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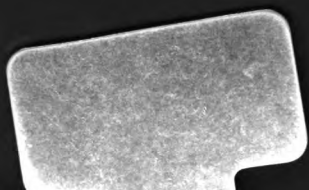
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THE
TRUE LIGHT
AND OTHER
SERMONS.

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AND OTHER
SERMONS.

BY THE
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ALLESTREE, DERBY.

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Darkness.

B

DARKNESS.

GENESIS 1. 2.

"And darkness was upon the face of the deep."

HOW involved in obscurity is the early history of our globe ! This our earthly dwelling-place has its foundation in depths of solemn darkness ! Some six thousand years ago, as we count, this mystic building was reared for the habitation of man. The countless ages that must have previously run their strange career we know nothing about, except so far as the deductions of reason inform us from those strange relics of life, so many, so varied, so marvellous, which we find in the museum of darkness.

He, the Great Creator, ineffable Light, must have been everywhere, always ; but how He was pleased to exercise His Wisdom, Power, and Goodness, we know not. Infinite series of varied marvels, it is most likely, gave glorious variety to the realms of His dominion. We must leave all shrouded in darkness, and, taking our stand on the threshold of Time, be introduced to

the world. The introduction is uninviting—"darkness upon the face of the deep!"

Since that time how many creatures have been called into the Light of Life; how many have retired into the Darkness of Death; and now we take our turn in the theatre, and play our little part. We shall soon quit the stage, and, retiring behind the scenes, make room for another company.

Author of our being! Controller of our destiny! Hear us when we pray; and through all the dark passages of our present condition, guide us to the Light and to the Glory of thy Presence. Amen.

Space is dark, philosophers assure us; and could we wing our way outside the ring of light that belts our world, the trackless path would cross intensely frigid plains of outer darkness. Oh, how do the angels speed? How do they ply their wondrous ministry, and bring and take freightage of mercy and of grace? How do the beams of light force their passage through the mighty void, and here and there impinge on floating worlds? How do the chains, the mystic chains of gravitation, hold the worlds together, and stretch themselves all tense, across infinitude? How does the voice of prayer and praise reach the ear of the Almighty, and not die out, with all its echoes, in the fearful transit? Who can tell?—Not one!

The chemistry of Creation; the attributes of Time and Space; the marvels of Motion and physical Power; the number of Worlds, their mutual dependence and

relationship ; the unfathomable depths of Eternity and Infinitude ; the Thrones, the Dominions, the Principalities, the Powers many, of spiritual Beings ; the Palace, the Retinue, the Attributes, the Glory of the Great King, the Triune Jehovah ;—here are subjects of thought—here is matter of reverend contemplation ! Take off thy shoes from thy feet, for the place where thou standest is holy ground. We, living atoms of motive dust, can think, and feel, and hope, and pray. May we see, amid the darkness of everything, the Spirit of God, like a holy Dove of Light and Life, descending from heaven, and abiding upon us.

The Bible is given for a moral purpose. We do not seek for philosophy and science, popularly so called, within its pages. The darkness upon the face of the deep, noted in the text, may well be taken to symbolize ignorance concerning the first formation, and after phases, of the matter whereof our globe is made. Let us explore, let us study and surmise, but let us not cast away those restraints of necessary ignorance by which we find ourselves bound : they may help to gird up the loins of our mind for other and nobler purposes ; and when we hear the voice of God—"Hitherto shalt thou come and no further," as we tread on the outer verge of the shores of knowledge, may we stop, and bow the head and worship, hoping inwardly that at some future time the revelation will be more complete, and that as we now know only in part, then we may know even as also we are known.

The physical darkness that settled on the mighty deep, before the Grèat Builder of all things began to rear the superstructure of man's house, that darkness was as nothing, compared with Ignorance, and Sorrow, and Sin, and Death, which afterwards settled on the deep of human nature. Darkness is repulsive, constituted as we now are ; it is the land of Fear and of Apprehension ; we strive by all artificial methods to overcome its power, to ward off its presence ; hence a nomenclature has been borrowed to express Sin, its origin and its work. How the power of moral darkness forced itself into this world in opposition to the Light of Life ; how a great Spirit headed mighty and numerous hosts, and gave battle to the Son of God ; how the fell ravages of Shame, and Grief, and Misery, and Death, and the Grave, in a word, how Sin gloomed horribly the fair face of Creation ; how all these things were or were done, is involved in impenetrable darkness. Oh, sad hap and woeful accident, that so foul a leprosy as the leprosy of sin should seize on man, eat into his very heart, and defile his dwelling-place ; that it should be so is darkness to us ; that it should finally result in the glory of God is darkness to us also.

The Scriptures, if they do not directly inform us concerning the author of this darkness ; if they do not chronicle the principalities and powers of darkness, or tell us their number, or their influence ; if they do not unfold to us the secret agencies, whereby a moral virus affects physical agents ; if they do not say in plain

words—Thus and thus it was, and is ; yet nevertheless they lead us on, to gather by inference strange and varied facts concerning all these things. Death is mining all ; and darkness, darkness that may be felt, curls, and floats, and insinuates itself, like mists and clouds over the landscape, through more than one-half of our mystic life and nature.

Man's first disobedience and fall was accomplished in a sinister way ; it was a deed of darkness. How the Evil One assumed the form of a serpent ; how he assailed our mother Eve, and our father Adam, and brought death into the world and all our woe ; how, from that time to this, he has held on his way, working in darkness everywhere ; one while eclipsing even the Sun of Righteousness ; and ever, in mildest influence, causing shadows to fall on the soul from the clouds of Doubt ; how he will make many a desperate struggle yet before he is thrust into outer darkness—we cannot tell. These matters are all brought before us in the Holy Scriptures, in more or less clearness, and are therefore proper subjects of study.

If men can scale the heavens by thought and intellect, and watch the marshalled hosts in their ordered march across the fields of space ; if they can dig through the strata of the earth, and pick up, with keenest interest, relics of creatures that in the almost infinite recesses of the past lived and moved ; can they not also address themselves to the task of mounting up, by faith and affection, to the abodes of just men made

perfect, and Angels, and Cherubim and Seraphim, and God ? Can they not, by painstaking study, dig through the strata of intelligence contained in books, down to the very granite of knowledge in Holy Scripture, and see footprints of the Creator, and signs of grace, and life, and salvation, and, casting away the works of darkness, hold fast the tokens of Light and Life ? Surely they can if they will.

Satan is the great power of darkness. Ignorance, and Misery, and Sin, and Death, work not at random. Agents and agencies peculiar to darkness, the great prince of darkness orders and wields. The prince of the power of the air ; the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience ; the God of this world, is the framer and furnisher of the strongholds, and flimsy dwelling-places, of Sin and Vanity. Associates he must have many ; a long and dark catalogue may be gathered from Scripture ; powers of darkness, aiders and abettors of Satan ;—Beelzebub, Moloch, Baal, Ashtoreth, Mamon—how many more ! Our own mother tongue will readily furnish us with words of a dark meaning, leading us instinctively to agencies of darkness, and enemies of Light and Truth—Deceit, Cruelty, Shame, Pain, Death ! It is no sign of wisdom, but rather of Slumber and of Folly, to give utterance to these and like words again and again, and pass on carelessly, as if there was no meaning in them, or as if that meaning had no bearing on the character and condition of mankind.

We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and yet how terrible a power has idolatry exercised. Who gave it that power? What is that power? Of course we know that God is supreme; but He does not *seem* to be supreme at present. We believe firmly, that Jesus Christ will destroy the works of darkness; but that Sun of Righteousness has not yet dissipated the moral darkness of our globe. The war is raging around us and within us, and although, as Christians, we are satisfied concerning the final result, we expect to be overcome in some of the turns of warfare; the troop of infirmities, the band of diseases, the company of fears, will be too much for us, and the King of Terrors will force us all to pass under his yoke. We wrestle not against flesh and blood merely, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in heavenly places. We need armour of light indeed to defend ourselves against the powers of darkness.

In whatever direction we turn our thoughts, darkness in every phase and condition, from the moral chaos of inexplicable sinfulness, to the floating cloud and flimsy shadow of sorrow and of doubt, meet our gaze. Not more surely does Night, again and again, let fall the dark curtain around the sleeping place of our outer man, than do Ignorance, and Pride, and Sin, clothe our inner man with vestments of spiritual slumber and death. Egypt, buried in darkness that was felt, when they saw not one another, neither rose any from his

place for three days ; what was this in the past, to India, for an instance, now, steeped in moral and spiritual slumber and death, a more fearful darkness that we Christians, in an island of light, see, and feel, and grope in ? The crowds around the golden image of the eastern monarch, at sound of music casting themselves all prostrate, save three, before that symbol of darkness ; what was that compared with the myriads now, who hasten to be rich through devious pathways of vice, of cunning, and of crime ? A hundred years at the most will carry us all out and bury us in darkness ; but what of that ? say too many—let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die ! A vague report of another gold field will be conveyed by letters, and papers, and word of mouth, all round the world speedily, as light of heaven is conveyed along the mystic pathways of ether. One would think that a mere gleaming promise of eternal life, of peace, in everlasting glory, would be enough to wake up the slumbering energies of a noble though prostrate race, and they would never rest satisfied until they had tracked that beam to its source ; but no ! and why ? Because men love darkness rather than light, their deeds being evil. Darkness is our normal state.

Who is this that cometh from the secret mansions of Sin, like a thief in the night, stealing silently along ? The powers of man quail and droop before him. The stout and the strong strive in vain to free themselves from his grasp. When he cries havoc, fear unnerves

all. The faculties of mind and body collapse. Before him all faces do gather blackness. Death is busily engaged in reaping his harvest, and storing it away in the dark granary of the grave. The prince of the power of the air is in alliance. The mirth of tabrets ceaseth ; the noise of them that rejoice endeth ; all the merry-hearted do sigh. Men look hither and thither, expecting the foe in every quarter. Who is this that rudely assails the comfort and peace of mankind ? It is the pestilence that walketh in darkness ! Oh, if Death did but do his work in even pace ; reap the world, in regular course, once in every thirty years, we might calculate with sufficient exactness the period of his visitation, and demean ourselves accordingly. Why is he allowed to hire the mercenary bands of plague and disease, and sally forth at every turn into the peaceful regions of health and joy, glooming the land with lamentation, and mourning, and woe ? We cannot tell why it is, but the dark fact stares us in the face. Aaron standing between the dead and the living, and the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, are suggestive enough without taxing our knowledge, or our memory, for further proof.

Famine again, is a heavy cloud of darkness ; when it settles on a land, how does fell havoc swoop, like bird of prey, on the mighty quarry of human nature ! Hunger and thirst are great exactors, and when the supplies are cut off, how terrible is the chafing wretchedness of want ! Call to mind some of the exigencies

of this fearful scourge of darkness ; men casting lots who shall next be slain ; or the delicate woman yielding up her child for food !

But the fearful scourge of all, that with horrid glut of cruelty, wretchedness, pain, and death, preys upon the children of men, is *War*. Pestilence and Famine come to us stayed and tempered by the providence of God, but war is goaded on by the passions of men ; and as, in mountain heights and rocky dells, the sound of the horn rings again and again by the marvellous mimicry of mocking echo ; so when the tocsin of war is sounded, round and about the mountains of Pride and Passion, through the rocky dells and defiles of Prejudice, of Spite, and wakened memory of old grudges, does the fearful sound swing and float. Sign of Darkness that men, Christian men, should be found at such a time to exult in heart, and exclaim—*Now comes Glory*.

The mere rumour of war fills the mind of the true philanthropist with sorrow and dismay. He knows that to clear the platform on which mighty nations shall show their deeds of prowess and of skill, Commerce, Civilization, Refinement, Humanity, and Religion, must stand back ; and when those mighty nations are near neighbours, rivals in greatness and in power, charged with all the fearful appliances of modern warfare, the devout Christian earnestly prays the Great God of Heaven, the Lord of Hosts, to forefend a collision.

God of nations ! keep England safe ! keep England Christian ! keep England in peace !

The catalogue of battles, registered in the history book of nations, I could not read to you, had I it at hand, it would take up too much time. To calculate the number of slain, mutilated, bereaved and afflicted, by the direct agencies of war, would tax the powers of common arithmetic. What crowds will spring up, in the great resurrection, from the mighty Golgotha of horrid war !

But Pestilence, Famine, War, and all the other rolling clouds of fearful darkness that shroud the heavens in perpetual succession, these are almost as nothing compared with that most subtle and spiritual darkness, which glooms the heavens of the soul. Even in the Christian Church, what errors, schisms, heresies, and superstitions, each beginning at first like a little cloud no bigger than a man's hand, have caused darkness terrible to settle on the fair fields of Christendom, one after another, or on all at once. Darkness must be indigenous, and fumes of ignorance, passion, vice, and sin, are ever rising from the seething cauldron of human nature.

The realm of Christendom hath been greatly enlarged during the last fifty years ; but how small a portion of our globe doth its limiting lines yet embrace. Go over the border into the land of outer darkness and the shadow of death. Oh what habitations of cruelty ! What orgies of shame ! What foul crimes ! What

fearful ignorance cast their mighty barriers to impede your onward progress. As they that sleep sleep in the night, and they that be drunken are drunken in the night, so the countless hordes that roam over the arid deserts of heathendom are drugged with sin, and thrown into sleep akin to death by the great power of darkness, who is tyrant ruler there. Surely it is our bounden duty, surely we esteem it a sacred privilege, to use every means in our power to send the light of life to lands of darkness. And what a favoured position we hold amongst the nations ; our trade and commerce, our enterprize and skill, search into every nook and corner of the world ; and shall we not bid all these take the lamp of Christian truth, and place it on a firm stand, that all that are in the house of our world may see the light ? If we do not thus, wherefore do we not ? Why do we falter ? What palsies our arm, or dulls the action of our heart ? Once again let me lead you to look on a darkness worse than any I have hitherto mentioned, which, if it fall on us, woe worth the day that we were born !

Two lights may be so constituted, that when they are brought into contact, they will destroy each other, and produce darkness. Each one separately shines with power and vivid force ; but, as if burning with envy and malice, they cannot be brought into partnership, but devour each other. This of natural lights. But stranger still, that in moral and spiritual matters, the elements of character in some men's hearts should be

so peculiar as to turn light into darkness ! How this is who can tell ? But that so it is sometimes must be regarded as a certain verity. The suggestion is conveyed to us by the mouth of our Lord —“If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness !”

