishly poured out.

But the soul was intended for God's special service, and as the object of his special favor. No one can doubt it. The proof is in its constitution and workmanship. He evidently designed it to be what it is capable of being. And what is that? Who can tell? When you see a persecuting Saul become the Apostle Paul, and hear from his saintly lips, amid prison glooms and rigors the language of angelic triumph; when you find the gentleness of the beloved John ripening into a heavenliness of tone and feeling, and hope and joy, till it seems scarcely strange that his Patmos Vision should become a daily experience; when you find a plain man like John Howard, by the power of consecrated charity transformed into an angel of mercy, so that amid the foul air of jails he seems to breathe the atmosphere in which angels

sing ; when you find even commonplace gifts and a commonplace lot transfigured into the means and features of an earthly paradise by the presence, and prayer, and devotion of a spirit that has bowed at the cross ; when you see the lowliest of mortals, a servant, or I had almost said a drudge, bearing about with him in his daily petty duties so much of heaven, that the greatest and wisest—like Archbishop Secker—on a dying bed send for him, that on the fervor of his petition the departing spirit may be borne as it were up to the throne ; who dare say to what any one, even the humblest may not attain ; what virtues may not chrystallize into a crown for his brow, what riches of reverence, and love, and unbought honor shall not embalm his memory ?

Yet all this is only to what *fallen* man, by the grace of God attains ! Did God create the soul without designing this ? Did He make it capable of being a “king and priest unto himself” when He only meant it to drag a muck-rake and gather straw ? Did He endow it with affections that can soar to heaven, when He meant it should scratch the dust and pick at crumbs ?

No ! The soul of man was *meant* for all that it is capable of being. And its highest end—by the side of which that of imperial aspirants is but the ambition of an ant-hill—is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. The soul is to be yielded up to God, that His will may work in it and through it. It is to be plastic to the great purpose for which He made it. In a word, it is to be holy as He is holy ; it is to be His consecrated, His living temple—His sacred name inscribed on its portal—all the wealth of time and probation a willing sacrifice upon its altar.

And how consonant and accordant is this with the

majesty of God and the blessedness of man! A living temple! A human spirit within which the Eternal Spirit condescending will deign to dwell!

But is this the state of man's heart by nature? Has the soul been kept pure and unsullied? Who does not know that it has been polluted and profaned? Stand as it were by the door of your heart and watch what goes in and out? What are your thoughts by day and your dreams by night? Are they of heaven or of earth? Are they pure and self-denying or worldly and selfish? Do they chime together in one chorus of praise to God, or are they discordant and inharmonious? Are they of the altar or the market; of duty or of pleasure, of Christ or of self?

On the answer to these questions the verdict of your treatment of what God made and designed as His own temple—holier, more precious than human hands ever reared—depends. Have you filled it with the tables of the money changers? Is the voice of your thoughts rather the bleating of flocks than the anthem of praise—the jingling of coin than the voice of prayer?

Who is there among us all—where is the most devoted Christian that is not forced to confess to his own shame, that this spiritual temple has been polluted by the presence within it of that which is unholy and impure—thoughts that he cannot approve, passions that he cannot justify, and yet for which he is responsible? It is a humbling confession. Has he betrayed his trust? Has he, the guardian of that temple, allowed it to be desecrated? Has he surrendered it to the foul hoofs of sensual and worldly things, till the sacred presence is excluded, and the great inhabitant, the Holy Spirit, has withdrawn?

It was accounted even by heathens a crime of special enormity to desecrate a temple. They called it sacrilege. And what is sin, intruding by your own act into the temple of your soul, denying its altar the sacrifice of a contrite heart—but just sacrilege? There is a temple God reared for Himself. And have you installed Mammon within it?

There are, doubtless, some hearts eminent for profanation. They are dens of malicious and murderous thoughts. Lust, and passion, and appetite, and reckless, Heaven-daring defiance, all are there. Avarice, and selfishness, and gloating revenge are combined there in infernal league. You feel as you approach them that you are on the borders of Pandemonium. How far does a Herod, or a Nero, or a Jeffries, fall short of being a hell incarnate? We regard with a shudder such monstrosities of depravity. We feel that in “the lowest deep” we have found “a deep still lower.” And then how startling the thought that sin-polluted shrines, to which the scenes of Bacchanalian orgies might sometimes seem almost like vestal purity, were designed for a hallowed service, were meant as temples of the Holy Ghost!

It is true there are lesser degrees of depravity, but the least of them all is a profanation. A sinful thought is a sacrilegious intruder. A selfish aim cannot rank above a money-changer. An idle fancy is a trifle in that sanctuary, where every thought, and imagination, and emotion of the heart should bow down and adore.

Alas for man! He has become like the temple of Jerusalem when Christ entered it. Unhallowed passions nestle there. The greed of gain has displaced devotion, and all the activity of the intellect and will, is often only to disobey his Maker.

But the object of the Gospel is to cleanse and restore and re-consecrate it to its proper, its hallowed service. See the ruin, and see at what cost the provision to restore it is made! What will effect the result? Nothing short of the means which God has devised. It is the blood of Jesus Christ that cleanseth from all sin. Nothing else does or can. It is the Spirit of God that renews the heart. None but a divine might can rear again the pillars of resolve, and restore the purity of affection. Have you called for help? Have you applied to the blood of cleansing? Have you opened your eyes to the greatness of the work? Have you aroused yourself to the urgency of the pressing, solemn duty? It is that work without which no other work is of any avail. It is in vain to cultivate taste or science. How worthless to wreath crumbled ruins with the twining ivy, or overspread them with venerable moss, while on the desecrated altar within no sacrifice is laid, and through the hollow vaults echoes no anthem of praise, no note of prayer!

Christ comes to your heart to-day. He bids you fit it for His reception, for He would come in and dwell there. It is His Father's house. It is a temple of the Most High. You are its high priest, to offer within it sacrifices of praise. Will you devote it to the traffic of mammon and to the revels of sin?

XXVI.

LIVING FOR THE UNSEEN.

"The things which are not seen are eternal."—2 Cor. iv. 18.

MAN occupies a middle point between two worlds, the seen and the unseen. He is himself united to each and compounded of both. He is body and soul, matter and spirit. On one side of him are material things, on the other, spiritual. He stands on the earth yet may commune with heaven. His body allies him to the worm, his spirit to the angel. He is a link between the visible and the invisible, the earthly and the heavenly.

Hence, almost as a matter of necessity, he lives in two worlds, sometimes inclining more to one and sometimes to the other. But something, in spite of himself, he has to do with both. The most perfect materialist that ever lived, the veriest miser whose heart was ever cankered by his gold, the bold boasting disbeliever in all spiritual realities, lives more or less in the realm of the invisible. A man's own soul will be a world in itself, a world of unseen things, of thoughts and fancies, of hopes and fears, of speculations and anxieties, of schemes and cares; a world of light and shade, of day and night, of clouds and sunshine, of storm and calm, of bald mountains and quiet valleys; a world that would still exist to the soul though the whole outward and material universe were dissolved; a world which is far more real, important, enduring, influential for good or evil than the globe itself with all

that it contains. Is it not so? Stop a man's ears, shut him up in total darkness, and into his prison, or into his voiceless solitude, he carries with him in his soul a world echoing with ten thousand voices, and bright or dark with ten thousand scenes of no material landscape. He sees no star-roofed vault above him, but his soul makes its own firmament; he hears no human utterance, but his soul listens to speech from the invisible and immaterial. If he is a Herod, he will have the hell of his own thoughts around him. If a Stephen, he will gaze up even with sightless eyeballs into an opening heaven.

Now, there is an infinite wisdom in that order of Providence which brings us into relations with two worlds at once. We are connected with matter in such a way that we may gain and gather out of material things their spiritual significance, and use them as helps by which to climb up to a region of spiritual attainment. We begin an immortal existence in the use and possession of a bodily frame, and we keep it just long enough for us, by means of it, to come in contact with the spiritual truths, and laws, and relations that it is most essential for us to know. Sensible things are emblems out of which the soul reads a meaning, because in God's plan they are figures and diagrams by which we solve life's problems, the visible things by which the invisible are demonstrated or explained. The body is a sort of scaffolding by the aid of which we build up our own spiritual structure, and when character is complete, and the soul is reared to the maturity of its stature, the scaffolding is thrown down, the body crumbles away, and the soul, built up and furnished for eternity, stands complete and forever independent of the instrumentalities by which it was reared.

Such is the use of the body, such the intent of the Cre-

ator undoubtedly in linking us to the clay. Things that are seen, that are material, are a kind of footstool on which we may stand to reach up higher toward another world, a ladder to climb by, alphabet blocks of wood by the study of which we learn to spell out the laws and philosophy of God, cuts and diagrams to illustrate to the spirit's capacity the methods of providence and the lessons of life. Thus viewed, the body, the world and all sensible things, have their sphere—and a wise one,—and so they ought to be viewed. Their use is transient. It lasts at the longest but a few score of years. Then the soul has been educated and furnished to do without them and they are thrown by. The unseen world of the soul is now ready to begin its independent existence. It has gathered from the visible all that the visible can give. It has learned its alphabet; it can throw aside its blocks and its spelling-book, and read what angels do.

Now what a gross perversion it is of all the aims of life, when a man lives for time, and sense, and the things that are seen: when on these he concentrates his hopes and fears; when in these he chooses to live and move and be absorbed; when, given up to the visible, he forgets the invisible, and seems to feel that he lives only for material interests and material good! This is sensualism, materialism, worldliness. It sacrifices the greater to less. It idolizes the brute and crucifies the angel. It makes the body its God, and the soul a hewer of wood and a drawer of water, just reversing their true relationship. It is as if a man should demolish his dwelling to furnish his tent, as if he should tear down a Temple of Solomon to supply the tabernacle of the desert.

Yet this is what thousands do—not only the avowed materialist who denies, in the face of all evidence, all

spiritual existence, with the Sadducee for his prototype, ignoring God, angel and spirit, but the multitudes of practical materialists, who try to live, for they can at best but try, in the region of material things alone. Some grasp gold as the highest good. Some idolize a ribbon or a feather, and never feel the majesty of a great, good thought. Some devote themselves to sensual indulgence, forgetful that there are joys which eye hath not seen nor ear heard. Some count their wealth by the standard of earthly value and spurn the riches of the soul's incorruptible inheritance—a treasure that no line can measure and no scales weigh—and some even fly to the visible world for relief from the invisible ; use pleasure, and amusement, and games, and business as a diversion and a foil to thoughts of duty. They take this world, that should be made a causeway over which to pass to heaven, to build up a Chinese wall that shall shut out every view or approach of everlasting spiritual truths and realities. All this is supreme folly. It is more ; it is gross wickedness, treason to the soul and to God, falsehood to all the ends and aims of life.

In the first place it is debasing ; more or less so in proportion to the degree in which a man gives himself up to it. I cannot look at a man who has devoted his years either to sensualism, or to mere money-making, or to pleasure, without a feeling of pity, in which it is hard not to have contempt mingled. His heart has grown to his sin, or lust, or gold like a shell to the rock. He is rooted to things seen. He degenerates into a mere thing. He becomes selfish, miserly, materialistic, in his views. His soul is petrified. Even when the body is worn out and is already crumbling back to clay, you can

talk to him only of sensual or material interests. He can scheme only for lust, or gain, or some paltry plan of self-gratification. His thoughts go no higher than the ceiling of his room, no deeper than his furrow. It is humiliating to look at him, to see in him how humanity can become debased. A libertine, a miser, an idolater of fashion, he has no taste or relish for anything purer or nobler than models of clay or images of corruption. He looks to the things that are seen.

Now, take his contrast; the man like Paul that admits, and believes in a world of truth, and duty, and spiritual reality, who converses daily with the invisible and the eternal; a man to whom all the material universe is but a glass through which the soul reads lessons of hope, and faith, and love; one whose eye ranges beyond the horizon of time and sense, and takes in an infinite prospect; one who sinks the body into subservience to the spirit, and who makes all the experience of life, its pains and pleasures, toil and rest, trials and triumphs, help to the development of a holy life and preparation for final blessedness; and who does not feel that in the presence of such an one he stands face to face with a worth and wealth that beggar the world? He is carrying out God's plan in his education. He looks to things that are unseen.

And not to do this is to disregard most stupidly what most concerns our happiness. It is not the outward world or outward circumstances that can suffice to make a man happy. His earthly lot is a poor test of his enjoyment. Penury in rags may sometimes be more enviable than all wealth and splendor. Eden landscapes cannot make Eden hearts. Happiness does not bloom, like trees, perennial in the tropics. It is the heart that makes the world we

live in. It is a man's thoughts, the forms that pass before the mind's eye, that leave the most abiding impressions. It is the immaterial world of ideas that we converse with most. The mind daguerreotypes all dead and living forms, and far more ; its fancies, and fears, and hopes, and convictions go to make the solitude of its thinking hours populous. One may walk through scenes like the happy valley of Rasselas and carry a Vesuvius in his heart. One may look out on the placid sky, when not a breath of wind stirs, or a leaf rustles, and there shall be a hurricane in his bosom. Do you think a man is happy because he lives in a palace and calls broad acres his own? His heart may even then be a beggar crying, "give, give!" The icebergs of the ocean have to float down all the way from the North Pole, and then they will melt away ; but a man's soul under all the sunshine of a tropical fortune may be even to the last like an unimpressible iceberg.

If you wish to know any one's real condition, you must look below the surface. It is not his wardrobe, nor his wealth, nor his honors, that make the real world in which he lives. Do you think Cain could be a materialist when the dire spectre of his murdered brother haunted him—a stern reality—and his own terror forced him to say, "every one that seeth me shall slay me?" Do you think Esau was a materialist, when the *image* of the lost blessing, the unseen good, moved him to bitter and remorseful tears? Do you think a sinless Eden could have made Saul happy when the evil spirit troubled him? Was it any visible, material loss that drove Judas to suicide? What but the impalpable image of his ingratitude sent Peter forth to weep bitterly? Was there any pit dug by human hands, any surging gulf which

human eye could scan, in which Simon Magus was plunged; when the Apostle said of him, "I perceive thou art in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity?" Ah! it is true, as the poet has said :

"The mind is its own place
And makes a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven."

The elements that a man carries with him in his own bosom are to him the most real of all things. Call them mere fancies; rate them as airy shapes; scout them as phantoms. Put them in the scales and say they do not weigh a feather. Make them out just nothing *avoir du poids*. But yet remember these unseen things, these impalpable forms and airy shapes have more to do with a man than all other things beside. Even the drunkard, raving in delirium, and made a maniac by images of horror that no eye sees but his own, shows how, when the thing is brought to a test, the immaterial in man triumphs over the material, and the mind's furniture of thoughts and fancies is the most real, while all else is but as shadows. Give me the man who looks at the unseen, and whose conscience is in harmony with its truth and its claims, and I will show you one who with Joseph can endure the solitude of the prison without a murmur; or with Daniel shall calmly pray to God and not fear even the lion's den, or with the dying Stephen under the shower of stones shall look up with a smile to the opening heavens, or with Paul and Silas shall make the midnight gloom of a prison vocal with songs of praise to God. Such may be, such has been, the communion of the soul with its unseen Helper, the feast of the soul upon the hidden manna, the refreshment of the soul from the unseen fountains of truth and duty, of faith and love, that the flesh

could be mangled on the rack, or crumble to cinders at the stake, almost without a consciousness of pain, and while the face of every beholder has gathered fear and terror, the face of the victim has been lighted up with beams from the unseen glory.

But not to look at the unseen, is to disregard that which is most important. You look at a diagram on the black-board. What are those lines and angles, considered in themselves, but just so much pulverized chalk in right lines. But look through the seen to the unseen, and you shall see those simple lines constructed to bring out a geometrical truth, a link in that chain of mathematical discovery that reaches from the fixed staple of simple axioms up to the highest point of scientific attainment. It marks a step in the progress of man up from barbarism to that stage of civilization in which the iron and the marble take form under his plastic hand, and the rude forces of Nature bend to his will almost to realize the fable of Orpheus charming them by the music of his lyre. So we say material things in themselves are of no more importance than so much bulk or dead matter, except as they are the forms out of which the student of Providence can educe unseen lessons. What is the grandest peak of the Andes to a noble thought? What is the fairest landscape to a beautiful or generous deed? What is the majesty of the Amazon to the current of a holy life moving on irresistibly in the channel of duty and bearing down all obstacles, even the terrors of death before it? To talk of dollars and cents when duty is concerned; to speak of balance of trade or of revenue when the principles of right action are at stake; to be absorbed in calculations of profit and loss when virtue

or humanity are bleeding their life away, seems to me worse, if possible, than Nero fiddling while Rome burned. One of the most stultifying and ludicrous exhibitions of materialism that I can now recall is to be found in a minority report of a committee of our State Legislature on petitions for closing the canals on the Sabbath. This report, not pretending absolutely to deny the importance of religious convictions, goes on to speak of "the tremendous effect upon the revenues of the State, and upon the prosperity if not the very being of the canal itself, which might possibly be the result of granting the prayer of the petitioners." It is as if one should speak of the tremendous weight of a pebble when an avalanche threatened to overwhelm him. I am sure that all material interests combined—railroads, and canals, and rivers, and lakes—might better be sunk in the ocean, than just help to people and enrich a land given up to Sabbath desecration, soon to be shaken by those earthquakes of terrible retribution, which like that in France at the close of the last century, when the Sabbath was legislated away, will make men feel that Pandemonium is let loose on earth. To weigh cargoes against principles, revenue against integrity, tolls or income against the fear of God, is as absurd as to calculate the value of the self-denial of a Paul, the benevolence of a Howard, or the patriotism of a Washington, in specie or bank notes. The riches of a community, as of an individual, are not to be found in its purse or its common treasury. They are not to be computed by stock in trade or annual income. They exist in that which casts all material interests altogether in the shade, in the elements of character and education and capacity for true and noble deeds—not in the seen but in the unseen.

It is the invisible world of truth and duty which towers infinitely above all earth-bounded schemes and interests. I cannot but regard a man who, surrounded by the Eternal and the Infinite, and possessed of a soul whose native aspirations and aptitudes fit it to grasp hold of thoughts as grand as God's being, and an immortal destiny, yet grovels in the dust-siftings of time and sense, as I must on one who should gaze absorbed upon a little bubbling rill in full sight of Niagara Falls, and yet have no eye to behold or admire that emblem of Omnipotence. I would say to him, "Lift up your soul, man; fling away your straws and chips, and think of a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Fling down your crutches and try your wings. Crawl no longer as a worm, but soar to be an angel. Drop your microscope with which you gaze at the minute atoms of chalk on God's black-board, and read the meaning of those lines and angles, where eternity and the laws of probation are diagrammed. Aspire no more to be merely respectable. There is an unseen bar where the King Invisible will judge the judges you fear so much. The seen is nothing to the unseen. It is the merely material shadow that marks where God's truths are passing by. It is the emblem that you are to look through, and then it is God's telescope to unfold worlds that Herschel and Ross never discovered, and of which mere science never dreamed."

But to look to the seen rather than the unseen, and to the exclusion of it, is the grossest folly when you consider that the things that are seen are temporal, and that the things that are unseen are eternal. All that we behold with the outward eye is transient and will pass away. Change and ruin are written upon it all. These

bodies shall crumble to dust. The dwellings of your poverty or your pride will be razed to their foundations. The robes you wear will become rags and be cast aside. Your possessions will pass from your grasp, and all the conveniences of your comfort and all the resources of your affluence will vanish away. Time covers the world with his ravages. He passes over empires, and his hoof of destruction realizes for them the boast of Attila. Pyramids and pillared marble and triumphal monuments crumble under his eye, and when he has done his work, a mightier hand shall sweep away his ruins and his structures, and

“The great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherits shall dissolve,
And like the baseless fabric of a vision
Leave not a wreck behind.”

The triumphs of art, the masterpieces of the sculptor, on which he toiled to immortalize his name, the lofty domes which attest the loftier aspirations of architectural genius, all the material gains and achievements of busy millions, and of all ages, shall live only in memory, and the place that knew them once shall know them no more.

But the unseen world, and all that belongs to it, is imperishable. Ages shall not annihilate or have power over it. God will still be the “King, eternal, immortal, invisible.” The soul will live, unencumbered longer with the burdens of the flesh. The elements of thought and character will survive the grave. A holy life will be an ark of hallowed memories and deeds that will float over the deluge that buries all the scenes of its consecrated effort. The invisible laws of retribution, the inviolability of justice, the everlasting beauty of holiness,

the unchanging blessedness of purity of heart—all these will survive. The soul itself will carry with it to the judgment-seat of God all the elements of that unseen world within, in which it is to live forever. That world is imperishable. Not an impression is lost. Not a memory dies. The tastes, appetites, aspirations, loves or hates, hopes or fears of the soul will follow it where it can carry nothing else. It will have all those, without the encumbrance or the alleviation of sensual existence. The drunkard, or the libertine, or the miser, with all their raging lusts or ingrained habits, but with nothing to satisfy them; the ambitious or proud man, with no material means to gratify the greed of a ruling passion; the worldly man, accustomed to lean on the world for his joy and diversion and gratification, but now with no such resource—all these, in that conscious guilt which no eye can see, and that conscious misery the heart only knows, will illustrate how much of perdition a man can carry with him on earth, how thoroughly he may be mastered by that undying worm of inward craving that fed on the world once, but feeds on the sinner now.

But that soul which is God's living temple, and in which he abides, is a world in itself of peace and joy. No matter where you place it, with Daniel in a lions' den; with the outlawed confessor of Christ, in the glens or caves of the earth; in the fires of trial; in the deep waters of affliction; in light or darkness; in the land Beulah, or in the valley of the shadow of death—its faith brings God near it, into it, and it triumphs in the thought, independent of earth's hindrances or its helps. It lives in the unseen, and into the darkest glooms of earth it brings with it the splendors of God's eternal day forever shining on its path.

We may see, therefore, how fatal a policy it is for the soul to yield itself up to the things that are seen, to live as though it had only to do with time and sense. You would, perhaps, smile to see a man offering his hand to shadows, or presuming to evade their blows. You would count him a simpleton or a maniac. But all the worldly successes and applause of life are to the soul that leans on God no more than the hand of a shadow, and all the blows which the world can inflict are no more than the blows of a shadow. "Fear not," said Christ, "them that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do, but fear ye rather Him who can cast both soul and body into hell, yea I say unto you, fear Him!"

And yet how many fly to the seen to escape the unseen, like Adam hasting to the thicket from the voice of God! How many rush into business, or pleasure, or schemes of amusement, or to diverting scenes, to escape from conviction or from the arrest of conscience! That unseen officer of the invisible Judge is at least no phantom, for to escape him the soul plunges deeper into material schemes and interests. Oh, beware of this! Run not away to hide yourself from the Unseen but All-seeing! You must meet God at last—meet him now!

Once more each one is making the world in which he is to live forever. How carefully should he proceed. The man who builds his house to live in it for a score or two of years, is careful in the building and the furnishing of it. His eye will rest upon it often. It is to be his home. It will minister in all its arrangements to his convenience or his discomfort. You do not chide him for his care.

Well, then, let us suppose that God offers you the privi-

lege of making a world. He says, "Here are the materials for it, and here are the powers to shape them. You may make it what you like. Here is soil that will make gardens, water that will make rivers and oceans, granite masses that will make Alps or Andes. All that is grand or beautiful, magnificent or terrible, barren or frightful, is here furnished to your hand. Make a world of them to suit your taste, and you may have it for your own, to live in and enjoy for ten thousand years." Would it not be a magnificent offer?

Well, God has done far more than this. He has given you a soul, that outweighs in value and in resources all the material universe, and he has given you probation and its means to shape and mould it at your will. He says, "Make that into a world to suit your taste, make it to suit you to live in and enjoy, not ten thousand, but ten thousand times ten thousand years." And you have already begun to shape and mould it. What and how much have you done? Have you planted it with heavenward hopes and aspirations—those cedars of Lebanon in the garden of God, or with the thorns, thistles and brambles of worldly cares? Have you solemnly and prayerfully invited the guidance of God and His counsel to direct you in the momentous undertaking?

XXVII.

THE STANDARD OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

“Follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.”—
1 TIM. vi. 11.

NO one who attentively peruses the Scriptures can remain in doubt of the high standard of a Christian life. “Follow me,” says the Saviour. That is, be like me. “Be ye holy, as your Father in heaven is holy.” Read over the life of Christ and you will see what the life of a Christian should be. There is the standard. There is no other; not the life of a minister—not that of any man, however eminent or devoted—not that of a Doddridge, or Payson, or Brainerd, or Edwards, or Baxter, or Bunyan. No one sooner than these men would say, “Look not to us, but to Jesus.”

Paul rebukes the tendency common with many, of virtually saying to themselves, “I can do what such an one does,” or, “No more can be expected of me than of such an one.” He says, “They that compare themselves among themselves, and measure themselves by themselves, are not wise.” It would be just as proper for a merchant to measure his cloth by the old burnt fragment of a yardstick as for a Christian to measure the aim of his life by the imperfect examples of a Christian brother. Christ

is spoken of as "leaving us an example that we should follow in his steps." The measure of the yard in England was once adjusted by the arm of the King, and then the standard was placed for preservation and reference in the Tower of London. Christ's life is our standard, and it is safely preserved in the pages of the New Testament that will last when the Tower of London is all dust. "Looking unto Jesus," is the Christian's motto. If, therefore, we can ascertain the characteristics of his life, we can see what ours should be—what it must be, if he is ever to own his image in us, and to acknowledge us as his followers.

First, then, it was pure and holy. "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." His bitterest foes could find no immorality in his life—nothing on which to base a charge against him. There was no impure lust, no selfish or ambitious aim; No covetousness after worldly possessions; no angry passions; no envy, jealousy, spite, or pride. His words were true, serious, faithful. His deeds were kind, just, and humane. In the parable of the Good Samaritan he has sketched the spirit of that life that could feed the hungry, give sight to the blind, weep at the grave of Lazarus, and pour consolation into the heart of the humbled publican. He did not shrink from the touch of the poor and wretched. All might approach him. He could make his home with the humble family of Bethany. He could dine with Zaccheus. He did not shun contact with any one whom he could bless, be they centurions, or publicans and sinners. He went through the world like the sunbeam, enlightening others, but contracting no impurity himself. There was no aping of wealth or greatness, no over-anxiety for even the necessities of life, no respect of persons, no desire

for the world's empty honors, no concern that the rich and the great only despised him.

And then, as love is the fulfilling of the law, his life was full of love. He prayed for all. He had glad tidings for all. He forgave his enemies and prayed God to forgive them. His life was the toil of love for wretched men, and his death was its triumphant and perfect exhibition. Not a malicious or revengeful thought did he cherish, not even amid the ignominious insults of his crucifixion.

His self-denial, also, was the evidence and the fruit of his love. Never before or since has anything like it been seen or known. He left the glory of Heaven for the meanness of a human lot. He left the worship of angels, to incur the maledictions of men. He exchanged the throne of Heaven for a cross of shame. He had the power of working miracles, but exercised it for the benefit of others, never for his own. And all this was for no selfish end. Compassion for wretched and guilty men, was the motive that led to this self-denial.

And beside all, he was eminently and uninterruptedly devoted to glorifying God—to the accomplishment of the work of his mission. "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" was his question when a child in the temple. "Work while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work," was an admonition which his life as well as lips enforced. There was no indolence, no indifference. Even when he sat down weary upon the well of Samaria, he was busy for God. He made the flowers of the field preach, and the sower's seed furnish him emblems. He organized his disciples into bands, and sent them forth to work. He communicated his own activity to those around him. All his

talents, all his powers were devoted to the great work of his mission.

Such is a most brief and imperfect sketch of His example whose authority must be acknowledged by all that bear the Christian name. It is the rule which we are to copy. He whom we acknowledge as our Master has set it for us. It is faultless. It is perfect. It is the only one that fixes the measure and scope of our aims. And now see what a life that must be that just copies Christ ; how pure, kind, holy, loving, prayerful, self-denying, devoted ! How active and energetic in the work of doing good ! Take the holiest and best men that have ever lived—the Apostles enduring perils of every kind, that amid hardship, and abuse, and imprisonment, they might exhibit the spirit as well as declare the doctrines of the Gospel ; “ the noble army of the martyrs ” welcoming persecution, or torture, or death for the testimony of Jesus ; the missionaries of the cross, leaving home and native land behind them in order to bestow upon ignorant and wretched tribes the unsearchable riches of Christ ; the prayerful, and devoted, and self-denying men who in humble stations have made it manifest that they were men of God, and were toiling to bless others and save their own souls—take all these, and hear them every one confessing their own weaknesses, and deficiencies, and failings, as compared with the one only example, and then judge, if ye bear the Christian name, what manner of persons ye ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness, if ye are not to dishonor that holy name wherewith ye are called. Surely, the standard of a Christian life is a high one.

We see this, moreover, when we consider its object. Why does God hold up before us such an example as that

of Jesus? It is that we may be transformed into the same image from glory to glory. It is to make that an instrument in our training to be like God himself. The whole scope of redemption is to recover our lost race—to bring men back to God. The Gospel hope reaches after nothing higher than the blessedness of perfect holiness. Without holiness it is impossible to please God. Without holiness no one shall see the Lord. It is only as we are like Christ that we are fitted for heaven. Nothing unholy or impure can be admitted there. Sin would mar its beauty, and disturb its peace, and make discord in its anthems. An unholy heart there, beneath the glance of a holy God, would be out of place. It would feel itself an alien, a stranger, an exile from all with which it could sympathize.

A Christian, then, is one that is in training for the holiness of heaven; one that God is teaching and disciplining to be an angel; one that is aiming and striving to reach that eternal home, which is made glorious by the presence of a holy God. Here he is a sojourner and a pilgrim. All his interests, his treasure, his hope, are in heaven. He fails of everything if he fails in these, and he must fail, if he is not like Christ.

See, too, how the standard of a Christian life is suggested by what the Scriptures say of those that bear the sacred name of disciple: "Ye are my witnesses," says God. What can an unholy man, what can an unrenowned heart, what can a worldly mind testify as to the loving-kindness, and the glorious holiness, and the spotless excellence of Jehovah? "Ye are the light of the world," says Christ; but what sort of a light is that which emits rays of darkness, that light which is all blurred over and eclipsed by worldly passions, by spots of impurity, by

conduct that challenges the reproach of men? "Ye are the salt of the earth;" but what virtue has that to communicate which cannot preserve itself, and what excellence must there be to warrant the truthful application of these words?

The Christian, moreover, has had great things done for him of which his life is to be the witness. He is called by God's message, he is redeemed by the blood of the Son of God, he is renewed by the power of the Holy Ghost. Infinite grace has called him out from darkness into God's marvellous light. He has seen God in Christ reconciling the world to himself. He has felt the evil of sin in his own nature, and has read its odiousness in the tragedy of the cross. Eternity has been unfolded to him. The unsearchable riches of Christ have been exhibited to him. Heaven has opened its gates to invite him thither. To him the Apostle turns, when he says, "Ye are redeemed not by corruptible things as silver and gold, but by the precious blood of the Lamb of God." Is such an one to be content with a low and worldly standard of living? Is he to make self his idol? Is he to indulge in the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life? Is he to live like the sin-blinded devotee of Mammon, to indulge in passion, envy, malice, revenge, covetousness, pride? Is he to allow himself to drift along on the current of the world, conforming himself to the standards of fashion, the indolence of his own nature, or the humors of the hour?