The Prince of Peace unsheathed a sword that should wage war to the end of time ; but a war, not of one nation against another nation,—“I am come,” such are His words, “I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.” The Light of the World sometimes causes a darkness to supervene that shall fearfully confound the recipients of its power ;—“For judgment I am come into this world,” such are his ominous words, “that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind.”

Beyond this world,—*where* nobody knows,—is the fearful realm of outer darkness ; the many roads that lead to it are Pride, Folly, Ignorance, Unbelief, or, in a word,—the great broad road of sin. Crowds are travelling here, there is no doubt of the awful fact. The Prince of Darkness has scouts and convoys innumerable to attend on the wayfaring myriads. Oh it is as real a progress as that which we actually experience between our birth and our death ! Can any men smile at the mention of it ? Can they treat with pity or

contempt the believers in such a journeying? If so, these afford the fearfulest witnesses to my mind of the blinding power of evil. Oh, my brethren, where are *we* going? Whither does our inner man bend his steps? How do we shape our course? Created, preserved, redeemed, christened, is it possible that any one of us can move on carelessly, believing at the same time that we are heirs of immortality?

“Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord.”

Eight.

LIGHT.

GENESIS 1. 3.

“And God said, Let there be light.”

IGNORANCE is a great stumbling-block in the way of our progress. Prejudice, welded with ignorance, is a great barrier, over which crowds never pass. Enterprise is palsied when self-conceit bolts the door of our heart. This wonderful little world of ours; this gem of heaven's jewels; if I may so say, a small signet ring on one of the fingers of the Almighty; how little do we know of it! How little do we study it! The materials of which it is composed; its shifting robes of cloud, and air, and sea; its varied peoples, from the tiny insect buried in minuteness, to the mighty behemoth, moving like a mountain giant; how little do we know of all these! Had we the wisdom of Solomon, and the lifetime of Methuselah, we should have more than enough to do in the study of this small book of nature. If we take but a step outside our world, how are we speedily lost through ignorance — the play of

the sunbeam, the attraction of gravitation, the messages of prayer, the ministry of angels, the Presence of God, how are we baffled! A mere suggestion concerning some of these things is often met by the smile, or disregard, or contempt of men. How are we fallen! We go here and there, and to a distance, seeking a novelty, whilst crowds of novelties close at home, in us and around us, are ready for inspection, but we pass them by.

Science is illimitable, but *our* science is limited. Moot a subject out of the bounds of conventional science, and then watch the movements of philosophers and savans. When the great Philosopher and Philanthropist, the Light of the World, made His appearance, doing strange violence to the even tenour of men's thoughts, and men's ways, He said — "And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." That man is to be admired, who, with true Christian prudence and boldness, gives utterance to truth, which he conceives of importance, though the current of fashion, or circumstance, may, at the time, run in another direction.

What do we know about the original constitution of physical light? Do we suppose there was none ten thousand years ago? Did the creatures who lived in the lower stories of our earthly home, live in sealed-up darkness? Had they no eyes? I know the narrow-minded religionist will bid us beware whilst we put suggestive questions of this sort, although simply in

search of truth, lest we overturn the throne of God; but we need not fear, reverent inquiry will not displease God, and if we ask wisdom of Him, He will give liberally, and upbraid not. Puny man cannot move, much less overturn, the throne of the Great King.

Millions of ages ago, physical light, as *we* call it, might have had its beginning, as perhaps it will have its ending. There are other marvels in store. The resources of the All-wise Creator are infinite, and will all be displayed possibly. Our knowledge, our thoughts, our expectations, are very limited. Heaven is not lit by the light of the sun or the moon. No! the Lord God giveth it light, and the Lamb is the light thereof. God is Light. I hope to see soon a light different to that of the sun, and a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

We fancy and surmise; we muse and study; and from the first page of our Bible gather what light of knowledge we can concerning the creation and constitution of our globe; but the information is confessedly meagre and obscure. This oldest formation of the Word of God is as difficult to understand, as difficult to explain, as are the fossils of extinct creatures in the lowest strata of the earth. Let us not dogmatize. Let us not brand as heretics those who differ from us. Let us allow the greatest latitude possible to the students of science. Never fear! the mistakes of men will correct themselves in time. Truth will prevail, even if it must do battle with all the powers of darkness. Strive

to be ever on the side of truth. The strange creatures that lie petrified in their rocky sepulchres under ground, are as much the handiwork of God as the Book which we regard as a Revelation from Him. These, by the aid of right reason, will throw more light on the constitution of the world, in former periods of its history, than the words of Scripture. God has given us two great books, the book of Nature, and the book of Grace; let us read them both, they mutually aid in throwing light of knowledge on man's mind. The Psalmist, when he composed the nineteenth Psalm, tried to bind these books together, and let us never sunder them.

The Holy Scriptures were written to meet an after demand; they do not go back so far in history as the buried inhabitants of former ages. 'Tis a gloomy light, you will say, which these creatures afford; of course it is; but since whatsoever doth make manifest is light, we ought to be pleased with even phosphoric glimmer in the deep caverns of the world — of time — of life.

The words of the text, the fiat of the Creator respecting physical light, must refer to a period long anterior to the placing of man on the earth. But there was a time, doubtless, when such command was given and executed; this is all we are required to believe, I think, on the subject; the rest is mere conjecture.

Why the All-wise God conceived the idea of creating light; who or what were the agents or agencies employed in the production of it; how it first beamed forth on the fields of space; what impressions were

made by it on beings and things previously organized or arranged; these are questions which we may legitimately put, and as legitimately answer, if we can, provided we do it reverently and modestly, and do not force our answers on others as matter of necessary faith. True wisdom is modest; the real philosopher is humble; the empiric it is whom knowledge puffeth up.

The blind man can have but a faint and inadequate conception of light, if he has any conception of it. Words will not satisfy him; his other senses will not satisfy him; but let his eyes be opened to perform their functions in play of healthful vigour, and how will his soul exult in beholding the fair form of creation bathed in the flood of lovely light. The ecstasy must be magnified a hundredfold to express the joys of an intelligent and responsible creature when the eyes of his understanding are enlightened to behold the more perfect loveliness and beauty of moral and spiritual truths set in the light of life.

Fancy creation thrown back again into darkness; the lights of heaven extinguished; all moving, as now, but in solid darkness, as well as in solemn silence. What a fearful catastrophe! We can hardly conceive a greater! After the lapse of an awful period of darkness, suddenly the command shall be given — “*Let there be light,*” and creation shall sparkle and glitter again with its magnificent galaxy of illuminated worlds! Which would yield the greater rapture of delight, think you, the renewal of an old grant, or the novelty of a first

display, as when the morning stars sang together, and all the Sons of God shouted for joy?

The conception and production of light must surely have been the immediate work of the Creator Himself. No agents could have understood the design, and therefore, could not probably, have been engaged in the accomplishment of it. We may perhaps regard physical light as something like a dim shadow of the light of heaven, thrown out, here and there, all over space, before the eyes of sentient and intelligent creatures, that they might be led to glorify the Father of Heaven, the unfathomable and unapproachable fountain of light.

If evil was then occurrent; if the Devil was in being, we can imagine how fearful would be the pain and disappointment thrown upon him by the searching scrutiny of physical light. That great thief of the night would be dreadfully shocked whenever the lamp of God's light glared in his face.

But let us pass on. The fair face of creation smiles with light, as if a holy joy, conceived in the soul, had found a silent utterance on the features outside. Praised be God for the beautiful robe of light wherewith He hath graciously clothed our mother Earth.

The word light has a wide meaning. It means, "Whatsoever doth make manifest," spiritually, intellectually, and physically. We as properly speak of the light of nature, and the light of grace, as we do of the light of the moon and of the sun. There is no necessity for us to gather into orbs, or confine to special and

definite receptacles, the diffused lights of nature, of reason, and of grace; any more than there was a necessity for the Creator, during the first three days, or periods of Creation, to ordain light-bearers in the palace of space. The light of heaven is very much diffused. We must be careful how we say, it is our lamp, and our lamp only, which shows the light of heaven. Of course we do well to be on our guard, when even the Prince of Darkness comes to us in the guise of an angel of light; but let us not say that all lights are fictitious which we cannot trace to the direct agencies of heaven.

The light of *Nature*! It has come to pass, of necessity perhaps, in a measure, through the fearful lapse of man into sin, that his nature has had a tortuous course, and whenever we utter the word *nature*, expositions of its meaning present themselves, varying according to the bent or constitution of our own individual mind. We throw the dim light of our own little lamp on every object around us. The medium through which the light shines will give its own colour to those outer objects. Few men are thoroughly sincere, hence so few thoroughly agree together. Jesus Christ, the Light of Life, is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever; but how differently is He presented to the world, because the reflectors are uneven or sullied. How should we exercise ourselves to have always a single eye and a conscience void of offence!

God made man upright, his nature was good; but he hath sought out numerous inventions. The true and

the good in man has been disrupted and distorted, but not destroyed. The light that is in him is from heaven, though it may come to pass, through the evil working of sin, that that light may be so dimmed, or tampered with, or even put out, that he shall become darkness. The true nature becomes lost in him, and the natural man then has a carnal mind, and a worldly spirit; and the great object to be sought on his behalf, is to bring him back, by the grace of God, to the original excellence of his being, according as it is seen, and may be gained, in Christ Jesus.

By the light of nature we understand that instinctive power, which we all have in common, some more, some less, as in every thing else, whereby we discern what is proper and right. For a moment, suppose the vegetable world to be possessed of some measure of intelligence; that which we now call nature would then be called instinct, as we call it in the animal world amongst brute creatures. The diligent and perpetual searching for food, the foraging (if I may so say) of fibre, and root, and leaf, would be an illustration of the light of nature; the vegetable lamp searching here and there, in the dark universe around, in order to see the right way of going. All this is now accomplished by fixed and unerring laws; the oil of this lamp, the lamp itself, and the light thereof, being the handiwork of God.

The lower range of animals, the brutes, possess instinct for their light of nature. Oh see now, how it shines, and flares, and flickers! See now how, from the

limpet on the rock, to the huge and sagacious elephant, this wonderful light of nature displays itself! How they move to and fro, and perform their various functions, guided by the light of instinct, their light of life! Man possesses this faculty, or power, in common with the less-favoured creatures of the world, but he has nobler faculties too, and his light of nature is fed and nourished with virtues which the brutes have not.

“Doth not nature teach?” asks the Apostle. Are there not subjects which the Christian has to do with as well as others, and which he can manage to do without the extra aids of divine grace and revelation? Our senses are not to be ignored because of the possession of faith. Our common sense is not to be sacrificed to our religion. The light of nature needs them all to form the oil whereby it feeds itself.

In the account of creation there is a marked difference between the lower creatures and man. There is divine counsel and conference taken for the making of man. This master-piece of creation must have uncommon pains bestowed on his constitution. The breathing into his nostrils the breath of life by the Holy Spirit, separates him an almost infinite distance from the teeming myriads that spring from dust or water, without such afflatus of divinity. A reasonable soul is the superadded glory of man. This is a candle of the Almighty; this is the halo of his being; this the secret of his influence; with this invested the Universal King delegated him the feudal lord of earth — “Have thou

dominion!" Alas! alas! he has forfeited his Maker's favour; he has broken the terms of his fiefship; but even now, through the reserves of grace and goodness, he stands acknowledged the viceregent of the world. How noble must man have looked when first the light of life beamed from his countenance! How noble, even now, when the darkness of sin is chased away, and he reflects the light of Christ his Redeemer! How noble will he look by and by, when waking up from the sleep of death, he shall bear the image of the heavenly, never again to lose it!

The light of reason in man, is like the sacred fire that the vestal virgins fed with constant care in the temple of their goddess; or rather like the holy lamps in the tabernacle of Jehovah, fed by oil divinely prescribed, and kept in perpetual burning by the express commandment of the God of Israel.

But we go farther still, and with eyes dimmed, yet sparkling with tears of joy, look one while on Eden, and another while on Calvary; there sin begins to blight nature, and here grace exhibits the cure. Heathendom is very dark indeed, nature has no extra aids. Christendom is the Goshen of the world, here the true light shineth. Life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel.

The light of grace is a marvellous lamp; taking this in hand wayfaring man can find his way through the changes and chances of this mortal life, quit the world by a new and living way, and be carried by angels to

the glory of God's presence. How dare a man refuse to bestow thought on the proffered grace of God? How is it possible to receive this grace of God in vain? Jesus seems to say again now — "I am the light of the world, he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Man is redeemed; his light is not quenched but renewed. By nature fallen, by grace raised up again. Lost and found. That Divine Being who breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and constituted him a living soul, breathes upon him again, and saith, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made us free from the law of sin and death. If we Christians walk in darkness, it is our own fault. If we quench the light of grace, how miserable and wretched will be our condition by and by, when the noble Bridegroom cometh, and we strive in vain to rekindle the flames of our extinguished lamps. "Whilst ye have the light believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. Lord, lift thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us."

There is one lamp in this earthly tabernacle of ours which may well command our special notice and attention; it is Conscience; its light shines, its beams flash everywhere. The poor heathen starts at his own shadow, thrown upon the earth by the light of his conscience. The enlightened Christian exults with holy joy when this candle of the Almighty burns steadily and well, for all the inmates of his earthly

home to work by. Having a good conscience, we have a sacred lamp of heaven to light us upon earth.

Take nature; take reason; take grace, like the children of Israel took pure oil olive beaten, for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always; and presenting thyself before the Lord, pray — “O God, who didst command the light to shine out of darkness, shine in my heart, and give me the light of the knowledge of Thy glory, in the face of Jesus Christ.”

The light of glory is in the distance, for after-thought and reflection; it is the Reserve of Grace. No glimpse of it is seen by mortal eye. Look where you will, impenitent man! you will see no light of glory, such as I now speak of; the eyes of your understanding must be enlightened before you can see so far off as the glorious land. Your light of glory is the sickly flicker that haloes what you call honour, wealth, power, pleasure; and this, like the false glare that sometimes plays on mere or marsh, will end in empty nothing. The Son of God was seen by all men once (how did they treat Him!) — but on the nether side of death He is seen only by the faithful. He doth not manifest Himself unto the world, but to the disciples. We may all build churches, and bow down before the ceremonial; but the glory that consecrates them is behind the veil, in the Holy of Holies; and it is the humble and penitent, the believing and obedient Christian only, who finds his way there, and falling prostrate before the

mercy seat, exclaims — “The Lord is my Light and my Salvation!”

Revert to the command of the text — “Let there be light!” Regard it as a perpetual law of obligation imposed by God on all His faithful servants. This world, once lit up by physical light, to be a beautiful dwelling-place for man, becoming, by strange hap of sin, a place of darkness — intellectual, moral, spiritual darkness — God would have it lit up with grace. As the golden sun in the sky pours his flood of light, day after day, in waves of heat, and life, and grace; as night after night, the lovely moon and countless stars do obeisance to the king of day; so hath God set in the firmament of His grace the Sun of Righteousness, to light, and cheer, and heal the nations; so hath He ordained the Church, as the moon, a faithful witness in heaven; and the countless stars, the faithful in Christ Jesus, each in his individual orb and sphere, to shine before men, that they, seeing their good works, may glorify their Father that is in heaven.

“In reason’s ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice;
For ever singing, as they shine,
The hand that made us is divine.”

The Father seems to address the Son, directing Him to this lower world, so dark, so wretched, so lost; and in the very words of the text, to expound the intention of His love and grace — “Let there be light.” “I delight to do Thy will, O my God, yea, Thy law is

within my heart. Lo, I come!" Such is the Son's reply, and in obedience to the divine command, "there is light."

The Son, enlightening his chosen ; casting the bright beams of his light around the Church ; pointing to the dark and miserable condition of the world, seems to say in the very words of the text to each, to all — "Let there be light" — "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature" — "Ye are the light of the world."

The Holy Ghost, in the gracious economy of salvation ; fruit of our Saviour's love ; one while, as at Pentecost, in power and mighty signs ; ever, as now and always, in secret and holy ministrations, seems to say, with a still small voice, in the hearts and consciences of all who profess and call themselves Christians, even in the very words of the text — "Let there be light." "Know ye not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost?" "Now are ye light in the Lord, walk as children of light."

So long as darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people ; so long as ignorance, and prejudice, and pride, and sin becloud the atmosphere of our world ; so long as Idolatry and Superstition dim and dull the heart of man ; so long shall the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, give command to all His faithful subjects and servants — by His blessed Son — by the Holy Spirit — by the Church Catholic — by His over-ruling Providence, as in the words of the text — "Let there be light!"

Life Dormant.

LIFE DORMANT.

EPHESIANS II. 5.

"When we were dead in sins."

"IN the midst of life we are in death;" this may be truly said, with a wider meaning than is commonly assigned to it. Life here, at the best, is so bound hand and foot with grave clothes, that if it were not for Jesus Christ, we might call the whole world a graveyard, a Mausoleum, a Golgotha! Life and death are battling ever; there is no sign yet of a cessation of hostilities; neither party will send out a flag of truce. If we have no higher faith than that which is supported by the evidence of our senses, we must acknowledge that Death will win at last. But we have a higher faith, and that teaches us to believe that Life will gain the victory. Fight on, mighty kings, fight on! There will an end be put to your warfare by and by. You must not think that this world was made to be drenched with blood; a bleaching place for bones; a wilderness for the wild sport of sin and death. Oh, no! you are under rule, and the Great King will say presently —

"It is time to put an end to these high crimes and misdemeanours. Legions! you must proceed hence to yonder place. Unfurl my standard; inform them all, it is the will of the King that rebellion should cease; and act accordingly."

Are you sufficiently convinced of the truth of Christianity to believe this statement to be correct; or, do you shake your head, as a token of doubt; or press your lips together; or smile; or sigh—symptoms of misgiving or uneasiness? There is no advantage, but rather disadvantage, in saying we believe, when we do not believe; this is like saying we have our dwelling among the tombs. A state Christian; a formal Christian; a fashionable Christian; is something like a mummy wrapped in cere cloths of death, that the living gaze on with astonishment.

"In the midst of life we are in death." That marble slab, cut and polished for your accommodation; how it is printed all over, by the printing press of ages past, with marks and hieroglyphics of an extinct generation. Here is like a little city of the dead, and as you warm yourself with the burning coal, you muse, and wonder, and are lost in strange surmisings. Once these things had life, but now, dead in marble, they speak of mighty changes. Do you understand their language; can you read off the telegram they send you across the mighty void of ages?

Nineveh, that once mighty city, brought before us again and again in Scripture, noted for power, for

wealth, for arts, for greatness, by the shelving of time and circumstance, is buried and lost to the gaze of man. "She is empty, void, and waste. How is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in." By and by the enterprize of man forces a passage into this city of the dead, and dragging thence its mighty ornaments and symbols of power, its mystic records of history, stops the mouths of cavillers and doubters by the evidence of their own senses, and bids them read and understand if they can.

Winter holds life in abeyance. One would think, if experience did not teach us otherwise, that vegetation for the most part was subdued and humbled to death. But we know better. Experience has taught us. Life has disbanded many of her troops, and is only withdrawn into winter quarters to make ready for another campaign. What a wise and wonderful conqueror is Spring! What a queen of beauty and grace! How doth she lead forth her armies, in uniform of living green, to take possession of the realms of Nature. Yet winter seems like death; and cold, and drear, and dark, the earth appears like one mourning for the dead.

Go into the church-yard, and walking slowly and pensively along, let your heart have its way, and listen to its talk. A solemn feeling steals over us when we meditate among the tombs. What contrasts are here! The forefathers of the hamlet sleep! We living and they dead; we moving and they still; we talking and thinking, and they mute and thoughtless; we carried

back by memory, and forward by hope, and they . . . Oh, what and where are they? Death surely is master here! Here is a winter without a spring! Is it so? . . . Mysterious stranger, now standing by our side, unseal thy lips, and bid us know! . . . He speaks — “Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die, believest thou this?” — Master, are not these dead? “The hour is coming,” so He replies, “in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.” — Brethren, our creed is this, each one speaking for himself — “I believe in the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.”

And now, let us come to man. What a piece of work is man! What fossils lie here imbedded! What wondrous relics of an olden time! Here is a winter, and here a mystic graveyard too! How noble in reason; how infinite in faculties; in form and moving how express and admirable; in action how like an angel; in apprehension how like a God! The beauty of the world! The paragon of animals! And yet to me, what is this quintessence of dust? It is to man, living man, so called, that the words of the text refer — “*dead in sins.*”

It is a wonderful gift of God — the gift of speech and language. To be able by means of sound, or

written character, to convey to another knowledge and instruction, is a marvellous endowment. If we were not sure that the resources of the Almighty are infinite, we might perhaps say — What a wretched place this world would have been without vocal sound, or language, or even books. But words are defective, of necessity, and cannot possibly compass the ideas of things wherewith the mind is conversant; they are clumsy vehicles for thought and feeling to travel in. The difficulty is greatly added to by the confusion of tongues; and when two or more sounds mean the same thing, we need an interpreter. If we were all pure and holy, innocent and guileless; if we were all possessed by one spirit, then words would serve their turn better; but prejudice and passion, ignorance and sin, clog them fearfully, and half the disagreements amongst mankind spring from the rugged character of words, where men hide their prejudices and selfishness. If all men thoroughly understood each other's words, in the same sense and shade of meaning, how much more united would they be than now they find themselves.

Objects of sense may be stamped on the mind by a definite impression, and words will tell them without fail. But thoughts, and feelings, and motives, and all the marvellous beings and properties that stock and people the more spiritual regions of creation, cannot be confined within the strait and narrow enclosure of words. Ten men will give ten expositions, varying

somewhat each from the other, of such subjects as — Virtue, Grace, The Beautiful, Life, Death!

No language speaks the truth rigidly, the language of Scripture being no exception. There is no lie when there is no intention to deceive. Talk would be dull indeed, and books would hardly be worth the reading, if man was not allowed to let his fancy play, or his imagination be at the service of reason and truth. Man's responsibility, as a moral and intelligent creature, rests, in a measure certainly, on the use or abuse of words. As from the utterances of the mouth, so also from the reading of books, and hearing of vocal sounds, it must be said — "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

Let your thoughts travel for a moment over the surface of Holy Scripture. It is not all plain. There are hills of difficulty, and valleys of the shadow of death. You need walk cautiously, and invoke the aid of a guide. Happy thing, however, to live in a land of grace! Favoured creatures, to be waited on by angels, ministering spirits from heaven. The devil is a cunning foe, and will make a stumbling-block of a word. Be wary; be heedful; be circumspect; and let the sword of the Spirit be kept bright and keen.

This word "*dead*" of the text, and "*sin*," and those which spring up on the other hand, *living* and *light*, may well engage our study, for they are full of meaning, and directly point to man and his attributes.

In some men there is no generosity, or if there is, it does not show itself on the surface; probably it is a fossil. The lambent light of love plays on the features of all at times, but the love of God may never be seen. Why should man be so partial as to confine his regards to his fellow-creatures, and not strive to make himself acquainted with God; not strive to embrace the Father of his spirit, and to know those holy beings, his fellow-servants, in another part of the house? Benevolence; kindness; charity, popularly so called, may be nothing more than the halo of selfishness. What do you think of wrath, malice, clamour, evil-speaking, envy, and such like? What are these? Where do they come from? How do they hang on the nature of man?

“In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” Eat he did, and die he did; but not on that day, as we reckon. We are forced by fact from the literal to the figurative meaning. And so in many other cases. We do not the less believe Scripture, when science, or knowledge of any kind, properly substantiated, forces us to give up prejudices, or dissolves associations ignorantly formed, like as the sun drives away fog and vapour. The fall of man has never been explained, and never will be, probably, in this life. We believe that he is fallen, from the announcements of revelation, and the concurrence of experience. It is an awful though interesting subject of study—the buried greatness of man. Not more surely did the drifting sands of the east, and other waves of hap and

accident bury Babylon and Nineveh; not more surely did the rolling flood of liquid fire cover up Herculaneum and Pompeii; than did sin drift over the nature of man the blinding dust of ignorance and conceit, and turn his glory into shame, and make it necessary to explore and search diligently for the relics of his fallen greatness. Had not heaven helped, it must needs be that man would ever have continued unknown to himself. Did not heaven help now, we should not have interest or energy enough to apply ourselves to the work of laying bare the original greatness of our race, and build it up again, renewed and consolidated with divine power.

Once man and God talked as friends. However we may interpret the narrative, *the fact* remains undisturbed. In a state of innocence man and his Maker talk together. There is great shyness now, on the part of man, to hold intercourse with his God. Shyness? Would that were all! In the great mass of mankind we see them actually worshipping the sun, or moon, or stock, or stone; falling prostrate, calling aloud — “Help us, for thou art our God.” This is a *fact*, account for it as you can. The fact tells us of the greatness and fall of man — greatness in striving after One greater than himself, fall in mistaking so fearfully the object to be adored.

We can see in the Scripture narrative, when the alienation between God and man begun, and what was the cause. Take the literal statement, and see Adam

and Eve, conscious of shame, trying to hide themselves amongst the trees of the garden. Alas ! alas ! poor fallen beings ! How came this to pass ? How comes it to pass, now, my brethren, that Christians are guilty of deeds of darkness, and cover up their sins in secrecy, and try to hide themselves amongst the trees of their own planting, and whisper to themselves — “ No eye can see us ? ” How comes this to pass ? Surely that same eye which detected Adam and Eve, sees us ! The secret sins done in Christendom shall, by the agencies of divine justice, be fixed in their places, like as the petrified fishes and insects are fixed in the concrete of an older world, and in the mighty convulsion at last, they shall all be thrown up ! There is nothing secret that shall not be revealed. The light of life shall make manifest the once hidden things of the heart.

In the search which the Lord God instituted, the guilty pair were soon found, and confronted the gaze of their Maker. But it was not so ever. When the world became thickly peopled, when the leaven of sin had begun to work in the mass of mankind, then they encouraged one another in downright disobedience, and betook them to folly and sin, as if to hide themselves from the searching scrutiny of God's eye. Of one period we are told — “ God looked down upon the children of men to see if there were any that would understand, and seek after God, but they were all gone out of the way ; there was none righteous, no not one.” He sent His servants the prophets, one after another,

but they heeded them not. He sent His well-beloved and only Son, and Him they crucified. And how is it now here, here in the latter day, here in the land of Goshen, with all our advantages, whether *massed* together in cities, or scattered on the face of the country, how is it now with us? It must be said of the many that they are *dead* in sins. They are not *actually* dead, as we call death, animation moves them wondrously. Never did a generation on earth move to and fro so fast; never was there one so busy and bustling; enterprise is stretched, one might think, to its utmost tension; works, varied and vast, show themselves almost everywhere; but when *direct* work for God is demanded of men, the great bulk go out of the way, they are "*busy*," "*engaged*;" perhaps, however, we may use the words of the text, and say—they are *dead* in sins.

But as God never leaves Himself without witness, we have great cause for thankfulness in knowing that many are alive unto Him, through Jesus Christ our Lord. May the number daily increase. May we be humble instruments in the Providence of God, of turning sinners from the errors of their ways, and saving souls alive.

Quicken us, O Lord, and we will call upon Thy name.

In the nature of man are many qualities noble and ignoble. Some are more manifest in their working, such as these—"Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance,

emulations, wrath, strife, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like." Others, not so manifest, or not seen on so wide a surface, such as these — "Joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." There can hardly be diversity of opinion concerning which set is best. They cannot have come both from the hands of the same Maker. Here, if I may so say, we find a fault in the geology of man. Study individuals; mark the master passion; and see how it affects the rest. Study the changes, the wonderful changes, that by the direct grace of God, or other agencies, are worked in the nature of man. Walking over the plains of the soul, and seeing many tokens of life, as the prophet saw in the valley of dry bones, say as he said — "Can these bones live?" And you shall hear an answer with many echoes, brought as if by angels from the four quarters — "Yes, yes, we were once dead, but now are alive. Sin covered us fearfully, but the burden was removed. The light of life quickened us into being, and now we rejoice in that light." My brethren, can we take this as an answer of verity, or do we regard it as altogether, or almost, a fiction? It depends on the answer we give, whether we have hope or not that the buried greatness of our nature shall be quickened into life, and beam with light and joy.