Even the world itself, conscious of the glaring contradiction, indignantly replies, No! Mere men of the world, strangers to the spirituality of the Gospel claims, can see that they are very high, and they look to the Christian disciple for a conduct that shall show principles of action

and aims above their own ; and however unfit they may be to taunt those that come short, the very taunt shows how they take the standard of a Christian life to be something pure, and exalted, and holy, and heavenlike—pure gold to their dross.

And if we think of the work which the Church is to accomplish, we see that it can be accomplished only as a high standard of Christian life and character is sustained. This world is to be converted to God, and the instruments for doing it are men ; but they must be holy men. The work can be done by no others. It is not wealth, or talent, or royal patronage that can do it. Genius may exhaust itself in setting forth the excellence of the Gospel. Material means may be multiplied beyond all precedent in the work of spreading it ; but all these will be only the shell of a rotten trunk, if vital piety, the very heart of the Christian life is wanting. Worldly men cannot convert the world. Half Christians cannot do it. Any quantity of Pilates, or Agrippas, or Demases cannot do it. A popular vote of the nations in favor of it would not do it. The eloquence that is not enkindled by charity is only as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. It is the living piety of the church—back of all sermons however studied, all creeds however orthodox, all rites however simple—that gives them force. Our logic can not argue men through the strait gate. Our warnings can not startle from the lethargy of death in sin. But there is a power in the life of a consistent and devoted Christian which defies the indifference of the worldling and the unbelief of the sceptic. They cannot sneer it down. They cannot ignore it. It is a living witness against them, always testifying to a reality that accuses them. Here is the strength of the Church. Not the

great names of her ministers or prelates, not the increase of her numbers, not the outward respect which she receives from statesmen, and poets, and politicians ; but the living, active piety of her members, their exemplary and devoted spirit, their prayerfulness, humility and Christlikeness ; these are the weapons of her warfare, not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. These make her more terrible than an army with banners. These bring down to her aid the omnipotence of God. Those lives, then, that do not come up to this standard, say, virtually, “ abandon the great work for which the Saviour lived and died. Let the world perish in its sin ; pronounce Christianity a failure, and abandon it.” But we cannot abandon it. We say, rather let the Church live up to her high standard. And it must be high. It must be such that men shall read Christ in it ; such that he shall be preached in it ; such that men who never open the lids of the Bible shall have a living gospel before them.

But what is now the condition of the Christian Church ? What is the state of the vast mass that compose it ? Alas ! how has the gold become dim, how is the most fine gold changed ! We are too deeply conscious in ourselves of the discrepancy between what we are, and what we should be, to question the change that has come over the Church since those early days when the little band of disciples gathered in an upper chamber in Jerusalem constituted the whole visible strength that was to grapple with the heathenisms of the world and the superstitions of ages. There are some, indeed, who are exceptions to the general rule ; some who have not defiled the garments of their profession ; some who mourn in secret over the desola-

tions of Zion ; some who live to do their Master's will. But how few these are !

Where do you find the true standard of a Christian life aimed at ? Go into the walks of commerce, and where are the men who carry the sense of their stewardship to God with them to their stores and their desks ? Where are they who bear about with them into the world the consciousness that they are witnesses for God ? Almost every where you see the idolatry of Mammon ; all the heart, and mind, and soul, and strength absorbed in making money ; the weariness of six days of excessive toil, robbing the seventh of its energy for serving God ; indolence eating out devotion ; selfishness displacing self-denial ; praise neglected and prayer forgotten. How often do religious services become the mere routine of habit, and Sabbath observance the mere tribute to a practice that has lost its vitality. How might an observing heathen, judging us in mass, write back to his countrymen that our devotion consisted in the patient endurance of having two sermons weekly poured down the throat of the intellect, and that the activities of the Church were absorbed in the process !

In some cases, who would suspect a man of being one that bears the Christian name ? He shows the same tastes, sympathies, and habits as his unconverted neighbor. In his household he is not the Christian parent ; in his business he is not the Christian trafficker. Sometimes you see him passionate, grasping for gain, hurrying as eagerly to scenes of amusement as the true disciple will to the place of prayer.

In fact, there are many Christians by profession, who make of this, two distinct worlds ; one the world of religious ordinance, the other of secular profit. A man is

the saint in the one and the worldling in the other. He goes out from the sanctuary and forgets what manner of man he was. He puts away his piety with his Sunday wardrobe. His hand is devout when it holds a Bible, but a creature of party when it casts a vote.

Can this be justified? Is this an age when we may lower the Christian standard? Have the apostolic band, "the noble army of the martyrs," the hosts of those who have "passed through great tribulation and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb"—have all these, headed by their great Leader, preceded us only that we should dishonor their illustrious example, and prove ourselves unworthy to follow in their steps? Has the world become such that it no longer needs to have "living epistles" of piety and devotion spread before it for admonition and rebuke? Has the missionary sent back word from his heathen field that the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of Christ? Is there no longer any call to self-denial, to importunate prayer, to holy living, to enduring hardships as good soldiers of Christ? Has the order of discipline in the great "sacramental host of God's elect" been recalled? Is Christ's life our pattern no longer? Is it henceforth an *easy* thing to enter in at the strait gate?

Let no man deceive himself. Till the goal is reached; till we apprehend that for which also we are apprehended of Christ Jesus, we are to follow after righteousness, godliness, faith and love.

XXVIII.

THE TENT AND THE ALTAR.

“And there he builded an altar unto the Lord.”—GEN. xii. 7.

WHAT a significant, although brief and simple, record is that which teaches us that the old patriarch had his altar where he pitched his tent! It was not enough to constitute his home that his family should be around him. He must have the assurance that the Eternal Father was present to watch over all.

A grand sight that was in the heart of the old heathenism—that one man against the world almost—that solitary relic of Eden memories, green yet amid the wide desolations—that altar of a pure worship like the ark of the deluge, the sole resting-place for the foot of pilgrim piety! See that standard for the true God set up, more sublime than granite monument or obelisk, yet reared by a humble home, and casting its shadow over the ground where the children played! It is to them hearthstone, temple, church spire, all in one. It is the symbol of all that we hold dear between the pages of the Bible. There it stands, more than a fortress to guard that home; more than a sanctuary to kindle devotion; an ever-speaking witness for God, the prophetic pledge that the world's great sacrifice was yet to be offered.

And what a noble character is that of the old patriarch! No worldly conformist is he—no mere time-server. See how with a world against him he builds his altar; see

how in the solid stones of the pile, he writes out as in granite letters his confession of the true God ; see how he sets it up before the eyes of his household, and how tent and altar rise side by side.

Ah, give us such piety as that ! which, even though no church or temple be near, will make its own home a sanctuary, and bring the glory of a Horeb or a Calvary down beside its lowly tent.

The example of Abraham is one to be copied. Every tent should have its altar, every home its mercy-seat. The father should be the priest of his own household. Each family should offer with united heart, its morning and its evening sacrifice.

Does not the very statement carry a convincing force with it ? Who that believes in the loving Providence of the great Father would call it in question ? Who but feels constrained to admire the beauty, the hallowing and peaceful influence of family worship ?

True, it may degenerate into an empty form. It may sink into a hollow and heartless service. It may become a drudgery, and repel rather than attract. But this will be only when the life of piety is chilled and benumbed by worldliness, when the heart is drawn off to earthly idols, when the great truths of immortality and redemption are neglected or forgotten.

Every community should have its altar, its place of public worship and common and united devotion. Abraham's altar was the type of both social and family religion—the devotion of temple and of hearthstone together. He was alone in the world as the worshipper of the true God. There were few or none others to join him in public prayer or praise. Yet he reared an altar about

which others might gather. How heartily he would have welcomed them if they had come to join him in the sacrifice !

So wherever there is a Christian family, although the only one in the community, there should be the nucleus, the center, of a Christian church. Let the wide waters of worldliness stretch like a waste around—there should be an island, or at least an ark of refuge. There a testimony should be borne for God ; there a standard set up to gladden and cheer the eye of every pious beholder.

You must sometimes have felt the beauty of that symbol of Christian worship, as journeying far away, you have caught sight of some humble village church, with the clustering dwellings reposing in quiet peace beneath the shadow of its spire pointing like a finger to heaven. There it stood the type of a common worship, the monument rising aloft to greet the eye of the traveler on his journey and the laborer at his toil. There it stood, in the silent eloquence of its very aspect, preaching every day as well as Sabbath, lessons of interest above the dreams of mammon or the schemes of gain—speaking of holy themes, and kindling memories of the scenes it has witnessed within its walls, of humble penitence and lofty praise. There it stood more significant than the Pharos of the Egyptian coast, more thrilling than monuments of Revolutionary valor, with a moral grandeur in its unassuming simplicity that casts contempt on marble piles. Strike it from the scene and you have left nothing in the framed landscape but a cheerless background, a community without a temple, a people without an altar.

But more essential than public, is household piety, and the first is vain without the last. Prayerless families

may form an intelligent, but not a devout assembly, and we know full well, that sometimes when the arm of persecution has scattered the flock, religion has withdrawn to the quiet retreats of the fireside, and a lofty devotion has breathed its prayer or sent up the incense of its praise from humblest homes. Piety has found a shelter in scenes too obscure to invite the notice of persecuting malice, and in forest glooms, or even the caves of the earth, the tent, and the altar, have still been conjoined. We love to think how the exiled pilgrims, who laid the foundations of empire on these western shores, with a pious impulse wiser than the statesman's sagacity, scarcely waited to frame their own rude cabins to shelter them from the blast, before they laid the foundations of the village church, so that every civil and social institution might be developed under the fostering influence of the fear of God. Our sympathies go with them into the deep forest, where, as they mark the trees that will serve to rear their own dwelling, they spare with careful foresight those that can be framed for the courts of the Lord's house. And when the humble fabric rises, and with it the gratitude of those that rear it, and each rude cabin nestles as it may beneath its shade, we think of the piety of the old Jewish patriarch, and of tent and altar inseparably associated together ; but dearer to memory than all this is that scene of family devotion where young and old kneel together beneath the humble roof, to pay their common vows and breathe their common prayer. Here is the germ of the harvests of after centuries. Here are training influences that shape the destiny of generations, and make the household hallowed as the school for young immortals—the nursery of heaven.

In this is wisdom. Let the tent and the altar go to-

gether ; let them never be dissociated. For there is common acknowledgment of God due from each household. The family bond unites individuals together by the strongest of all earthly ties. Its several members are associated together in the closest intimacy. They sleep beneath the same roof, meet at the same table, converse on the same subjects, are familiar with the same scenes. They exert upon one another a mutual influence, and breathe one common atmosphere of thought and feeling. Insensibly they acquire kindred tastes. They reflect each other's views. They adopt the same standards of judgment. The same books and papers fall under their eye, and the same friendships often draw them into the same circles. Their interests, moreover, are kindred, if not identical. The same events excite a common interest, or enkindle like emotions. In their hopes and fears, their joys and griefs, their hearts beat with the same impulse, and the reverse or success of one affects them all. Daily intercourse strengthens bonds of association, draws them closer and makes them dearer to one another. The same blessings are largely poured into their common cup, the same calamity embitters their common lot. The reputation of one, to some extent, involves that of all, and the honor or disgrace of one is reflected back upon every other member.

Looking up, then, as they do, to the same heavenly guardianship, dependent as they are upon the same Providence, fed by the same hand, sustained and spared by the same mercy, and cherishing the hope that all the changes of time that may yet separate them on earth, and all the events which may open for them widely sundered graves, shall not obstruct their blest reunion in heaven ; shall they not unite in a common acknowledg-

ment of the same weakness and the same dependence, the same duty and the same need, the same God and the same Saviour? Should there not be some token of unity in religious conviction, some manifestation of their kindred interest in the same divine truth? Shall they meet at a common table, and not kneel at the same altar? Shall they share in kindred earthly joys and hopes, only to be estranged from all sympathy in those of heaven?

But to be more specific, they have common needs, common wants, common dangers. They are alike mortal, dependent, exposed, tempted, tried. Must not each, as well as all, say, "I am a sinner: I have an evil heart of unbelief: I need the renewing grace and the guiding spirit of God? Must not every one acknowledge the obligation to the same obedience, the claims of the same holiness, the necessity of a like preparation for meeting God? Can one fall into danger and the others not suffer with him? Can one indulge in sin, and the others escape the influence of his disobedience? Example has there pre-eminently a contagious power. The same modes of error, like the same modes of speech, tone and language, are sometimes to be found; and the correction for one is that for all. They must consequently look to the same Providence to guard them, the same wisdom to guide them, and the same mercy to blot out their sin? Shall they not then adopt one confession? Shall they not lean together upon one arm? Shall they not alike bow in penitence, shall they not send up the united petition for the same grace?

But they have, moreover, common favors and blessings from the same divine source, and these demand a united thanksgiving. As sickness carries distress, and death mourning, through a household, so the welfare of each is

a common joy for which all are to be grateful. Life, health, strength, food, raiment, shelter, the social blessings of home, wisdom for all from the same Bible, grace from the same divine fountain, redemption from the one Redeemer ; do not these demand a common gratitude, and a common expression of that gratitude ? Shall all other emotions be shared and deepened by intimate association, and these of grateful love to the Great Giver fail to be thus cherished ? Who does not see the guilt of so marked an exception ? Who does not feel the inconsistency of such a course ?

But they have, moreover, we will fondly believe, something common in their hopes. However varied in some respects their condition, they have not relinquished, they cannot relinquish, the cheering prospect of a common home in heaven. They will cling through varied scenes to the sacred thought—that all earthly separations or wanderings shall not obstruct their final reunion in the same fold of the great and good Shepherd. Shall they not then unite in those acts of prayer and praise which seem at least to give some warrant for the hope ; which seem to offer an outward pledge of that common sympathy which alone can ever unite them in the harmony of the redeemed in heaven ? What a very mockery of all reasonable hope that would be, which had not the basis of even a common recognition, a common acknowledgement !

But beyond all this, family religion as manifested at least by family worship, gives to the fireside a congenial charm. It sheds a sanctity over all the relations of family intercourse. It makes home, in a measure, what it should be, some feeble type at least of the hallowed home of the great family above. That common prayer,

that common praise, are telegraphic lines, as it were, reaching from the hearthstone up to the throne before which angels bow. The earthly household becomes the type of the great household of faith. Earthly brotherhood is recognized as the type of that by which all shall say without one discordant tone, "Our Father which art in heaven."

Family religion is the best safeguard also of the future welfare of the family. The scenes of coming years on which childhood is entering now, are full of danger. The tempter is there. Thousands have already fallen, and thousands more are exposed. Your child, the members of your family, with the swift flight of time, are hurrying forth to mingle in those scenes, to risk those hazards. You are to guard them by your counsel; you are to arm them for the strife. And how shall they go forth? With what preparation will you let them venture where so many have fallen? Have you nothing to inculcate but worldly prudence? Have you no sword to put into their hand but that of mere intellectual training? You may have wealth to bestow upon them, but that very wealth may prove a curse. You may train them to industrious and moral habits, but these have often proved but a vain security for time, to say nothing of their utter incompetence for eternal issues. Is there not something more necessary? And what is it? Your own convictions anticipate me when I say that more than industry, intellectual training or wealth, must religious principle avail—that principle which has been nurtured at the family altar, and which has thenceforth been strengthened by every memory of early years. If you would disarm the power of temptation for them when they are called to meet it, let the very aspect of the Satanic bribe be re-

buked by a reviving of those scenes where all knelt in prayer around the fireside, and the words of the sacred volume made the thought of sin terrible, and the glories of holiness attractive. Let them carry with them, ever hung conspicuous on the walls of memory, the picture of life's early experience, hallowed by associations of praise and worship. Let the scenes of home come back to them, never without that foremost feature of the family altar ; never to be conceived of except as associated with the high claims of religious duty.

Surely the example of Abraham is one that commends itself to every parent. The tent and the altar should ever be conjoined. Every household should be the sanctuary of a hallowed affection, the earthly image of the family of heaven. Religion should be there, not in mere form, but in its living spirit ; not as a mere outward ceremonial, but as an inspiring principle. Let the busy world be what it may, this should be an Eden lighted up with the smile of God, blest with that peace which comes only from Him whose advent to earth kindled the rapt songs of angels. Here, at least, should be an ark floating securely over a sin-deluged world. Here youthful minds and hearts should find a nursery for heaven. Parental influence and example should bear the aspect, not of a cold, formal propriety, but of a fervent, cheerful, living faith in God. With his earliest thoughts, the child should learn to know his Maker's goodness, should recognize with gratitude His care and providence. Here each opening mind should be led to unfold itself to the beams of heavenly love, and the earliest consciousness should be made familiar with the idea of duty to God.

But how can this be, if the tent and the altar are disjoined ? How can it be in the home where religion is a

stranger? How can it be in the place where the voice of prayer and praise is never heard, and a sinful neglect of known duty only serves to commend irreligion. Ah! there is a teaching in silence, a sermon in neglect! But it preaches negatives. It says, "No love, no duty; no obedience, no law; no judgment, no heaven, no hell; no Saviour, no God." And who would venture to give it a tongue for such utterance, a tongue to whisper in the ears of childhood the fond and fatal delusion.

XXIX.

LIFE'S TEARS AND HARVEST.

"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again, with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."—Ps. cxxvi. 6.

THE world is full of contrasts, but contrasts often strangely linked together. Youth and age are strung on the thread of our common life. Seed-time and harvest are revolving spokes in a common wheel. You never see prosperity but there is a glimpse of adversity in the background. The halls of the reveler are strangely kindred to the cold garret where wretchedness lies on its bed of straw. It is hard work to move graveyards out of sight of mammon's busiest walks. The light frivolities or sinful indulgence of youth are the downward steps of a staircase that lands us among rags, and sighs, and blighted prospects. The sparkle of the wine-cup degenerates into that phosphorescence of moral death that gleams from the decanters of the grogshop.

And so, also, the true success of life stands out from a background of self-denying toil, of struggle, and hardship, and manly endurance. The rich harvest-field, waving in its beauty to the breath of the winds, speaks of labor and culture, and the hard-won victory over a stubborn soil. The bow of hope that spans the close of life's pilgrimage is hung on clouds of care and trial, if not of sore calamity.

"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the world where sorrow is unknown.
No traveler ever reached that blest abode,
Who found not thorns and briars in his road."

Scripture expresses the thought in words not less beautiful: "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless return again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

Final success—the joy of life's ripe harvest—is the goal of our hopes. No wise or thoughtful man will live merely for to-day. The pilgrim who seeks a home is not content to linger and loiter for the mere flowers beside his way. The sower looks onward to fields white and ready for the sickle. Wisdom has regard to the grand issue. The triumph or the pleasure of to-day is transitory. We want a hope that does not sink with the setting sun. The true success of life is that which does not fail the evening of our days, and leave them to blight or barrenness. We want that shout of "harvest home," that will not die into silence with the failing breath, but makes the passage of the grave a whispering-gallery where heaven and earth talk together.

Many mistake in their ideal of what constitutes the true success of life. That man who comes back from the field of probation's toil, rejoicing and bringing his sheaves with him—he who is heir to God's "well done"—is not the world-applauded hero, not the man who has piled up the largest heap of wealth, not the man that has drawn most notice, but he who in proportion to his talents can show the most permanent good done; he who, though he has but few sheaves, has those of wheat and not tares, whose life-work has built not "hay, wood and stubble," but "silver, gold, precious stones." He

comes back rejoicing—with that joy that flows from knowing that his work is done, and has not been altogether vain—that he has sheaves for heaven's garner, grown of precious seed, and that into the presence of the great householder he can go and say humbly, but hopefully, "Thy talents have gained five talents more." Here is true success; not that hailed by the acclaim of applauding thousands, not that which was won by a favoring turn of fortune's wheel, not that of pomp and triumphant parade, but that of an approving conscience, and the smile of Heaven; that of works that will outlive their author, works that will follow him.

It is not without significance that a man is presented before us as going forth weeping, bearing precious seed. By this we are taught that he must have a tearful anxiety, such a deep sense of the greatness and arduousness of his task as will make him weep before God, and he must sow the right seed, direct his energies in that channel which will produce the best as well as the largest harvest.

No man ever, as a general thing, accomplishes much without a deep, if not burdening sense of what he undertakes. It is so in temporal things. It is so in spiritual. The great works of life are no holiday by-plays. A man must not go to his work-shop or counting-room toying or trifling. He that would carry out his business projects to a successful issue, must make care and toil his partners. He must struggle with the tide of events, and turn it into the channel of his designs. He must not shrink from vigilance and anxiety. He must be prepared to battle long and well with adversity. And so it is with the pursuit of spiritual good, the mastery of self, the

victory over sin, the rebuke of surrounding wickedness, the culture of grace in one's own and others' hearts. The greatness of the task must be felt, felt even to tears, felt to the measure of a tearful prayerfulness.

And the true work of a Christian's life aiming at final success, is great enough to warrant this. It is a great battle. It is a struggle to absorb the soul's entire energies. To win heaven, to make our calling and election sure, to keep the light of holy example bright amid surrounding darkness, to carry the standard of truth right through the bustling crowds of worldliness—this is no easy task. It demands that anxiety which will press the energies of the whole man out into action. To do our duty by ourselves—to master sin within and temptation without—to do our duty by others and bring them as far as we may to the Saviour, it burdened the soul of an Apostle; it might task the powers of an angel. It calls for an anxiety that will flow forth in prayer and tears, tears that the soul weeps and not the eye, tears that God sees and not man.

And another element of success is that we go forth bearing precious seed. There is care and anxiety enough in the world if only directed into the right channel; there is seed enough sown if it was only of the right kind. But the tares and weeds outnumber the wheat. The botany of the moral is as rich as that of the natural world. The thorns and thistles, the perplexities and cares that men sow for their harvests are innumerable. How much of the seed laboriously sown by men is worthless, or worse. It grows up to pain, and guilt, and anguish, and accusing memories. Men sow to the wind to reap the whirlwind. All the sorrows and calamities of life almost—its disappointments, and disgusts, and de-

spair—come from the seed sown. Stupidity or recklessness never stops to ask what it is, whether precious or worthless. The man who casts the seed of wasted years, of selfish or worldly anxieties, into the soil he cultivates, knows not what he does, and, when time shows him his mistake, he sees too late that his own hands planted it. Some men sow seeds of poison to embitter all their after years ; some scatter seeds that spring up to mere useless shrubs ; some sow the seed of their vices, that multiply and spread their curse like the Canada thistle, overrunning the farmer's fields. Precious seed there is, but it comes from God's patent-office ; it is seed that springs up into a life of piety, devotion, and usefulness ; it is the seed of holy aims and strivings ; the seed of charity, integrity, and self-denial. It is such seed as Christ sowed in the Sermon on the Mount, or by the well of Samaria, or among the famished thousands of the desert ; such as Paul scattered broadcast over the Roman empire ; such as time sifts out of the lives of good men in faithful duties done, and holy examples set, and kindly words uttered ; such as the faithful parent drops into the soil of the young heart springing up to all generous, and humane, and heavenward strivings ; such as falls lightly as the snowflake about the hearthstone where the home-group kneel to pray ; such as the Sabbath teacher drops into young and tender hearts, that it may grow with their growth and strengthen with their strength ; such is the seed precious beyond all price, the harvest of which shall be rich in more than golden sheaves. As he that turns a desert to a garden does a more useful work than he that built the pyramids, so he that turns one soul to righteousness, or keeps his own from the pollutions of the world, does a work that will invoke blessings on its

author when lizards crawl over the monuments of nobles and of kings. The seed he plants is that of the spreading banyan-tree of grace, that will live on and still extend when the frosts of time shall have withered the weeds and sedges that bloomed and thrived, as human wealth or greatness, for a summer's day. A man may toil as hard to plant thorns as grapes. He may spend as much labor in rearing shrub oaks as cedars of Lebanon ; and so a man may sow to the flesh and of the flesh reap corruption, and it may cost him as much care and effort as if he sowed to the Spirit, and of the Spirit reaped life everlasting.

The wise farmer is careful in the seed he selects. It costs no more to plant the good than the bad. A man may sweat and tire as much in sowing chaff and sawdust as in sowing wheat ; and when we look at the field of the world, we seem to see men who, oblivious of the nature and bearing of their efforts, are spending, in the mere pursuit of personal and selfish objects, those energies which, wisely directed, might lay up a treasure for them in heaven. No matter how hard they toil, the more miserable will be their failure if they have not the precious seed ; no matter how abundant their returns, if they be but weeds, and straw, and stubble ; no matter what shrewdness and skill they may display in accumulating a bulky crop, if, on God's threshing-floor, not a grain of wheat can be winnowed out. You might go through the community and sum up the attainments of thousands of busy lives, and when you subject them to the only real test of what they have accomplished for God and man, they are, with all their imposing array and splendor, no better than great Babylon, that golden head of the kingdoms, when " weighed in the balance and found want-

ing." An air-bubble may be as brilliant and more bulky than a jewel, but it dissolves at a touch ; and so death touches the splendid fortune, or the honored reputation, and it breaks, with all its glitter, and disappears forever ; while he that, at the cost of all he had, has sought the goodly pearl, may have it shining forever in the crown of his rejoicing.

Let there be, then, that attention to the seed you sow which the importance of the case demands. That was an ignoble boast of the ancient artist, "I *paint* for eternity," by the side of him who, conscious of aspiring to a harvest for the garner of heaven, can say, "I *sow* for eternity." Not one grain of his precious seed is, or ever can be, lost. It may sleep long beneath the cold clod, and the wintry storms may seem to weave a snowy shroud for its final burial, but its hidden life will outburst its sepulchre with the returning spring-time, and then it will be seen, that, while the schemes of statesmanship were brushed by time like the spider's webs, and colossal fortunes vanished like a dream, and a fame that the world echoed died in whispers, the kindly counsel, the holy example, the self-denying charity, the lowly beneficence of the good man were springing up to a harvest over which the jubilee of angels should break enraptured.

"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless return again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." *Doubtless !* You may rely upon it. It is the sure result of His ordinance who has declared that seed-time and harvest shall not fail. It may sometimes seem to be otherwise. There are those who toil on prayerfully and tearfully to life's close, and see little fruit of their efforts ; but many times their works follow

them. When their dust has been given to the grave, and men have read their name only on their monument, some lingering memory that seemed dry and dead has bloomed afresh, and the very words uttered in the weakness of their dying breath have been the down that floated a seed for eternity to a spot where it found a congenial soil, and rooted and grew up to a noble life, or to generous deeds. Then at last, perhaps, it was remembered, that long ago in humble, lowly striving, some child of God had prepared the field and sowed the seed for the harvest that gladdens the heart of angel reapers ; that, in the calm assurance of faith, hoping against hope, and struggling with discouragement, a godly zeal or heavenly endurance laid the foundation for all these results.

Look yonder at that little group on the Grecian shores of ancient Miletus, and see how at the words of that saintly man, who stands among them, the tears are starting from many an eye ; and, at last, about to bid them farewell, he kneels down and prays with them all. See, how with sore weeping, they fall upon his neck, and kiss him, sorrowing that they shall behold his face no more. It is the Apostle Paul and the elders of the Church at Ephesus, but that Apostle goes forth weeping, bearing precious seed, the seed of the Word of God, and if you wait a few years more, you shall hear a voice of triumph issuing from his Roman prison : " I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith, and henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of life." Ah ! there is the joy of the laborer returning from the harvest-field, bringing his sheaves with him.

Gaze yonder on the northern coast of the African continent, and look at that desolate home of a widowed

mother and her only son. She is a Christian woman, and long and well has she toiled and prayed that the heart of her child might be renewed and sanctified. But the years pass on, and learning, and philosophy, and human speculations, and passionate indulgence, possess his thoughts, and every day carries him further from the path of Christian hope. Tears flow in secret, and many a heart-coined prayer goes up for his recovery, but there is no change. The widowed mother goes sadly to her pastor, and opens to him her burdens and her griefs, but in a faith built upon the assurance that he that sows in tears shall reap in joy, he bids her still hope that grace will not let the child of faith and prayer be wholly lost. A few years pass on, and you see that wayward, paganized, ambitious youth, the venerable Bishop of the ancient Church, and the admiring reverence of after centuries knows him as St. Augustine. She that went forth and wept, bearing precious seed may come again rejoicing in the abundant harvest of her prayer and toil.

There, again, is the faithful Sabbath-school teacher. Burdensome anxiety for the welfare of souls committed to his care, makes him feel the arduousness of the task he has undertaken. To gain their attention, to imbue their minds with heavenly truth, to lead them to the Lamb of God ; all this is a work to try the faith, and excite apprehension. But with a tearful faith in God the seed is sown. No promise of a harvest, perhaps, appears. The pupils are scattered abroad over the wide world, and no track of them can be kept. But afar away, on shipboard, in the silent watch on deck, or in the solitudes of the great prairies, or in some strange and distant city, the memory of those Sabbaths comes back, and the wandering scholar thinks how like the prodigal he is, and

God's spirit carries the conviction home, and so, afar off in time and place, he is brought near to God, and, at length, it may be that he meets that teacher, and gladdens his heart with the story of God's gracious dealings, till he who went forth weeping bearing precious seed feels that he can return rejoicing bringing his sheaves with him.

Take another illustration. Here is a poor, unfortunate child of want and sorrow. Pain, and grief, and affliction have been his lot. He has suffered long and much, sometimes from human coldness and harshness; sometimes from disease, or the anguish of bereavement. But, with all this, he has hope in God. Tears indeed are his meat and drink, but the fear of sinning against that great and good Being, who has left him so many mercies still—fear lest he betray complaining or ingratitude, is his greatest anxiety. There he lies, perhaps almost helpless, on his straw-bed in a garret, but gathering up from his precious Bible sweet words of counsel and of promise, and dropping them one by one into his memory, till they root there deep and strong, and nothing can tear them up.

He seems to me like the sower going forth weeping, bearing precious seed, only his own heart is the field, and God's word and God's rich grace are the precious seed; but I know that the harvest will come, ah! it has come already, in that calm submission, that cheerful faith, that heavenly hope, that make the sufferer's bed preach to the world the blessedness of a believer's portion.

Such are some of the abundant lessons which God sets before us to impress upon us the truth of his word. The world is full of them. He that would come back from life's harvest-field rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with



him, must be prepared to go forth weeping bearing precious seed. It is not by shunning self-denial and duties' hardships, that the true goal of life can be won. The path of ease is not that of heavenly, any more than earthly attainment.

Look where you will over this busy earth, and you find no blessing of probation that has not cost effort or self-denial. The richest harvests cost laborious culture. Even the prizes of fame and ambition have been won by persevering toil. The laborer's gains are moist with sweat, and the soldier's laurels drip with blood. The heroes of faith have endured hardness; have sustained the great "fight of affliction." They have passed through the furnace. Some of them have run their earthly race to a fiery goal. All that will be Christ's disciples must be cross-bearers. They must be prepared to tread in their Master's steps. They must welcome "the narrow way." They must "sow in tears."

I would not advocate a sad and tearful countenance. I would not clothe religion in black, or robe it in mourning habiliments. But I know that life and life's tasks are a serious and solemn thing. I know that sin has made the world a vale of tears, and no Eden can come out of it till sin, by stern conflict, is mastered and subdued. He that would be a victor must first act the soldier's part. By prayer, and toil, and self-mastery—leaning ever on the staff of Jehovah—we must climb to the height from which we fell.

"Whoever thinks, must see that man was made
To face the storm, not languish in the shade.
Action's his sphere, and for that sphere designed,
Eternal pleasures open on the mind."

XXX.

WALKING IN THE TRUTH.

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."

3 JOHN 4.

“**T**O walk in truth!” What an expressive phrase!
How full of meaning!

There are some men who walk in falsehood. You might write their biography in a tomb-stone epitaph, that might almost make the marble blush—"a thirty, forty, fifty, seventy years' lie." It is false to God, false to conscience, false to the reality of things, false to the eternal laws of duty and righteousness. It starts with a false principle, and ends in false results.

Such is the life of the hypocrite, the man who seems what he is not; who makes his speech and manner and professions a mask to deceive; who murders truth and integrity, and yet wears the robes of the murdered. In his case, the atmosphere in which he lives and breathes is falsehood.

So there are thousands whose life is unreal. They live in their own fancies. Their life is but a dream of fashion or pleasure. As they whirl by on their way to eternity, they are gay, thoughtless, heedless. They walk in a vain show. Their joys are hollow joys. Their troubles are fanciful. Their talk is empty bubbles, the froth of vanity.

There are others again who would scorn a lie, who would brand it with infamy, who are yet false to God. He is their sovereign, yet they do not obey him. He is their master, but they do not serve him. He is their Father, but they do not honor him. To his just claims, they say, how often, like the young man in the parable, "I go, sir," and go not. They have been entrusted solemnly with talents, but they are false to their trust. They have means of influence and, perhaps, wealth, but they are false in their use.

And thus they are false to themselves. They betray their own souls. With these in their keeping, they falsely surrender them to sin and Satan. Instead of guarding them with a truthful fidelity, they leave them, with door ajar, for Satan to enter.

It is not strange then that they should be false to their convictions. They know what is good, yet do it not. They feel that they should be pious, yet they linger in their sins. They hear a voice within, with Sinai authority, calling them to repent, but they are false to its summons. They see the flag of duty waving over them, but they will not march under the banner. They are false to the flag of conscience.

In common with others, they are false to the eternal laws of righteousness. These are binding on us all. From the seraph before the throne, to the felon in his cell, there is not a moral agent in the universe of God, exempt from their obligation, and there is not one who does not at times acknowledge it. But how many break through them, are disloyal to them, put duty under bonds to pleasure, insult the awful majesty of truth, do despite to the authority which legislates for eternity and for the universe.

Doubtless many of these would scorn a downright lie. They have been educated to despise it. They discern in it something intrinsically mean and odious. But their idea of it is that it must be articulated in words, or compacted in cheats and frauds. They forget that the very spirit of it is a Proteus, that like the rain-drop it may be compacted in ice or expanded in vapor, like the pestilence it may walk in darkness, as well as destroy at noon-day. They forget that the very essence of all sin is falsehood, a violation of truth, or truthfulness, to God, man, or the soul itself.

Thus, we see that the comprehensive summary of a noble and upright life is "to walk in truth." There is nothing grander, purer, higher. And there is nothing so exactly descriptive of the complete and perfect character. To walk in truth is not only to be what we seem; not only to scorn masks; not only to shun the hollowness of all that the dying man pronounces unreal; not only to withdraw from the path hung about with shows and pageants and shadows, but to walk as God's child, to live as the heir of heaven, to be true at once to truth, to conscience, and to God.

No doubt all this was included in the idea of the Apostle. It was unquestionably his summary of a Christian life. His highest idea of the truth was, as Paul expresses it, "the truth as it is in Jesus." He had himself heard the master say, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." To him the highest truth, the sum of all truth, the sum itself of truth, of which all science and philosophy were but darkling rays, was Christ the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. To accept him as the great teacher, the great example, the great atoning sacrifice; to be found in him, not having his own right-

eousness ; to be able to say, "for me to live is Christ," "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," and to walk in his steps, the steps of incarnate truth itself—this, beyond question, was what the Apostle meant by his expressive phrase, walking in truth.

And who doubts that the man who is true to God, according to the Bible standard, true to Christ as a servant and disciple, will be true in all things else? You can trust him. He lives under the all-seeing eye. He dwells in the all-pervading presence. He yields unswerving allegiance to the God of all truth. You want no spies to watch him, no human statutes to bind him, no sureties to make good his word. Potosi or California coined into gold could not bribe him. The powers of earth and hell could not shake his integrity.

Nay, the highest standard of Christian character and virtuous attainment is presented in this walking in truth. I could not ask of any man, of any Christian, any thing more than to walk in the truth of his convictions and professions. Let him hold these fast, and he will be a perfect man. He will not say one thing and do another. He will not profess to follow Christ and yet forsake him. He will not assume to be a child of God, and yet by worldliness, selfishness, and the love of vanity, covet the adoption of the Devil. He will be ever at the post of duty. He will ever enjoy that blessed music of heaven which flows from the harmony between conscience and act, the disposition and its allotted task. He will exemplify his religion in word and deed. He will tolerate no self-delusion ; he will abide under no pretense.

To see such a man as this, is a cheering, a noble sight. It is the sublimest spectacle beneath the stars. It does one's heart good, it makes it glad, to look at it. The

upheaved granite, pushing its mountain peaks up into the clouds, where the lightnings play, is grand. The broad landscape, where flowers bloom and trees wave on the background of silver lakes or azure skies, is beautiful; but grander than the mountain and fairer than the landscape, is the true life, lifting itself heavenward, but blooming like the flower by the lowliest home.

If to see it is so cheering—to see it afar off, in a stranger that we never knew before—what must it be to hear of it in those we love, and whom we have ourselves taught! those for whom we have prayed much and earnestly, whom we have met by the fireside, in whose behalf we have felt the anxiety too deep for words! Their welfare is like our own. It is a part of it. The blow that smites them strikes through them to us. But to hear, to be assured that they walk in truth, is to hear the best news—that which our fervent affection most desires, that which crowns our fondest anticipations.

How strange, how mysterious is that mutual bond of sympathy and affection which binds us all one to another! It counteracts selfishness. It keeps us from scattering each like a hermit to his solitary cell. We smile at other's joy, we weep at other's woe. See the parent's heart, stretching the tendrils of affection far over sea and land to clasp the absent child in its embrace. See the mutual attachment of teacher and pupil, of pastor and people, of the missionary and his converts! And what is it that this affection desires the most, when it is pure and intelligent? When life is at stake, when the enfeebled frame is sinking under disease, how poor is dress, or show, or beauty, or honor! And when the purity of the soul, its spiritual life, is exposed to hazard, how vain is the pomp of its ruin, its harvests of grain, its

gleanings of gold! We shudder at that monstrous distortion of feeling which would have a child rich though mean, great in place or rank, if dwarfed in principle. We have no words for the folly of the parent that makes a doll of a child, bedizzening it with silks, and ribbons, and jewels, only to nurse its pride and make it the sport of its own precocious passions of envy and vanity. It is like burning a precious diamond for the sake of its transient blaze. It is reducing that which might be planted as a cedar in the courts of the Lord's house, into a charred firebrand, and doing it under the perverted name of affection.

But take away the scales from the blinded eye. Recognize in that object of love a young immortal. See in it here on earth one exposed to temptations that may rend it like demons, and fling it dehumanized into the gutter or the dark pools of vice; one that is not safe for a moment without the safeguards of virtue; one that only in the strength of truth, purity and piety is fit to fight the battle of life and come off conqueror, and then, if you love it, how every thing else shrinks into insignificance by the side of that life of duty and religion in which the soul grows ripe for the benedictions of men on earth and the blessedness of God in heaven! You want to see it walking in wisdom's ways. You ask, with tears perhaps, that God would keep it from the evil, from vice, from falsehood, from being untrue to itself or to him. And you are not contented, your anxiety does not find relief, till you beseech for it the new heart that loves God, the new life that springs from his truth.

And you are right here. Better that your child should be a beggar in the streets than that it should grow up to falsehood and false ways. Better that it should be hated

of men than unloved of God. But it cannot be loved of Him, unless it is true, unless it walks in truth, unless it is strong in truth, unless the truth has made it penitent, humble, contrite, faithful, consecrated to God. There are times even in this world when the cable of good habits under the stress of temptation's storm would yield, if the iron thread of Christian principle were not intertwined with it, and we know, that in the final struggle, he is weak, no matter of how strong resolve, or tireless energy, who is not strong in the Lord.

How then can yours be the joy which the Apostle felt? The joy, greater than which he declared he could not feel? How, as you gaze over your household, or your circle of friends, or on the forms of those you know and love, can you find for yourself a happiness even on earth like that of the angels in heaven over the repenting sinner? Surely, it is only by doing what you can to lead them to the fountains of eternal life, to the fear of God, to the feet of Jesus. It is only by striving so to draw and guide them that they shall be led to him who is the way, the truth, and the life—shall indeed, in a single word, walk in truth.

But to this end you must walk in truth yourself. If you point to heaven, you must lead the way. Nay, if you hesitate, I can conceive the very piety of your child a stinging reproof, an occasion of reproach, an element to embitter your anguish. To rejoice in his conversion, you need to be converted yourself. Oh! that every parent could say, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth, and this joy is mine."

XXXI.

CHARACTER.

"The righteous is an everlasting foundation."--PROV. x. 25.

HAVE you ever passed along the shores of the sea where the chafing waves had for centuries been encroaching on the land, washing the sand away, but leaving here and there a rocky ledge lifting its crest in proud defiance? What seemed solid earth vanishes away, undermined and disintegrated piecemeal, while what had hitherto been buried out of sight and had passed unnoticed, comes out to view, and is prepared to challenge all the mad force of the ocean lashed into rage.

On these shores of time, where the waves of centuries undermine and sweep away the greatest works of art, may we not feel that we have a parable before us? The sands around us are drifting away; the structures on which we expend our art are crumbling; empires are disintegrated; fortunes are whelmed in the abyss; the iron frame yields at last. Marks of decay are traced on all that we behold; and yet time and violence, wind and wave, leave to every man that which we denominate his *character*. With each passing year it comes out more clear and distinct and unchanging, until at last when wealth, and honors, and vigor have yielded like

sands to the all-devouring sea, it stands alone, like the monumental pillar of probation, lifting its head above the tide and wave.

The results of life are various, but the most permanent of them all is character. Sometimes it is the only thing that a man has left him after the discipline of probation. Sometimes misfortune sweeps away all his gains, and calamity leaves him friendless, and he stands alone with only his character, like a pillar solitary amid the ruins of a great city, surviving the wreck of all things beside.

They may disappear, but character abides. Once, indeed, it was pliable, almost like wax to the seal; a breath could cover it, like a window-pane in winter, with pictured frost-work, or tarnish it, like the polished steel, and disfigure it by unsightly rust. A mere word will sometimes sink into it, falling as lightly, perhaps, as a raindrop on the primeval sands that ages have changed to solid strata, and leave an impression that future ages will never erase. A fleeting opinion, carelessly uttered, may mar and disfigure it forever. A passing incident, a look of reproof, a kindly tone, a memory of goodness, an example of piety, may impress some feature that will outlive the crumbling granite. The very dust and straws of time may be incorporated into it; the collisions of youthful passions and interests may impress upon it lasting distortion. Sometimes you may almost pour it liquid into the mould of a stronger will. But when it has taken shape, when time has hardened it in the mould, or fossilized the impression, it defies all the rasps and files of discipline, and blunts the hardened chisel, and sets at naught the force of fire and hammer.

What is there that falls more gently and lightly than

the snow-flake? A breath will melt it, and you cannot feel its feathery stroke as it drops lingeringly from the clouds; it sinks noiselessly and unnoticed, and is lost to view in the fleecy mass with which it mingles. And yet with time and pressure it hardens, and helps to form the giant iceberg which, launched from the frozen coasts of the North, floats downward toward the pole, towering above the tallest mast and crushing the oak-ribbed vessels that are dashed against it like egg-shells.

Is it not so with character? How evanescent is the passing emotion, the fleeting thought! No human eye notes it, no human ear hears its echo. You cannot grasp it, or define it, or weigh it in the scales. It is born of an incident or a breath, and it vanishes like a vapor. The microscope cannot detect it, and history can rarely record it. It hangs out no flag, it blows no trumpet. It seems to flit by like a drifting shadow. Its step is as noiseless as Time's own; and yet, as it sinks into its place in the soul, it is incorporated with other thoughts or emotions more or less like itself, and the result is sometimes that structure of character that will resist all outward impression of rain or sunshine, and will carry the breath of polar winters with it into regions that were strangers to its birth. The strokes that are aimed at it only rebound against him that strikes. The masses that are dashed at it are only crushed in the collision. It is the frost-bound, impassive iceberg of the soul.

Thus, while fashioned, perhaps, like wax, it changes, as it were, to adamant. Long before it has seen three-score years and ten it becomes fixed, and rigid, and changeless. You cannot mould it by persuasion or impress it by terror. The appeals of reason are lost upon it; the hopes of blessedness cannot soften it; the unveiled

realities of retribution leave it impassive. All the powers of the life to come fail often to change a single feature, and if there is yielding at last, it is through the apprehension of final judgment or the power of sovereign grace.

A man's character is the aggregate of all the dispositions, tastes, purposes, and habits of his soul ; whatever helps to constitute his moral identity. This, slowly made up, it may be, changing imperceptibly, perhaps, through years, is finally the least yielding of all things. At first it may be almost as shifting as the folds of the morning's mist. You cannot tell, amid the vicissitudes of childish years, what form it will finally assume ; and yet at last it looms up before you, outlined as clear and definite as that silver-edged border of the thunder-head, pencilled on the distant sky, which you can carry with you in memory through years to come. You cannot tell, perhaps, how it was formed, what silent, invisible influences moulded it, or from what source its elements were derived. Just as the morning's sun will drink up by its millions of beams millions of dew-drops, gathering them from lake and clod, from forest leaf and mossy bed, from steaming rottenness and fragrant flower, so from countless sources are drawn the elements of our moral life, from the examples we witness, the opinions we hear, the scenes through which we pass, the principles set before us or adopted by ourselves, the plans we form, the books we read, the pleasures we seek, the very objects of nature, of art, of providence or grace, that pass before our eyes.

But when these have yielded what they have to bestow, the liquid gift crystallizes, like the jewels and diamonds of what we might almost call the bleeding granite ; diamonds which become so hardened and unyielding, that

the blow that would make any impression would suffice to crush them to atoms. The character becomes less and less pliable, and ere the ordinary period of life is past, we feel that the age of a Methusaleh filled with adverse and counteracting influences, would be powerless to change it. If graceless then, it is graceless forever. If not yet moulded, it is thenceforth forever rough and rude, rugged and harsh, stern and forbidding. Mountains may be levelled, ocean cliffs may be worn away by the tides, the pyramids may crumble, but the character is still the same. The tides of passion only plow that channel deeper which is already worn, and habit only entrenches itself more strongly between the cliff-bound barriers that it has formed itself.

If any importance then attaches to character, the influences by which it may be rightly shaped should be carefully studied, and the period during which it may be moulded should be accounted the golden moment.

But character is important—unspeakably important. It is character which gives all its worth and significance to human existence ; without it, man is no better than the brute—no better than a graven image. He sinks to a level with the beast he drives, or the acres he ploughs. The end of existence and of probation is to form character—character that will glorify God. Character is the one indisputable and abiding result of our earthly trial. Every thing else is subsidiary to this. For it, the immense mechanism of time is set in motion, the world is framed, social order is established, laws are ordained and tests applied. Without it the globe with its furniture would be like a plowed field unsown—a house built, but never occupied. What is the mere culture of acres, the building of cities, the minting and accumulation of coin, except

as these bear on character? They have no more intrinsic value or importance than a bee's construction of his cells, or a beaver's construction of his dam. Sum up all the other deeds and achievements of a human life, and if you omit character, what remains but stubble? There is not a grain of wheat left. You have taken away the digits and added up only ciphers.

What is that one work which is going forward ceaselessly throughout our whole career; which activity may promote, but which indolence cannot arrest; which begins with cradled infancy, and is closed only by the summons of the grave? Is it not the work which builds up character? And is not this our life work? Are we not all artists? Is there not a striking parallel between the process of the sculptor, and that which is going forward in our own souls? The first blows knock off the largest fragments of the marble, and determine the general contour of the statue. But not less important in some respects are the latest touches of the chisel, imperceptible in their effects to the careless observer, but yet giving finish to the work. So, to the very last, we are perfecting the work begun perhaps in childhood, and of all our achievements, this is to us the most important, as it is the most enduring. We may undertake enterprises that are futile as it respects dividends, but the character gains or loses by them. We may foolishly defeat our own success, or undo what we have done, but the double experience is registered on the character. We can undertake nothing, which does not leave its most important residuum in our own hearts. Our character is for us the summary of the results of probation.

Character is the most valuable possession that a man can have on earth. It has an unspeakable worth even in

the markets of the world, and in the daily intercourse of men. The loss of character is sometimes the loss of every thing. How poor and contemptible is he that has forfeited it! How he becomes the foot-ball of the world's scorn! How he finds his symbol in the withered leaf, torn from its living stem, tossed by the whirlwind, and left to sink despised and neglected to oblivion!

Character has its value when tried by a business standard. An established reputation is itself a capital. It inspires confidence. It commands credit. It was by the force of character that Washington in the dark days of war held together the armies of his country. It was by the force of character that the elder Pitt was able to evoke at a critical moment the energies of the nation, and make England's name terrible around the globe, on the heights of Abraham and in the jungles of India. It was the character of the missionary Schwartz that secured him confidence, and made him the peaceful mediator between hostile armies. There are no victories or triumphs inscribed on the bloody record of war, that in moral grandeur can surpass or equal the bloodless achievements of character. It has proved itself mightier than numbers, stronger than steel, richer than gold. The eloquence of Demosthenes is feeble by the side of the eloquence of character. Sometimes a whole nation is lifted out of despondency by the voice of one man in whom it has learned to confide. The ranks of a shattered army are marshalled anew into invincible battalions when the man whom they feel they can trust is put at their head. A single well-known signature will evoke millions of money in behalf of the enterprise it endorses. Such are the triumphs of character.

It is the capital often of youthful enterprise; it is the

pledge of business success ; it secures friends ; it conciliates sympathy ; it commands respect. In the hour of need, in the trying emergency, it surrounds one with those who are disposed to lend a helping hand. He is not ostracised simply because he has been unfortunate ; he is not shunned as a pest ; he is not despised as a villain ; calumny may assault, but can only temporarily harm him, and when he rises again, as he is sure to do in the end, those that hissed once will be ready to applaud. He can look upon his honest earnings without a blush. They do not rust and canker, and eat his flesh as it were fire. There is not a mean or dishonest coin among them ; but even if he were to lose them all, they are but trash to what still remains. His character will abide with him ; it will be the foundation of new enterprise, the warrant of final though remote success.

Character, again, is essential to happiness. There are some characters of which we cannot form the conception, without associating them with gloomy passions and troubled thoughts. They are built up of the elements of selfishness, greed, and crime. We look upon them as on some frowning, massive, windowless castle, with its damp, chill chambers and gloomy dungeons, where spiders weave their webs and lizards crawl. There is no cheerful sunlight in them, no ringing tones of sportive innocence, only the clank of chains and the echo of solitary footsteps. No place is there for happiness, no room for innocent delight or sweet content, and sometimes you may read on the clouded brow, as if sculptured over the grim portal of a tower, "Only the tyrant and his victims dwell within."

There are elements of character that are like a disease in the bones, eating up the marrow of life. The impure,

malicious, envious thought is a kind of demon within the soul. It goes about with us, haunts us, dwells in us, is part of our being. It defiles and pollutes by its very presence. It frowns fiend-like upon us, from within, refusing to be dislodged. We are possessed as it were of the Evil Spirit. In such society happiness cannot dwell.

And yet there are characters with which we associate naturally whatever is peaceful, and cheerful, and happy. Pure, lofty, generous, above the strife of low passions, full of meekness and gentleness; we approach them as we would the shadow of Eden bowers. Their presence repels all that is unbecoming, morose, selfish, dark, or cruel. The light of conscious integrity and innocence streams through them, and they are fanned, as it were, by breezes laden with heaven's own fragrance.

It is character and not place that decides the nature of the inward life. It is not the saloon that determines the features of the scene, but the guests that fill it. The landscape is nothing if "only man is vile." Locality, scenery, climate—these are of no avail. The thoughts and emotions which help to compose the character, and which are also the waves and foam that it tosses up, show us what it is; and when these belong to a restless sea, ridged with the rolling tempest and the blasts of passion, we know that it must be a stranger to peace—just as we feel assured when these sink to repose amid their own rippling music, heaven with all its stars will be mirrored on its quiet bosom.

But character is important for the influence it exerts. It is held up before the world like the picture before the artist's eye, which he is to study. It exercises a constant though silent power over others wherever it is displayed, by the fireside, in the social scene, in the historic gallery,

in the walks of public life. It commends the good, or it sanctions the evil. It points to heaven and leads the way, or it seduces to the paths of the destroyer. Noiselessly but effectively it is ever at work. The hands may be folded to repose, the tongue may be silent, but the character speaks. It preaches to the present and to the absent. It admonishes, it inspires, it cheers, it guides; or, on the other hand, it misleads and perverts. Who would not say, Let it be formed on the true model? Who would not insist, even in the obscurest sphere, on its being shaped so as to bless, and not to curse?

But character is also unspeakably important, as that which alone we can carry with us out of the world. Every thing else, fame and fortune, rank and station, must be left behind. But our character will be our own. If it is what it should be; if it has been built up of holy aims, and sacred emotions, and the experience of charity and faith; if it has been so shaped and featured that we may trace upon it the image of Jesus; if it is beautiful with the image of penitence, and cheerful obedience, and sweet submission; then it is our unspeakable treasure — our family likeness to the redeemed, the token of our relationship to the holy spirit before the throne.

How solemnly, then, does it demand your care! How does its importance throw every earthly or temporal interest into the shade! Without it, kings are poor, and with it beggars are rich. It constitutes, by the grace of God, our title to the rank of the Nobility of Heaven.

XXXII.

SOCIAL DISCIPLINE.

‘Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification.’

ROM. xv. 2.

THROUGHOUT the universe, there seems to be every where an antagonism of opposite forces, more or less harmonized, the proper balance of which is essential to, and secures order. In the solar system, there is centrifugal as well as centripetal force, one impelling the planets onward in their orbits, and the other holding them within the sphere of the sun’s attraction, so that the course they take is directly around the sun. The one balances the other. So it is throughout the starry system ; and thus the “music” or harmony of the spheres is preserved.

So the temperature of the earth through the varied seasons is the resultant of heat from the sun’s rays, and the cold of the polar or of the interplanetary regions. There is a perpetual conflict, and yet a perpetual though constantly varying equilibrium. The air we breathe is composed of well-balanced elements, either of which in excess would soon destroy life. Our own nature is constituted of reason and passion, of conscience and will, and either, in preponderating excess, would unfit us for our sphere of action on earth. Society itself is kept in equipoise by a balance of what have been termed the radical

and conservative elements, although these words are often grossly misapplied.

But it is when we consider man in his relations to society, that we see this antagonism and equilibrium most strikingly exemplified. Civil order is the result of the free action of the individual, gently but firmly and persistently modified by a regard to the common good. Let that free action become license, let it fail to feel the central attraction of a common interest, and a man becomes like a lawless planet breaking loose from the system and carrying terror and ravage in its path. On the other hand, let that free action be absolutely suppressed by central authority, and the system becomes a tyrannic unity; much as if the sun should draw all the planets to itself and consume them in its blaze. Then is realized what the despotic Louis XIV of France aspired to, when he said, "I am the State."

Every thoughtful student of history knows that in the order of providence, where one of these tendencies is in excess, the other will be provoked into action and be disposed to rise and meet it. When individual license runs riot in crime and violence, the strong hand of a Nimrod, a Charlemagne, a Napoleon, will be called in to hold it in check. And so where royal prerogative, as in the case of the Stuarts of England, assumes to crush the liberties of the subject, and trample on individual rights, there will be an uprising and a practical protest against it, as there was in the great Rebellion under Cromwell. Just as the intense heat of summer brings the cooling clouds and the lightning, so the burning rays of oppression will marshal the vapors of popular dissatisfaction, till they sweep in terrible and, perhaps, wasting energy over the parched plains.

Thus, civil order is the balance of conflicting elements, and when either of these is in excess, the popular tendency will, perhaps slowly, settle back in favor of the other extreme. The conservative of one period is the reformer of another, and if the vessel of State careens too much, he that was on the extreme right will be very apt to go to the extreme left, while he who occupies the centre will be more apt to sit still.

In a perfect state of society there would be no careening. Individual freedom or will and the attraction of the common good would be in equipoise. And this result is the high aim of the broadest and most sagacious statesmanship. The individual is to be so trained that he shall voluntarily and intelligently keep the path of order, moving like the planet in its prescribed orbit. He is to be free within a limited sphere, and his own will and intelligence are to respect these limits—the limits set by a proper regard to the supreme authority and the highest good.

But this training is a difficult work. It cannot be accomplished by legislation alone. It cannot be achieved by popular elections, the war-cries or the success of party. Xerxes' army, with all the giant trunks of the Black Forest at hand, never could build up even a soldier's hut, unless the materials were first reduced to shape. They must be dealt with individually. And so constitutions and statutes, and the most sagacious statesmanship, and all the lore and jurisprudence of ages, will be of no avail, unless, in the dwelling, the neighborhood, the village, the school, the sanctuary, and by the fireside, men are trained to self-rule, self-restraint, and the experience of freedom harmonizing with authority.

The fact is that the will of man is depraved. Its force is in excess. Each individual would be a law to himself.

He is disposed to overlook the claims of the common good, under the pressure of interest, passion, and self-indulgence. Unless this tendency is corrected or modified, he will be a disturbing element in the social body. Put him any where, and he will still in some way be in antagonism to others. The great necessity is to provide means by which he shall be held in check. You cannot remove or obviate this necessity by any ingenious organization. It will intrude, along with human nature itself, every where, in a Fourier Phalanx, a More's Utopia, a Bacon's Atalantis, the happy valley of Rasselas, or any earthly paradise.

To train men for society, and for harmonious social relations, is a necessary step, if they are to be trained for heaven. And unquestionably the providence of God makes use of all varieties of social discipline, the hopes and fears and sympathies of men, the penalties of social opinion and usage, and civil government, as an important though subordinate element of their education. He that cannot live with his fellows here on earth without trampling on them, or disregarding their well being, is by the very fact disqualified for the social converse and sympathies of the spiritual world.

And here we approach the great and important truth. that God is educating us through our social as well as our intellectual and moral nature. Man was not made to be alone—to live withdrawn from human companionship. The life of the solitary misanthrope or hermit is unnatural. We may say with Cowper :

“Man in society is like a flower
Blown in its native bed. 'Tis there alone
His faculties—expanded in full bloom—
Shine out; there only reach their proper sphere.”

In the constitution of human nature, there are faculties and susceptibilities and longings, which, like the tendrils of the vine, are ever reaching forth toward the props of human sympathy. We cannot stand solitary. Isolated from society, our nature could not attain development. You might as well enclose the young shoot in a cylinder reaching up an hundred feet, and then expect it to grow. You would only dwarf it. It wants light and air, and nature's glad companionship of dew and sunshine, or it will pine away and die. The seed must be planted in the earth or it will never germinate. So our nature must be planted in the soil of society, or it will never grow and expand, and bear fruit. It will become and remain a dry seed wasting its life away, a fossil, a mummy, or be at least a colorless cellar plant, a limb with dry buds, never expanding, or giving forth their fragrance. Even Pope has said :

"Heaven forming each on other to depend,
A master, or a servant, or a friend,
Bids each on other for assistance call,
Till one man's weakness grows the strength of all.
Want, passions, frailties, closer still ally
The common interest, or endear the tie.
To these we owe true friendship, love sincere,
Each home-felt joy that life inherits here."

If there is any evidence of design in the nature and constitution of man, it is to the effect that he was made for social service and enjoyment ; his great duties are not solitary or selfish ; his highest pleasures are those that he communicates or shares with others. And what a grand and glorious light do the revelations of heaven throw upon this theme ! The mansions above are the

home of the blessed ; the sanctified and saved are the great *household* of faith ; the great assembly of the just is the *family* of God. Heaven is the communion of holy and happy spirits ; there voice blends with voice in common praise ; there soul responds to soul in common purified affection ; there is no solitary blessedness ; there is no selfish joy.

For such a destiny as this, who does not see that God is training us now ? He is doing it in every variety and form of social intercourse. He is bringing before us, and holding up to our view those principles, those necessities, those duties, through which the selfish, isolating, wilful elements of our nature are subjected, and brought under the control of reason, conscience and kindly affections. He is showing us how we must live, if we would live in harmony and peace ; by what laws and rules we must be guided here, if at last we would be one in spirit with the ransomed before the throne.

And this earthly discipline, to him who views it aright, is truly invaluable. A wise man, a truly wise man, will not rebel against it, although he may, at times, be tempted to say, " Good Lord, deliver us," or even to cry out, " Let this cup pass from me." He knows that it is sometimes better for us to meet opposition and endure misapprehension, than be lulled to lethargy by the monotony of applause. He knows that our roughnesses are chafed away sometimes by the roughnesses of others, even as the rough fragments of the beach are rounded to polished pebbles by friction, or what may be called the social discipline of the rocks. He knows that human civilization and social culture and the grand stimulus to self-improvement would be impossible, without those social conditions which involve the meeting and mutual operation, and

perhaps collision, of social qualities. He knows that unless we have been disciplined to terms of association, we cannot associate, unless by contact with others we learn to restrain ourselves and know our own place, we shall be like a superfluous cog in the wheel, or a discord in the general harmony.