Let us take an instance or two, as illustrations of our subject.

The Apostle Paul was a man of mark and character. He has been studied by ages and generations. His

master passion was indomitable perseverance. Whether as a rigid Pharisee, or a devoted Apostle, you see this affect his whole being. How many men since his day, noted in the world, have been noted for the same quality ; how few of them, alas ! it is to be feared, found the attraction that he found. Science, Literature, Art, Money, Honour, their centres of attraction — Christ was his. “For me to live is Christ,” are his own memorable words. But in him “the beautiful,” “the good,” did not appear at first. Fierce and wild was his nature, terrible the torrent of his perseverance — “breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord.” “I was a persecutor and injurious,” he says. He makes no exception in favour of himself, the words of the text are his — “We were dead in sins.” Conscience was his friend certainly, but his friend was nearly, if not quite, blind, at one time ; still it helped him in his after reflections — “I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.” Look at the man after his conversion. Over the east ; over the west ; now at Ephesus ; now at Jerusalem ; now a prisoner at Rome ; always the devoted servant of Jesus Christ. Willing not to be bound only, but also to die for the name of the Lord Jesus. As loving and gentle as a tender mother towards her children ; as watchful and earnest as a true friend or a father. Thoroughly devoted to Christ, and thoroughly yearning for the salvation of mankind. Noble champion of Truth ! Fine specimen of a man ! All his faculties beaming

with light of life ; his whole soul carried on the broad river of the love of Christ towards the haven of bliss. He seems to address himself to each one and all of the assembled multitude of after generations ; not perfect indeed but devoted, with chains of infirmity on his outer man, but free in his soul — “ I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.”

Saint Augustine was a remarkable instance of the power of grace. The dormant life of God in his soul never let him rest. The fervent prayers of a holy mother seemed to work like leaven in the wayward heart of her child. “ For nine years,” says Augustine of himself, “ I lived deceived and deceiving others ; seducing men into various lusts, openly, by what are called the liberal arts, and secretly, by a false religion ; in the former, proud, in the latter, superstitious ; in all things seeking vain glory, even to theatrical applauses and contentious disputes ; and to complete the dismal picture, a slave to the lusts of the flesh. . . . Yet was I preserved, foul as I was in all the mire of sin.” And yet afterwards how bright a Christian ; how noble a champion of truth. Hear him speak again — “ I bowed my neck to thy easy yoke, and my shoulders to thy light burden, Christ Jesus, my Helper and Redeemer. How sweet was it to be free ! I conversed familiarly with thee, my Light, my Riches, my Saviour, and my God.”

One other instance nearer home, a minister of our own Church, not very long ago entered into rest ; of

noble powers, but at first, fearfully prostituted to sin. Of great energy, but alas ! on the side of evil. By the grace of God he was converted from the error of his ways, and now the dormant life is quickened into being, now his powers, his energy, are for Christ, and for Truth. When turned eighty years of age, some of his friends feared he might continue his public ministrations too long, and pressed him to discontinue them. "I cannot stop," he replied with energy. "What ! shall the old African blasphemer stop, whilst he can speak." By and by he said — "It is a great thing to die, and when flesh and heart fail, to have God for the strength of our heart, and our portion for ever. I know in whom I have believed, and He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

Brethren, believe me, there are in the nature of every man relics of his original greatness. The Christian religion confers no new faculties, but quickens and directs the old. That waiting for divine interference, if there is really such waiting, or if there is not except professedly, is often one of the worst signs of spiritual slumber and death. Interest, anxiety, painstaking care and diligence, betoken reality. To hope for happiness or heaven without using the means appointed to obtain it, is a solemn mockery of God. Oh ! may human and divine agencies concur in our case to bring the dormant powers of our being into the Light of Life, into the fruitage of holiness, into the glory everlasting. — *Amen.*

The Light of Life.

E

THE LIGHT OF LIFE.

EPHESIANS v. 14.

"Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

THE successive stages of creation, the gradual development of life and beauty, are subjects of study full of suggestive thought. We may try our best to understand these subjects, and although we shall not be able to understand them thoroughly, but only in part, yet the attempt, properly made, will strengthen the mind, and yield both pleasure and profit.

The utterances of the Almighty; the exposition of His will concerning this world of ours—how wonderful and how varied! "Let there be light"—"Let there be a firmament"—"Let the waters be gathered together"—"Let the earth bring forth herb and grass"—"Let there be lights in the firmament"—"Let the waters bring forth"—"Let the earth bring forth the living creature"—"Let us make man." These commands betoken the successive stages of

creation ; the order of the gradual development of life and beauty.

If you take away light from the marvellous laboratory of creation, the deficiency will be almost infinite. Light permeates the whole. Light is like heavenly leaven, which leaveneth the whole lump of creation. Even dark and cold space affords a highway for the passage of light to the infinite number of worlds that the Great Creator hath disposed here and there as it pleased Him best. Imagine creatures, such as we are, to have been present when light first burst over the plains of creation ; how thrilling, how full of marvel, delight, and ecstasy, must have been their sensations. Let us try to sympathize with them in some measure, as often as we see the golden chariot of the sun come forth through the gates of the east.

Light has much to do with life. The light of the sun is absolutely necessary for vegetable and animal life. If God did not make his sun to shine upon the evil and the good, there would soon follow a lapse into chaos and death. What are the peculiar qualities of light we cannot tell ; how those qualities affect our globe we cannot tell ; but we are sure that the qualities of light fit the needs of man and his dwelling-place. Dormant life is called forth by nothing with so much speed, grace, and power, as by light — the sun in the sky for creation, the Sun of Righteousness for redemption.

It is during the short and cold days of winter, when the sun is busied in another part of the world, that

life sinks down into torpor, and the semblance of death. Nature looks sad and disconsolate. The varied hues of beauty have melted away. But as the days lengthen, and the glorious sun exercises a longer ministry with us, then life teems afresh, and bursts forth with renewed vigour. An annual resurrection from the grave of winter is a perpetual evidence of the power and the grace of heaven.

The light of ordinary intelligence breaks on the mind by degrees. The dim twilight of childhood gives way before the brighter light of after intelligence. The processes of nature require the art of labour. Stores of knowledge are fetched from without, and set with proper reflection in the depositories of the mind. Indolence and sloth, in alliance with ignorance, will perpetuate a cold and dark winter in the soul. A proper and diligent use of the means furnished by God's providence for the increase of light and life in knowledge, will be succeeded by pleasure and profit, as the bloom of spring, and loveliness of summer, and fruitage of autumn, follow in regular course the winter of the year, through the gracious ordinances of heaven. Let us regard the bounties and the beauties of Nature, furnished and formed by the hand of God, as types and symbols of the bounties and beauties of Grace, and as we notice laws and agencies corrective of decay in the realm of Nature, may we experience those healing virtues of Grace, by the Good Spirit of God, which we are assured of in the records of Revelation. The path

of the just is as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

But it is not to Nature, not to the dormant life of vegetation, for instance, nor the transition life of creatures inferior to man, that the words of the text refer. It is not the lower creation that is called on to "awake," and "arise," but man, the delegated lord of all, who, through the untoward working of sin, is thrown into a deadly slumber, and needs the special call and help of heaven to rouse him up to life and activity. The Sun of Righteousness quickens the dead in trespasses and sins. Jesus is the resurrection and the life. "My Father worketh hitherto," so He spake, "and I work." These words intimate that the fabric of creation needs constant care to maintain and preserve it; and also that the fabric of redemption makes a like demand for perpetual care and support. As at the first, when darkness was upon the face of the deep, there went forth a command for the creation of light; so now, when the darkness of ignorance, sin, and death, has settled on the soul of man, there goes forth a new commandment — "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead." In either case provision is made for fulfilling the commandment. The Author of Creation is the Author of Redemption. The resources of the Almighty are infinite, and can meet even infinite demands. What were the impediments to the creation or diffusion of physical light, if there were any such, we do not know; sufficient for us to know that they

were overcome. What are the impediments to the creation and diffusion of spiritual light, "the light of life," we do know in part, but we may let the evidence of fact in the former case, strengthen the evidence of faith with regard to the latter, and joyfully and hopefully labour on, as workers together with God for the diffusion of Christian intelligence and life to the ends of the world.

Looking down upon a slumbering race, the slumber being charged with death, the Great God, Father of the sleeping family, is represented as full of concern and perplexity lest His children should never awake. From heaven He utters His voice, one while loud as the thunder, anon, still and searching, like the call of a devoted friend. Knowing thoroughly the causes of sleep, how many from nature, how many from habit; knowing thoroughly the purposes of heaven and the condition of earth, the gracious Father appoints and uses such agencies as are most in keeping with mercy and judgment; if men wake we call it mercy, if they sleep on to the end we refer the fact to justice and judgment. The ordinances of heaven are true and good. "Thou, O Lord, hast a mighty arm: strong is Thy hand, and high is Thy right hand. Justice and judgment are the habitation of Thy throne; mercy and truth shall go before Thy face."

To think that this little cottage of creation should be in such a case! To think that its wretched inmates should be so steeped in the deep sleep of a moral

slumber! To think that the Great Lord of all, the Father Everlasting, should busy Himself with such solicitude, to wake up the dormant energies of His people! This seems passing strange! But this is true! How little do we know, or think of, the marvellous agencies employed by the Father of our spirits to rouse us from the bondage of spiritual slumber! If we could be let into the Temple of the arcana of Nature, and be showed, so as to understand, the infinite resources of life, of order, of beauty, and of grace; if we could see them streaming forth in their respective agencies, and accomplishing the set purposes of their ministry; how overwhelmed with astonishment we should be, and with what a loud voice should we exclaim — “O Lord, how manifold are Thy works, in wisdom hast Thou made them all, the earth is full of Thy riches!” Stepping from the Temple of Nature to the Temple of Grace, and moved with a similar knowledge of its treasures, our astonishment would be greatly increased. Reverence and awe would encase the pearl of great price, and our lips would find utterance thus — “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”

The two temples stand open; through the portals of both, by God's grace, we have passed; the light of life will guide and illuminate us further and further, if we bend our steps properly, until we are led into the Holy of Holies, the Presence Chamber of the Great King.

As if the ordinary means of divine providence fell short; as if the common call of God the Father failed in its merciful intentions, God the Son assumes our nature; gains admission to the house through the portal common to all; searches for Himself into the condition of the human family; wakes up with loving violence some of the children, and bidding them look on Him, gives a commission that they should go, use the extra gifts bestowed on them, and wake up the sleepers! Oh, if God in the Spirit is wonderful, how much more wonderful (as we say) is "God manifest in the flesh." The light of life streaming from the glory of God's presence on the humble dwellers of earth is wonderful to think on; but the light of life streaming from the visible manifestation of that glory, in the person of Jesus Christ, oh, how surpassing in wonder is this!

The visit of Jesus Christ to our world was altogether a marvel of grace. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." "That was the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." From the star that guided the Magians, and the glory that shone round the shepherds, to that fulness of grace and truth which His favoured disciples were privileged to see, we trace the development of that light of life which the Father caused to shine upon the world. Without voice or words it seems a living enforcement of the command of the text — "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

The ministry of Jesus was a series of outbursts of the grace of life. The wonted reign of darkness was confused. Infirmity, ignorance, disease, misery, sin, death, all in turn were overcome. If the evil spirits flocked to the Holy Land, and were permitted to hold an unusual sway over men, both in body and soul, how were they thwarted, and how was their prince thwarted. They stood abashed and affrighted — “Art Thou come to destroy us before the time?” The glorious display of the light of life surprised the Prince of Darkness, and threw him out in his tactics. He was not prepared for such a mode of attack. To think that through death Jesus Christ destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil, and delivered them who, through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage!

The fetters of infirmity, the chains of disease and sin, dropped off in the presence of Jesus Christ — “Arise and walk” — “Be thou clean” — “Receive thy sight” — “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.” The language of the prophet found literal fulfilment — “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped; then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing.” Even death gave way before him, and the King of Terrors dropped his sceptre. “Talitha cumi” — “Lazarus come forth.” “I am the resurrection and the life.” What an earnest this of the great deliverance! What an assurance that there shall be no more

sorrow, nor sickness, and that God will wipe away tears from off all faces. As our gracious Master moved from one to another of the afflicted, He seemed to say, like one having authority — “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.”

The return of Jesus to His Father was the signal for further displays of the light of life. The Holy Comforter came. That marvellous Pentecost, the first after that wonderful Passover! What a flood of light burst on the world! Unlearned and ignorant men became noted for wisdom and power. The Apostles and Brethren busied themselves in their new ministry, and seemed to exclaim aloud, as if the command were the key-note of their commission — “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” Thousands awoke, and these thousands caught the strain afresh, and with renewed vigour insisted upon it that Jesus was the Christ, the Light of the World.

In all the chequered scenes that followed; through all the centuries that have rolled by since then; in this country and that; sometimes loud, sometimes low, the command has been given, the command has been obeyed. And now, through the length and breadth of the world, with an energy never known before, amongst civilized and savage, the workers together with God are many. Now with a louder voice and stronger faith than ever, let us call upon the sleepers and the

dead to awake, and arise, and Christ will give them light.