But the highest virtues of heaven find their nursery on earth in the field of our social relations. The noblest lessons that can be imprinted upon the soul may be learned under the divine tuition amid scenes of social intercourse. Here we learn to love, pity, forbear and forgive. Here we learn to welcome self-denial for others, to anticipate their wants, to guard their steps, to pray for their welfare, to esteem their gratitude. We are taught also to recognize our responsibility in their behalf. Isolate men from one another, make hermits of them, and how could there ever be any chance for the record of those great loving and generous deeds that shine through the night of ages like the jewels of time's diadem? Where had been the meekness of Moses, the love of David and Jonathan, the national devotion of Esther, the brotherhood of the early disciples, the fidelity of the martyrs sealing for others their faith with their blood, or the missionary zeal that with loftiest heroism, has gone down the deep, dark mine of heathenism to rescue those exposed to perish? Nay! taking a lower level—who would ever have read with such a thrill of admiring wonder the noble deeds of patriarchs and philanthropists, the self-devotion of a Regulus, a Wilkenreid, a Tell, a Gustavus Adolphus, a Wilberforce, a Howard, or a Washington? God's wisdom is gloriously illustrated by so ordering our lot, that the highest elements of our spiritual education are brought home to our own doors, so that he who would

learn the lessons of forbearance, charity, and generous self-denial, need seek them not afar, where academic halls invite the favored few ; not in senates, where giant minds contest the palm of eloquence ; not on the world's battle-fields, where genius and valor alone can attain distinction ; but by the quiet fireside, where filial duty and brotherly and sisterly affection may check lawless passion, and impel to the heroic deeds of a self-subdued and subjugated will ; by the very way-side of our pilgrim-path, where we may take a brother's hand with the outgushing sympathies of fraternal affection ; amid the common walks of every day life, where we may endure wrong without a murmur and return good for evil ; in our own lowly or limited neighborhood, where we may find objects of pity and relief, and win the rich blessings of those that were ready to perish.

We are in our school-room. The text-book of social duty is thrown open before us, and the finger of the Great Teacher is pointing out the lines. Here we are to learn to curb self-will, to exercise self-denial, to take into view the wants and claims of friends, neighbors and the whole human race. The work of ministering angels is before us, and we may learn it if we will. How, if we spurn text-book and Teacher, can we avoid the doom foreshadowed in the sentence, "He that is unfaithful in that which is least, will be also unfaithful in much?"

XXXIII.

INFLUENCE.

“He being dead, yet speaketh.”—HEB. xi. 4.

NO error is more common among men than that which is committed by a false estimate of moral forces. Whatever is material and palpable arrests attention, but that which is voiceless and unseen, eludes notice. The lightning is more demonstrative than the sunbeam, and the tornado than the falling dew. Yet, it would be a great mistake to judge them by the degree in which they are calculated to arrest attention. And so also the motives and agencies that shape human action and human life, and extend to the moulding of the destiny of nations, are slighted by the materialistic philosopher as unworthy of scrutiny. He recognises the volcano ; he respects the earthquake ; he concedes the importance of mountain and valley, river and lake, forest and prairie ; but the unseen agencies of thought and emotion, the elements of moral truth, fail to attract his gaze. He sifts the sands of history, but the subtlest and yet most powerful elements elude his search. He retains the quartz pebbles, but loses the golden grains of truth. His philosophy is the sieve of the Danaïdæ.

Yet all around us extends that moral world, invisible to the outward eye, which concerns us more deeply than

soil or climate. The atmosphere which pervades it is influence, and it is not of less importance to the soul than air is to the lungs. It may be laden with fragrance ; or charged with deadly miasma ; it may bear the healing dews upon its wing, or it may sweep over us in blasts deadly as the Simoon of the desert.

To the student of history, noting generation after generation passing off the stage, it is singular to observe how they are all linked together, so that no biography of character is, or can be perfectly complete, which does not recognise in it the shaping elements that have come down from distant ages, or been derived from distant lands. Society reaching back to the fall in Eden has a strange unity, and may be compared to a living organism of which influence is the life-blood. Popular opinion may be compared to the heart, which receives its tribute, through the arteries and veins of the social system, from the very extremities, and sends it forth pulsating to find its way to the remotest portions and the least conspicuous members of the whole. There is constant change, but nothing is lost. Every drop is gathered up and helps compose the aggregate.

There is no fact more obvious to one who observes what passes around him, than the power of influence. It is a power working unseen, but producing surprising results. It works in a sphere susceptible oftentimes of deep and lasting impression ; it fashions opinion ; it moulds character ; it gives shape to the career and destiny of men and nations. On influences, seemingly unimportant, and sometimes exercised without design, great events in the world's history have been poised. In the moral world there is something analogous to what we see in the physical, when the change in direction of a few

pounds pressure on its helm, guides a vessel to the desired haven, or sends it shattered upon the rocks. The final character and doom of man are determined, like the lines on the daguerreotype plate, by influences as subtle and impalpable oftentimes as those of a pencil of light. A single word, unwisely spoken, has had a history as fatal as that of the rash shout that startled the toppling avalanche from its poise and hurried it down in ruinous crash to entomb a village. The impulse of a moment has changed the complexion of a life. A mother's tears, not improbably robbed the ocean of a victim, and saved to us a Washington. The martial inspiration derived from Homer's pages, sent Alexander forth to the conquest of the world. Cæsar's ambition was fired from reading and envying the life of the Macedonian. Napoleon's plaything while a boy was a cannon. Who does not contrast great results with feeble causes, when reading Doddridge's "Rise and Progress," he is reminded that the author was taught by his mother the stories of the Bible, before he could read, from the painting of Sacred Scenes on the Dutch tiles of the chimney?

Just as a breath will obscure the polished mirror, so a thought will obscure the lustre of character. As a floating atom entering the eye of the body, will blind it, so a floating atom of thought may injure or destroy the soul's vision of heaven.

But not less striking is the fact that this influence perpetuates itself. It is often the seed of a most magnificent or a most lamentable harvest. Even if counteracted, its modifying effect is not lost. Like forces uniting at an angle, it and that which comes into collision with it, are both affected. We see this abundantly illustrated in the history of philosophical speculation as well as in human

biography. The tributary is lost in the main stream, but it communicates its volume and some of its peculiarities. Two commingled influences yet live in their compound result.

There is an important sense, in which it may be said that every man is immortal, even on earth. That which constitutes the essential element of his active uselessness, or his active mischief—his influence—never dies. It vanishes from view. It becomes impalpable. It is swallowed up in the great social aggregate, like the rivulet in the river, or absorbed like the dew in the mists and vapors ; but it does not, it cannot perish. It survives all the personal fortunes of the individual from whom it emanates on earth ; it outlasts the monument, however enduring, that is raised over his dust. When the eye is closed to its last sleep, and the hands are folded to their last rest, it may still be said of their former possessor, “ he being dead, yet speaketh.”

It is one thing to write a man's biography, closing it at the moment when the group of mourners separate around his grave ; it is quite another to write its continuation from that point, for the last may be infinitely the most important, most identified with the destiny of the race. Then he begins to speak and act through his influence alone. That has gone forth through example, opinions, words and looks, thenceforth disencumbered of all mortal hindrance, to work directly, with an unearthly, spiritual activity, on the minds and hearts of survivors. If traces its image there. It shapes the plan, decides the wavering purpose, lures to the forbidden path, or utters the word of remonstrance—the timely warning. It lives no longer in a single breast, but in the hearts of all that it ever reached, and when they drop away and disappear,

it still survives, transmitted to others from generation to generation, transmigrating incorruptible from life to life, and in ever-expanding circles, affecting more widely all the influences, kindred or adverse, with which it comes in contact, and all the lives which it may help to mould.

This may seem to us, amid the every-day materialism of our earthly course, almost like romance, the extravagance of imagination, revelling amid bare possibilities. And yet it is sober fact ; it is stern reality. The influence we exert—no matter how humble our sphere—is no mere fancy, no mythic creation ; and it is almost the only important thing that we can leave behind us on earth. Thenceforth and forever, it becomes a power for good or evil, working through the thoughts and deeds of survivors, and working with a continuousness and energy that can never grow weary, that will never sleep, or cease to work. That influence has all the intense and unwearied activity of a disembodied spirit. It knows nothing of our mortal frailty, cramped and hampered by material obstacles, and exhausted by fatigue. It never grows old. It never knows wrinkles or grey hairs. Three-score years and ten cannot measure even the childhood of its being. The age of a Methusaleh is ephemeral by the side of it. We may not be able to trace distinctly its sphere of activity, but we know that it has one. It has a life that is indestructible and eternal. It lives in the lives it has touched and moulded, in the opinions that bear its imprint, in the great causes of selfishness or philanthropy, of sin or godliness, with the current of which it has mingled its tributary rills. The missionary carries it with him from the hearthstone of a pious home to the banks of the Ganges, or the Islands of the Sea. The enterprising pioneer transports it afar to the bosom of the wilderness.

Its scattered germs spring up amidst Greenland's snows, or under tropic suns. It goes with the statesman to the senate, with the preacher to the pulpit, with the words that types multiply to ten thousand homes.

There have lived men, intellectually or morally eminent, whose influence we are able in some feeble and imperfect measure to trace. We can mark it along the track of the world's history, in national development, social reform, and intellectual revolution. Of all the great and good that lived in the infancy of time, and whose names and examples have been preserved, it may be said emphatically, that "they being dead, yet speak." Abel still teaches us, as generations before us. The voice of the Patriarchs comes down to our day, and the lessons of their experience are ringing in our ears. Joseph, and Moses, and Joshua, and Samuel are holding up before our eyes today the testimony which God called them to bear to his providence and grace. Solomon's Proverbs outlived his temple, and can never perish. Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and Daniel still prophecy for us. The influence of apostles, evangelists, teachers, martyrs, is felt more and more widely as generations pass away, and is spreading still, and shall spread till it reaches every spot which the foot of man hath trod. The poor widow with her two mites has been preaching charity for eighteen centuries, and is preaching yet. The good Samaritan, by his spiritual lineage, is still binding up wounds, and caring for the wretched by a thousand hands that his spirit guides. The grateful penitent on whom the Saviour bestowed the eulogy, "She hath done what she could," has won countless treasures for Christ's anointing; more precious, by far than the alabaster box of precious ointment.

We can trace the influence of the old Greek philoso-

phers in the shaping of systems that have affected the prospects of nations. Plato speaks still in the modifying influence which his speculations exerted upon the early development of Christian truth. Aristotle, when more than a thousand years had passed over his grave, was still moulding the scholastic thought of Europe, and teaching the minds that from the chairs of the universities were to teach the world. Zeno and Epicurus seem to rise out of their graves to call distant generations still to sit at their feet. So, too, the great and eloquent Chrysostom preached to admiring thousands; but he had a larger audience when centuries after his exile and hardships, thousands whom he had never seen caught up his words, and echoed them forth on a broader stage. Augustine exerted, while he mingled with human affairs in person, a powerful influence; but we forget his episcopal dignity when we think of Charlemagne reading his writings amid the splendor of his court, or Huss poring over them in his study, or Luther exploring them in his cell.

And as it is with the good, so it is with bad men. The poisonous streams of their influence roll on to swell the great current of the world's thought, and mingle death with its waves. How much that was pure and holy has thus been neutralized! How it makes us shudder to think of the mischief originated by the blasphemer, the swearer, the Sabbath-breaker, the libertine, whose examples have lured others to the brink of Hell, or have constituted them their successors, to snatch the flag of wickedness from their dying grasp and wave it still! Who is not appalled when he attempts to trace the baneful influence of parental faithlessness or vice, cursing a whole household, or of social profligacy, contaminating whole groups with the infection or moral pollution?

When Tom Paine's bones, transported to England by Cobbett as a speculation, were mouldering in the custom-house, too poor to pay the duty, and when at last they were thrown overboard into the sea, his influence, the influence not merely of his writings, but of his character, was poisoning the whole neighborhood of his former residence, and spreading more and more widely on both sides of the Atlantic. The great villains of other days who sought glory and power by sacrificing nations to their ambition—the Alexanders, Cæsars, and Napoleons of all ages—whom some men for their mere genius or valor would almost deify—have not yet become cyphers in the sphere of influence. They are still perverting other minds, or firing them by a false ambition. Their names and examples are drifted on, like thistle down in the wind, to distant lands and ages, to sow in ever new fields the seed that shall multiply and perpetuate the distant curse.

But, perhaps, among all the illustrations of the widening and ever-extending sphere of influence, none is more striking than that which is afforded by the history of literature. Here, indeed, we sometimes find "fact stranger than fiction." It seems like romance to trace from mind to mind, and from age to age, the impulse of a thought, or a cluster of thoughts, which were almost neglected in their own day. I wonder that among all our antiquarian and genealogical students there have been so few who have bethought themselves to trace the strange lineage of books. In the department of philosophy, indeed, something has been done, and along the line of metaphysical research and development we may trace the influence of mind upon mind, theory upon theory, and from Plato down to Sir William Hamilton

or Mansel ; through nominalists and realists ; Roscelin, Abelard, and the schoolmen ; Bacon, Locke, and Leibnitz ; Kant, Berkeley, and Hume ; Reid, Stewart, Jacobi, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, we may note the successive links of a connected chain that stretches over centuries.

But in the religious world, the exploration has been far more imperfect. And yet even here there are some striking facts that thrust themselves almost upon our notice. There is many a book like Butler's "Analogy," or Pascal's "Thoughts," or Baxter's "Call," or "Pilgrim's Progress," or others of less fame, that has associated with its history strange stories of its influence. A polluted literature carries us into scenes of crime, and in revels and violence, in courts and prisons we trace the progress of its poisonous influence.

A single book has linked different generations together. It has spanned ages with its arch of thought ; it has bridged the centuries so that others have come down to us, or we have gone back to them ; and we have thus been permitted to commune with the gifted minds of the past, and receive the impulse of their earnest thoughts. Sometimes, after a lapse of ages, a book has been dug up, as it were, out of old libraries—the fossil strata of literature—and has been made, like Paleario's little book, to do fresh service in the cause of truth or the conflict with error. It has been waked from the sleep of centuries to speak in fresh tones, even if in quaint speech, with the authority of a living prophet.

Towards the close of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, two hundred and fifty years or more since, when Raleigh was exploring the New World, and Bacon was yet an aspirant on the track that led to fame, an obscure Puritan minister, named Edmund Bunny, fell in with a work writ-

ten by the Jesuit Parsons, which had some good things in it. He thought them too good to be lost ; so he took the book, cut the popery out of it, recast it after another pattern, and gave it to the printer. It went abroad, and, among others, two men, who afterward became eminent nonconformist ministers, were seriously impressed by its perusal. An old torn copy strayed away into an humble cottage of Shropshire, and fell into the hands of a poor man who lent it to Richard Baxter's father. Richard was then a boy of fifteen years, but the book came in his way and he read it, and it pleased God to make it the means of awakening his soul, and leading him to feel the inexpressible importance of eternal things. From that hour he began a new life, and in his writings, throughout a toilsome career, crowned with glorious revivals, we see reproduced the pungency, point, and fervor of that old book known as "Bunny's Resolution." Who that has ever read the "Saint's Rest," or traced the ceaseless activity of Baxter's life, will venture to compute the results which flowed from the reading of that old torn book which the cottager lent to Baxter's father.

Baxter died in 1691 ; but among the "live books" he left behind him was his "Call to the Unconverted," of which 20,000 copies are said to have been sold in a single year. Such was the harvest that was to furnish seed for new harvests on fields that are unexhausted yet.

About twenty-five summers had passed over Baxter's grave when some of his books,—one of them the "Call to the Unconverted," so it is said,—fell into the hands of a young student at St. Alban's. That student was Philip Doddridge, and the reading of Baxter led to his conversion. He became the faithful and successful pastor of the church in Northampton ; educated in his seminary

several young men for the ministry ; wrote his " Family Expositor," which has gone into tens of thousands of families ; composed not a few of the sweetest hymns that for a century have been sung in Christian sanctuaries, and which we are singing still ; besides producing his treatise on " The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul"—a book which in German, French, and other European, as well as in heathen languages, has preached to millions and resulted in the conversion of hundreds and of thousands.

Thirty-three years after Doddridge died, a copy of this book found its way to the table of Mr. Unwin, a correspondent of Cowper. A young English statesman, just setting out on his journey to Southern France, and in want of a book, took it up, and asked its character. " One of the best books ever written," replied his companion, Milner ; " let us take it with us, and read it on our journey." The young man readily consented, and the reading of that book made upon his mind impressions which were never effaced. He began to examine the Bible for himself, and the result was that he was led to consecrate his life to the service of Christ. That young man was William Wilberforce, whose name is forever associated with the legislative reforms and philanthropy of the English nation, the abolition of the slave trade and the introduction of Christianity into India ; and whose devoted piety led him to write his " Practical View of Christianity," a work which has travelled around the globe, and been read alike on the banks of the Ganges and the Mississippi ; of which more than one hundred editions have been published, and which the great statesman Edmund Burke spent the two last days of his life in reading, declaring that he had derived much comfort

from it, and if he lived, would thank its author for having sent such a book into the world.

The volume had been published but a few months when it found its way to the Isle of Wight, and fell into the hands of a young curate, to whom it had been sent by a college friend—a thoughtless candidate for the ministry—with the request that he would read it, and tell him what he must say about it. He began to read, and could not lay down the book till he had read it through. A decided change was wrought in his views of divine truth, and he declared: “I feel it a debt of gratitude which I owe to God and man, to say, that to the unsought and unexpected introduction of Mr. Wilberforce’s book, I owe, through God’s mercy, the first sacred impression which I ever received as to the spiritual nature of the Gospel System.”

That young curate was Legh Richmond, and his works will live, and he being dead, will continue to speak, as long as there is a heart to be moved by the simple story of “The Poor African,” or “The Dairyman’s Daughter.”

But more than this; Wilberforce’s book crossed the Tweed, and fell into the hands of a young Scotch clergyman, absorbed in scientific pursuits, and oblivious of the sacred responsibilities of his calling; a man nevertheless of princely gifts, of whom that shrewd judge Andrew Fuller said, that “if he would throw aside his notes and preach *extempore*, he might be king of Scotland.” He was learned, eloquent, ambitious, and worldly, but the Providence that designed him for higher service brought him low on the bed of sickness, and after months of weary confinement to his room, the “Practical View” fell into his hands. This event proved the turning-point in his career; and when Dr. Chalmers told the story of his conversion

to God, he declared that Mr. Wilberforce's book brought on "a great revolution in all his opinions about Christianity," and that he "experienced a very great transition of sentiment in consequence of reading his work." The life of Dr. Chalmers was shaped anew by that book. It made another man of him; it consecrated his princely intellect to the cause of evangelical truth; it fitted him to speak forth in trumpet tones to Christendom, and to become the Moses of the Exodus of the Free Church of Scotland from its bondage to State patronage and control.

But the book that gave a new shaping to his career crossed the Atlantic. It rekindled the flame of expiring devotion in the Episcopal Church of Virginia, and the evangelical character and labors of Bishops White, and Madison, and Mead cannot be depicted except with Wilberforce's book in full view in the background. Here we pause. But the stream, the fountain head of which was in the old torn copy of "Bunny's Resolution," and which was swelled by the tributaries of Baxter's "Call," and Doddridge's "Rise and Progress," and Wilberforce's "Practical View," and Legh Richmond's "Dairyman's Daughter," does not pause. It is flowing still, and nothing shall arrest its rising tide and swelling current till the earth is covered with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

It is only rarely that we can attain that historic elevation from which we are enabled with our feeble vision to look down and trace the streams of influence winding their way in silver light. Many of them are hidden from view as they course along through overshadowed marsh or obscure valleys beyond the distant hills. But they are flowing, although unseen, wherever thought finds

expression or there are hearts to be impressed. The rill has its mission as well as the river ; the dew-drop as well as the mighty Amazon. Proper influence in the lower circle is as real and as essential as that which is exerted in senates and cabinet councils. We may in vain essay to trace its path, but to the eye of heaven it may be like the stream that winds its way through desert sands and clothes its banks with herbage and with flowers. But sometimes we can trace it. A mother's prayers and tears, sisterly fidelity, parental example, filial piety ; how often have these been fountains of blessing to the household ; how often have they ministered strength to the tempted, or filled the heart of the weary pilgrim with joy, or proved the sources of streams that have borne down a tide of blessing to after generations ! The records of humble life, unread by the great world, are filled with illustrations of the power of influence. It is felt by "village Hampdens" and "mute, inglorious Miltons." It issues forth from forest sanctuaries, and district schoolrooms, and cottage firesides. The history of a household, properly written, would be a commentary on the plastic power of influence derived from precept and example.

No thoughtful man can afford to overlook or disregard facts like these. We live in a world where unseen elements are giving shape to human character and human destiny ; where we are forever receiving and giving off impressions that will still endure when the chiselled lines of the granite have crumbled, and the headstones of our own graves shall have claimed kindred with the dust they once commemorated. Is it not a solemn world to live in ? Is it not a fearful responsibility that rests upon us ? And how can that responsibility be evaded ?

We cannot divest ourselves of influence, however obscure our sphere, and we cannot escape from it except by going out of the world. It is as essential to our social life as the air we breathe. We are integral parts of the social organism. The blood that flows through the veins of a single member circulates abroad till it has, directly or indirectly, been felt in the entire system.

Who, then, can fail to see and confess the importance of individual influence—of that which we exert now, and that which will survive our departure from earth? For that influence we are responsible. Every day we are determining what it shall be. It cannot be simply neutral; it must of necessity be for good or evil. It must be on the side of God or against Him. It must commend or discountenance religion. And is it of no account if our influence may contribute to decide some wavering mind in its consideration of the great question that concerns its final destiny? Who would not pray for wisdom to enable him to speak those words and set that example which shall guide others to the living fountain, to the foot of the cross, to a throne of grace? Who, knowing that his influence will live on—"a life beyond life"—and endure in some form, however imperceptible to *human* scrutiny, for ages to come, will not confess to himself the imperative importance of guarding that influence from all that is contaminating, and sending it forth, like a tireless and white-robed angel, on its interminable mission of charity and blessing?

XXXIV.

THE TONGUE.

“Death and life are in the power of the tongue.”—PROV. xviii. 21.

AMONG the means of influence possessed by men, not the least worthy of our attention is the power of the tongue. If it were only properly controlled and employed, what a different face the world would wear! If only those words were spoken that should be, what a vast change would come over these scenes of human society—a change such as would bring with it all that we could ask to bless our sin-cursed world, and change the moral waste to an Eden. Right words, the fruit of right thoughts, would be accompanied by right deeds. They would breathe abroad an atmosphere of peace and purity. They would be employed to repress the very beginnings of evil. They would meet the first symptoms of budding iniquity with indignant rebuke.

Such a result we are bound to seek. As Christians we can aim at nothing short of it.

What a wonderful faculty is that of human speech! It can give form and expression to each thought of the mind and each feeling of the heart. It can so shape it into articulate utterance, so embody it, that it can take its way directly into the soul of another, there confronting other thoughts or mingling with them, like one do-

mesticated at a strange fireside. It gives a sort of corporeal existence to the invisible, impalpable thought, clothes its spiritual substance, as it were, with flesh and bones, gives it such a personal being and identity, that its lineaments and features stand out as if on the painter's canvas, so that when we have met it once we can recognize it again.

Ancient fable tells us of a certain monster known by the name of Proteus. He had the faculty of assuming any shape at will. He might be a tree or a stone, a serpent or a dove, a lion or a lamb, and from each of these or a thousand other forms he could easily and at once pass to another as he chose.

Such a fable, however, is realized in the tongue. It can give utterance to thoughts as various as the objects that meet our eyes. It can be the dove or the serpent, the eagle or the jackal. It can bless or curse. It can whisper slander or utter praise. It can speak in tones of kindness, or send forth the ravings of bitter and vindictive passion. It can vent the oath, or pour out the homage of devout and humble prayer. It can set before us the sublimest truths of heaven, or utter the blasphemies of the world of woe. It can carry to other hearts the sympathy of our own, or mix in their cup of anguish new dregs of bitterness. It can speak in the sufferer's ear in tones that seem like heavenly music, or give back sounds echoed as it were from the desperation of fiends. It can throw a holy charm around the hour of social converse, or it can poison peace by the harshness of its expressions. Now it becomes a sort of angel guide leading us by some lofty track of thought up to the throne, and again it can whisper in our ear the diabolical suggestions of fallen spirits. It can assume by turns every person-

ality, and portray before us every form of character. It can cherish purity or vileness ; fan the fire of love or the flames of discord ; speak words that are like drawn swords, or such as find their emblem in the olive leaf. Who does not know, who has not felt, the power of the tongue,—in the social circle, in the public assembly, in the scenes of business, pleasure or devotion. I know that the power of speech is various with different individuals. Some have it to a greater and others to a less degree. In some cases it has been trained to what seems an almost superhuman effort. It can hold crowds enchanted upon a breath. It can charm them with a whisper. It can hush the thronged audience-room till it is silent as the grave, and then again carry the multitude away by a resistless tide of sympathy till there outbursts the long, loud shout of applause. The tongue of Demosthenes—how it ruled the fierce democracy of Athens, and swayed them above all the gold of Philip ! The eloquence of Cicero—how it carried back the decaying patrician pride of Rome to the days of her early and stern severity, or almost charmed it into forgetfulness of its degeneracy and disgrace ! The tongue of Peter the Hermit preaching through Europe the crusade of the Middle Ages, till the leaven of his enthusiasm pervaded the mass of the nations, and they cried responsive as with one loud shout, “ God wills it,” and rushed madly and blindly to cover the hills of Palestine with their bleaching bones,—Whitefield’s power of speech that could melt Franklin’s cold, calculating utilitarianism into the flow of impulsive generosity, or transport the polished, courtly, critical Chesterfield, till, beside himself and carried away by the spirit of the scene he cried out with shuddering alarm—the eloquence of our own Henry, whose words communicated their

electric shock to other minds and decided the question that ushered in the scenes of the Revolution—these all illustrate the strange power which God has sometimes given to the tongue of man. It is a wonderful, a fearfully wonderful gift!

But you may say all do not possess it. In fact, few do. It is rarely bestowed. But then, if you will consider it, the great feats of the power of speech on the public theatre, are but rare and transient things. They come once in an age. They are oftener remembered for what they were, than for what they have accomplished. They were phenomena out of the wonted course of things. They rose above the daily routine of life like mountain summits, and, like them, too, above the sphere of common appreciation. The great work that changes society, remolds the nations, renews the heart, is going on far below, around the mountain's base. The tongue, in the house and by the way, in the store, the office, the saloon, the parlor : in the schoolroom and by the domestic hearth, is doing a work far mightier than it is doing in the crowded court room, or in legislative halls, or even in the pulpit. It speaks to fewer hearers perhaps, but infinitely oftener and it is heard and comprehended better. It is not addressed to the listless. Its eloquence is not wasted. It is not above the capacity of the hearer. It does not flow in rounded periods or elaborate sentences it is true, but its idiomatic phraseology is not the less forcible for all that. Each word tells. It provokes an answer. It is a link in a conversation that fuses minds together. One comment by the fireside may neutralize the effect of a sermon. One slighting, jesting remark may have force enough to break off the truth-tipped point of an arrow of conviction and send a soul to hell.

Review your own experience. What do you remember best? What has impressed you most? In few instances the preacher's words, or the conclusions of the eloquent moralist. It is the words you heard in ordinary conversation, from the lips of a friend or associate, addressed to few ears beside your own—perhaps to yours only. The voices of loved ones in your early home, that spoke the lessons of parental anxiety, or brotherly or sisterly affection; the jests, or boasts, or opinions of some older or more experienced companion; perhaps the foul-mouthed vulgarity of abandoned men; perhaps the witticisms or wild fancies of gay and reckless revellers; perhaps the short sentence that whispered in your ear, in warning tones, the epitomized experience of a lifetime; perhaps the sneer, half hypocritic, half malicious, that drew you to regard duty, and truth, and holiness, as hateful, obsolete notions, just fit for a dying man, or a heartless ascetic; perhaps the words that spoke the creed of Mammon, or the liturgy of his worshippers; perhaps those that expressed the low and sordid morality of the worldling; or it may be something better than these,—the kind counsel of the true friend, who pointed out a better path of life;—these, and things like these, are what the mind retains. They fasten on it with a grasp that outlasts every other. Only the last day will reveal to us the power of a word—the power of a single utterance. To tell what a word has done, what a word may do, might excite your incredulity. It is the seed of a harvest, the pivot on which a life has revolved, the motto and watchword of an eternal existence.

Can you tell how the career of men is shaped even for time? How often is it done by words! A sailor's yarn makes a Nelson or a Paul Jones. The fashionable

nonsense and lofty airs of an assuming fop brings out miniature Nashes, Brummels, and D'Orsays in abundance. Boasts of an easy conscience and lax morality turn the heads of heedless youth, and make them knaves or sharpers before they are men. Sacred words, shaped to profanation and blasphemy by vile men, distort the moral image of the soul for time and eternity. The Judgment will reveal how a sentence, a word, gave the cast to its destiny. A few words from President Dwight secured to American science the honored name of Silliman. The remonstrance of an idle classmate saying to Paley—" *It is a sin for you to be idle ; you have talent, you can do something in the world ; I cannot,*" gave shape to the life that procured us the "Natural Theology" and "Evidences of Christianity." McCheyne, of Scotland, was once passing a foundry, and stopped to gaze on the bright glow of the furnace. He turned to the man that fed it, and said : "Does that fire mind you of any thing?" That was all, and he went his way ; but the man he addressed never rested till he had heeded the admonition to "flee from the wrath to come." Henry II. of England let drop in hasty passion a few words that resulted in the murder of the Archbishop Thomas à Becket. That deed convulsed all England, and affected its condition for centuries.

But it is needless to recapitulate illustrations of the truth. If character has influence, words are its representatives. A whole character may be imprinted on a sentence, and that sentence, like a stereotyped plate, may go on imprinting its image, and reproducing itself from day to day, from age to age. In one sense a word spoken never dies. Like our influence, and a part of it, it lives on to the judgment. As the thunder among the moun-

tains will roll on from crag to crag, verberating and reverberating to the last, so the word spoken will echo on and on, till its tone is mingled with the blast of that trumpet that shall awake the dead. The heart of each that hears it is a sounding-board to transmit its tones.

Such, then, is the power of words. They are thoughts incorporated ; fitted for active service, going out armed to their work, bearing the sword or the olive leaf, winning or assaulting, attacking or repelling, all they meet. We marshal them, and they are a mighty host. Single, they may be Goliahs ; united and multiplied, they may be a phalanx.

Think how many words must go to make up the utterance of a life ; how every one, even the idle word for which we are to account in the judgment, makes and leaves its impression ; how it essays to stamp some feature or feeling of our hearts upon others' experience ; and then estimate, if you can, the power of words ! It defies computation. We might better attempt to count the sands on the seashore. We might as well try to number the raindrops. Our words are the verbal image of ourselves. If we could arrest them and look them in the face, we should see ourselves reflected in a mirror, and perhaps be forced to blush. How many daguerreotypes of our inner being have we thus cast off, by which those that gaze on them are changed into the same image ! Surely the power of speech is wonderful, fearfully wonderful, as an element of probation. The inference of our responsibility for it then is plain.