It was not without warrant that Paul spoke as he did. The Spirit that moved him as an Apostle, and the spirit that actuated him as a man, alike suggested the announcement of the text. The One took of the things of Christ, of the deep things of God, and showed them unto him; the other took of the things of man, from the hidden recesses of his own heart, and showed the tally. Paul's conversion was a remarkable one; as he looked on the other side of it, in his after life, how was he distressed; as he experienced day by day the indwelling of Christ, how did he rejoice. His conversion was the boundary line, strongly marked and definite; on the one side of it darkness, prejudice, sin, and death — on the other light, and candour, and life. He might well personify the grace of truth, and bid her speak, and write at her dictation the words of the text. As he visited for the first time the synagogue of the Jews, or the synagogue of Satan; as he repeated his visits to widen the domains of Christ; as in the forced retirement of a prison, or the voluntary retirement of midnight, he penned those epistles which were to be handed down by the hand of Divine Providence, for the study of after ages; he might well repeat the words — "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

At the feet of Gamaliel; with the Jewish writings; amid the conclave of Rabbis; following the most straitest

sect of their religion, Paul's character, so far as we can see, so far as we can imagine, did not appear so excellent, as when he took his place at the feet of Jesus, and became one of the despised Christians, and was counted with them as the offscouring of all things. The hand of authority, when that hand is stiffened with pride; the eye of the seer, when that eye is acquainted with prejudice; the heart of a father, when charged with selfishness, will not command the admiration of mankind, will not execute the beneficent intentions of heaven. That hand must be warm and open with benevolence; that eye must be single with guilelessness and simplicity; that heart must be full of sympathy and love, and then all will be well. So it was with Paul before and after his conversion, and so it has been with many a man since Paul's days, as he, by like grace, has stepped over the boundary line of sleep and wakefulness, of death and life, out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

The fossils of human nature, if I may so speak, spring into life at the bidding of Christ. As He took off the chains of infirmity that bind the outer man, so He, by His Spirit, quickens into life the dormant virtues and graces that constitute the beauty of holiness. "Loose him, and let him go. Agents of death, hold off; this is a ransomed captive;" thus He seems to speak ever. And more than this He says — "Let your light shine." "Be ye holy, for I am holy." "Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the

dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." As the glow of heat from the sun, charged with grace of life, calls forth the embryo into development, so the love of Christ constraineth the renewed nature to develope the fruits of the Spirit. The dank marsh of sinfulness is, by a gradual process, deprived of its baneful nourishment, and its rank vegetation sickens, and droops, and fades away, by the very same grace of heat that calls forth and strengthens into vigour, those trees of the Lord's planting that beautify the kingdom of God within us.

The grace of God, through Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit, works marvels. Read the Book, here is a narrative of the marvels of grace. Read the other book, wider open than ever, not of paper and ink, but of *character*; not printed here in England only, but in New Zealand; in the isles of the sea; in Caffreland; in Greenland; in the heart of Africa; all over the world. The passionate have become gentle; the lustful pure; the envious satisfied; the proud humble; the sinful holy — *all happy*. Behold the triumphs of Christ! See the evidences of the Christian Religion. The works of the flesh are overcome, the fruits of the Spirit abound. The light of life dissipates the darkness of death.

I must meet an objector — "Your report is inflated; it is not true; pride, and envy, and lust fatten in Christendom as elsewhere; and as for the Caffreland, and other far off lands, how can we know?" — Where-

fore do you state your objection? Is there lurking in your heart a secret misgiving about the grace of Christ? Have you proved for yourself what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God? Remember, the evidences of Christianity cannot be properly read by a jaundiced eye, cannot be understood by a prejudiced mind. "None of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand." He who takes pleasure in flaws of evidence; he who smiles at infirmity; he who can company with objectors, and say — "There, there, so would we have it;" and at the same time is baptized, and confirmed, and admitted into the fellowship of Christ's religion; of such a one I should say, if I borrowed the language of the world — "He is a pitiable object of contempt;" but as I repudiate such language, I would simply turn to him and say, in the words of the text — "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

Regard the words of the text as the commandment of heaven, spoken to you, and to be repeated by you, and act accordingly. Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice. The power necessary to accomplish the commandment will be vouchsafed. God never told a creature to do that which cannot be done. If He gives us a command, He will afford means for the execution of that command. "Stretch forth thine hand — and he stretched it forth, and it was restored whole like as the other." "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk — and immediately the man was made whole, and took up his

bed and walked." "Be thou clean — and immediately his leprosy was cleansed." "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." And no doubt they were, but the accomplishment of the command was in a region not searched by mortal eye. "Awake thou that sleepest." How many have snapped the cords of slumber in obedience to the command of heaven, and the eyes of their understanding have been enlightened. "Arise from the dead" — "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." The grave-clothes of sinfulness and infirmity have burst their bonds, and the spiritually dead have become alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. If a heathen man, in the heart of heathendom, should awake and arise, he would find no one to lead him by the hand; Socrates, Plato, the philosophers all, would fail to give him light. But let a man awake and arise in Christendom, and Christ will give him light, and guide him by the hand. The inquiries of his soul shall be answered, the cravings thereof satisfied; the development of his true nature moulded and perfected; he shall be changed from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord. And here, in this case, we see the agencies, or some of them; here we have the Scriptures, here we have the Church, here we have the children of light, all eager to guide the little one in Christ, through the vestibule of the temple, up the mighty nave, towards the holiest of all, where are the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy-seat.

Light Bearers.



LIGHT BEARERS.

MATTHEW v. 14.

"Ye are the light of the world."

HOW the three days, or periods of time, before the appointment of the great orbs of heaven to exercise a ministry on earth, passed or were measured, we cannot tell. The sun rules the day with us, but he did not so rule the first three days, or periods of creation. In the sacred narrative there is the evening and the morning of the first, second, and third day, and on the fourth day God said — "Let there be light," or rather, light bearers, the bodies being there before, most likely, but now they are to be lit up for a purpose. Let us say — infinite are the resources of the all-wise Creator ; we see but a part of His ways, and, at our best estate, through a glass darkly. Having graciously summoned us into the vestibule of the temple of Life, we hope He will be pleased to lead us on until we arrive at the most Holy Place.

How beautiful and glorious must have been the first shining of the sun ! How must the ministering angels have wondered to see so marvellous a lamp suspended in the Palace of Creation ; or, coming to the period of man, how must Adam and Eve have been filled with unutterable astonishment, as they contemplated, for the first time, the hosts of heaven, the sun ruling the day, the moon and the stars the night.

Probably when we quit this mortal scene, in the wake of Christ, and are introduced to an immortal one, profoundest astonishment and awe will possess us on becoming acquainted with luminaries of a higher order and more refined splendour, than any we saw here below. Taking the place assigned us in the new constitution we shall show forth the praises of Him who called us from an inferior to a superior position in His infinite kingdom. How many stages of progression we may experience before we arrive at the perfection of our being, He only knoweth who has determined the times before appointed and the bounds of our habitation.

Every thing in our world seems to indicate a state of progression ; from rude beginnings, as we say, to more glorious displays, leading us to expect perfection as a finality. The dim glimmering twilight ; light bathing Creation in a flood of uniform density ; old Darkness permitted to present himself again and again, until the many lamps are lighted up, and all fear of return to the original state of chaos quenched and that for ever. We can grope our way backwards by the

guide-marks of the Creator, through wide periods, across mighty fields, until we lose ourselves in the first darkness. So we can wing our flight, aided by faith and hope, following the guide-marks of our Redeemer, through wide periods, across mighty fields, until we lose ourselves in the light of glory. The revelation of God's Book of Nature leads us backward; the revelation of His Book of Grace forward. We shall find that Science and Revelation are on most intimate terms, if we study them aright.

Science tries to discover the secret treasures of Nature, and Art to fit them for service. Hence the discovery and use of artificial light. The light of knowledge dissipates the darkness of ignorance, and shows man many an object, which, but for it, would have remained for ever buried. We kindle a fire; we nourish a flame; we make darkness relax his rigid hold; and when the sun is down, and the moon has waned away; or the sky is curtained from our gaze by clouds, we light our lamps, and sit by our fireside. Let us be thankful for the lights of Science and Art.

No wonder, when man had fallen and his soul had lapsed into darkness, that the heavenly bodies should attract his attention, win his regards, or even furnish him with idols. The worship of the sun is a nobler kind of worship than that of stocks and stones. No wonder that man, the prey of fear and apprehension, should seek to propitiate the wrath of the all devouring fire. When it pleased the Good God to become the

Teacher of His fallen creatures, He made use of type from the fountain of creation to syllable His Word of instruction. Jesus Christ becomes the sun of righteousness, and therefore worshippers of that sun we all are. Light is knowledge, and holiness, and grace, and God! And we, as Christians, are honoured to be especial bearers of this light to the world.

There is a fire that never shall be quenched. There are wandering stars to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. To propitiate that all-devouring fire, or rather, putting it in more correct phraseology, to "flee from the wrath to come," is the interest, is the duty, is the privilege, of every Christian man. We may bear in mind, since we are capable of being moved with fear, that there is a quenching of light in unutterable darkness.

There is many a noble orb (if I may so speak) in the heavens of our nature, over that kingdom which is within us, which require but the command of heaven to turn into a galaxy of bright lights—Reason, and Conscience, and the Will, and the Memory. The light that is in you may be only spread as a thin veil over the face of your soul at present, as the light was spread during the first three periods of creation. May the time be come for the will of heaven to be more perfectly obeyed, and the orbs of your nature to be lighted indeed. As God commanded the light to shine out of darkness so may he shine in your hearts, to give the

light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The supremacy of the Sun amongst the light bearers of our world, demands that we should make special and singular reference to him.

The moon may be taken as the symbol of the Church. The ever varying phases of this lamp of night may afford an illustration of the many changes, as man can see of the Church of God. Of the one we can calculate the law ; of the other we can only as yet, make observation. The agencies at work in the one case are simpler and more easily contemplated than those of the other. The great masses of the heavenly orbs are moved with uniform and constant forces, but the individual members of that wonderful body the Church, are acted on by diverse and conflicting agencies. If we do but study our own individual self for ever so short a period of time, how are we baffled to account for the ever-shifting phases of our marvellous experience.

That from the earliest periods, a congregation of faithful men, should be collected together to be the witnesses of God in this His world, to give light to them in darkness, and to manifest to beholders the beauty of holiness, is a fact worthy of observation. Abraham and his seed constitute a bright light amid the surrounding darkness of heathendom. The kingdom of Solomon attracted many even from far by the bright and peculiar light of its glory. The common-

wealth of Israel, with its pillar of cloud and fire ; with all its meteor flames of sacrifice ; with the glory-cloud in the temple that betokened the presence of the Deity ; with the burning lights of Prophets and Priests and Kings ; with the lamps of intelligence shining in their holy books and revealing the light of heaven ; this wonderful commonwealth was set as a light in the world until the time appointed of the Father, when the Christian Church more marvellously and more beautifully displayed the Glory of God. The bright beams of the Church now pierce the darkness of almost every land, and give assurance to the thoughtful, that the glory of the Lord shall one day cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

The stars naturally symbolize the individual members of the Catholic Church. What a dark void, what an illimitable desert, would the sky seem without the stars. Whether grouped in constellations, burnished in clouds, or stationed as individual watches of the night, how splendid and marvellous a display is presented to us in the starry heavens. So it is in the Church. We can study its individual members. Those who have turned many to righteousness already shine as the stars in the firmament of God's grace. We can study them to our profit. We have groups or constellations presented to our gaze — Apostles — Prophets, We have a burnished cloud of witnesses — the Martyrs. We have many a burning and shining light from all sorts and conditions of men — a king ; a

peasant ; a poet ; a philosopher ; a minister of state ; a poor widow. But why do I thus proceed ? The spiritual seed of Abraham is more countless than the stars of heaven. The saints and faithful in Christ Jesus are a multitude which no man can number, of all nations and peoples, and kindred and tongues. We are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses. The memory even of the just is blessed. These are set in the firmament of heaven to give light upon the earth.

“For ever singing as they shine

The hand that made us is divine.”

To the many light bearers already constituted in the firmament of the Church, the great and glorious Father of lights is continually adding more. Again and again do we look and wonder, for we behold fresh tokens of power and of grace. To Abel, and Noah, and Abraham, and the Jewish worthies all, we add the names of Gentiles many, who have been turned from darkness unto light, thus bearing witness that the Sun of Righteousness is a light to lighten the Gentiles as well as to be the glory of His people Israel. May we, each one, reflect more clearly the bright light of Christ.

The imagery of scripture with reference to this subject is familiar to us all. The dream of Joseph, how it clings to our memory—“the sun, and the moon, and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.” The vision of the unrighteous seer is matter of history with us—“there shall come a Star out of Jacob.” Daniel’s words we repeat with joyful hopes—“they that turn

many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." In the closing scenes of Revelation we behold one like unto the Son of man, and "in His right hand seven stars."

It was to a few poor and illiterate men that Jesus addressed the words of the text — "Ye are the light of the world." The selection of such instruments; the employment of such means; the fixing (if I may so say) such lamps in the temple of grace; all prove that man is capable of great things, and that God is the true source of all power. This fact of history may also cheer the heart of the weakest amongst mortals, as if saying to him — "I am the Almighty God, walk before me and be thou perfect." — "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." True Christians have their souls lighted with wisdom from on high. It is not the wild fire of earth that cheers and guides the traveller to eternity, but the light of life from God in Christ; and we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.

Light was created and diffused by the Almighty before it was gathered into receptacles, and confined to founts. When the fulness of the time was come, He appointed the sun to give light by day, the moon and the stars by night. He might have addressed them in the very words of the text — "Ye are the light of the world." So too, God, the source of light, intellectual, moral, and spiritual, was everywhere long before the

worlds were created ; but when the fulness of the time was come, He manifested Himself by Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, above all, by Christ Jesus, that true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. There is (if I may be allowed to say so) the light of Christ diffused through the nature of man, the lamp of heaven and of hope ; but when the fulness of the time arrives, in the experience of each individual saint, Christ is revealed, by the Holy Ghost, to the soul, and is reflected in the character to all beholders, so as to glorify the Father of all, the inexhaustible fountain of light, with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning.

Although we cannot tell what are the essential properties of light, we can tell and realize the beauty it displays. The smile of creation, how beautiful to behold ! The lovely face of Nature, when the moon softly plays upon it ; and in the distance, stars many, one differing from another in glory, all unite to form a scene of thrilling interest and delight. The varieties of scene — mountain, and vale, and sea, and stream. The varieties of colour — the blue sky, the green earth, the rainbow, the flowers in almost infinite forms and hues that deck and embroider the whole garment of the world. What a Mind for design ; what a Hand for work, must have planned and perfected these marvellous things !