I need scarcely say that power and responsibility are justly proportioned to each other. The degree of the first is the measure of the last. The man of ten talents has a more fearful account to render than the possessor

of five, or two, or one. For all that we have, little or much, we are held responsible to the same high tribunal. For everything that confers influence, for everything that can be used for God or perverted to evil, for everything by which we may bless or curse the world, honor or dishonor God, we must be held to a strict account.

The power of speech and the use we make of it, will not, cannot, therefore, be overlooked. It is a talent, and not a mean or trivial one, which we all possess. We may have it indeed in different degrees. In one case it may be rough and unwieldy, in another it may be as the polished Damascus blade. But whether it be like the beam of Goliath's spear, or only as the pebble-stone out of the brook, in either case it is summoned to do service for God. We hold it in trust. We are to use it as stewards who are to give account. It is capital on which we are to trade for God, for eternity. Not one fraction or farthing of it may be wasted or misemployed. This is, indeed, a high standard, but it is the true one. Devise any other if you can. Surely you will not class yourself with the number of those reprobated by inspiration as "fools," who say, "Our tongue is our own, who is Lord over us?" You will not presume to contradict Christ when he says, "by thy words thou shalt be justified and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." You will not presume to annul that eternal enactment, "for every idle word that men speak, they shall give account in the day of judgment." You must admit, to the full, your responsibility for the use you make of your tongue.

How then shall it be employed?

Not at random. There is verily such a thing as a duty of silence. In some cases we may serve God and our neighbor best by saying nothing. We can be altogether

the most useful and serviceable by "holding our tongue." This may seem to some a very simple thing and of easy attainment, and in some cases it may be. But in others it is more arduous. To know when we ought to be silent, and to act on our knowledge, is a great thing. Some lack the first, and some the last, and some both. But there is a power in silence that is most expressive to approve or condemn.

John Jay, when ambassador to France, was once in a company of infidels at Paris. They talked on recklessly, venting their spite at the Bible. Jay was silent. It troubled them. He did not pronounce their shibboleth. They could not go on while that grave, just, true man sat there a silent spectator, a sort of solemn judge, riveting at last their gaze. No wonder his bearing forced them to speak, and when they asked, as if to relieve themselves of their confusion and provoke his acquiescence, "Do you believe in Jesus Christ?" his silence had prepared the way for his confusing and confounding answer, "I do, and I thank God that I do." He was silent at the right time, and spoke at the right time, and when he spoke said the right thing.

In other cases silence might justly be construed into acquiescence. There are times when we are called upon to speak. It requires study and discretion to know when these occasions arise, and to know *what* to speak. Much mischief may be done by the wrong word: much good by the right one. The celebrated Chancellor of the University of Paris, John Gerson, than whom an abler man was not to be found among the thinkers of his century, on writing out advice for a friend with whom he might, if he had chosen, have communicated orally, gave as a reason, that rarely had he ever entered into a lengthened

conversation, but upon review he discovered that he had said something that he regretted and would wish recalled.

There are some persons whose tongues seem to have solved the puzzling problem of perpetual motion. Like the clapper of a windmill, the lightest breath will disturb their equilibrium.

In such cases the conversation may well be expected to be a very shallow stream. Instead of speaking what they have to say, and then like the Sandwich Islander, feeling what he wrote, "that thought is done," they string word upon word, until by endless repetition they exhaust at once the patience of the hearer and their own credit for sense. Indeed any other sounds may answer as well as those they utter, and they compare, not creditably to themselves, with him of whom the poet says :

"He went a whistling for the want of thought."

There was some significance in that lesson of the old Philosopher, who insisted that his pupils should first attain that preliminary of wisdom, the power of silence. Before they asked a question they must learn to listen. It involved one of the greatest pieces of self-mastery—the mastery of the tongue. To converse well—letting alone the matter of duty, we must learn when to be silent.

Cowper never wrote a truer thing than when he said,

"Words learned by rote a parrot may rehearse
But talking is not always to converse ;
Not more distinct from harmony divine,
The constant creaking of a country sign."

This leads us to remark again that the tongue should

never be suffered to become the instrument of passion. If anger or envy stir within your heart, stifle it there. You may sometimes smother a fire, that if once suffered to find vent, could not be extinguished by copious streams. A tongue mastered by passion is a terrible thing. It seems as Scripture expresses it, to be literally "set on fire of Hell." It blazes out, as in flames of the pit, with curses and imprecations, oaths and blasphemies. There are tongues to which vulgarity and profanity will not adhere, until passion has prepared them for it. Then they are possessed apparently by the evil one. The wires that move the tongue seem actually worked by his fingers, and we listen to speech which evidently befits such an original.

In some cases again there may be a high degree of earnestness, that is perfectly justifiable, but there are proper limits within which even this should be confined. Cowper was not the only one who could say

"Preserve me from a thing I dread and hate,
A duel in the form of a debate."

Conversation which *ought* to be made, and which *may* be made the charm of social life, should never become its curse. And yet it will be, if evil surmisings or bitter disputings are allowed to change it into the instrument of personal assault, or self-exhibition indulging in taunts, contradictions, reproaches, or assumptions.

There are times indeed, when sin lifts its head, and wrong goes boldly forth, when words ought to be swords unscabbarded, and sentences battalions, when the utterances of truth and soberness should be like those of Paul, when he made the guilty Felix tremble on his judgment seat. There are times when words should be,

as it were, deeds, every one a blow in defence of trampled justice, and every man then who wavers or withholds his utterance, or sells his tongue to silence, is guilty of treason to the majesty of truth. It had better be cut out than left to be guilty of such ignominious dereliction of duty. The delinquent might well imprecate upon it the curse that David invited, should he become unfaithful to the sacred city, that it might "cleave to the roof of his mouth."

But while the tongue is not to be made the instrument of passion, it should be the organ of kindness and charity. What a power of blessing is stored up in it! Kind words are the sweetest music. There is something heavenly in their tone. In the jar and tumult of surrounding passion, they seem to whisper like Jesus on the troubled sea, "Peace be still." The burdened heart forgets its load. The fevered sufferer loses something of his restlessness, and feels the charm of the magic utterance. The world looks the brighter, and flowers more beautiful, for kind words. The humblest home—the rudest hovel becomes a kind of palace of content. Heaven does not seem so strange a world to us, for angels hover round our hearthstone. And the influence goes abroad with us. As the oil poured on the troubled waters will calm them, inso-much that where they dashed madly in foam, they sink at length to a glassy surface on which heaven is mirrored, so it is with the power of kind words. They hush the agitated and restless social elements to repose, and spread abroad a hallowed influence.

But the tongue may be made an instrument of slander. No one questions the power of malice when it resorts to this weapon. Its method then compares with an open public charge, as an assassin does with a soldier in the

ranks on the open field. It is an enemy that stabs in the dark. It is a foe shooting from behind a hedge. It is an Indian darting his tomahawk at a sleeping victim. A word that secretly assails another's character is a blast of death. Though uttered in a breath, it is the breath of a miasma.

Slander is the tongue's meanest work—both cowardly and impure. If you dip your hands in filth, to fling it at another, you pollute your hands to stain his dress, and only make yourself the more contemptible of the two; and if you use the tongue instead of the fingers, it only transfers the outward disgrace to the soul within.

And as to the use of vile language, which to some seems congenial, it is a sin not only against God, but against the tongue itself. When this is so employed, it must be because all true and pure taste is corrupted, for the tongue was never given to relish foul words, any more than vile food. And it should be borne in mind that, when it is so perverted, it is one of the most efficient agents of evil, let loose on earth. A foul or obscene word, though clothed about with elegant paragraphs, is an apostle of depravity. It may enter the heart in disguise, but it is as Satan entered into Eden to pollute and destroy. A serpent lurks under the angel robes of eloquent expression. Many is the mind into which the tongue of the vile man has introduced some foul image, that has left a serpent's trail behind it, as it crawled in and coiled itself about the heart's core, folding it like a guardian demon—not angel—for final doom.

But preëminently the tongue should be consecrated; it should be "Holiness to the Lord." The words that we speak should be words of truth and soberness. Liberty of speech is a noble privilege, but God gives no liberty

to speak the teachings of sin. Our freedom is linked with accountability. Speak as you will, but remember you are to be judged.

How much holy work, if the tongue was a consecrated thing, might be done for God by it! Not in the pulpit only; or in the hall of debate, or on the lecturer's platform, or in the courts of justice, but in the daily walks of life, in humble scenes, by the fireside, in the social circle, in familiar conversation, in confidential intercourse. If the Gospel of Christ dwelt in every heart, and the love of Christ on every tongue, all of us would become evangelists. Our words in the ears of a dying world, would be as the message of a prophet, rich with the peace and hope of heaven. And why should they not be? Why should not yours be an example to others?

Do you not hope at last to be numbered among the angel throng that surround the throne? And if so, how will your tongue be employed? *They* will be clothed in holiness. They will speak the praise and sing the glory of Him who is glorious in holiness. Not an utterance will escape them that might not be whispered in the ear of God, that might not be echoed from world to world, throughout the universe, or which, wherever it might be heard, would not be hailed as pure and blessed.

And shall that tongue on which such an honor waits degrade itself to the vileness and frivolity of earth? Shall it forget its high destiny and bandy words in foolish jest? Shall it—aspiring to an angel's place—act rather a devil's part, and whisper sin, when it is yet to sing “the new song?”

XXXV.

THE POWER OF EXAMPLE.

“Be thou an example.”—1 TIM. iv. 12.

THE power of example is unquestionable. It springs as a necessity from the circumstances of our social condition, and the susceptibilities of human nature. If there was but one man in the world, or if all dwelt apart like hermits in their solitude, example would be a word without meaning. But man is a social being. He has a social nature. It is this that brings us together in families, societies, communities, states, confederations, nations. That cluster of houses which you see afar in the quiet valley, forming a humble village, has a meaning, and furnishes you one definition of man,—as good, certainly, as the famous one of Plato—a gregarious animal, one that loves to live in society, in the neighborhood of others. Such association makes one man with his life, words, deeds, known to his neighbor. These are placed before each as his book is before the student to read and study. They are the book of human nature, and if we turn from every other, we cannot turn from this. It meets us every where, making the whole world our schoolroom, so that in our houses, at our business, in the street, in the public assembly, we are, in spite of ourselves, lessons to one another.

And then another definition of man is that of an imi-

tative animal. What he sees others do, he learns to do himself. This susceptibility to imitation is not the result of reason, or the fruit of consideration. It is, in fact, strongest where reason is weakest, in the child, although it never probably entirely disappears. You may, perhaps, on some occasion when you have been engaged in earnest speech have had your attention called to the little child before you, studying you as a lesson, and perhaps imitating your manner or gesture, or trying to mouth your words.

This imitative faculty, especially in early life, is a kind of necessity of our being. It needs to be most active, then, when we are becoming fitted to the new, strange world around us. Just think what a vast number of sounds a child must learn to imitate, in order to express its wants, and all usually acquired, to the most exact intonation, before it is six years old! Think how many things it has learned to do at that age by means of the power of imitation! What a wonderful susceptibility all this indicates! And it is necessary. Yet what a danger of perversion often accompanies it! As evil is more readily learned than good, so this susceptibility in a false direction is morbidly and precociously active. How quickly a child falling into the evil company of those a little older than itself, learns to be like them; can recite, at a second's notice, all their vulgar slang, all their pet phrases, all their obscene or profane language! Their manners, their gestures, their modes of speech and tone, will sometimes be copied with a surprising accuracy, and a whole company sometimes will so taint one another by the power of example and imitation, that they seem as like as coins struck from the same die. And how fully this holds true with youth gathered in acad-

emies, or colleges, or professional schools, few who have not seen, are able to appreciate. One leading mind will sometimes furnish the example that sets the fashion. It has a power over the others like the sun over the planets; it holds them around it, each in its orbit, like attendant satellites, receiving from the power of its attraction, the law that regulates their motion. There are few minds comparatively of so firm a texture as to resist the influence, and make orbits of their own. You may meet young men, who imagine they are very strong-minded in rising above the puritanical notions of their early training, and who fling off the restraints of common sense, as a madman would his straight-jacket, who have made a mistake just as gross as that of a drowning man who imagined he had learned to swim. or that of one jumping from a church-steeple that he had learned to fly. The poor, pitiable fool becomes the victim of his deluded and deluding fancies. He has become so confused morally by the example of his profligate or reckless associates, that he has not sense enough left to see that instead of being very strong-minded, he is very weak-minded, a piece of wax that every body stamps his seal on, till a thousand confused images, each obliterating all but the fragments of its predecessor, leave him a perfect nondescript, without a single line or angle of character that is sure to last long enough to bear being defined.

And you may see the power of example over this imitative faculty of man in other things. What is fashion, what is the current meaning of the word? Something to imitate, something that is imitated. There are some zones of human society where the highest conception of Omnipotence, or what might be taken for a God, a thing "to be glorified and enjoyed forever," is—fashion. There

are persons who are incarnate lumps of fashion ; within, their thoughts are fashion ; without, their clothes are fashion. Fashion governs them as much as the moon does the tides. And yet fashion is but one result of the power of example. Men do as their fellows do. They dress, speak, think, act by the rules of fashion. One coward's example on the field of battle, one deserter's going over to the foe, has placed a crown on one man's head and torn it from another's ; has, in fact, transferred an empire. If you go into a community or a city where dissipation prevails, the strength of the vice is in the power of example. Men will swear, gamble, drink, carouse, by falling into a society or company with which it is the fashion to do so. Even men without principle of their own, will be restrained by the example of the good. When Lord Peterborough lodged for a season with Fenelon, the piety and virtue of the latter had such effect upon the nobleman that he exclaimed at parting, "If I stay here any longer I shall become a Christian in spite of myself." The example of a pious slave has sometimes been made the means of a master's conversion. Many anecdotes might be given to illustrate the sanctified and effectual influence of holy example.

The daughter of an impenitent mother was about to make a profession of her faith in Christ. It wrought deeply upon the mother's heart. "Well," said she, with tears in her eyes, "I will resist no longer. How can I bear to see my dear child love and read the Scriptures, while I never look into the Bible ; to see her retire and seek God, while I never pray ; to see her going to the Lord's table, while his death is nothing to me !" "Ah !" said she, to the minister who spoke with her of her daughter's intention, wiping her eyes, "yes ; I know she is

right and I am wrong. I have seen her firm under reproach, and patient under provocation, and cheerful in all her sufferings. When in her late illness she was looking for dissolution, heaven stood in her face. O that I were as fit to die! I ought to have taught her, but I am sure she has taught me. How can I bear to see her joining the church of God, and leaving me behind, perhaps forever." From that hour she prayed in earnest that the God of her child would be her God, and soon they were seen walking together in "the way that is everlasting."

It is thus that the example of a holy life or an evil life multiplies itself. We are addressed by it as imitative beings, breathing the atmosphere and catching up the opinions that surround us. Even while we gaze upon it, we feel its transforming power. It is insensibly imprinting its image on our hearts. We become accustomed to it, and if it be hateful, gradually lose our repugnance to it. It is in the study of example that we feel especially the force of Pope's lines :

"Vice is a monster of so frightful mein,
As to be hated needs but to be seen ;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace."

But the power of example is seen still more when we compare it with other sources of influence. It is the most effectual of all preachers. Words are powerful, but "actions speak louder than words." These last are mighty, but example is mightier. The poet has said of words :

"Words are things, and a small drop of ink,
Falling like dew upon a thought, produces
That which makes thousands, perhaps millions, think."

Yet that word will die away on your ear ; that thought will vanish with the closed book. You may forget the one, you may neglect the other. But example cannot so easily be set aside. The logic of a man's life is mightier than the eloquence of speech. He may talk like an angel of the beauty of virtue and the excellence of religion, but if his life is that of a devil, he refutes his own arguments faster than he can bring them forward. And so on the other hand, the life may have an eloquence that preaches beyond the power of language, the excellence and duty of religion. A young man who was once about to be ordained as a Christian minister, stated that at one period of his life he had been nearly betrayed into the principles of infidelity, " but," he added, " there was one argument in favor of Christianity which I could never refute, the consistent conduct of my own father." It was not the words that had been taught him, it was not the arguments of learned men, it was not the weight of authority, it was not the pulpit lessons of the Sabbath, it was *the consistent conduct of his own father* that proved his safeguard. There was a power in parental example from which he could not break away. Home example is something that a child can understand. It is the alphabet of life's spelling-book, that it knows by heart, before it can spell its first word in the primer. The catechism of parental example is far more important and effectual on the young mind, than any composed by great divines or learned scholars, than any that is taught by question and answer. And it is easier learned. There are no hard words in it. It does not need an interpreter. Its doctrines are plain and simple—level to a child's comprehension. It needs no illustration. It is all illustration itself. Its lessons are life pictures, read at a glance.

Little may a parent be aware of that infantile sagacity that translates *things* before it knows the meaning of words. Example sows the seeds of life's harvest, sometimes before a child can speak. That early home, by the still quiet influence of example, moulds the character into such a shape, that all the after years of probation, all life's storms, all the jar and bustle of business cannot change it. It is like a pen of iron and the point of a diamond graving on the rock. A child knows well and needs no one to tell it, that while words may speak the mind's knowledge, actions declare the heart. What a man *is*, is far more than what he *says* :

*A word "doth never with remorse
Our minds so deeply move,
As when another's guiltless life,
Our error doth improve."*

Guilt and sin love to quote the failings of a good man, a thousand times more than even the eloquent eulogies of vice from the lips of a bad one, because more powerful and effective. They never exult as they do when they see that good man stumble. His fall, is the fall of that majestic statue of holy example that has looked upon them with a withering frown, and when it lies prostrate like the fallen Dagon on the threshold of his own temple, mutilated and broken, they regard this misfortune to virtue as a personal triumph for themselves. That example has been to them what the prophet Micaiah was to Ahab, and if their lips were bridled, their hearts said as plainly as that wicked king, "I hate him, for he prophesieth not good of me but evil." Example is indeed a prophet. It may even make the devil stand abashed and feel "how awful goodness is." Men who are not satisfied with

themselves, who feel that they are doing wrong, seek an excuse for themselves in the weakness of another. If a good man errs, they deem themselves privileged. They will wrap themselves up in the cloak of his failings, and so lay the flattering unction to their souls. They could not rest content with the principles of a perverted morality, with any *verbal* apology for their sin, however well expressed; they want an example that they can quote. Frequently they are only too successful in their search. Good men are often weak, and blindly cling to an error that thus becomes a stumbling block to others.

In the early history of the Temperance cause a man who had once been addicted to intemperance, rose in a temperance meeting and related his experience in regard to the influence of temperate drinkers of respectable standing upon the habits of the drunkard.

"Many a time," said he, "have I gone to Captain Johnson's tavern and waited for half an hour, or an hour, for some respectable man to come in and go to the bar and call for liquor. After a while, Deacon Barnes would come and call for some spirit and water. Then I could go up to the bar and do as he did." Deacon Barnes hearing of this, asked him if it was so. "It is," said the man. "Well," said the Deacon, "you shall hang on me no longer. I joined the Temperance Society yesterday." "Did you?" "Yes!" "Well, then I will join to-day, for I can do without liquor as long as Deacon Barnes can."

How vain to cherish the hope of being able to demolish the arguments of the Sabbath breaker, of the theatre goer, of the intemperate man, of the votary of fashion, while they are fortified by the example of those who esteem themselves good men, and in some cases pos-

sibly are! Well may we ask, is it not a divine wonder, a miracle in attestation of the truth of Christianity, that it has maintained itself in the world for eighteen centuries, and made progress, when domestic traitors have so often stabbed at its vitals with poisoned daggers—when they have kissed, with the lips of profession, a cause they betrayed by example?

Let no man then forget in this world the præeminent power of example. It is the monarch of human influence. It towers high above reason and logic, and all the power of words. We may expose a sophistry. We may counteract a bribe. We may live down a slander. We may show the infidel, that his cause in the light of reason is utterly indefensible. But example is too much for us. When good men sin we cry out instinctively, "God have mercy on us."

Let every wise man then beware of evil example. The warning is not needless; the danger is all around us. Evil examples abound. You stumble upon them at every step. There is not a lie that Satan needs to delude souls to perdition that might not be found in the actual utterance of some life, in the language of some action that is to be witnessed every day all around us.

But if others do wrong, even by multitudes, is it any reason, why you should do so? Does their sin give you authority to disobey God? What if they are gay! What if they seem to prosper! What if wit and fashion throw a spell of enchantment over their profanity or their recklessness! Will their example take away your guilt—will their painted rottenness compensate for your casting in your lot with them? Will it lighten that coming hour of reflection, when you stand at the bar of your own conscience? Will it sooth the anguish of a

dying hour? Will it stand you in stead, when the eye of your great judge flashes its lightning through the dark secrets of your soul?

What if many do sin; what if the majority do cast off the fear of God; what if it is fashionable to travel the broad road; will you therefore be the suicide of your soul? Will fashion take away the sting of the undying worm? Will fashion put out the flames of the quenchless fire? Will it be delightful to be damned in company? What if many would laugh at you for being odd; is their ridicule worse than God's frown? Is your own conscience such a torpid thing, that sin may trample on it by mere force of numbers? Are your convictions to be voted down by majorities? Have you enrolled yourself in that democracy of darkness, where numbers are instead of God?

There are good men who err and set a bad example; there are great men whose intellectual eminence flings a flood of splendor over the ruinous vices or the contemptible follies in which they indulge; there are men whose names we would utter with a certain degree of reverence against whose example we must put you on your guard; for the splendor of genius cannot atone for its errors, and, if it did, good sense should warn you of the presumption of supposing that because you have the errors you also have the genius. Great men, and even good men, have been characterized by gross weakness. They have shown themselves unsafe guides. The frailty of Solomon is as memorable as his wisdom; and the same pages that record Peter's devoted attachment, tell us how he denied his Lord. None of us has any right to adopt a human standard. There is an emphatic meaning in that declaration of the apostle, that they "who mea-

sure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves among themselves, are not wise." On the principle that another's example may sanction your course, there is nothing left which you may not do. You may quote examples for everything. If you wish to join in the gay dance, you may find some professedly Christian partner ; if you wish to visit the theatre, some renegade Christian can show you the way ; if you wish to share the whirl of nonsense and vanity, there are Demas-professors in the world to keep you in countenance ; if you wish to travel on the Sabbath, you may possibly find a seat by the side of some one whose duty it has been at some time to enforce the commandments ; if the love of the world attracts you more than the place of prayer, there are certainly those who can sympathize with you in your tastes. There is scarcely anything you can wish to do but you can find a pretext or apology for it in the disgraceful failings of such as are presumed to be good men ; but shun the principle. There is only one example for *you*, and that is the Master's. The multitude can furnish no substitute. A multiplicity of criminals cannot sanctify crime ; a host of evil examples cannot change the nature of sin. Bear this in mind when you are tempted to go with a multitude to do evil. The curse will not be the less because they share it. You sin, and you must bear it. If you could sin by proxy, you can not be judged by proxy. You will stand at the bar of God to answer for yourself. Keep, then, one thing your own ; part with all else if you please, but be the owner of an independent conscience. Let not your destiny lie at the pleasure of your neighbor or the risk of his example. You are not called on to gratify him to such an extent as to become an outcast from God to keep him company.

Be, moreover, an example yourself. You know the power of example. If you have five talents for which you are to account, your example is one of them. Whether living as you *now* do, it *ought* to have any influence in the world, is one question ;—whether it *does*, in fact, is another, or rather it is no question at all. It does ; it must. It is every day and every hour at work, blessing or cursing, drawing men toward heaven or toward hell—in your family, among your associates, in your daily intercourse, among all that know you. It is working where you are and where you are not ; it is remembered by others when it has passed from your own mind ; it is multiplying itself, reproducing through others its own image ; it is preaching from the pulpit of your life a sermon mightier than these poor words. Your children hear it, and act upon it ; your impenitent friends and associates are confirmed in their sin or alarmed by it. Many an eye looks to you to know what you will do and how you will live, and the current of your life determines that of others.

If you could once see the power of your example in its bearing on the destiny of beings around you for time and for eternity, words would not be needed. You would be startled at yourself ; you would not dare one hour longer to live in such a way as to counteract the truths of the Bible in their power on others' minds. Is there not something unspeakably terrible in the thought of having come into the world to undo the work for which Christ left heaven and sojourned among men ? To throw your life into the opposing scale ; to draw men away from God, or hold them with you in your sin—it must be a strange stupidity that can leave you unconcerned in such circumstances as these ! The most trifling acts of

yours may set an example that may seal the ruin of some soul. The Apostle Paul studied to be an example ; and it was a noble purpose in him that led him to declare—“ If meat make my brother to offend, I will not eat meat or drink wine while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.”

What a blessed treasure for you would be that of holy example ; if every one that saw and knew you could say, “ There is a true Christian ;” how in the obscurest position you would be preaching to the hearts of others, leading them to your Saviour and making Him theirs ! Your journey through the world would be a path of light, bedewed at every step with tears of grateful joy from the eyes of those that rose up to call you blessed ! The treasure of a useful life would be stored up for you in heaven, and on your track to the spirit-world would follow those whom your example had attracted, and who would join you in the music of the new song.

But if yours should prove to be an evil example, how fearful the reverse !

Well might the poet Middleton say—

“ If men of good lives,
Who, by their virtuous actions, stir up others
To noble and religious imitation,
Receive the greater glory after death,
As sin must needs confess ; what may *they* feel
In height of torments and in weight of vengeance—
Not only they themselves not doing well,
But set a light up to show men to hell ?”

XXXI.

WEALTH : ITS SOURCE, POWER, DANGERS AND DUTIES.

“ It is required in stewards that man be found faithful.”—1 Cor. iv. 2.

WEALTH, in its original signification, is any thing that contributes to the *weal* or welfare of an individual or a community. In the latter case, it is the commonwealth, so called. Individual or personal wealth is whatever can be made conducive to the weal of the individual ; and in its largest signification, embraces physical and mental qualities, so that a man who is poor in all else may be rich in mental acquirements, in powers of thought, in the means of acquiring and exercising influence. But in its usual signification, wealth is synonymous with property, and means the material possessions that a man calls his own, that is, what he has received or acquired, and what the law secures to him the right to use and employ. It may consist in money, or houses, or lands, or manufactories—fruits of industry, the profits of trade, labor, or genius.

The sources of wealth are various. Sometimes it is acquired by inheritance, sometimes by slow and patient industry, sometimes by speculation, sometimes by gift or donation, but in all cases through the constitution of things ordained by God's providence. There could be

no such thing as wealth, but that God has created its original material, and conferred on man the power to give it shape. In making the world, the Great Creator fashioned it so as to afford the means of industry and enterprise. It is not merely a place where man can idly set his foot and stay out his appointed time.

The materials of wealth everywhere surround us. The genial soil, waiting for the seed, gives promise to industry of an abundant harvest. The broad prairie invites the hand of cultivation. The trees of the forest need but skillful toil to take the shape of timber, and be fashioned into commodious and beautiful dwellings. The coal lies buried in the earth, waiting only for the hand of labor to bring it forth and give it value. The iron in the mine is worthless there, but invites the patience of industry to turn it into wealth. Gold is buried in the rocks, or mingled with the river's sands, and must be sought out and gathered, to become the representative of value. And thus all the materials of wealth, and the strength and skill also, by which man is able to turn them into wealth, are conferred by God.

The earth is his, from which we draw our sustenance. The ocean is his, that we whiten with the sails of commerce. The rivers are his, that float our steam palaces, and our ships laden with produce. The mine is his, from which we draw the materials of our industry or comfort. Our strength to labor, our powers of invention to devise the means and implements of labor, the constitution of mind and body, by which we can turn every thing to its uses, and find enjoyment in them—all are His. He opened the fountains, and planted the forests, and reared the mountains, and gave the valley its rich and fertile soil. His are the flowers of the field and the cattle on a

thousand hills. Enterprise cannot lay its hand upon a single object, that does not declare God to be its proprietor.

The primary source of wealth, therefore, is to be found in the Great Giver, and all the powers of mind and body, by which the original elements are transmuted into shape, come from the same source. The earth, with all its stores of hidden material, is the gift of God to the race. No one more than another can claim its unoccupied wastes, except as he improves them for the supply of his own individual wants. No man has an exclusive title deed from the Almighty. It is on the ground, therefore, of indefinite lease, and that not exclusive, that enterprise goes forth to claim and take possession of the waste and uncultivated portions of the earth. Here is the origin of wealth, and then, with the powers that God has given, man cultivates it and gives it a manifold value. The plowed land is worth more than the unplowed, the harvest field more than the unsown. Labor and skill give increased value to the material. The ore is purified in the furnace; the cotton from the field, and the wool from the fleece of the sheep, are woven into cloth. The forest is cut down and furnishes timber. The fruits and productions of one climate transferred to another meet a demand that increases their value. Commerce, transferring her materials from place to place, and distributing them to meet the wants of man, adds to their value, and thus wealth is produced.

The extent to which any man can command the productions of skill and industry is the measure of his wealth. Yet, usually, it is bestowed on the condition of individual effort. When a man attains it in any other way, it is by some exception to the general rule which God has laid down. The hereditary transmission of property is not

the legitimate way of acquiring it. By mental or bodily effort, by "the sweat of the brow," in the expressive language of Scripture, it is properly to be secured. When this law is complied with, wealth is something more than a pile of dust, a mere mass of matter, that may be conveyed by title deeds and bequests. It is the index of individual energy and effort, the sign—not always infallible, it is true, from incidental losses or disadvantages, but yet the general sign—of a man's ability and enterprise. If honestly and fairly acquired, it is the noble testimonial of industry—the measure, according to its extent, of a man's real capacity. It is true that this wealth may in some cases be meanly hoarded up, so that the very accumulation of it is a robbery, denying to it the use by which it might be multiplied; but yet, when fairly acquired and fairly employed for its legitimate uses, it is a sort of index of the man.

The voice of duty, therefore, while it requires us to recognize the source of our wealth, and all our titles to it in God, bids us, in the right use of our faculties, and with true views as to the value of wealth, and the way in which it is to be employed, make all we can—not, however, overtasking our powers, or interfering with the just claims of body and soul upon our time and attention. Industry is a Christian duty, and vigor is a divine gift, a talent God has given to be employed. The faithful use of our powers in their appropriate sphere, multiplying the conveniences and comforts of life to ourselves and others, giving us the means of influence and doing good, has the highest sanction of the Word of God. With right views and aims, we can be as truly serving God and working out the end of our probation in the field or in the workshop as when we are found in the

closet or prayer-meeting, giving each, however, its appropriate place.

Except as the love of selfish gain interferes, we may work for God in seeking to increase the profits of our business and multiplying our means to bless the world. Let no man say that religion will spoil a business-man, even if it does forbid by solemn ordinance all unjust gain, the lie, or cheat. It bids us be industrious. "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord,"—such is the Christian's motto. Make all the money you can, consistent with honesty and the higher interests of yourself and your fellow-man. It is only the right use of your talent which enables you to become more extensively and widely useful.

The power of wealth for good or evil has passed into a proverb. The maxims of the world confess it. One of our most eminent poets has said,

"Plate sin in gold and justice's dart falls hurtless."

"Why, this will buy your priests and servants from your sides,
Pluck stout men's pillows from below their heads,
Will knit and break religions, bless the accursed ;
Make the hoar leprosy adored ; place slaves,
And give them title, knee and approbation
With Senators on the bench."

And another has added :

"Gold is the strength, the sinews of the world ;
The health, the soul, the beauty most divine ;
A mask of gold hides all deformities."

But to curse gold for the evil it does, is like cursing the brickbat instead of the man that throws it. The Bible does not say *money* is the root of all evil, but the *love* of

it. God himself created the elements of wealth and they were the main part of that great work of his which he surveyed when it was complete, and which he pronounced good. Wealth is the implement or result of industry—an instrument of influence that has in itself no moral character, and can have none apart from the use to which it is applied. Without therefore either praising or cursing it, we speak of it simply as a thing which the good or evil passions of men can employ to produce any desired result. And as thus apprehended, its power is vast; can scarcely be overrated. It furnishes the capital of enterprise. It is the talent which industry can put out to usury and multiply manifold. In conjunction with human energy, its natural ally, it can accomplish wonders. It carries forward all the processes of our complicated civilization. It rears the manufactory, and feeds its spindles, and turns its wheels. It provides and sustains the laboratory of art. It builds the school-house, the college, the church. It covers our land with railroads and canals, developing new wealth along their track. It tunnels the mountain, and tames the wilderness, and opens the forest. It wakes the unbroken solitude with the hum of busy industry, and calls up cities and villages on the banks of our rivers, and along the shores of our lakes. It launches the vessel it has built, and unfurls the sail of commerce, and explores the coasts of distant lands. It turns the world into a great workhouse of industry, a mammoth Crystal Palace, rich with the products of every soil and the treasures of every clime. Some few rills of its great river, overflowing its banks, run into the channels of benevolence, and cheer the arid waste of human misery, sprinkling the broad desert with green oases, or turning the wheels of hallowed enterprise, and working the machinery

that floods the world with tracts and Bibles. And beside this, what motives it presents, tempting to the highest achievements of effort and of daring. The hope of it starts indolence from repose, and rouses to effort. Its power is felt in the importer's counting-room, and in the humblest hamlet of the land. It sends out the fleet ships on their perilous voyage ; it explores unknown routes marked by hazard and danger, and at the same time carries on the whole mechanism of common daily industry. To gain it, labor toils, art invents, genius soars, study gathers up her intellectual treasures. Lured by this bait, cupidity breaks over the restraints of honesty and the laws of God ; avarice hoards the memorials of its own cursed selfishness ; desperation no longer pauses on the brink of crime, but dashes over the gulf. Public justice is corrupted, and becomes rather public wrong ; a bribe blinds the eye and perverts the judgment ; a bribe changes the channel and current of legislation. In one form or another, wealth is interfering with the whole course and order of society. It erects a charitable institution, or sets up a grogshop. It blesses a poor family with needed comforts, or spurs on extortion to wring away their last crust. It gives an impulse to benevolent enterprise, or becomes the tool of conspirators and villains. The robber on the highway dares death for it. The false swearer perjures himself to attain it. The speculator risks all that he has, that he may attain more.

And what power it gives to individual influence and opinion ! The fashion that wealth adopts and sanctions has immediate and unquestioned currency. Unjust as it may seem, society, in its present state of human apostacy is so constituted that gold is often mightier than reason. It gives a sort of authoritative *imprimatur* to a current

notion. It only needs to be known that wealth adopts it to supply its lack of sense, or cover up its absurdity. And this power may be used for good as well as for evil. It may be employed on the side of truth, and to wipe off the shame that the world would cast on the principles of a pure morality, or of non-conformity to its false standards. Wealth furnishes a pedestal, on which the statue of a good example, and of just principles may be set up and made nobly conspicuous or even impressive. In fact, its power is such through society and the world, that it can scarcely be overrated.

But with the power are connected also the dangers and responsibilities of wealth. These are classed together, because the dangers flow from a neglect of responsibility ; use this powerful talent or means of influence aright, and the dangers are few ; neglect it, and they are vast and manifold. The very dangers, therefore, enforce the conclusion drawn from a consideration of the power and influence of wealth—a power and influence which of themselves imply responsibility.

The dangers of wealth flow mainly from those views of it which allow of its abuse. Seek it for its own sake, and it is a curse. The love of money then appears, as it is, the root of all evil. It lures a man to danger and to crime. Seek wealth as a means of doing good, that you may serve God and bless the world with it, and there is little temptation to transgress in its pursuit the rules of strict honesty and virtue. Seek it as a means of selfish gratification, as a source of luxury, or a ground of pride, and it is a snare. You are tempted to disregard the obstacles which justice and morality throw in the way of its pursuit. Then it leads to falsehood, to dishonesty, to crime. It tempts you to forget a higher object in one

lower and incidental. It exalts one that should always be kept secondary to the importance of a primary. It destroys the natural and just relations which it should ever be made to sustain to other objects. A man whose main and ruling purpose is to make money, degrades himself from a man to a thing. So far as he can, he makes a machine of himself, the whole scope of which is no higher than that of the die of the mint. He rises just to the dignity of a gold washer or sieve, or rather sinks to that zero of the moral thermometer. The tendency of his course is just to place him on a level with the tools he uses, or the engine that drives his machinery. He is merely the calculating, ciphering, directing furniture of his establishment. He might almost as well give up all claims and titles to his humanity. He would no more be missed, so far as moral worth is concerned, in the community, than his workshop or his engines. The love of money, creeping into the heart, eats out with poisonous tooth all the human that is there.

But we should not overlook the result of the temptations to crime to which the love of money renders one so susceptible. As this passion prevails, it invites to all various forms of injustice and extortion. A man absorbed in prospects of gain, ventures on doubtful methods, indulges in questionable practices. He is entangled, snared, involved in the meshes of his own dishonest schemes, and becomes their victim. He lives a knave, and dies a fool, and is adjudged accursed.

There are dangers, too, arising also from the possession of wealth. If suddenly acquired, it has a strange tendency to make a man's head dizzy, or his neck stiff, or his heart cold and hard. Sometimes he does not know what to do with it, and so becomes a spendthrift and

makes it a means of expediting the catastrophe of a career of luxury and sin.

But however acquired, if it is not held and kept as a solemn trust in stewardship for God, it tends to attract the heart, and hold it fast to itself. It narrows the range of sympathy; it tempts one to treat his poorer neighbor with scorn and neglect. It leads him to exalt pride above humanity. He is in danger of forgetting whence his affluence came, who gave it, and who continues it, and who can make it worthless in a moment. He is in danger of forgetting God in the idolatry of his wealth; of counting himself, with the resources at his command, independent of the great Giver; of living to enjoy his money rather than employ it for God. There is danger of its becoming his greatest curse—its very touch infecting his soul with a kind of leprosy—his grasp upon it leading him to neglect to seize upon what is infinitely more important. There is danger of his regarding it as his own, exclusive of the claims of God, and employing it as an instrument of luxury and pride, building and furnishing himself a heaven with it here, to the neglect of a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

In some cases wealth leads to dissipation. If the father of the household escapes, his children often inherit the curse. They grow up with the idea that they were not born to work and earn their bread by the sweat of their brow. Every wish must be gratified. Pride and fashion have all their thoughts. They are indulged with all that wealth can purchase, and before they are men or women they have acquired habits of expenditure that utterly unfit them to take care of themselves. You see them incarnations of vanity, worthless for any useful service—their minds perhaps uncul-

tured, their hearts perverted, their views of life ruinously absurd. The chances of the future are decidedly against them. You can almost see the inscription, "a human wreck," written upon their forehead now. Their place of destination is already dimly visible amid the foam-crested breakers that line the shores of life.

All these dangers, and others that might be cited, give double force to the lessons of responsibility in the pursuit and use of wealth. It is to be sought and employed as a talent from God for which we are solemnly accountable. The language of Scripture on this subject is fearfully impressive. We have already seen—in considering the source of wealth—that it comes from God. We improve it and add to its value, just as we do to the powers of the mind, by cultivation. Our wealth is no more ours in the absolute sense, than the faculties of the mind are. God has a property in both which he has not relinquished, which he cannot relinquish, and for which he will call us to account.

How absurd would the pretensions of that man seem, who should claim that his tongue was his own, and he might speak what he chose; that his pen was his own, and he might write what he chose; that his faculties were his own, and he might employ them as he chose! The assumption would be absurd. It would open the door to universal license. There is a higher law that regulates all these things. What an ineffaceable stamp of reprobation all our better feelings would set upon that man who should employ great and splendid abilities to build up some scheme of selfish aggrandizement, using his superior talent to malign virtue, or gild vice, or seduce the inexperienced into the paths of sin! We should feel that no language could furnish a strain of condem-

nation severe enough to visit his fault. And yet, according to the measure of its influence, wealth is subject to the same law of accountability. Just so far as it sanctions unworthy practices, or says by act or show that worldly gratification is the chief thing, or lays its tribute on the altar of luxury and pride, just so far it "plates sin with gold," and paints a demon as an angel.

Even if we are so disposed, we cannot stop short of the great Scripture rule of obligation reaching to the use of every thing that can extend or multiply our influence. Our wealth, like our power of speech, is a sacred deposit, and if for every idle word that men speak they shall give account in the day of judgment—so also for every dollar, for every cent that they misspend or employ for an unhallowed purpose. The wealth that is wasted in extravagant display is a talent buried in the earth, or worse than this—given over to the devil. The gorgeousness of dress that feeds your pride, is just so much of the means God lent you to see how you would use them for Him, flung down to those passions that feed upon them now, but at last will feed upon you.

The great question for us to ask in the use of our means, is not, How can I gratify myself in the expenditure; but, How can I best employ them in serving God? They are His—entrusted for a while to me—but soon to be called back. He tells me, as a steward for Him, to lay out the portion committed to me in the way in which it will do the most good, in which it will glorify Him most. All selfish considerations disappear at once. I am to act as God's hand, paying out for Him, investing for Him, receiving for Him, and using for myself just what will best fit me to serve Him.

I need not say that this is a high standard, but to your

conscience I leave it, whether it be not the true one. With the Bible before me, I can discover no other. With eternity in view, I think it would be folly supreme to adopt any other. You are to consider, and by solemn vow you are bound to consider, how you may contribute to carry out the scheme of Christ in regard to a dying world, and all the means of influence at your command are called into requisition. Bought yourself at a price which no gold or silver can be employed to compute, you owe all that you are as a ransomed captive, and all that you hope to be as one of the redeemed in glory, to that love that was manifested in the cross of Christ. The claims of God, as Creator and Preserver, are, as it were, reinforced by the demands of atoning blood, and their justice has been acknowledged by you before the world, with God, angels, and men as your witnesses. Whatever you can do to promote the most sacred of all causes, to limit the empire of sin, to spread the Gospel of the Son of God, to dry the tears of the mourner, to scatter happiness around your path, or send it like the sunlight to the humblest home and the most benighted heart, to bring the dying to the fountain of life and draw them on with you to heaven, all this you are bound to do, counting it a privilege as well as a solemn duty. And by all the means which God has entrusted to your charge, you are bound to do it. If God has given you wealth, that is a talent. You may by a hallowed purpose make it a powerful instrument of good. It may speak for you, toil for you, be a missionary for you, or rather for Christ. It may teach the ignorant, reform the degraded, sustain the claims of Christian charity, give a new impulse to benevolent enterprise, and raise up multitudes who shall bless God through you.

Suppose for a moment, that with abundant means at your command, you resolve to use them as it seems to you Christ would have them used—as you would choose to use them if Christ was walking by your side, and day by day sitting down with you at table, or conversing with you by the way! Suppose your highest ambition—as strong and earnest as that of the aspirant to wealth and fortune—was just to accomplish the most good possible with the means at your command: the largest results of glory to God, and beneficence to man! Is that an incredible supposition? Why should it be so regarded? Is it fanatic or absurd to live by a rule which you acknowledge obligatory? Be wise and do it.

Then, though you live in a world that sin has cursed, there will bloom all around your path an Eden only less lovely than our lost inheritance. Its fragrance will surround you with the breath of heaven, and when called home at last, of you it may be said, “Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; yea, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labors, and their works do follow them.”

XXXVII.

POWER OF ASSOCIATION ;

OR,

ON PITCHING ONE'S TENT TOWARD SODOM.

“And Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom.”—GEN. xiii. 12.

THE power of evil association is well illustrated by a short chapter in the history of Lot. We are told that “he pitched his tent toward Sodom.” These words possess great significance, and excite deep interest when taken in connection with Lot’s subsequent experience. Up to this time he had been in company with Abraham his uncle. They had dwelt together, and herded their flocks in the same pastures. But a strife arose between their herdsmen, and in order to avoid all occasion for it in future, they separated. Abraham gave Lot his choice of location, from the whole land before him, saying, “if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right ; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.” The result was as is stated, and this in spite of the fact put on record with it, that “the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly.” From this hour the life of Lot becomes sadly clouded with disaster and gloom. The storm did not, indeed, come down at once, but an observant eye

might have seen its threatening masses piled up and darkening in the distance, and casting their sombre shadow over all his prosperity. The rich and well-watered pastures, the flourishing condition of his flocks and herds, the respect which his growing wealth and prosperity secured for him at present, might lead him to forget or neglect the question of a holy life, and the favor of God might even dazzle him blind to the coming danger; but on the wings of the wind the vengeance he challenged was hastening, and, though delayed, it was sure to come. It overtook him in the very scenes of his prosperity, and from its fiery deluge he scarcely escaped, thenceforth a poor, bereaved, desolate, old man, the victim, till he dies, of the social corruption with which his family had become contaminated in Sodom.

This brief history throws around the language, "he pitched his tent toward Sodom," a meaning of fearful and momentous interest. Here was that passage in his life which was ominous of all his future disaster; which was, in fact, its procuring cause.

But the history of Lot has the force of parable. To many a man it has all the significance of a personal application. It reads like the parable of the Prophet Nathan to the guilty King of Israel, which closed with that home-thrust, "Thou art the man." Of how many may the recording angel be even now writing that chapter in their history, which may be summed up in the short paragraph, "he pitched his tent toward Sodom."

Consider, first, the meaning of the words. In the case of Lot they had a meaning of great weight, a meaning that is not comprehended merely by the sight of moving tents and a change of location. The men that Lot employed to move his cords, and stakes, and sheep-

skin tent-cloths, had, perhaps, no conception of what it meant to "pitch the tent toward Sodom," as they were ordered to do. They saw nothing in it but the securing a more advantageous locality, a more beautiful country, a richer pasturage, and fatter flocks. Perhaps Lot saw nothing more. It may be that increased ease and prosperity and worldly comfort blinded him to every other result. He may have looked on the Sodom neighborhood as something of a drawback on his location, and yet have been inclined to think that, perhaps, after all, those neighbors were a well-meaning people, only somewhat too indulgent in their gaiety; a little too extravagant in dancing and night revels, balls, and routs. He might have considered these as a very pardonable result of their superfluous wealth—that carving and gilding of social intercourse which bespeak the perfection of gentility, and are almost necessary to take off that roughness and boorishness of manner which, in some circles, are "the unpardonable sin." And even if in some cases these things were carried too far, what harm could it do him, a man of fixed and religious principle, far above the reach of any such perverting influence; and as to his family, he could see that they were kept under proper restraint, and formed no bad acquaintanceships or associations. It is barely possible that on their account he was the more willing to reside in the neighborhood, for, as a rich man, he would rank high among the aristocracy of Sodom, at least if he was not too puritanic in his way, and his children might move there in the very highest circles, and ally themselves to the wealthiest and most fashionable families in the place.

If any of these were the views of Lot, which is certainly more than possible, he had not himself any proper

sense of the meaning of that thing—"pitching his tent toward Sodom." It was, in fact, pitching into temptation; it was rashly braving the lion in his den; it was balancing an uncertain worldly good against an almost certain spiritual loss; it was venturing on a slippery path where nine out of every ten that attempt it, fall and perish, or are, at least, crippled for life. To go near Sodom was to venture near a maelstrom with the almost inevitable danger of being drawn in. To pitch his tent there was to make the danger perpetual.

But though ancient Sodom was burned, there are other Sodoms still, though known by other names. God poured out his deluge of fire and burnt every trace of the cities of the plain off from the planet, so that where they stood nothing is left but salt deserts and bituminous lakes; still their type of corrupt human nature is not extinct. An English statesman has said, "Every man has his price." There is no little truth as well as some slander in this. But it is true that every man has his Sodom, his peculiar temptation. There is some sin to which he is drawn by, perhaps, a golden bait; some association, or friendship, or intercourse which corrupts or perverts the mind, or chills its religious ardor. It will be difficult to find any society which has not one or more of these Sodoms in it. Perhaps it is some select circle of wealth or fashion, where holy thoughts, like the angels of God in the city of the plain, are persecuted and outraged; perhaps it is some clique of youth who are madly bent on fun and frolic, and fling ridicule and contempt on holy things. Possibly it is a band of veteran revelers, a company of hardened and dissipated men, whose jovial manners cover, like the lie on a gilt label, the most poisonous drugs within. Or it may be that the

Sodom is a more ideal thing, the gaining some prize of pleasure or ambition, by which the soul is risked—a Sodom that a man might hang up in his shop window, or fold as a bank-note in his pocket-book—a sort of abstract Sodom—a corporation seal that carries all the authority and force of the city itself.

A man that journeys on a score or two of years in the world, will pass many of these Sodoms, these gilded homes and haunts and associations and symbols of iniquity. And he pitches his tent near them, when he comes within their influence. If he is ever saved it will be as Lot was, “so as by fire.” He has put his foot in the trap, and if he ever takes it out, it may be not as it went in.

It is a most startling description of a dangerous phase in a man’s life, when it can be said of him he has “pitched his tent toward Sodom.” Then he has begun to yield, and he will find it ever harder and harder work to resist. He has come into the neighborhood of evil influences from which there is a strong improbability that he will ever break away. He is looking in the direction of a worldly and selfish gratification, and the object will rivet his gaze, like the fabled eye of the basilisk, till he becomes its victim.

But what reasons are there for men to pursue so fatal a course?

If you ask what sufficient and justifying reasons there are, I answer, None! There is nothing—not the largest bribe, not the mines and treasures of the world, not a title-deed to Sodom or this great globe itself, that is any equivalent for such a sin, or can be a reason for it. Sin is unreason, it is folly and madness in every shape you can put it. The hope of gain tempting a man to pass

the line of duty or the rule of conscience one hair's breadth, is the venture of a soul. The wisdom of sin is always and forever the wisdom of Judas, selling his Lord and master for thirty pieces of silver. It is the same kind of business.

But if you ask what reasons the mind considers, or what the motives are which it views as reasons—we may find an answer by analyzing Lot's experience. Unquestionably in his case it was mainly the hope of gain. He saw the country fertile and well watered and abundantly productive, and he supposed that his flocks and herds would thrive there. It seems reasonable to suppose that he was a man of a good degree of enterprise and foresight—knew as we would express it now, how to make money, and he determined he would. A fat ox or sheep was current coin in traffic then—when mints were more difficult to be procured than they are even in these days—and a large flock of such, was worth as much as heavy bank deposits now. It is plain then that his main object was to do a good business, as we would say. Every other consideration is inferior and subordinate to this. He does not pause to consider how much such society as he would be thrown into ought to reduce the estimate of his profits; he does not ask how much will this eager haste to be rich interfere with present duty or future peace; he does not consider the trouble and temptation and vexation that will beset him in consequence of having to be thrown in among such a set of vile or wicked men—or if he does, these matters are lightly passed over, and he commits that great mistake which many have made since his day of reckoning his clear profits by what is equivalent to a cash or stock account at the end of the month or year. He does not appear to have considered the question,

What would God have me do? It was a matter not of prayer or religion or duty, but of the pocket. He turned himself for the time being into a money-making machine, tasked to the largest returns, and the result is as we might expect—"He pitched his tent toward Sodom."

We shall find Lot's experience a prototype. The grand reason why men are drawn into sin, or at least into irreligious and worldly company till they become Sodomized in hardness of heart, is in very many cases, the purpose of making money. What friendships and partnerships money makes! What crimes it glosses over, what meanness it covers, what infamy it hides! Men will take off their hats and make obeisance to a worm that crawls in gold. They will take a human being into their company and their friendship, because his rottenness, which they know full well, is plastered over by the reputation of being rich. They will handle pitch if it is only in a silver vase not *entirely* smeared over—if there is a place for the fingers to touch the silver. And so in business transactions, character is a subordinate thing. They want a man with them who can help the firm and bring in round profits, whether by lies or truth. A man goes often into a business not because it is one of general utility, not because it is fair and honest, but because it will make him rich as Sodom, perhaps as wicked too. He will walk deliberately through all the labyrinths of fraud, and even if he scruples at its stratagems, will pass them over in silence, for his partner or his accomplice bears the blame, while he only helps him wear the wedges of gold and the goodly Babylonish garments.

And if these things are so, can we wonder that good men often forget their religion while they hurry on to make money? They pitch their tents near Sodom with-

out knowing the character of the place—except that a heavy business is done there. They leave the Abrahams, the praying men, and mix themselves up with those that worship the dollar—the Judases, and Demases, and Ba-laa.ms—whom they will soon resemble. Their families are becoming naturalized Sodomites, and they are, perhaps, coining the eternal hopes and welfare of their children into the wealth and fortune which they mean to leave them when they die.

But the love of money does not stand alone among the motives that blind the reason of men and lead them into bad company and a worldly life. They like the gay life and tone that prevails in the scenes which represent to-day the ancient Sodom. And what those scenes are you may easily imagine. If I was to picture them out before you, sketching them by the features of their prototype of the plain, I should use the smoothest brush and the fairest colors. I should not select their original at that hour when the flaming vengeance of heaven is making the dwellings of their pride fiery tombs. I should not wait for the wicked city to take its attitude before me, when its affrighted inhabitants are rushing with mad, wild haste from the scenes of their revelry to some spot that might serve as a refuge from this terrible tempest of death. This should be left far, far and dim, in the background. I would select that hour when the morning sun clothed every object in the glow of beauty and of promise; when the whole landscape smiled in the robes that God had woven for it with his own infinite skill; when the laugh, and the jest, and the merry greeting went round, and there was no cloud upon the brow and no burden on the heart. The Sodoms of our day have the fascination as well as venom of the Serpent. You may find them in



scenes of festive mirth, in the gay saloon with its brilliant lights flashing enchantment over their beauty, in the thoughtless crowds that follow the rounds of fashion and of pleasure ; in halls where no Egyptian death's head grins its ghastly smile, and no stern censor sits with frowning brow ; where every object contributes its portion to rob life of every thing sad or gloomy, and even throw a spell over the thought of the grave, to keep it down while vanity and sin trip on with the winged hours. And it might not be amiss that music and poetry should be there and lend their charms to those of the sparkling bowl, while wit in all its brilliancy, and humor in all its sportiveness gave tone to mirth that needed these alone to finish out the picture with all its coloring.

I do not say that all these elements are necessary, but let them, or any part of them, be allied to irreligion, or even be divorced, as in most cases they must be, from piety, and they make that Sodom, over which, as yet, no fiery tempest hangs. And who knows not the motives that impel to such a scene ; the native restlessness of the mind panting after satisfaction ; that thirst for happiness that should lead us to the living fountain, but oftenest stops at the muddled pool ; that youthful ardor, whose beating pulse asks the stimulus of folly to make it throb even to aching, and that ambition which seeks such scenes for a theatre on which to shine. And yet that theatre is a Sodom. Far away in the background the curling mists are wreathing terrors about the brow of the storm, and now and then the lightning is gleaming forth like a flash from the eye of an angry God. Higher rises the cloud, darkening with wrath, till the roaring torrent breaks upon the startled citizen and hems him round with its fiery flood. Then you see him like a man

reading the letter that warned him of the incendiary, by the light of his burning dwelling—confessing the folly of those reasons for which he suffered himself to be drawn into the snare.

But how is it that a man can be said to “pitch his tent toward Sodom?” I answer, by taking his course in that direction which will throw him into vain and worldly company.

When I see a youth neglecting to form steady habits, inconstant and fickle, ready to become the victim of the first temptation that crosses his path, I think there is a man who will soon “pitch his tent toward Sodom.” When I see another neglecting the sanctuary and desecrating the Sabbath by loitering about here and there, or reading all the stray things that come to hand without regard to their character—there is a man of whom I feel sure that his tent has been already “pitched toward Sodom.” When I see any one more anxious about the fashions and modes of the day than about questions of duty, more concerned to appear well in the eyes of the world than beneath the eye of God, I recognize there one who has pitched his tent *so near to Sodom*, that he is aping its manners and enslaving himself to its customs. When I see a man neglecting the company of the thoughtful and discreet, associating with those whose shallowness of brain is made more intensely shallow by their folly, I ask how far can that man’s tent be from *the very walls of Sodom*. When I see a man so intent on business that in his love of gain he shows no interest or anxiety to meet where Christians love to pray, and even feels a stranger when he comes, I fear that man has too plainly *pitched his tent toward Sodom*. When I meet with one who puts off religious duty for the present that

he may enjoy the world in all its gaiety and pleasure, I feel like whispering in his ear, *You have pitched your tent toward Sodom.* When I find a man cherishing the acquaintance of some fascinating and engaging yet unprincipled companion, I think within myself, would that some one as with the archangel's trump would blow the blast of warning, "You have pitched your tent toward Sodom."

Whenever you suffer yourself to come within the reach or sphere of any influence that makes you less conscientious, less devoted, less prayerful, it is a sign that you are pitching your tent on the plain of *Sodom*. Whenever you suffer yourself to be drawn off into plans and speculations that make you love the world more and the Saviour less, you may know that you are busy removing your tent and *pitching it toward Sodom*. When you find that the sober pleasures of religion must be spiced by some new ingredient from the world to give them relish, you may know that your tent is pitched where you already *breathe the air of Sodom*. When your anxieties are manifestly greater to get rich and multiply your hoards on earth than lay up treasures in heaven, it might be well to ask yourself if your tent is not already *pitched toward Sodom*. A man may think he is on perfectly safe ground, may compliment himself on the fairness of his Christian profession, while yet in fact his tent is *pitched toward Sodom*. He may see every thing around him bright and prosperous and promising, so that he almost thinks he is in a paradise, but he should remember that Sodom once was "like the garden of the Lord." A man may spend his thoughts on a fine location for his house, a good prospect, and handsome grounds, and when all is complete he may find too late that he has only been

pitching his tent toward Sodom. A man may be anxious to get established in some business, and he may be so eager in his plans, so forward to execute them, that overlooking the question of their utility or morality, he shall *pitch his tent toward Sodom.* The director of a railroad company may have invested his funds so largely in a Sunday-breaking concern, that his anxiety for the percentage silences his remonstrance at the sacrilege of murdering that holy day under the iron wheels, and he finds that *he belongs to a Sodom corporation.* A man led by curiosity or pleasure enters the cars on the Sabbath, to be transported to some distant scene, perhaps of folly, perhaps of worship, but he often neglects to ask, is this the place for any but the *inhabitants of Sodom?* A man eager in regard to political interests yields to the current around him, and becomes mixed up in its turbid whirl, till he seems like one of the lot—a mere intriguer, a white-washed wire-puller, and even then is not aware how near *he has pitched his tent toward Sodom.*

But to show how men do this would be to recite all the brilliant or gainful iniquity of the world. It is done almost every day before our eyes. It is no laborious operation, no groaning task. It is a mere operation of the will, a choice, that has such power that it takes a man's soul, and removes it in the twinkling of an eye, a thousand miles from heaven, into the immediate neighborhood of Sodom. It is thus the spirit of a man is borne on the lightning wing of a wish with all its hopes and passions from light into darkness, from Abraham's bosom to the company of Sodom. Your choice does this, a fleet fugitive volition of the soul. You are doing it when you indulge foolish thoughts and fancies; you are doing it when you suffer yourself to read with admiration

the deeds of a splendid villain or a wholesale murderer like Napoleon. You are doing it when you suffer novels and romances to transport you even for a few hours into the company of Sodomites, who will almost inevitably draw you nearer to themselves. You are doing it when you suffer the glitter of gold to seduce you from the search after the priceless pearl of truth and of religion. You are doing it when you suffer your mind to become so engrossed with the things of time and sense as to neglect to prepare for eternity. You are doing it when you suffer yourself to be drawn into conformity with the vain pleasures and fashions of the world. You are doing it when you neglect prayer, and the Bible, and the sanctuary, and the Sabbath. You are doing it, perhaps, when you are doing nothing else, and think you are doing nothing at all, for one of the sins of Sodom was "idleness."

But an equally momentous question yet remains. What will be the result of all this?

I answer, perhaps increased worldly prosperity for a while. This is not absolutely certain, but oftentimes it is the case. Doubtless it was with Lot, or he never would have remained in the neighborhood so many years as he did. His flocks and herds thrived and increased. The rich and fertile and well-watered soil furnished him an abundant pasturage, and the city of Sodom was at hand as a good market. He must have felt convinced that he was doing a good business, although we can see now that his gains were a curse, the bait of that great man-hunter Satan, and Lot was decoyed into his trap, with all his family, and some of them could not get out. But for a time he evidently prospered. It may be that he congratulated himself many times that he quitted the company of his too Puritanic uncle who had scrupled, up to the

time of their separation, to avail himself of the advantages of that neighborhood. And Lot's condition in this respect may be a type of many others. Some men make themselves rich, as they think, much more rapidly by knavery and fraud and meanness. Religion stands in their way and they discard it. Morality interferes with a profitable lie, and is cast out of the firm. It is more than possible that things go as they wish. Their gains count up. They make large dividends. They can afford a greater degree of splendor. They can serve mammon in a princely style with his own bribes. Their houses are furnished like a palace. They can procure the most costly fabrics. They can lead the fashion. They can compete with the aristocracy of Sodom. So far the parallel of their condition with Lot's is kept up as it respects prosperity.

But perhaps there is a further parallel in the history of their family. The minds of children, in the atmosphere of such a home as theirs will be, drink in poison from the first breath of intelligence. The neighborhood and the associations are all Sodom-like. Wealth is the household God, and they are idolaters long before they know of any other worship. They come in contact only with scenes that corrupt and pervert. On the upper strata of society, where they move, float like foam on a stream, the lightest materials. Their minds become mere air bubbles, blown up with pride; and when mixed with the foam around them, dissolvable into less than a drop of good sense. It will be a remarkable escape if they pass the rapids of youth without being tossed to fragments or scattered in froth and foam. It is possible they may fall into some eddy where they will revolve and revolve till they are lost in the mass of drifting dust and straws that cir-

cle around them. Many a parent has enriched his children to destroy them. He has given them wealth as Naaman gave it to Gehazi, and a leprosy with it. In giving them facilities for moving in the circles of wealth and fashion, he has helped them to ally themselves with the sons and daughters of Sodom. They have grown up to be his grief, and to bring down his gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. His ill-gotten wealth, his gold and silver denied to the service of Him for whom he should have been a steward, have cankered in his hand and eaten his flesh as it were fire. And the prophecy has been fulfilled in those that are bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh.