But there is a light also in knowledge, and virtue, and holiness, which all admire, though in different degrees. There is something so attractive and charm-

ing in the character of the righteous, that even the wicked man exclaims — “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.” The nature of man is leavened with a hope of immortality, and when the more excellent of mortals take their departure from earth, as the sun sets in the western horizon, others, not so good, watch the setting with interest, and hope theirs may be like it. It is the passage to another world, and they think a bright passage the presage of glory. The *life* of man shows his character, and not the strugglings or subterfuges of hope, in the hour of his departure. The vapid atmosphere of earth may prevent our seeing the glory of the setting sun, as the pains and penalties of a sinful humanity may cloud the departure of a saint of the Lord. *Walk* in the light, and leave the orderings of the future to the gracious Providence of God.

What do men *see* in the saints? Sorrow and sadness, infirmity and sin, set their marks on all; and of the greatest it was said — “there is no beauty in Him that we should desire Him.” It is not in well-set features merely that beauty consists. The expression which lights up the countenance, beaming from the inner lamp of the soul, is a better guide to character than the features are. Our actions, our words, our looks even, can send forth beams of light that beholders admire. What a beautiful light haloes noble actions! What a sunbeam of joy will a kind word communicate, and even the compassionate look of sympathy from a

friend, will warm a heart instantly as with holy fire from heaven. Thorough and hearty devotedness to Christ is the oil of a Christian's lamp.

O could we learn that sacrifice,
What lights would all around us rise !
How would our hearts with wisdom talk
Along Life's dullest, dreariest walk !

“ Let your light so shine before men that they *seeing your good works* may glorify your Father which is in heaven.” These words are a suggestive exposition of the text, and as the Christians moved about the world in their heavenly ministry they attracted observation, and won regards by the light which their good works displayed. Besides, there was something peculiar and unusual in the demonstration. Men had been in the habit of loving their friends, but these Christians loved their enemies. Evil must be met and overcome with evil, so said the world ; “ an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,” so wrote Moses ; but the Christians said — “ be not overcome of evil but overcome evil with good.” Pride, and Pomp, and Gold, and Glitter had flared in heathendom, but they were put out by the mild and lovely radiance of Humility, and Truth, and Godliness, and Grace ! Men wondered to see the change wrought, as the light of the gospel beaming from the living characters of Christians chased away the darkness. The focus of the eye must needs be altered to adapt itself to the brighter light that was shed upon the earth. The eyes of the understanding were enlightened. If you had lived then you would

have seen men casting away the works of darkness and putting on the armour of light, in a more marked and manifest way than now they do when the light is more diffused. Heathen husbands were won by the conversation of the wives. Even from the mouths of babes and sucklings praise was perfected. The light of life was manifested in various and wonderful ways. The light bearers were many ; the lamps were bright ; it seemed as if God was making new heavens and a new earth, and the time of transition from the old to the new, full of hope and marvel.

But a question arises — how do we know these things ? How do we become acquainted with the men of olden time, who were the lights of the world ? With our own generation we may be well acquainted, but we are short lived, our life is a mere span. The light of Books beams upon us ! The providence of God has furnished us with modes of fixing knowledge and perpetuating it continually. Vocal sounds ; written characters ; the art of printing are light bearers of intelligence, and without these what a chaos of misery would have ruined mankind ! Books (if I may so speak) are like the heavens which compass our globe, in them we see the bright lights of the world.

In the primitive times when men lived hundreds of years there was no need, or little need, of books. Word of mouth was enough. The witnesses of a fact lived so long that it would be next to impossible to interpolate a fiction. Adam talked with Jared probably, and Jared talked with Noah. The transmission of

intelligence was easy and accomplished by word of mouth. But not so now. We should soon be lost in a labyrinth of inexplicable confusion if we had no medium of conveying intelligence, from one generation to another, except by word of mouth or tradition. Books are very important light bearers in our dark world. By their light it is, by their light only, that we see Adam, and Seth, and Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham, and others, the stars of the moral and spiritual heavens. The art of preserving knowledge by means of visible symbols, written or stamped, or printed in books is one of the wonders of the world. Books are lamps for the illumination of mankind. Even a small well chosen library, is a fountain of light that we may well sit by and refresh ourselves.

The uncorrupted preservation of books is matter of prime importance, and for this the Providence of God has made singular instruments. The witnesses we call in support of the Holy Scriptures, eye one another with jealousy and distrust. False testimony would be detected and overturned on the instant. To the Jews were committed the oracles of God; it was the chief item of their glorious privileges. They faithfully kept this their trust. No heathen dare tamper with their sacred records. The lamp that they held in their hands, they firmly believed, and their belief was good, was fed with oil of heaven. Alas! Alas! to think that whilst they held firm this lamp of God, the evil leprosy of sin was rising from their hearts, till at length the palsied hand dropped the holy vessel, *and*

then the Christians took it up! From that time till this, the word of God taken away from the Jews has been committed to the Gentiles, and "holding forth the word of life," here and there and all about, we hope the house, in every room of it, will be speedily lit up.

As we look around at the splendours of God's creation; see the glorious sun day after day go his determined circuit; behold the lovely moon and countless stars night after night do the bidding of their Maker in silent implicit obedience; as we are conscious all the while of the wide domain of darkness, and feel at times the fear and the horror it produces; so we can contemplate the glorious Sun of Righteousness shining with healing in his wings, and ruling the day of Knowledge, and Truth, and Holiness, and Life. So we can look on the Church as His faithful witness, its dark spots and shadows; so we can behold the stars, faithful and called in Christ Jesus, each in his set place, beaming forth that measure of light conferred by the Great Author. The darkness of ignorance and sin we feel is a wide realm yet. Rising with the occasion; calling to mind the appointments and ordinances of heaven; praying earnestly, perseveringly, for the grace of life; knowing that we are invested with solemn responsibilities, we strive to realize the truth of the words of our Master — "ye are the light of the world."

"Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us."

The Sun.

THE SUN.

MALACHI iv. 2.

"Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings."

THE sun demands distinct and especial mention. That glorious luminary, surpassing all, eclipsing all, in splendour, the king of glory, deserves our marked attention. Pitiable lot of them who are born blind never to see the kingdom of light !

From the bright orb that daily traverseth the heavens before our eyes, the Christian's mind, by such suggestions as the words of the text naturally call up, turns to that brighter sun, whose beams afford healing, joy, and strength.

The heavens declare the glory of God ; and, as often as, from the tabernacle above, the sun, as a Bridegroom cometh forth gloriously, the Christian rejoices in his course. Clouds may arise, storms may sit on the visible heavens, but the Christian has faith in God, and knows well that behind the darksome, flimsy mountains, the king of day makes his royal progress.

“Sun of my soul, thou Saviour dear,
It is not night if thou art near ;
Oh may no earth-born cloud arise,
To hide thee from thy servant’s eyes.”

How little do philosophers know of the contents, or the constitution of the universe. How little do Christians know of the place and constitution of the orders of intelligence, from the awakened sinner on earth, to the brightest archangel nearest the throne of God in heaven. The natural sun transcends in marvel all our enterprize — the spiritual sun how much more !

A dense and ponderous mass, a million times greater than this world, which we make so much of, sweeping space probably with all his train of worlds, at a speed which we are not able to calculate, clothed in raiment so bright that it dazzles our keenest eyesight to look on it ; this is a marvellous object ! This is the handiwork of God ! This is the sun that rules the day !

The brightness of the Father’s glory ; the express image of his person ; Light of Light ; Very God of very God ; this is the sun of the spiritual world ; this is Christ our Lord. He ruleth the day, and sendeth forth beams full of grace and truth, across the space of his mighty orbit. We veil our faces and worship.

The moon is lovely ; the stars are many and sparkling ; but at the approach of the sun they pale and pale, until, on his arrival, they die out, and we altogether lose sight of them through light. So long as the moral and spiritual world moves on as now, bodies of men,

sacred associations, individual saints, will engage our attention and win our regards; but as the sun approaches or rises over the horizon of our soul, the inferior orbs have no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. The noxious exhalations, vapours, clouds, and darkness, of ignorance, prejudice, and sin, are absorbed or chased away by the healing beams of the Sun of Righteousness.

Fable tells us, that to gratify curiosity, a child of man was detained from his birth in a secret enclosure of darkness, and not allowed to see the marvels of day. When his powers were sufficiently developed, being led forth into the presence of light, he fell prostrate before the majestic splendour of the King of heaven. What conception do you suppose, such a man could have, with all the appliances of instruction, of varieties of colour, the beauties of nature, and the splendour of light?

Truth tells us of many an one, born and trained in darkness, who, when led by the gracious hand of providence, from the dank and dark cave of ignorance and sin, into the broad daylight of grace, have fallen prostrate and adored the fountain of light and glory. We all, my brethren, ever live in that sacred atmosphere, which is lit up and graced with the perpetual shining of the Sun of Righteousness. Shall a burst of light affect us more than a constant radiance? Shall a beam, darting through a cloud, win our praises more than that vesture of light which clothes us ever?

It must with truth be acknowledged, that at our best estate, even now, we are in the very pupillage of our existence. The light which beams upon us from heaven, comes to us through a dense medium. We see through a glass darkly. The instructions of men fall very short of our requirements. In the narrow cave of our earthly estate we can form but a dim and confused notion of the glories outside. It is true indeed, that although the eye, and the ear, and the heart, fail to reach the object of our souls' desire, the Spirit of grace and of revelation shows to us the glories of Jesus, who is the Word of God. But how little of these glories are we capable of appreciating? We are so straitened in ourselves: we know but in part: we are but of yesterday, and our childhood must needs be spent in gathering mere rudiments of knowledge, and preparing for our manhood. Oh how we should pray and long for the bright morning of eternity, when the glorious sun shall burst through all the clouds that surround our world, and that which is perfect shall come, and mortality be swallowed up of life!

If the sun did nothing more than gild our world with light, spreading over mountain and plain, desert and fertile field, crests of ocean waves, and ripples of the brooklet, a golden glow of cheerfulness, this were a wonderful ministry for a creature of God. But when, added to this, his beams are charged with mystic power, to call out from the many receptacles where it lies secreted, the grace of life and beauty. Oh, this is a

wonderful addition to his greatness. Both animal and vegetable life owe much of their energy and excellence to the gracious influence of the glorious sun. How often have weariness, sorrow, and pain, been held in abeyance, by the charming power of the heralds of day, hastening over the eastern hills, to clear the passage for their noble lord.

If Christian religion did nothing more for the world than change the face of things ; if it only removed barbarism and supplied civilization ; changed grossness into refinement, and ignorance into knowledge, it would confer an inestimable boon on mankind. But it changes the *heart* of things ; it permeates the whole lump of humanity ; it searches into the springs of sorrow, and misery, and sin, and death, and dries them up, or if not this, runs them into the waters of oblivion by a short course. It even takes poor fallen sinful man by the hand, and leads him through a new and living way into the Father's house of many mansions, and robes him in glorious apparel in the immediate presence of Christ.

And now, following the intimations of the text, let us turn from the sun which rules in the natural heavens with such power and grace, to the Sun of Righteousness, whereof the text speaks, that rules in the spiritual heavens, and exercises such a marvellous power of grace and salvation in the souls of sinful men.

There is no doubt on our minds respecting the person to whom the words of the text refer. The Jews applied

them to the Messiah, and we Gentiles, believing that Jesus is the Christ, perpetuate that application. Instead of saying, as we perhaps should say, in the more homely and matter of fact mode of giving utterance to our thoughts — “the Messiah shall come and instruct and save you,” the Jews dealing in imagery and figures of speech, announce the same intelligence in more poetical phraseology — “The Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings.” The spirit of Christ, which was in Malachi, did signify to him, that the bright and glorious luminary which rules the day, and screens, with the sweep of his garments, all other heavenly bodies from gaze, might well be taken as a symbolic representative of the great Saviour of the world, and the prophet wrote it down, and thus testified beforehand the glory that should follow.

In the interpreting of Scripture, every man must use all the agencies at his command. He must not assume a voluntary humility because of the straitness of his circumstances, or even the bondage of his sinfulness. Let him stand upon the highest hill he can climb ; let him mount if he can, to the top of Pisgah, and take a wide survey of the glorious land. We christians, living now, are much more favourably circumstanced than were the Jews of old, or even our brethren that have gone before us. Knowledge has increased. Evidences have multiplied. Our tread is firm. Coming, for instance, to the interpretation of the text, we are not stinted in knowledge as the Jews

were in the days of Malachi, or as the Christians in the days of Origen. The New Testament is opened before us ; the history of the Church in these latter days sheds its radiance on the pathway of our experience, and we cannot restrain ourselves from bursting the formal modes of conventional propriety, and exclaiming aloud — “The glorious sun has risen, and shed its healing beams all round the world. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.”

The proper and essential Divinity of Christ is a subject that fills our mind with awe and reverence, as the glory filled the sacred place of old. He is the very and eternal God. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. Dwelling in light unto which no man can approach (for no man can see God and live), He had the glory with the Father before the world was. In the glorious Palace of the Past, before the present Creation was called out, He was with the Father. In the glorious Palace of the Future, whatever Creations may succesively arise, He will be one with God. Eternity, that mighty, mystic ocean, embracing, if I may so say, in its wide bosom, all the islands of time and circumstance, is His dwelling-place. He inhabiteth eternity. Darkness is held in chains. We lose vigour of thought and strength of purpose ; we tread on sand and deal in subterfuge, if we let go our hold of the proper and essential divinity of Jesus Christ.

This is the true God and eternal life. Little children keep yourselves from idols.

The proper and essential Humanity of Christ is a subject which fills our mind with wonder and hope, as the mind of Israel was affected when, at the waving wand of Moses, the turgid sea opened its bosom, and made a way for the ransomed of the Lord to pass over. The new and living way is through the flesh of Jesus. The humanity of our Lord guides us home and stays us in our journey. There is no controversy here. All acknowledge now the humanity of Jesus Christ. A phantom He was not, but a real man. The heresy of the Docetæ is exploded. The biography of Jesus is interesting. If we could put it amongst the fable books, it would delight mankind ; but it deals with Sin and the Evil One, and *therefore* is treated rudely. Jesus Christ is the *peculiar* Benefactor of mankind, and many misunderstand and misinterpret the purpose of His ministry. Sin is an evil prompter, and Envy, and Malice, and Spite, triumvirate of mischief and of misery, are evil workers ; good for us if we never use their ministry. The rude cradle at Bethlehem, and the rough cross at Calvary, the alpha and omega of his mortal existence, are stern witnesses of the realness of His humanity ; and the hyphen of His ministry, as He went about doing good, assures us of the same fact. Yes, a man of the substance of His mother, born in the world. Behold the man ! The man Christ Jesus. It is an awful prophecy — “God hath appointed a day

in the which He will judge the world in righteousness, by that Man whom He hath ordained." Faith in the proper and essential humanity of Christ is necessary to salvation.