Another result of pitching one's tent toward Sodom will be a growing disposition to tolerate its sin. Some men call this liberality. I call it atheistic indifference. It is almost a certain result of mixing with vile men or having any thing to do with the unprincipled and immoral that we become, almost unconsciously, their apologists. Their enormities, their sacrilege and blasphemy, their profanity and obscenity, their excesses and follies, excite less and less repugnance. We are not horrified as we were once at them. Our own feelings and character have undergone a wondrous change. Virtue has gone out of us, not to come back again. Conscience is less strict. Sin is less criminal. Truth and justice are less sacred. We are ready to relax even the severity of God, and become Universalists, as I suppose the inhabitants of Sodom were, almost to a man.

Another result that follows, if it does not accompany, the one just specified, is a disbelief in the judgments of God. When there ceases to be in our minds any vivid distinction between righteousness and sin, we shall see

but little need of a judgment. A man who associates with unprincipled and worldly-minded men will see them acting every day without any regard to that distinction. A crime is with them, as with Napoleon, inferior to a blunder. No sin is so great as the loss of a good bargain ; no virtue half so meritorious as a faculty of making money. It is this, according to their Gospel of Mammon, and not charity, which covers a multitude of sins. Such society as theirs is eminently corrupting. The atmosphere they breathe is the chloroform of morals. Without pain, and before we are aware, it deadens sensibility, if not life, and recovery is rare. We begin to cast off the awful sense of a just and holy God. We begin to believe He cannot be present ; never interfering, where the principles of truth and justice are weighed in the same scales with cotton ; where princely villains play the part of Dives, where the plains of Sodom are like the garden of the Lord. Thus we cease to dread either present judgment or a judgment to come. We slumber on in perfect security. Every thing is fair and full of promise. We dread no terrible reverse. We sleep as quietly as Sodom in the days of her guilt, before that terrible morning broke whose early hours were to see her entombed in fire.

And when the fear of God is gone, where and what is man ? A blazing world broke loose from its central orb ; a madman escaped from his cell ; a being you can neither trust nor control ! Destroy that fear in your mind, and you may go on in deeds of desperation that will rival the guilt of ancient Sodom. There is nothing to bound the audacity of your desperation when temptation calls.

There is but one step more to the climax of the result.

And that may be seen by the light of burning Sodom. It is the inevitable doom of sin. You may fill your cup for a long while before the drop comes that will make it overflow. But it will come at last. So it was with Sodom. So it is and will be with every sinner. It will come, perhaps, in a moment unlooked for. Judgment will break forth like the lightnings, and while you think yourself safe you will be crushed.

And what a doom will yours be? If Sodom and Gomorrah rise up in judgment against Chorazin and Bethsaida, will not Chorazin and Bethsaida, from their lowest deep, rise up to condemn you who deserve a lower? And if the earthly vengeance that overtook Sodom and Gomorrah is too terrible to be described, what will your lot be, if you sin against the light of the clear shining Gospel, and the truth of your convictions?

Where, then, are you now? In the broad way, in the paths of impenitence, with your "tent pitched toward Sodom?" Retrace your steps. Its smiling fields and glowing landscape allure to ruin. They are the crust of a fire-bed. Hasten away. Leave your gains and your gold, and save your soul!

XXXVIII.

BLESSINGS AND DUTIES.

“Other men labored and ye are entered into their labors.”—JOHN iv. 38

GRATITUDE is instinctive. A mind properly constituted cannot receive a favor without feeling impelled to acknowledge the obligation. All the blessings we are conscious of enjoying are so many calls made upon us, in the providence of God, to seek out and acknowledge their source. What is that source?

There can be but one, underived and original. There are ten thousand channels through which the blessings reach us, but we may trace them all back to one great fountain. We should not, as we drink the refreshing draught, spurn the cup or the hand that offers it; but ought we not to recognize the heart that impels the hand?

There are few of our privileges or comforts that are of our own individual procurement. They have been transmitted to us from past generations, or they are the fruits of social organization. Their true history carries us back to distant ages, or brings to view the sweat, and toil, and blood of others, whom, perhaps, we have never seen. There is scarcely a familiar utensil of our dwellings with which thousands of busy fingers have not been more or less associated. It is connected with slowly evolved processes of art, with the rudiments and progress

of science, with repeated experiments, with associated effort reaching back through centuries.

How many of the things which contribute to your convenience, if not necessity, have come from distant lands ! Yet before the vessel that brought them could spread her sails and go forth upon the broad, trackless ocean, the science of navigation had to be built up, and the art of ship-building had to be perfected, and the methods of commerce, including the excavation of ore and the coining of money had to be devised. The time was when the rude canoe was the highest achievement of ship-building art ; when the sailor, clinging to the coast-line, dared not venture out of sight of land ; when the furnace was as yet unknown, and only the rudest forms of barter were the embryo of a now world-wide commerce. It has taken ages to secure the progress that has been obtained. The history of navigation carries us back to the invention of the mariner's compass, to the study of astronomy by Newton, Copernicus, Gallileo, Ptolemy, nay, by the Chaldean shepherds watching their flocks by night, and taking the earliest critical observation of the stars by which the sailor determines his place on the broad ocean waste. It carries us back to the old crude methods of ship-building, when steam was unknown, and the ancient triremes were impelled by oars, and the sail was only a doubtful experiment.

We must call to mind, also, the slow progress of geographical science, exploring bay and river, and creeping venturously along the shores of the Mediterranean, and peering out, by the " Pillars of Hercules," into the unknown ocean ; then venturing with Columbus across the broad, watery waste, and revealing a New World ; then by countless voyages of bold explorers searching out a

path to the Indies, and perfecting, with new faint lines, the charts that map island, ocean, shallow and shore.

Take your seat by your own quiet hearthstone, and think for a moment of the various relationships by which, in the enjoyment of your blessings, you are linked, not only to the present and the living, but to the distant and the dead. Let imaginary lines be drawn from each object that furnishes your dwelling, from each volume that lies upon your shelf or table, from each comfort or convenience of your home, from each influence that has instructed your mind or fashioned your character, back to the ten thousand objects in which they each originated, or in which they had their birth, and you will find yourself, like the sun, the centre of a vast system revolving about you, for your convenience ; nay, the centre of innumerable rays of blessing and beneficence, only they are all received instead of dispensed. You will find that just as the sunbeams are so many telegraphic messengers, uniting, by their lines of light, every sand-grain, and dew-drop, every grass-blade, and leaf, and flower to one point ; so in your own home, in your own heart, meet the countless lines of influence and blessing that come streaming down to you through the centuries, and connect each of your comforts, conveniences, or privileges with the names, and toil, and invention, and heroism of innumerable benefactors, who, in one way or another, have bequeathed to you the results of their invention, their self-denial, their enterprise or their effort.

The humblest utensil of household economy has really a history almost primeval, carrying you back to the long, rude and abortive experiments of semi-barbarous art. Invention and toil pioneered a tardy progress ; and just as the emigrant is forced to thread the mazes of the forest,

open roads, and bridge streams, and toil on long and tediously beneath the deep shadows and amid the almost unbroken solitude, before villages and civilized art, schools, and churches, and social culture can spring up around him, so ages of toilsome endeavor must pioneer us before we can enter in peace upon the inheritance of their achievement. If you should undertake to write out in full the history of one of the most common implements of art—write it as the history of the steam-engine has been written—you would find yourself threading your way through the labyrinths of past centuries, gazing, perhaps, on the rude anvils that ring out amid German forests, or studying the primitive armor of Grecian heroes ; or, floating down the stream of time, you would meet, perhaps, with some contribution from the speculations of an Albertus Magnus or Roger Bacon, some accidental discovery of a noted alchemist, some lingering tradition of oriental usage, some accidental discovery which genius stood ready to employ, till a printing press, a lightning rod, a safety lamp, or a lucifer match met your eye as the memorial of ages of striving and inventive experiment. As we read of the crude efforts of early art, we are not prepared to see at first their real and important connection with the triumphs of modern skill. And yet the stream that floats down to our doors the harvests of past ages of effort, is continuous, like a vast river, draining the valley of time of its ingenuity, fed, in its original, by countless springs bursting from distant hill-sides or from mountain snows, with tributaries winding unseen through the obscurity of dark ravines and interminable forests, without so much as a charted line for their memorial. A wandering traveler might sit down by the mossy brink of some mountain spring, or

launch his light canoe on the surface of some calm lake in the far off wilds without suspecting that it was the germ of a Mississippi or an Amazon ; that there the current that might at length float the navies of the world had its humble birth ; and so, in the remote tracts of time, the historic traveler might stumble, without knowing it, upon some rude contrivance or simple fancy, or happy accident, which was the germ of a broad development of civilized industry, the head fountain that gave the impulse of its descending current to turn the wheels of the machinery of modern art. But so it is. Others have labored and we have entered into their labors. The clustering comforts of our homes, all the arts, and inventions, and discoveries that make them differ from the Indian's wigwam, or the kraal of the Hottentot, have come down to us from the labors of past and distant generations.

But what are all the material comforts of our civilization, much as we should miss them if they were withdrawn ; what are all the arts and conveniences that add refinement and lend their charm to our social life, and minister to our social enjoyment, by the side of those higher blessings of moral and religious privilege without which all beside is but as the shell without the kernel, the husk and chaff without the grain ? Here our vast indebtedness is again brought to view. I cannot take up the work of any great master in the world of thought without being constrained to confess how vast is the obligation imposed upon me by the privilege of committing myself to *his* guidance, or listening to *his* animating words that lend wings to my spirit and teach it to soar to spheres of lofty meditation. I cannot turn over those leaves, crowded with conceptions that enrich my own

soul as I read, that, in my just estimate, beggar all material wealth, without being constrained to acknowledge that I have entered upon an inheritance prepared by other hands, on gardens that they have planted, on vines that they have trained, and fountains that they have opened. I find my lost thoughts that roam at random, furnished with guides that lead me to scenes where the mind may feast itself on whatsoever is lofty and pure, glorious or sublime. They take me to the Pisgahs of vision, or to "chambers of imagery ;" or they lead me where the unfolded magnificence of more than sun and stars is spread out to my view, and I am roofed with a firmament of wisdom and goodness transcending that which the telescope unfolds. Those old thinkers, already notching their centuries, how they call me up to them, or sit down by my side and speak to me in words that leave the most enduring impression! They make me a different being. They expand my mind to a loftier stature ; they inspire my soul with their grand conceptions. With a pupil's gratitude I recognize them as masters. They have built with Herculean might, bridges of truth over gulfs of doubt, where else I had floundered, and mired, and sunk ; they have grappled with problems of being and providence that had else appalled my feebler powers. Across the centuries they stretch to me the hand of brotherhood, and cheer me, like them, to do and dare.

Yet they have not enriched me alone. The social world around me, made so genial, or at least so tolerable, owes its culture of mind and heart to their endeavor. Their thoughts have been, for generations, like the early and the latter rain. Not only the lofty tree has been refreshed, but the lowliest grass-blade in the humblest

nook. Educate the leading minds of a people, and through them the blessings of knowledge and culture are distilled upon the whole field of social life. The quickening power of high, pure thought diffuses itself like the bracing influence of fresh air. The millions breathe it, and society and the State acquire a more vigorous life, in which we share, and by which we are blessed ourselves. Each virtue and each grace springs up refreshed. We are surrounded by the privileges and comforts of general intelligence, culture and refinement.

Thus it is impossible for us to estimate how much we owe—not for the wealth of mere abstract speculative thought, but for practical enlightenment and permanent impulse—to those who have preceded us, who have made our books, fashioned our literature, and left the impress of their large and sagacious wisdom on the institutions that we enjoy. Perhaps they were accounted theorists. Perhaps they were classed as pedants or book-worms. Yet their explorations have discovered and opened mines of thought, or the trees they planted have proved century oaks, under which generations have sat and sung. The very soil itself has a larger value, that their feet have trod it, and that their thoughts are current in the minds of those that tread it still. We are the richer vastly in intellectual and spiritual wealth, that they have lived and meditated, and spoken, but we are also richer in the domain of art and material wealth. The very acres, the dead soil, the hills and valleys themselves, acquire a new value, that they have been pressed by the feet of the pilgrims, or been hallowed by the presence of a Washington. We are richer that Milton wrote, that Bacon and Locke speculated, and that Newton read to us the lessons of the stars—richer not only in the treasures of

learning, but in the wealth which the State recognizes and the miser hoards.

Thus, all the great students and thinkers of the past have labored for us. The speculations of the philosophers, and the glowing visions and inspiring thoughts of the poet are our rich inheritance. Columbus discovered for us the New World, but far more glorious in their aims and hopes, the great navigators on the sea of human thought trusting to the unerring needle of the Word of God, have opened to us, not a new world, but a new firmament of worlds. How vastly enlarged, how immensely expanded, is the field of enterprise which they have set before us! To what new and hitherto unexplored realms have we been conducted under their guidance! They make the tenant of the humblest hovel the possible lord of a vast, a boundless domain. Who that reflects for a moment on the range of intellectual vision, on the fields of experience, on the wealth of motive, on the inspiring power of high and hallowed example—all arrayed before us through the labors of the great minds of the past, can restrain his lips from the involuntary confession of our vast indebtedness?

If we consider our civil privileges, we shall find that they are not of our own procurement. They are an inheritance, and how often toil-won or blood-bought! Orderly and constitutional government—government by law and by rulers of our own choice—is one of the latest matured harvests of time. Wisest men have studied the arts of constructing States. Jurisprudence is an old science. Its foundations lie deep in the early ages, when Draconian codes, or the wisdom of Solons and Numas, or the imported “Tables” of Roman laws commanded veneration and respect. How slowly and tediously even

down to the present, has the science progressed through Roman organization and statesmanship—the care of Justinian and Theodosius, the labors of Ulpian and Tribonian, the research and speculations and conclusions of Grotius and Vattel, of the Cokes and Blackstones, and Stowells, and Kents, and Storys, and Livingstons, whose names are the lights of jurisprudence, and under whose guidance it has attained to its present position !

In civil progress experiment has followed experiment, and failure has succeeded to failure, till inch by inch, we have been permitted to feel that there was at least some advance. All this while precedents have been accumulating, experience has been stored up.

Who can estimate our debt to the wisdom, valor and large foresight of the heroes of the Revolution and the early statesmen of the Republic ? Let their names, then, be honored as they deserve. Among them were true and noble, as well as able men, and history, to its latest page, must recognize their worth. They took large views of the future. They laid the foundations of Government deep and strong. They built more wisely, in some respects, than they imagined. If as men, on some points, they proved fallible, it is not for us sharply to criticise their errors. Later statesmanship, with all the lessons of a larger experience before it, leaves still undimmed the splendor of names like those of Washington and Franklin, Hamilton, Adams, Jay, Jefferson, and Witherspoon.

The inquiry is pertinent, How came we by such men ? The statesmen of that age were themselves the pupils of the past. For their wisdom, for their sagacity, for their principles, and their methods of applying them, they were indebted to the experience of earlier periods. The examples of preceding failure and success in kindred ex-

periments had not been lost upon them. If not versed, all of them, in classic lore, there were certain important lessons, traced as epitaphs on the tombstones of dead empires, which they knew by heart. For their instruction, history opened her broad page ; for their warning or guidance, political philosophy trimmed her lamps—some of them long dimmed and half stifled in the sepulchres of buried nations ; for them Locke and Sidney had speculated, and for them the Bradfords and Winthrops had, on the bleak coast of New England, changed the ideal to the actual. It was not in vain for them that Hampden had resisted the payment of an illegal tax, or that Milton had pleaded so eloquently for “the liberty of unlicensed printing.” The Constitution which they framed was, in reality—as to its elements—a mosaic made up from all preceding ages and from the contributions of all the most eminent thinkers that had gone before. Fragments of the old Jewish theocracy were there ; scraps borrowed from the speculations of Plato and Cicero ; lessons out of Athenian history and the Achaian league ; suggestions borrowed from Roman organization and the Justinian Code ; ideas transplanted from the history of the Mediæval Italian republics, and the towns of the Hanseatic league, and the Federal experience of the Swiss cantons ; principles that had shot up to a world-admired harvest in the little Genevan republic, that had flourished in the rise and triumph of the Netherlands over the tyranny of Spain, that had been scattered abroad to germinate under the ashes of England’s Smithfields, and amid Scottish heaths and glens, that had, in fact, crossed the ocean in the Mayflower and been embodied in town and church organisms, under the shadow of the half-subdued forests of the Eastern colonies.

This is not a picture of fancy. The more close our scrutiny the more clearly will the indebtedness of our early statesmen be confessed. They received the bequest of the world's antecedent experience and a summary of the results of its endeavors in that sphere in which they were specially to labor. Their merit was, that, trained under peculiar circumstances by that Providence that raised them up for their work, they used them wisely and well. But no history of the construction of the Constitution could be more curious or instructive than the history of its component elements, and the influences and experiences by which they were moulded and shaped. And, in the final search, whence came these, but from the same wise Providence and the same divine goodness that trained up for us those patriot statesmen?

So, also, the men of their age had been providentially fitted for the crisis they were called to meet. The best blood of England flowed in their veins. They were the children of those who had fought under Cromwell, who had listened to Howe and Owen, Baxter and Manton, Norton and Shepard, and Hooker. They had been forced to wrestle with untamed Nature, and, by sweat and toil, wring their bread from an ungenial soil. The war-whoop had not died out of the forests around them ere many of them had attained to early manhood, and some of them had been cradled in forts or to the echo of the sentinel's tread. But more than all, they had read the Bible; they had read of Moses and an oppressed people, of Gideon and the deliverance he wrought, of David and his defiance of the Philistine. They had pondered over Christ's words: "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that

are God's." They had received by tradition and from trustworthy records the story of the martyrs' faith and the hardships of the victims of Star Chamber and High Commission, till antipathy toward tyrants, secular or ecclesiastic, Straffords or Lauds, beat in every pulse.

And then came those irritating attempts to invade the liberties of the Colonists, which, for a whole generation, were training them for the decisive hour. Nothing shows more strikingly the Providence that was working out the result, that was training our fathers, and fitting them to respond to the appeal that was soon to be made to their endurance and their valor.

We see thus our indebtedness to them and our indebtedness also to the Providence that raised them up and prepared them for their work. Thus, we go back to the Pilgrims, to the Reformers, to the Martyrs. But we cannot stop even with the Reformation, its heroisms and its martyrs: for these were but tributaries of a stream that had been flowing all along, almost hidden, indeed, while it wound feebly through the wilderness of the Dark Ages, but bursting forth in its freshness from the fountain of Calvary, and in the early centuries giving assurance of a force and a volume which could not be suppressed. The Author of the Gospel, the Founder of Christianity, the One who gave his Apostles "a mouth and wisdom," and taught them to endure the fiery trial, is really the original source of all our political and social blessings, and only a shallow philosophy overlooks the fact.

Thus, for ourselves we must confess that "others have labored, and we have entered into their labors." Hands that have long been folded in the grave sowed the seed of which we reap the harvest. Upon us "the ends of the world are come." The tree of privilege under which

we repose, or from the loaded branches of which we pluck the richest fruit, was planted long before our birth. It is a patriarch of the forest, a Runnymede memorial, a Charter Oak of centuries, that had a history already before its spreading shadow had fringed the shores of this Western World. It sprang up long ago, when the heel of mailed warriors trampled the leaves of its bed, when the streams of devotion that poured forth from prison and catacomb, and the streams of blood that flowed in the amphitheatre, or from the block, watered its young life. Justin Martyr vindicated its right to be, and Augustine in his "City of God" registered its growth and forecast its prospects. It sent out its roots till they struck deep in the soil of centuries; and one reached out its fibres to drink from the soil where the blood of the faithful had flowed, and another twined itself about *Magna Charta*, and another about Wickliffe's Bible and the homes of the Lollards, and another drank up the dews that fell silent upon the scenes where a Claude, and a Bernard, and a Savonarola labored, and another reached afar to the banks of the Moldau and the shores of Constance to imbibe the virtue that was in the lives and the ashes of the Bohemian Reformers, and another reached toward the Swiss Cantons and the School of Calvin, and another was rooted in Wittemberg and the German forests, and others still might be found beneath the fires of Smithfield, or the flats and dykes of Holland, or about the Bass Rock and the Tolbooth of Scotland, while still another found its way to the bleak coasts of the Western wilderness and clasped the rock made sacred by the feet of the Pilgrims—thus making ages and generations tributary to its growth, till the very sap of the tree seemed the commingled life-blood of centuries, and the

fruit it bore was enriched by the flavor of every age and clime. Its bark is the sculptured register of heroic names and deeds, growing larger with each new ring that swells the giant trunk. We may read upon it names like those of Huss and Luther, and Calvin, Wickliffe and Knox, Latimer and Cranmer, Cromwell and Hampden, Sidney and Russell, Milton and Marvel, nay, of our own Elliotts and Winthrops, and Mathers and Edwardses and Hookers. Ages ago, in times of its earlier feebler growth, God's saints knelt beneath its shade, and Puritan's prayer and Covenanters' song echoed through its branches. The blasts of persecuting power wrestled in vain with its gnarled strength. The scars of its torn limbs only attest its triumphant endurance, and in each of them we may read the struggles and conflicts through which it has been spared to cast its grateful shadow about our favored homes. And never should we forget how it has sheltered us, spreading its broad, majestic arms like a shield over tent and altar, embowering freedom and justice, intellectual and moral culture, beneath its genial shade, and proving itself a Tree of Life in the Eden of our favored lot.

Who can look thoughtfully upon it without feeling a sort of homage for its venerable form and massive trunk, or having his heart stirred within him by reminiscences of its earlier prime; without acknowledging that it is Time's memorial of the good and brave, planted by God's own gracious providence, watered by prayer, cultured by self-denial, and fed from every great and heroic deed that has dropped the enriching leaves of spent endeavor thick over its spreading roots? Who can properly regard it without feeling that it calls upon us not only to cherish the memory of our fathers, but to lift up our

hearts in devout thanksgiving to Him who, by the antecedent preparation of centuries, qualified them and their materials for what they were to accomplish, and then wrought Himself in them mightily?

But of our religious privileges it is præeminently true that they have been bestowed as a free gift, and yet their price was paid by the self-denial and the sufferings of others. They come from the Great Giver, but they come through the channels of human endeavor and voluntary self-sacrifice. We have entered upon the inheritance of others' toil. How little do we realize in its enjoyment, how much it has cost! We have the Bible, and we justly count it an unspeakable treasure; yet in what agony of soul, amid what prison glooms, what sorrow and exile were many of its lines written! What fidelity, even unto death, has guarded the sacred trust! what fires of persecution have been kindled around it, and what rivers of blood have flowed to quench those fires! The hymns we sing—how many of them, like Henry Kirke White's "Star of Bethlehem," have been coined out of sighs and groans, and tears, the inward anguish of a broken and contrite heart! How many a book of devotion, like a crushed flower, gives forth the fragrance of a soul bruised under the strokes of affliction! And if the trampled shell may be said to "bleed pearls," how many a gem of piety and hallowed trust, "of purest ray serene," that sparkles upon us out of the night of worldliness and sin, has been compacted of drops from the wounds of sanctified sorrow! The great names of the sainted dead that, like stars in the firmament of the past, cheer the twilight of a journey that will end with the everlasting dawn, are largely the names of those who "have passed through great tribulation."

Is it strange that the ancient Egyptians in the blind-

ness of their heathenism, adored their river Nilus as a God? They could not trace it to its source. That source was hidden far away in a region which human enterprise had, century after century, vainly attempted to explore, and which only in our own day has been discovered to the world. Yet year after year, this wonderful stream, ceaselessly flowing, brought down to the great valley, with its periodical overflow, the sediment that enriched, and the waters that refreshed the parched fields.

And is there not another Nile on the banks of which we dwell—a Nile more wonderful than that, the origin of which was so long unknown—one that brings down to us with each returning day, instead of year, blessings by the side of which those for which the Egyptian deified his ancient river, are but straws and dust? *Our* Nile is the river of Christian truth and privilege, which rolls on by our doors, that current in which are combined streams of ancestral blessing, flowing sometimes from hidden fountains scattered over the broad tract of past ages, sometimes from the Bethels and Goshens, and juniper trees and caves and mountain sides of which we read, where holy men have knelt and prayed and communed with heaven. On and on they flow, till the fountain opened on Calvary pours forth its tide, and the united streams then, like the ancient Nilus, become a river that needs no other tributary, but rolls along down to us its golden sands, and all the freightage of the holy example and the sanctified experience and rich harvests of the ages of Christian endeavor through which it flows. Follow along its track now, or drift upon its current, and you will find it sweeping by the side of scenes of glorious memories—funeral piles and scaffolds, and the prisons of the early martyrs; along the valleys lined with glens

and caves and the catacombs that cradled and sheltered the infant church ; along scenes of exile and solitude where God's suffering saints could wake the silence of nature with prayer and song. You find its banks lined with the most memorable scenes of history, Pentecost, Patmos, Nero's prison, the Amphitheatre that rang so often with "the Christians to the lions !" the cells where the Jeromes and Bedes and Bernards in days of darkness kept fresh in the world the spirit of devotion ; the old Bethlehem church at Prague where Huss preached at the risk of his life ; Wittemberg and Geneva, and England's Smithfield, fragrant with the memory of the martyrs ; Spanish *autos de fé* the blazing fagots of which told where heaven stooped to take its loved ones to its bosom ; the bleak hills of the Grisons, where Italian exiles preached the Saviour they loved ; the villages of the Albigenes and the valleys of the Waldenses—till you feel that no river known to modern exploration or "ancient song" can boast such magnificent volume, such historical scenes, such inspiring monuments, as this glorious river of Christian privilege, "the streams whereof make glad the city of our God."

And for us this river flows. Down to our age does it come bearing the precious bequest of all the generations that have gone before. They have labored and we have entered into their labors. As we enter upon our inheritance, realizing what it cost, who does not feel almost like David when he refused the draught offered him from the well of Bethlehem—asking with genuine humanity, "Is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives ?" Surely we tread upon hallowed ground. Our harvests are gathered from soil that has been watered by patriot blood. The ashes of martyrs are beneath our

feet. Our most precious privileges have been won and guarded and transmitted to us by the sleepless vigilance of those who have fallen in their defense.

We owe to them a vast debt, but they have passed beyond the reach of our gratitude. We may cherish their memory, we may build their monuments, we may charge historian and poet to commemorate their fame, but that is all ; we only express our indebtedness, we do not cancel it ; we cannot. But is there not one for whom they were instruments, who "wrought in them mightily," who made them simply the willing distributors of his beneficence, who still lives, and who inherits all their claims as well as maintains His own ?

Most assuredly there is ; and to his cause, to his service, we may devote our energies and talents, and thus render back, not what we owe, but the testimonial of our gratitude. And shall we not do it ? Shall we not feel that in such a world as this, the recipients of such privileges as ours may not longer live to themselves ; that selfishness is crime ; that we, the heirs of the past, hold what we have in trust for generations to come ?

Ours then should be the broadest philanthropy, the most ready and cheerful charity. We should ever acknowledge the claims of the Great Giver in every object of his care to which we may be the ministers of his bounty, or to which we may extend the privileges purchased for us by no mercenary hands and in no selfish spirit. The lessons of duty which are read to us from the page of history, urging us to gratitude by the blessings that God's servants have toiled and suffered in His name to procure for us, are properly one with the second great Commandment of the law ? "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

XXXIX.

VALUE OF TIME.

“It is turned as clay to the seal.”—JOB xxxviii. 14.

AS clay to the seal, so light is said to fit itself to the object it meets. But the same also is true of time. How readily it takes the shape we give it, but, unlike the light, it keeps it. And yet the business of our life is to shape time, to furnish the mould to which it shall adapt itself. A good man's life is so many years moulded into the forms of truth, and virtue, and religion. A bad man's life is so many years allowed to take the distorted shapes of sin. Time is plastic as the clay, as the light; and yet, when once shaped, it is past being recalled to be shaped again. The great question of life is, therefore, how shall we use our time; how shape our years, hours, and moments.

To answer this question we must consider, first, the value of time as our material to work upon.

Its value is seen first from the fact that it is the necessary material of life. All that life has of good, or great, or valuable, or useful, is fashioned out of it. Time is our quarry. Out of it we bring the well-spent hour, the well-spent year, the well-spent life. Time for an intelligent being, is the equivalent of existence, and we must estimate it by the capabilities or possibilities which it involves; what it can do for character, virtue, integrity,

piety, Christian hope, beneficence. Who can tell the value of these ?

Time is the iron in the mine. What shapes you can give that iron ! You can melt, and mould it and hammer it into a thousand implements, from the nail to the steam-engine. It is true you can abuse it. You can arm the soldier with it ; give him spear, and dagger, and cannon-ball to murder with on a magnificent scale. But what could you accomplish without it ? It is the material to be fashioned, and you must have it, or you cannot have what is made of it. So with time ; that, too, is liable to perversion. Like the iron, it may be hammered into that which is useful or deadly, but without it there could be nothing like life or life's deeds.

Time is valuable, again, because of the character of what you can fashion out of it. It can be put to the most valuable shapes and uses. The iron is worth more than the clay ; the gold more than the iron ; time, more than all. There is no pearl of the sea, no diamond glittering in the mine, that can be cut into such priceless and sparkling forms of beauty as these hours and years. There is no jewel in kingly crown that shines like a well-spent hour ; none whose loss is worth the tears which that Roman Emperor Titus shed when he said, " I have lost a day." How the sculptor exults when he comes in possession of a block of the finest Parian marble, for he is thinking what his chisel can make of it. See him examine it. He looks it all over. He sees that it is of the finest grain, without a single crack or flaw. And yet what is it ? A rude, unfashioned block of stone ; without sense, feature, or expression. And yet out of that rude mass he will bring a noble statue, expression glowing on every feature ; another Washington, or another

Webster, till the marble will almost speak. So the artist values that rude block, and the world gathers to admire what he has brought out of it. But time is a nobler block for the skill of a higher art. No sculptor's hand ever chiseled on the marble any thing more than the bare image and shadow of that impress which these years can be made to bear. It is for you to make the artist's ideal a reality ; it is for you to touch his marble and make it live and breathe ; it is for you to make his fancy fact, and his imagination truth ; it is for you to take his loftiest ideal of what is great, and good, and pure, and make it live in time.

Would you know the value of the marble ? See what has been fashioned out of it. See how human skill has brought out the image of whatever the world has seen of great, or good, or noble. Would you know the value of time ? See the lives of Christian men that have been cut out of it. Less than seventy years made a Paul, a Payson, a Baxter, an Edwards. Think of that noblest gallery of art, the great assembly of the spirits of just men made perfect—every one of them a model, every one of them fashioned to the divine image. And what is all other wealth ; what other treasures of art by the side of this ? A holy life, in the sight of God, is of inestimable value. It is the only true wealth ; and if you can bring it out of the seventy years of existence, what must the material of these years be worth ? A cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple shall not lose its reward ; and how many thousand times may it, or something like it, be repeated ? Out of one hour you may bring forth some feature of penitence, or faith, or charity, or hope. What out of a year ? what out of life ?

The value of time, too, is seen in the permanence of its

results. You may stamp it as you can the wax or the clay, but the stamp made, the impression lasts forever. You can mould your days and years at will, but once moulded, they are fixed for eternity. A thing done is "cut with a pen of iron and the point of a diamond ; it is graven on the rock forever." The marble may crumble, the mountains melt, the earth burn to a cinder, but that deed outlives the final conflagration. How plastic time is on our hands. Like the clay pressed upon the seal, like the light laying itself upon every object, so time fits itself to our every will. We can make what we will of it ; we can pour it, like the molten iron, into what mould we please ; the mighty thing shapes itself to our thought. It lays itself upon the face of our mind and fits itself to every feature. Not an atom, not a hair fails of its imprint. And how that imprint lasts ! Ages do not corrode a fragment or a trace. What would a sculptor give for such a piece of marble ? He works hard and long on the hard stone to bring it into shape, and, when shaped, how the ages crumble it, turn it into a pile of dust ! A careless hand knocks off one feature or another, and the mutilated thing is thrown among the rubbish. But time is not like the marble ; what it takes it keeps—its statues are immortal.

But time is a valuable material, because what we bring out of it is our own, and ours forever. It is something that we shall carry with us when time itself is no more. Time's offspring shall outlive its sire. The image of our life hewn out of these years is our living self, our character, our conscious being—every deed or thought that has gone to make up what we are. This is the true wealth—what a man is in himself ; all else is but trappings, smoke, show. His gold and silver, houses and

lands, are only the dust on the lid that covers the treasure of himself. They are foreign to him. They are as his only for the hour ; his to weigh him down, perhaps ; his as Pilgrim's burden was, till he reached the cross. They are put into his hands just for a day, that it may be seen what he may do with them, whether he will make a plaything or an implement of labor out of them. But they are foreign to his true treasure. They are not his as his deeds and character are ; they are not his as his life is, inseparable from his being. The rich man crosses the threshold of the grave, and, in the twinkling of an eye, he becomes a beggar ; begs for a drop of cold water, too poor to buy it. The beggar goes, too, but he looks, perhaps, to the eternal throne, God's heir, and says, " My Father." The man that owns a gold mine is not rich for it ; the man that owns the world is not rich for it. Perhaps he does not own his own soul ; he has lost it, and the Devil holds the title-deed, and what is he without it ? But the man that owns the quarry of time may be rich. He may bring up the hours and days rich with beneficence and piety, every one worth more than a thousand ingots of gold. And they will be his when every thing else, even his body, feeds the worm. He will take them with him, to death, to the judgment, to heaven, to the throne of God. No one shall tear them away. The deed I have done is mine forever. You may steal my hoards, you may burn my dwelling, you may rob me of my limbs, you may chase this tenant-spirit out of its poor crumbling dwelling, and leave it no home in the flesh ; but there is a wealth that I shall carry with me, not wrapped in napkins, not stored in safes, for that deed is mine ; all that I have hewn out of time's quarry will go with me ; the things I have

done, the experience that has measured out my years. Those deeds of generosity, or self-denial, or faith, or penitence, or prayer, are my true wealth, and all else is clay. They may have been done for others, but still they are mine ; mine when I die, mine when I am judged, mine forever. They are a part and parcel of my own being ; they have grown into my immortal life ; they are the elements of my soul, the features of my spirit. They beat in every pulse of thought, and feeling and hope ; they are threads in the white angel robe, leaves of the palms that God keeps for me in heaven. Death will not despoil me of them. He will take the rags and dust that were ready to drop off. But of the righteous it is said, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, yea, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labors, and their works do follow them." I shall then be rich in God.

What a mine of wealth to work them is that of time ! What unspeakable treasures are hid in these unexplored years ; what inconceivable heights and degrees of blessedness ; what after memories of holy living and beneficent action ; what riches of penitence, humility and love ! And of all that we quarry out of this mine, nothing shall be lost, not a grain, not a fragment.

The value of time as material is seen again from the fact that it is never given but once, and consequently, when lost, can never be regained. God never gives the same moment twice. His dealing with us—His providence says, "Use it now or never." You can do as you like, but here is the alternative. It will never come again. What a value does this give to a thing, to have written on it "Now or never !" How do we call the time of securing it the golden moment ! It would be less valuable if we could make it wait on our leisure. But

time is not like silver that we can lay it by, and keep it till time of need. It must be used when given. It is like the manna that must be gathered in time, and not be stored up.

But more than this, when gone, there is no recalling it. Ask the fled year to come back. Will it? Call aloud for one of its privileges, one of its hours of mercy. Will it return? As well stand by the grave and summon out of its coffin one of death's prisoners. That year is gone and will come no more. You might redeem a captive, but "the redemption of the soul," of time, "is precious, and it ceaseth forever." There is no opportunity to barter it back. Mines hold no equivalent, treasuries no wealth that can bribe it into your hands.

What would not men sometimes give for a lost opportunity! Even in a worldly point of view it is priceless. See that man that has been thrust into the duties and responsibilities of manhood, without good habits, without education—without a distinct aim or a fixed character! He sees his error now, but it is too late. Oh, if youth would come back again! Oh, if he might but live those years over! He would give the Indies, if he had them. He would pawn an empire, if he owned it. They seem the only valuable thing that he ever had, and they are squandered. They are his lost birth-right. He is another Esau. Oh, if there were but a place for repentance! But there is none. He is a beggared bankrupt. He feels it when too late—the martyr of a lost opportunity; the victim of his own lie, when he said "Youth is rich in time."

"Youth is *not* rich in time, it may be poor;
Part with it as with money, sparing. Pay
No moment but in purchase of its worth;
And what its worth, ask death-beds; they can tell."

If any thing were wanting to set the seal on the value of time, it is this, that its loss is irrevocable. There, on his solitary island, is the poor shipwrecked sailor. Years ago, after his misfortune, there passed a vessel that might have rescued him, but he lit no signal fire. How many times since has he thought what that hour was worth! You may be that poor, forlorn object, if you let the hour of probation go.

Thus we see time's value. It is the material of life. It is the most noble of all material to work. No mine is so rich or abundant. Its results last. They are eternal. What we draw from it is our own, and ours forever—the only thing that is, and when lost, it can never be recovered.

But what is the skill necessary to improve time—to work this mine, if you please, or shape this material? Certainly, it calls for all the wisdom and skill that man has—for it is work of the highest, and holiest, and gravest art.

Time is not like clay that a careless hand may mould and crush, and no damage be done. You cannot gather this up again and put it on the wheel. It is not like the iron, that can be taken out of the imperfect mould, and put into the furnace, and so re-cast. It is not like the marble, its fractured mass replaced by a new block. It is not like gold, the value of which can be weighed by ounces. It stands alone among earth's treasures, far above them all. It should be dealt with by a wise and careful hand. What would the sculptor think to see a rude blunderer pounding away with his sledge-hammer at a noble block which he had destined for the material of his master-piece? How indignantly would he reprove such

ignorance and folly! What madness, he would say, to batter and deform such noble material! What spirit of devastation and vandalism could induce to the deed? And yet what is the blunderer on marble to the blunderer on time, carelessly dashing off the parts that might be shaped into the full proportions of a perfect frame? Is the man that lives for God and heaven to live with less reflection, and act with less care in the improvement of time than the artist bestows upon his stone? The highest artist of all is he who fashions forms of beauty, and truth, and love. All other art is poor and beggarly by the side of this. Yet go into the sculptor's studio and see him at his work. He toils for hours, all absorbed in his task, and seems scarcely to have moved a muscle. You look and see how carefully he uses his chisel. Here a mere grain, and there a grain, like an atom of dust, is removed. Hours pass, and you cannot see that he has accomplished any thing. The unpractised eye can perceive no change. But, a few months hence, that product of his skill will be the envy of kings and courts. Oh, man, thou sculptor of time, the artist reproves thee! Will he deal so carefully with the cold stone, and will you abandon to neglect and a rude hand that material which God has given, that with more than Zeuxis' boast you may say "I work for eternity?"

That artist gave toil and study under the best masters to gain his skill, before he put his hand to that masterpiece. You have not taken your first lesson of the Great Master, perhaps. You have not comprehended the first problem in the book of life. And yet you take hold of this precious, unspeakably precious material, as you might of clay or earth; you put it in all sorts of distorted shapes; you carelessly knock off the fragments of days

and years that you need to fill out the proportions of a perfect life. To make the whole mass of your years the plaything of your fancy or your pleasure, you scarce ever ask, "What is that noble thing that I can bring out of them?" You show, it may be, no anxiety to leave them behind in any other shape than a pile of rubbish.

But is it to be supposed that without study and effort, the highest results of a hallowed ambition will ever be realized? What is gained without effort? What is worth gaining? What man floats to his goal? Everywhere men put forth skill and science and muscle. Great men are great workers; holy men are.

Toil and attainment are almost identical. The scholar, the artist, the merchant, all strive if they gain. Shall the greatest boon—the greatest wealth of life, be ours by indolence?

What is it then that is needed to make the most of time? Skill, toil, wisdom, in no common measure! And what skill, what wisdom? That of the man who piles his heaps of wealth highest? That of him who can intrigue most successfully? That of the man who can absorb the most philosophy? That of the man who can spice life with the greatest variety of pleasure? No! it is none of these. It is that skill, that wisdom that is taught in the school of Christ, that can tell heaven's true coin from its counterfeit, that can appreciate the true worth of life, that can know, in fact, how to live. To have that skill you must have the help and teaching of God—the great almighty artist himself must instruct you. You must come to His word and there discover, what time is worth to the heir of eternity, what probation is given for, and how the flying moments can be made winged messengers to carry the treasures of a holy

life for you up to God's throne and store them there. You must find the die to stamp the hours with, that will stamp their true value ; you must know what your work is on earth as a sinner in God's sight, bound to the judgment, with mercy possible through a Saviour, with a day of grace hasting to its close, with a dying world around to be led by your words and deeds to the gates of life.

And then to all this knowledge, must be added application and effort. All your years will be a dead loss without it. No man has ever proved time's value, but, like holy men, he has wrestled and striven. Let time take its own course, let the years go as they may, and they will never float you to heaven. You must watch with the rudder in your hand. The Great Pilot said, " Watch and pray ! " The Apostle said give diligence to make your calling and election sure !

And once more, what is done must be done quickly. Time admits of no delay. He will not wait neglected at the door. You cannot put him off as you do others. Each moment comes and knocks, and if you open not, goes his way, and is seen no more till in the judgment, he stands up and says, " You slighted me."

Surely, our responsibility for the use of time is great and fearful. It is a solemn and weighty trust. It is even a terrible thing to live. Years of existence in a world where we may hew those years into a staircase to heaven, are of untold value. What a man does with them is an immense matter of concern, to himself, to men, to angels, to God. An eternity hangs upon it. A judgment will be decided by it.

The results of a right use of time will be immensely glorious. Only see what they are on earth. Even in the short span of human life, see what some men have

become. They have made time a vast mine out of which they have brought all the treasures of cultivated intellect, of hallowed piety, of generous and self-denying benevolence. They have built themselves up by the grace of God, "to the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus." They have walked the earth they blessed, majestic to all ages, in the consciousness of highest and holiest aspirations, divine patterns before men. We wreath their names with blessing. We bless God that they lived. There is nothing on earth so beautiful, so grand, so lovely as finished Christian character, radiant with every virtue, featured after the divine image. Go to the grandest works of human skill and art, the piles of a magnificent architecture, the temples that were the work of centuries, the galleries of painting and sculpture rich with works of earthly immortality, and what are all those dead things to the magnificent temple of the human soul, on whose front broadly traced is read the plain inscription, "God dwells within?"

But the results of an abuse of time are terrible. You see this even on earth. Pile up all the epithets of misery that human language possesses, and they are nothing but an inch measure to the mountain of guilt and woe that abused time flings on the remorseful, agonizing soul of the confirmed transgressor. A hardened heart—harder than the nether millstone—that the love of Calvary cannot melt, nor the thunderings of Sinai rend, is made in a less space than seventy years. No plummet of human thought can fathom the untold depths of misery which is reached sometimes in life's short span. The hideous and devilish features of a Herod or a Nero are cut for eternity by the chiselings of a few short years. What images of distortion and enormous crime rise up out of

the graveyard of the past at the mention of some names that were once the names of men! As they start up around us we seem to be standing in the midst of the sculpture gallery of hell. The imprint of Satanic art on every feature speaks the terrible skill with which the great master can imbue his disciples. And all reaches its horrid perfection in less than three-score years and ten! In so short a time the character is fixed like the iron cooled in the mould, to hold forever its flawed and distorted shape. There may be only that short space between the awful result and the light, thoughtless innocence of the child that plays to-day about your hearthstone.

The hour to begin to improve time should be the earliest possible. Delay is madness, folly, suicide. Many a man converted in his later years feels sadly that his life is but a fragment. And how many want even that fragment!

XL.

W A S T E D T I M E .

“Redeeming the Time.”—EPH. v. 16.

“**M**ILLIONS of money for an inch of time,” exclaimed Elizabeth, the gifted but ambitious Queen of England, on her dying bed. Unhappy woman! Reclining on her couch, with ten thousand dresses in her wardrobe, a kingdom at her feet—but all now valueless—she shrieks in anguish, but in vain, for an inch of time. Her three-score years and ten are gone, and an empire cannot buy one moment back. It is too late.

What an impressive lesson! How significant alike to queens and beggars, to princes and subjects! What is to be done, must be done while time is ours. And if we linger, like the beggared queen, we may wait too long. To waste time is to store up remorse. To yield it to sin, is spiritual suicide.

Time may be sadly abused! It is like a blank check. One man may twist it up to light a taper, and another with the patient fingers of toil and duty may trace upon it lettering that will make it current for uncounted gold. It is like a painter's canvas, on which you may portray a man or a reptile, a John or a Judas. It is the warp of life, into which you may weave threads of shoddy or threads of gold. Waste time, and it matters little what

else you economize. Spendthrift of this, you are bankrupt forever. The practical wisdom of this life is to discern its value and use it well. Those years when we can earn the least are often most precious. The hours of childhood trace the features of manhood, and sow the harvests of age. Wasted days are often like broken links in the chain of life, leaving it to fall into useless heaps of rusty iron. A neglected opportunity of study sends one that might have been a Paley or a Brougham down to the ranks of ignoble indolence or toilsome drudgery. Declining a calling or a business that demands energy may prove the momentary mistake that expands with years, till it casts the whole life in shadow. To seize the right moment, or to put every moment to its right use, constitutes the grand strategy of life's campaign.

How many thousands yet in the vigor of life can go back, in memory, to hours which they would give bitter tears to recall! But those hours are beyond recovery! There is no redemption for them. The past, more relentless than the grave, never gives up its dead. There is no resurrection of a wasted privilege. The hours that folly has imprisoned never come back, except in haunting memories, from the vaults of darkness. Summer birds migrate back and forth with the seasons; but the flying moment never turns back, but hastens on with its record to the bar of God. Spring will clothe the dead earth with new life, but the dead year never blooms again. You may advertise for lost moments, but none ever answered the advertisement of a "lost day." The time that has fled, is irrevocable for evermore.

It is this fact that helps to invest it with such unutterable value. It cannot be exchanged or transferred, or redeemed, or retained. You may pawn it for a toy, but the

treasuries of Kings will not pay its ransom. You may fling it into the abyss of folly, as you would a pebble into the sea, but all the drag-nets of human art can never bring it back. Like the key that might have unlocked the iron safe stored with treasure—it is thrown away, and no Chubb or Hobbs can devise its duplicate.

There are some crowded graveyards where coffin has been piled on coffin, till the first buried seems trebly buried. So it is with the crowded graveyard of our years. Those years will never be ours again. All that we can do is to plant the flowers of memory over their dust, and yet every flower will wither or change to a thorn if its roots strike down to the dust, of years of folly and of sin.

Such considerations as these forbid every thoughtful man to trifle with time, to jest it away, or heedlessly surrender it at fashion's or fancy's call. It is one of those few possessions which are granted us, which make all the show and glitter which distinguish the rich from the poor, and the peer from the peasant, of but small account. Masters of time, rightful owners by the rightful use of it, we are more than the lords of acres. Rich in time, by hoarding the moments in duty done, one may look down on Rothschilds and Astors. This is our princeliest heritage and most precious capital. We can invest it in industry, study, application, charity. We can carve the hours into deeds which our children shall bless. We can build up the years into well executed plans of beneficence and devotion, holy temples of the heart within which the sacred presence of the Spirit shall abide.

But it is as related to eternity that time assumes its highest value. This is our probationary state. As the

fleeting days of childhood give shape to manhood and its destinies, so the years of time shape the eternal future of the soul. How insignificant seem the little grains of sand! Yet you see them heaped up and framed to become the mould in which the molten iron is poured. So with the grains of time. Whether you design it or not, you are turning them into the mould in which liquid thought, feeling and purpose crystallize, till they are like the iron or the granite. A wasted, squandered day is not simply so much reduction of spiritual existence and activity. It is a flaw in the mould. Its imprint on the character is imperfection and deformity. Years of sin are not simply so much offset against the balance of a reformed life. They are such a portion of the mould itself broken up.

Bend the twig and you incline the tree. One moment's pressure on the sapling may do more to injure it or shape it, than tempests in after years. No arithmetic can compute the results that must flow from an error now. Each of these moments may be the pivot on which a world to come is poised. Thousands in the agonies of despair have been able to look back to some critical juncture, some memorable moment, on the issue of which the scope of after years depended. There, just at that point, a single moment seems like the turning point of destiny. It might have opened the door to hope and heaven. It might have been made the gateway to eternal blessedness. It might have been the first round of a Jacob's ladder. It might have marked the point where, turning on his track, the penitent sinner should have been greeted by that gratulation of angels over the new-born soul—"behold he prayeth."

Is such a moment precious? Who would run the risk

of flinging it away like chaff, of dissolving such a jewel in the wine cup, or leaving it to swell the rubbish of a wasted life? Such a moment comes to all. It marks the crisis of the soul's destiny. To you it may have come to-day, and it may never come again. Yet every moment that leads to it, or draws it on, is also precious. Each day is preparing you for it, to use it or abuse it. These tickings of the clock, these beatings of the pulse, these noiseless swingings of the pendulum of time, hasten the striking of the hour of doom. The impression of every scene, of every lesson, of every folly is pushing you on to some decision—whether you will serve God or not, whether you will consecrate your life to its true end or not. On, on rolls the tide of hours, days and years, swifter and stronger in current, setting more resistless toward the cataract. Moment flows into moment, melts into the mass and is lost to view, but every drop swells the flood that bears you on—that presses you to the final issue.

And then think of wasted time—for all is wasted, so long as the great end of life is overlooked. What are feasts and fortunes and honors, if God is not glorified? What is all industry, if you give not diligence to make your calling and election sure? What is all business, if you are never busy for God, never busy to lay up treasure in heaven? The sands of the desert are barren, but what is their curse to that of the time-grains of a life given over to vanity, frivolity and sin? Over this Sahara-waste sweep the burning blasts of remorse. Over it no fragrance breathes, within it no flowers bloom. Only the life that is devoted to God, that breathes in prayer and exults in praises, that garners the hours and coins them all with the stamp of duty, with the image

and superscription of their great proprietor—only such a life is worthy the name. Any other is but a living death. Any other is but the slow steady deliberate murder of time—the sacrifice of probation and privilege on the altar of mammon or lust.

How long then before you will begin truly to live? An uncertain future makes a day, an hour, too long to wait. And even if the future was certain, it would be madness to live any part of it in a course of deeds that we shall want undone. Undone! It cannot be. Tears cannot wash the past out. It is cut in the rock forever. There stands the soul's changeless image. You cannot re-form, or new model, or correct it. Suppose it is a Juggernaut, a Mammon, a Gallileo, a Simon Magus! Will it do to wait till it becomes such before you begin to mould and shape your years to save them from such perversion?

You will find it a hard, an almost hopeless task,

“To improve the remnant of your wasted span,
And having lived a trifier, die a man.”

“’Tis well if looked for at so late a day,
In the last scene of such a senseless play,
True wisdom will attend your feeble call,
And grace your actions, ere the curtain fall.
Souls that have long despised their heavenly birth,
Their wishes all impregnated with earth—
For three-score years employed with ceaseless care
In catching smoke and feeding upon air—
Conversant only with the ways of men,
Rarely redeem the short remaining ten.”

If they do, what remains is only like scattered freight picked from a wreck, the poor sad memorials of life's great disaster, full of tears and vain regrets. Will you take them as your sum of life?

XLI.

THE PSALM OF LIFE.

“Making melody in your heart to the Lord.”—*EPH. v. 19.*

A SHORT time since it was my privilege to hear some hundreds of children sing. With life and spirit they sang the “Forward, march!” and in mellower tone and with sweeter pathos, “There’s a light in the window for thee.”

It was, indeed, a privilege to hear them. There was a charm in that multitude of young voices harmonizing together. I was called upon to address them, and I told them, as the most appropriate thing that came to my mind, that I wished they would each make their life a song of praise, so that their words, and deeds, and thoughts, and plans should harmonize together, and that would make the true Psalm of Life.

The Psalm of Life! or life a psalm of praise to God, rendering to Him in grateful devotion the true harmony of soul, of all its faculties, and thoughts, and acts, through all the years of probation! Is not this the standard, the Divine standard, at which all should aim? Does it not express that which, if realized, would answer for us the true end of our being? Does it not answer to the highest and noblest ideal which the soul can cherish? And what is sin, in all its forms, in all its variety of shapes, but just the discord which disturbs the harmony; some-

times in a single note ; sometimes in whole stanzas ; sometimes in the whole song ? It puts others out. It jars and grates, as it were, on the ear. It makes all that hear it uncomfortable. It destroys all harmony. It deals with the music of a holy life, or of a pure society, as the earthquake does with a fair landscape, covering it with confusion and rubbish !

To secure the true divine harmony in the heart, the life must be consistent with itself, the thoughts with the words, the words with the deeds, and all of them with one another, and with the law and will of God. Nothing short of this will ensure a perfect and harmonious life.

So to social order and happiness it is essential that the views and feelings of men should accord. Not that they should be precisely alike in faculty, or education, or apprehensions of things. They may differ here as the different parts vary in music, and yet there shall be, if only each, true to the keynote of Christian love, executes his part, a higher melody.

But to secure this result, each individual note must be correct. What if it be a little thing. A slight variation produces discord. And hence it is that to the general order, and harmony, and happiness we must train each thought and utterance of the individual soul.

The heart of man may be compared to an organ, its keys swept by the fingers of each individual will. Some with rude hands, finding it disordered and untuned, force it to send forth harsh and grating tones. Some pour forth from it the anthems of praise, and some the peals of holiday music, while others make it breathe the thunder-gusts of passion, or roll to the music of the devil's march.

Where the thoughts and words do not accord, you have

the incarnate discord of the deceiver and the hypocrite. When a man means one thing and says another, there is an incongruity that arrests attention and invites criticism. You can put no faith in him. You may pity, but you despise him. His own soul jars within itself.

When the words and deeds do not accord, there you have the discord of false professions and false promises. A man says one thing and does another. He speaks fair and acts foul. He puts on the sacred mantle of truth in order to deceive and betray. Or he is simply reckless of truth, and feels no longer bound by promises. Such a man is discord incarnate in the knave, the cheat, the intriguer, the liar. His presence in society is a constant jar, and he has no peace within his own soul—no music there. There can be no melody in the heart.

But more than this, a man's aims ought to harmonize with one another, or he will have the discord of restlessness and discontent! Some men would have objects which they cannot attain at once. They are like children that want to keep the orange and eat it at the same time. They want wealth, and yet do not want to toil for it. They want honor and respect, and the reputation of usefulness, and yet they want ease and indolence. Some would be at once patrons of incongruous things. They aim at forbidden fruit, and yet would retain an honest purpose. Their life is a perpetual discord, disquieting themselves and others at the same time.

In order to harmony, life must have one grand aim, which shall act as leader, and with which all others as subordinate shall accord. Else it will be a Babel of incongruous sounds. It will be like a mob instead of an army, without an acknowledged commander. There will be no order, no music in it. Who can doubt—who that

can answer the first question, What is the chief end of man?—what that leading aim that is to control all others should be?

But the life, also, should be one consistent whole. Every added year, and day, like a new stanza, should be set to the same music. It is certainly well for a bad man to become good, but it is better that there should be no need of change. What a terrible sentence that is, "His bones are full of the sins of his youth." And yet how often it is true! Those early years were a wild, mad glee. The later ones are a saddened dirge. Sometimes a man is lured by one thing, and sometimes by another. Now he would be a Pharaoh, and now a saint; now a Solomon, and now a hermit; now a hero, and now a pleasure-seeker. Now he would pray, and again he would swear. Now he would be a reformer, a stern censor of morals, and again he would plead the cause of immorality and license. He would praise truth, and yet betray her; commend honesty, yet cheat himself; extol religion, yet trample it under foot. This is to make life a discord, a Babel, a Bedlam; to shut up together in the same limits the lamb and the wolf, the dove and the vulture, the deer and the tiger.

There are some lives that are like a combination of acid and alkali. The diverse elements neutralize one another. There are principle and passion, generosity and revenge, pity and rage, kindly sympathies and miser lusts. There are some whose incongruous views and schemes remind us of the toes of the golden-headed image of prophetic vision—a mixture of iron and of miry clay. They build, perhaps, on the rock, but with hay, wood, stubble. Their life is a disjointed affair, a mass of fragments, a heap of commingled lumber and brush-

wood, put into shape. They have pursued one thing and then another, never satisfied, never reaching any thing, mixing up, in fact, snatches of scores of songs with an incongruity that would be ludicrous if it was not so disastrous.

But the true life is that which will harmonize in all its parts, so that, as timber fits to timber, deed will fit to deed and aim to aim, to complete one perfect whole, and like the varied notes of music, each shall have its place and contribute to the melody. Is not this the just ideal?

Yet the life may be consistent in itself and yet not in harmony with the will and providence of God. But this also is essential. Men like to be able to put forth the claim to consistency; but there may be an unholy as well as a holy consistency. A desperately wicked man will naturally be regarded as more consistent than one just wavering between good and evil. Satan, doubtless, is a model of consistency. Every added year of wickedness, like an iron harrow dragged over a field, leaves fewer green things behind it to check the uniform desolation. As habits become more rigid, as the purposes become more fixed, character approximates to the changeless features of an iron statue, and takes upon itself the immobility of desperation. Consistency, merely, may be consistency in evil. It may be the harmony of sin. It may be the dead level of depravity. It may be a uniform blackness, unbroken by a ray of light. Deed may fit to deed, word to word, thought to thought, and each to the other, so that life shall be in warp and woof one uninterrupted, seamless cerement of sin and death. There shall be no broken thread of penitence, no gentle shade of pity, no brightness of hope.

A man may thus be in awful consistency with himself, but in discord with God and truth, and the laws of holiness and heaven. He may come into perpetual collision with these, and be in conflict with all with which he should harmonize. The whole realm of God's providential government, is to the thoughtful ear an immense organ, ever pealing forth in thunder-tones the law of Sinai, the notes of holiness, always proclaiming, "the way of the transgressor is hard," and in its undertones you may hear the echoes of the approaching judgment. A life that is not holy and godly jars with these. In plain words, the harmony of life requires, that it should fit into the Divine system—demands that it shall not run athwart the laws of eternal truth and justice. If it does so, in ever so small a matter, it breaks in upon the holy order of God's government, it grates in the universal anthem that goes up to heaven from the Creator's works.

We see, then, that there can be no perfect melody in the heart while sin is there. If word is discordant with word, or deed with deed, or thought with thought; if one speaks what he does not mean, or professes what he does not practice, or promises what he does not fulfill; if the elements of his moral being are at war with one another, the passions with the reason, the appetites with the conscience; if, in a word, the psalm of life has not been tuned to the key-note of the Gospel; if our uniform and practical purpose of consecration to God does not bear down all before it; if the aims and aspirations of the soul do not all accord in "glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will to men," there can be no proper melody in the heart nor the soul.

But let this be the case, and that melody is the legitimate and necessary result. Let the soul, by nature at

discord with itself, with conscience, with its condition, with the laws of holiness and God, be converted, so that selfish will is subdued, so that sin is abandoned, so that God is loved, and His law becomes a delight ; let the soul, purified by the power of atoning blood, and attuned to the praise of Divine Grace, be brought to feel that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, that walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit," and then, instead of a cage of tigers and screech-owls, it shall be the orchestra of the Divine Spirit, where all the faculties and affections of the soul shall unite in the chorus of "Holiness to the Lord." The grace of God shall breathe through it, and wake from its trembling strings a music beyond that of *Æolian* harps. There will be a sweet concert of thought and deed ; an un murmuring submission to God's providence ; a holy joy in doing His will ; and those outpourings of Christian love, in kindly and charitable purpose, which are the very music to which God's ministering angels, on their earthward mission, clap their joyous wings.

A holy life is more than a Beethoven's strains or a Handel's "Messiah." There is a glorious music in it unmatched by the masters of human song. The noted organ of Freiberg is said to transport the listener and make him forget all else while he listens—now to the roar of the cataract, and now to the thunder-peal of the storm, and again to the rippling music of the waves as they die away upon the strand. But that organ of the human soul which can pour forth the trumpet song of Miriam, or the lyrics of David, or breathe forth the loving words of the Patmos exile, or the heavenward aspirations of the Apostle to the Gentiles ; which finds expression in the meekness of Moses, or the devotion of Isaiah,

or the heroism of Judson, or the fervor of Baxter, or the humanity of a Nightingale, a Dix or a Howard—this organ of the human soul, its keys touched by the fingers of the Divine Spirit, its music the chants and anthems of heaven itself, its harmony, sweeter than sweetest incense, ascending to the listening ear of the Lord God of Hosts, is more wonderful than any whose keys have been shaped by human fingers, more glorious than any that far-famed minster or cathedral can boast.

And yet in the lowliest lot, and by the humblest fire-side, where the luxuries of earthly music are unknown, there may be such outbreathing of sweet content and gentle charity as shall make the loss of other music unfelt, and shall invite the ear of angels to listen to the song ; for there are deeds, and affections, and heavenward aspirations too grand for note-book or organ peal—a music of life infinitely above the reach of the highest art. If God Himself dwells within the soul, it shall be full of heaven, and heaven is more than music.

“ A life of duty lends to all it sees
The beauty of its thought ;
And fairest forms and sweetest harmonies
Make glad its way unsought.
In sweet accordancy of prayer and praise
The singing waters run ;
And sunset mountains wear in light above
The smile of duty done.
Sure stands the promise ; ever to the meek
A heritage is given ;
Nor lose they earth who single-hearted seek
The heritage of heaven.”