The Messiah is God and man. As the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ. He is Immanuel — God with us. God was manifest in the flesh. He took our nature upon Him. We need not distress ourselves through want of an interpreter, when we read in the Old Testament such expressions as these, referring to the Messias — "The mighty God, the everlasting Father." "Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." "The Lord our righteousness." The New Testament makes them plain. The announcements which He made through human lips respecting the realness of His Divinity, are received with mingled emotions of awe and gratitude — "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." "I and the Father are one." The vision which Jacob had is fulfilled. Jesus Christ is God and man. From the heights of Divinity to the depths of Humanity, Jesus is the way. Angels of God ascend and descend upon the son of man. We are cared for indeed, when such a Saviour stands at our door and knocks!

The possession of a sound mind, of a right judgment in all things, is a special gift of God. To be able to weigh conflicting testimony, and assign to every subject its proper evidence, is a great help to wisdom.

What evils have arisen to the Church through private interpretation of Scripture. We have no right to wrest Scripture, or force it to give utterance to our own wishes. No state of mind is so likely to attain unto wise counsels as that which is poor, and contrite, and trembleth at God's word. This is both an evidence and an earnest of the spirit of wisdom and revelation. On the subject before us — the Divinity, the Humanity, the Messiahship of Jesus Christ, how good to possess a right judgment. From the first faint whisper to the last clear voice of the revelation of Jesus Christ, ability to catch the proper force and meaning is a noble endowment. What He did as man ; what He did as God, rightly to divide and balance, is necessary to the stability of knowledge and of faith. Holding a right creed about inspiration is of little value, without experiencing the power thereof. The letter changes, the Spirit is one. The seed of the woman in the book of Genesis, is the Alpha and Omega in the book of Revelation. The glimmering light of truth in the conscience of every man, is the twilight of the Glory of Earth and Heaven. Jesus Christ is all.

As you search the Scriptures daily, remember they testify of *Him*. One while you will behold Him robed in light of glory ; then you must veil your face and worship. Another while, you will see Him busy amongst men, with a face marred by sorrow, and crowds treating Him rudely, then you must draw nigh and take Him by the hand, and say — “ Master, it is good to be

here." The flash of glory from His Divinity must halo your soul, when you see Him amongst men, as one that serveth. If so, be sure

"Some softening gleam of love and prayer,
Will beam on every cross and care."

Sometimes, perhaps, you will stand astonished, not knowing whether God or man is doing the marvellous deed. Be not terrified, muse on such words as these. "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, yet believe the works ; that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in Him." Never cavil nor be captious. Receive with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save your souls. And be ye doers of the word, not hearers only, deceiving your own souls. The spirit of obedience reveals Christ. If a man is disobedient to the heavenly vision, he is wilfully blind ; he will never see God. Ponder on such a passage as this — "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world ? Jesus answered and said, if a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

The primary meaning of the text has reference to the first coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in the flesh, for the redemption of mankind. But this meaning may be widened to embrace within it, the revelation of Christ, to every individual soul that feareth God in the highway of holiness all across the world.

It may go farther still, and take us to the time, when the last morning shall dawn on the world, and He cometh again in His glorious majesty, to judge both the quick and dead.

The healing is Salvation. Human nature is a great morass, a desert, a wilderness. The Heavenly husbandman resolves on reclaiming the field of the world. He conceives a plan. He ordains the means. To clear, to irrigate, to fertilize the world, demands infinite resources. He wonders. His own arm brings salvation. His righteousness, it sustains Him. The Sun of Righteousness arises with healing in his wings. The desert becomes a fruitful field. The mountains and the hills break forth before Him into singing, and all the trees of the field clap their hands. Sin is put away, and *Holiness to the Lord* is the motto of Regeneration.

Believe the four Gospels ; treat them not as cunningly devised fables. Read the Acts of the Apostles ; they are the attributes of real men. Understand the meaning of the Epistles ; here is divine philosophy. And you will prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. You will realize the healing virtues of Salvation. The Sun of Righteousness has changed the face of the world, and will change. A wonderful healer has visited the pools of Bethesda. He healed them all. Ignorance, Poverty, Wretchedness, Sorrow, Despair, Sin, Death, He has remedies for all. Here is the good Physician. Now we have the balm of Gilead. Tell me not that the scowl of the

infidel, or the sneer of the scoffer, can quench the beams of light. I know better. As well might you screen from the wide world the life-bearing beams of the glorious sun, by holding up before you the palm of your little hand, as the wicked in their insensate madness, turn light into darkness, to any but themselves and their kindred.

“To reveal Christ in me” supposes a wonderful power and agency. “Christ in you the hope of glory” is an announcement, that should set every man on diligent search, to know for certainty, who is the Lord and Master in the home of his heart. The healing beams of the Sun of Righteousness, bear the grace of life to the immortal parts. The word of God is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. In other phrase — Religion must live and move within, brought there by the grace of Christ. Whited sepulchres may be beautiful to behold, but they are within full of dead mens’ bones and all uncleanness. The kingdom of God is within, and the Sun of Righteousness is the light and glory thereof. How good and gracious an influence is exerted in our nature, when we seek first the kingdom of God and His Righteousness.

The gradual revelation of Christ to the world ; the roll of the sun’s chariot across the nations ; the enlightenment of science, and philosophy, and civilization, and refinement, as consequent of Christianity — these are subjects of intense importance ; these are matters of fact and prophecies. We may look to the end, we

may fly on the wings of hope, to the uttermost parts of the earth, and find the heavens charged with light and grace, even to the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

The gracious promise of the text draws a line of limit to the healing rays of the Sun of Righteousness. It throws (as all revelation does) a practical cast on godliness — “*unto you that fear my name.*” The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Hear the conclusion of the whole matter of religion — fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. There must be first a willing mind. This is the gift of God, and He giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not. No man is compelled to be religious ; it is a matter of choice. No man is compelled to open his eyes, and look on the beautiful forms of creation, but the means are so simple and so skilfully contrived, and the inducements are so many and so fair, that no man is willingly blind to earthly things. The means of grace are simple ; the contrivances (if I may so say) of redemption are exquisitely skilful, and the inducements are many and strong. But the spell of sin-loving must be broken, and when this is done, the soul, like one realizing a marvellous discovery, exclaims — “How great is the simplicity of Christ.” O Lord plant thy fear in our hearts, that we may not depart from Thee. Show us the light of thy countenance, and we shall be saved.

Clouds.

CLOUDS.

ISAIAH liii. 2.

**“He hath no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see
Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.”**

HOW fitful are the moods of man's experience, as fitful as the clouds which, in our murky atmosphere, darken, or veil, or flit across the heavens over our heads. There is many a phase of heart experience which we can give no more account of than we can of the rise, and shape, and vanishing of the flimsy clouds of the sky. And all our life long, the atmosphere of our soul is continually beclouded with doubt, or sorrow, or care, or trouble of some sort. We seldom have a clear sky.

A sudden thought, a lively fancy, a quick feeling will instantly weave a wreath of misty doubt and mischief, and place it on the head of our soul, and how long it may be before we can divest ourselves again of this gloomy thing! The agencies of sin so easily combine with other agencies acting on man, that he cannot calculate on a day, or even an hour, for calm repose and the sunshine of a quiet mind.

¶ The condition of our outer life is also subject to many changes, and the clouds of poverty, pain, sorrow, bereavement, vanity, roll in heavy masses, or fleet away in thin shadows, in perpetual restlessness. This vale of tears is scarcely ever free from clouds. The changes and chances of our mortal life are many and curious.

Such has been the condition of mankind from remotest antiquity ; probably, had we the proper records and means of search, we should trace the line of man's misery to the sin of Adam, that little cloud no bigger than a man's hand, which, in process of time has spread over the whole world with such baneful influence.

Into such a world as this, with its strange conditions ; into such a scene as this, with its ever-varying phases of fortune ; to this little theatre of life, with its many characters ; to this cloudy place of sin and misery ; subject to its laws, and bound to it by peculiar obligations, the Son of God came. The vesture He put on ; the position He occupied ; the conditions He submitted to ; the ministry He exercised, were so many clouds around His divine nature, which ordinary mortals, with common eyesight never pierced. They looked on Him, 'tis true, but there was no form of beauty, no comely proportions, to command their admiration. They talked of Him with boldness, with flippancy, with disrespect, because He had veiled Himself in a cloud, which they might have seen through, at least in sufficient measure, had they the heart to do it, and caught a glimpse of the contour of His marvellous character,

which would have declared Him to them as their Messiah, the Saviour of the world. Man is responsible for his ignorance and prejudices, and if he sees not in the book of creation the invisible things of God, or being more highly favoured, sees not in the book of redemption the divine character of Jesus Christ, he will have to bear the consequences of his guilt.

The light of life has to shine in the dark places of this cloudy world, and the wisdom and the grace of God have to mould agencies, in keeping with the real condition of fallen man, and his dwelling-place, so as best to promote the diffusion of that light. The divine Being, Jesus Christ, who took upon Him the glorious duty of bringing salvation to fallen man, must demean Himself in keeping with the work He has to do. He has to visit our world, and assume our nature. He must submit Himself to the laws of our mortal state. Poverty, Retirement, Sorrow, Labour, Misery, and Death are His portion as well as ours. But He has moreover to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. He has to make atonement. He has to bring in everlasting righteousness, by a thorough keeping of God's holy law. He has to set a perfect example to all sorts and conditions of men. He has to meet the malice and the power of the evil usurper, and dethrone him. He has to destroy the works of the devil. He has to bring life and immortality to light. To accomplish all this, divine power in human nature was needed, and Jesus Christ, our Immanuel, has satisfied the needs; to accomplish

this, it was necessary that the whole realm of human experience should be visited and searched, and through the clouds, and mists, and darkness of this strange land, our divine Redeemer travelled.

We have now to dwell on those states and changes of fortune, those sorrows, and pains, and miseries, and exigencies of His mortal existence, which may be called clouds, investing the sun of our souls. We shall be able at the same time to learn lessons profitable for ourselves in all our sufferings. To think on, if we do not see, the silver lining of the darkest clouds ; and, at times certainly, to trace the bright edging of light, that gilds with joyful hope the sorrows, and cares, and troubles of our mortal life.

The *mystery* with which our Saviour is invested, is the first cloud that screens Him at times from our gaze. Like the mass of clouds that capped the summit of the holy mount, to hide the glory of the Presence, when Moses received the lively oracles of the law. Or, like the shadowing of the mercy-seat caused by the Cherubim of glory. Or, coming nearer home, like the shade of doubt that obscures our mind, when we try to discover the seat of residence of our immortal souls, in the earthly tabernacle of our mortal body — such is the mystery that veils the Saviour of mankind from our vision.

The announcements of Him in Holy Scripture are, many of them, dark and mysterious. The seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head. The seed of Abra-

ham blessing the world. The prophet like unto Moses teaching His people. The son of David seated on His Father's throne. The mighty God; the everlasting Father; the Prince of Peace—in the roll of Isaiah. The Ancient of Days; the Son of Man; the Shepherd; the Stone; the Branch—what clouds of mystery shroud these mountain heights of the holy land of revelation.

Many things hard to be understood cloud our reading of scripture, and yet, perhaps, by proper labour and pains-taking, some of these may be surmounted. As the traveller, climbing the rough side of a mighty mountain, passes through a cloudy zone of darkness, and then emerges from the upper surface on a region of superior sunshine, and from his more commanding position sweeps in his vision a longer and more varied range of beauty, so does the explorer of truth widen his views as he climbs upward, and the dispensations of heaven will always reward the labour and travail of humble and diligent enterprize. Jesus looked like an ordinary mortal to ordinary men; Religion is a thing of strange doubtfulness with the mass of mankind; but as humble and holy men, true and hearty disciples, beheld His glory, full of grace and truth, so do all that truly fear the Lord, find Religion's ways to be ways of pleasantness, and all her paths paths of peace. Simplicity, and sincerity, and thoughtful and prayerful labour, are like beams of the Sun of Righteousness, which will pierce through or dissipate many a cloud of darkness in our pathway home.

“The land where (suns and moons unknown,
And night's alternate sway),
Jehovah's ever burning throne,
Upholds unbroken day.”

In the performance of the great work which our Saviour came on earth to accomplish, what sacred mystery attended Him. His words ; His works ; His reserve ; His very silence, tokens of mystery oftentimes. The limiting line of the revelation of Himself, we cannot possibly trace, as we ask — “Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us and not unto the world ?” Ever present, yet never seen, Jesus is the stay of our faith, and the wonder of the world. We cannot follow Him down those steps, which He took from His throne, to the cloudy region of the dead. Christ Jesus thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men ; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Down this strange stair of degradation, what an horror of great darkness must have hedged him round ; yet he never slipped nor lost his footing, till he made a firm stand on the lowest floor of the human house. The death he submitted to on the accursed tree ; the sacred corse from which the Wonderful Presence departed for a while (Oh whither departed, and for what ?) ; the Resurrection ; the forty days tarrying ; the Ascension ; His perpetual session at the right

hand of the Father ; without touching on the guiding light of prophecy. Oh, what mystery of intensest interest clouds our Lord about !

The prejudices of a degraded people could find nourishment in the very mystery that obscured the announcements of their Deliverer. Partial in its reading, as from its nature prejudice ever is, the Jewish mind, clouded with sin, selected what it liked, and discarded what it disliked, of the revelation of the Messiah. Thus they accomplished the will of heaven, in crucifying the Lord of glory, and ruining themselves. Prejudices as deep may now cloud the sinful mind of Christians, who have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof ; who praise the Saviour with their lips, whilst their hearts are far from Him. What a cloud of mystery hangs about the responsibility of man ! Freedom of will ; liberty of action ; veiled presence of God ; means of instruction and of grace ! No unnatural force is exerted to remove the screen that hides the Saviour from our vision. As in the agencies of nature, clouds of darkness silently glide or melt away, and the glorious sun cheers the world, so by the agencies of grace, through deep thoughtfulness, and sorrow for sin, and faith in God, the Saviour is revealed to our souls, with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

True Christians partake of the mystery of their divine Master. They are a mystery to themselves, they are a mystery unto others. Their oneness with Christ, being joined to the Lord by one Spirit ; their

individual experience, each in his set place and vocation ; their faith, and hope, and love, making them citizens of heaven, and strangers on the earth ; they may say with truth — “therefore the world knoweth us not because it knew Him not.” And still moving on, up the heights toward the heavenly Jerusalem, they are constrained to say — “Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear — *we shall be like Him !*”

Poverty was another cloud that surrounded our Saviour — cloud, as men call things. Doubtless, God’s thoughts are not as our thoughts ; and that which is highly esteemed among men, is sometimes had in abomination with Him. A poor condition may be more glorious really than a rich one, and may serve to set forth with greater contrasts the beauty of holiness, the lights and reflections of virtue and of grace, like the dark cloud in the sky, on which the sun paints the bow of mercy in tears of heaven. Good for mankind, that the Saviour chose the hard, and rough, and crooked things of mortal life. He won His way through most untoward circumstances. Had He chosen Grandeur, and Riches, and Prosperity, He might have been a model for kings and great ones of the earth, but as it is, He is the model for all. Despair can never torture a man, as long as he looks unto Jesus. Hope will nerve to fresh endeavour, until the last embers of life are burnt out on the altar of a Christian’s heart.

What a poor lot Jesus had ! What a poor man He

was! A manger-cradle must be counted cloud enough around His humble birth-place. If we could see Him earning and eating His daily bread at Nazareth, He would hardly have risen a step, I dare say, from the level of His birth. Hunger and want assailed Him sometimes in the labours of His ministry. He was obliged to say once — “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.” It was a keen craving that made Him say — “I thirst.” Oh, my Lord, how poor thou wast!

Heaven is full of compensations. Jesus had meat to eat that we know not of. He needed not special ministry of angels to bear Him food. He had no need to work miracles in His own behalf. Consciousness of integrity; fulfilment of duty; salvation of man, served for food and cordial to the Holy Jesus. It is ever so with them that do the will of God. Poverty sanctified by holiness, is like the rain-bearing cloud, that discharges its heavenly treasures for the benefit of mankind. “Poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, yet possessing all things.” Oh, ye poor, murmur not; if the cloud of Penury and Want have driven men away from you, there is One ever near to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. Without money, and without price, the blessings of redemption are dispensed. The poor have the Gospel preached unto them. It was the will of heaven, for Him who was rich, to become poor — see

how the will was obeyed. It is the will of heaven, that through His poverty we might be made rich — let us see to the fulfilment of this.

Obscurity also hid our Lord from view. Poverty and obscurity generally go together ; they are like two sides of the same cloud. The rich have many friends. The sunshine of prosperity will tempt all men out. Rome was mistress of the world, when Jesus lived and died. Cæsar was the grandest name that tongue gave sound to. Herod had more state than Jesus, as this world goes. By imperial order, Joseph and the Virgin travelled from Nazareth to Bethlehem, and then and there the Saviour was born. They soon found their way back again, and Jesus by-and-by was called the Prophet of Nazareth of Galilee. The obscurity of His parentage and birth ; the obscurity of His lot and life ; the obscurity, and worse than obscurity, of His place of residence, told against His claims as Messiah. It was not generally known, that He was born in the city of David. Report was sufficient for the multitude, and He went by the name of the Nazarene. If a Scribe or a Pharisee had found out concerning His birth, it would have been good policy (as men call policy), to hide the important fact in the obscurity of His general life. Most men have dark corners in their inner life, where they hide those remnants of knowledge, that would tell against them if exposed to gaze.

Rulers, and Poets, and Philosophers, and Orators, and Great Men of various names, were dividing among

them the honours of the world, and in the mean and retired town of Nazareth, was the Saviour of mankind living in obscurity ! How mistaken an estimate do men often form of greatness and glory ! “ A poor man by his wisdom delivered the city, yet no man remembered that same poor man.” We need make a demand on our faith, when we contemplate the obscurity of our Saviour, faith answers to the demand, and exposes to our gaze the special ministry of angels, that waited on their Lord continually, like that cloud of witnesses, which the Apostles reminded the Hebrews compassed them about.

Most men live and die in obscurity ; few comparatively speaking, are thrust out into prominence to meet the gaze of mankind. Humble duty-doing ; the fear of God ; trust in Christ, will give a bright lining to the cloud of obscurity and retirement, whilst the restless and discontented, the proud and the sinful, will chafe under its darkness ; as Israel and Egypt by the margin of the Red Sea, that was destined to form a miraculous passage for one, and awful grave for the other.

Sorrow invested our Saviour with its gloomy darkness. He was truly a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. Like as fragrant clouds of dewy steam, sometimes screen the loveliness of early morning from the gaze of man, exciting their admiration and their hopes ; so the sacred sorrow of the Son of Man, gives an undefined and mysterious appearance to Him at

times, like haze in the distance, but stirs our sympathy and wins our love when He comes to us close, and we feel that His tears are shed over us.

Sin has caused much sorrow. What bitter waters man has had to drink on account of transgression ! The ordinary course of nature is tinged with sadness. Could we really contemplate all the causes of sorrow — could we experience all its phases — how should we be overwhelmed ! We suppose Jesus did contemplate all the causes of sorrow, and experience all its phases. With a sensibility of nature most intense ; with the full consciousness of the mighty duty imposed on Him, to “carry our sorrows ;” to drink the very dregs of the cup the Father had put into His hand — well might He say — “Behold, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow !” and again — “my soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death,” and — “sorrow hath broke my heart.”

Made like unto His brethren in all things ; in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin ; divine as well as human — Jesus is able to succour them that are tempted. Sympathy in Him is perfect. He is moved with compassion for the multitude, who have no shepherd. He sheds tears over the city that will not repent. He weeps at the tomb of His friend. Oh ! on the lonely mountain, or on the sleepless couch ; in the wilderness ; in the city ; everywhere ! how did sorrow rend His sacred heart. The needs of the world were on Him, and He carried the mighty burden

through the vale of tears, through the grave and gate of death, and cast it down at the feet of divine Justice, demanding pardon, and liberty, and life, for fallen man.

As the children of Israel were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, so the children of God are baptized unto Jesus in the cloud and sea of His sorrow and suffering. Onward through the wilderness, that cloud tracks the pathway of the saints. We must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of heaven. Godly sorrow is goodly discipline, and although weeping may endure for the night, joy cometh in the morning.

Sorrow has its residence in the mind, pain in the body; and whilst the one filled the soul of the Redeemer, as the cloud filled the temple of Solomon, the other, like the fire of the Chaldeans, was busied in destroying the sacred edifice. The temple of His body was brought down to the dust, and in three days reared again.

The dark and dismal clouds of death rolled over the Lord of life and immortality. He died that we might live. He tasted death for every man. "It is finished," was uttered on the accursed tree. And whilst there was darkness over all the land, as the Sun of Righteousness set in the clouds of death, so doubt, and disappointment, and dismay, brooded over the souls of His disciples, till the rising again on the third day restored them to hope and joy.

How mild a radiance is shed on the cloudy pathway

of our sorrows, by the light of life of the Holy Jesus ! Through all the varied accidents of our strange and eventful journey, from the cradle to the grave, whether Poverty, Sickness, Sorrow, Suffering, or Death, cast their cloudy bands around us, we have Him for our guide and mainstay. We have Him for our hope and light and glory. May we never let go our confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.

The following words of the holy and learned Bishop Jeremy Taylor, bearing as they do on the subject which we have been considering, may properly close my present sermon — “In the midst of two thieves, three long hours the Holy Jesus hung, clothed with pain, agony, and dishonour, all of them so eminent and vast, that he who could not but hope, whose soul was enchased with divinity, and dwelt in the bosom of God, and in the cabinet of the mysterious Trinity, yet had a cloud of mercy so thick and black drawn before Him, that He complained as if God had forsaken Him ; but this was ‘the pillar of cloud,’ which conducted Israel into Canaan. And we follow this cloud to our country, having Christ for our guide : and though He trod the way, leaning upon the cross, which, like the staff of Egypt, pierced His hands ; yet it is to us a comfort and support, pleasant to our spirits as the sweetest canes, strong as the pillars of the earth, and made apt for our use, by having been borne and made smooth by the hands of our elder brother.”

The Great Eclipse.

THE GREAT ECLIPSE.

PSALM *xxii.* 1.

“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

KNOWLEDGE is measured in scales of heaven, that knowledge which maketh wise unto salvation. Holy Scriptures give but limited information, as the needs of man, and the wisdom of God, have ordained. The light of life is dimmed and obscured by the infirmities of man, and other accidents of his condition. Sinful mortals must not be allowed to prescribe terms to heaven, and have their curiosity gratified at the expence of Judgment and Justice; let them rather use with reverence and gratitude whatever knowledge is given, and wait with patience for further supplies. We see through a glass darkly. We know but in part. When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

Sadness and a certain measure of disappointment perhaps, will haunt us at times, when we think about the treasures we have lost — treasures of knowledge

which the words of Jesus contained, and which are not written in a book. How, for instance, have we often-times longed to hear that exposition of Christian truth, which on the road to Emmaus, on a certain memorable occasion, the risen Saviour gave His sorrowing disciples, to their heart-burning wonder and joy. What a sacred clasp would it have afforded, to hold together the law and the prophets, and the New Testament. How do we also sometimes wish we could have conversed with Moses and the prophets, and prevailed on them to expound to us the dark passages of their writings, and fill up certain gaps, which now we cannot easily, if at all, bridge over. But sorrow, on account of objects of interest irretrievably lost, is unprofitable and vain. The best thing to do, is to possess ourselves of that Spirit, with which inspired and holy men were guided and taught.

How impossible is it for us, or next to impossible, in the Psalms for instance, at all times to catch the definite meaning of the writer, and set it before others in an exposition not to be gainsaid. Sometimes, by prophetic impulse, the Psalmist speaks in the person of his Son and Lord, Jesus Christ, across the space of a thousand years. The interpretation to us now may be as clear as it was dark to them to whom first the words were uttered. Then again, he suddenly returns to the ordinary character of his own experience, to the even tenour of the ways of men, and with prayers, and musings, and wailings for sin, completes his poem. We

may learn perhaps, from this characteristic of experimental and prophetic scriptures, how things human and things divine are welded together; how amid the strange elements of worldly matters, He who built all things, built His Church, and appointed its Sacrifice and Priest.

Of all dark events in the history of the world, that which we are now about to contemplate must stand first — the great eclipse of the Sun of Righteousness — the death of Jesus Christ on the accursed tree! All other events sink into insignificance by the side of this. How to calculate the combination of things that made it necessary; how to seize on the elements of fact, that must be used to work the mighty sum; how to arrange and number the agents and agencies many, that were engaged in the accomplishment; in a word, how to speak properly of Jesus Christ and Him crucified, will tax all the powers of men and angels. May holy awe and godly sorrow, and reverend joy, fill our hearts as we take our stand by the cross of Calvary, and make our observations.

All the circumstances of the life of David are not recorded in Holy writ, and there are some references in the Psalm from which the text is taken which could not possibly find fulfilment in him. They are prophetic glimpses of the sufferings of his Lord. How many pictures are drawn of sorrowing and suffering humanity, and the chief of them are portraiture of Jesus. Some of the words were actually used by His enemies,

and applied to Him. The very words of the text proceeded out of His lips as He hung upon the cross, and it is not impossible that He gave expression to the whole Psalm. It's every word may find fulfilment in Him, strange though it may sound and wonderful.

It does not appear, I think, from the narrative of the crucifixion, if we make one exception, that our Redeemer put forth any power, or had any aid vouchsafed to Him, by virtue of His divinity, which may not be vouchsafed to us in our sufferings. He put forth His divine hand indeed, and rescued a penitent believer from the strong arm of the enemy. "To day" He said, "thou shalt be with me in Paradise." With this exception, all the utterances on the cross were utterances of sorrowing, suffering, and sympathising humanity. We do not look to the dying Jesus for display of divinity, but for the triumphs of humanity, that all mankind may follow the example of His great patience, loving-kindness, humility, and trust in God.

In humble and prayerful study of the words of the text, we may set our Lord before us as perfect man, made a perfect Saviour to us by His sufferings. We may use our own little gauge of knowledge to fathom, if we can, the depths of His misery. We may pray to that all-wise and holy Teacher, who taketh of the things of Christ, and revealeth them unto us. We may use and ought to use, every means human and divine vouchsafed to us, in order to understand this strange dying and death. And when we have done

all, to the utmost stretch of our ability, we shall be sadly disappointed at the greatness of our failure, and utter hopelessness of ever being able to compass the incomprehensible marvel. The elements of calculation of this great eclipse, can only be made available in the infinite sphere of the divine mind, so that we puny mortals must let that alone for ever. God was manifest in the flesh, and gave infinite merits to the sacrifice on the cross. Blessed truth for us to embrace — “He made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world.” “We have redemption through His blood. Hallelujah! Amen!”

A certain fact is declared in the text with regard to our Saviour — *He was forsaken of God*. We must consider this. And then we may use all diligence, and make search for an answer to the question — “My God, my God, *why* hast thou forsaken me?”

Such is the force of habit, and such the waywardness of human nature, that the mouth may give utterance to confessions of sin, and forms of devotion, when the heart appreciates not at all, or but little, the meaning and the power. Even on the deathbed, the heart may deceive us, and the words of the lips may be no proper gauge of reality within. We may actually quit the world playing a part. How often also when troubles arise, do we impute to God, what should rather be imputed to ourselves. “We are forsaken of God,” such may be our language — when we should rather hear it

run in this form — “your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.” But with our Saviour it was otherwise ; His lips and His heart held truthful correspondence. He had no need to play a false part. All temptations that assailed Him never caused Him to swerve from perfect uprightness. Truth was ever on His lips ; and we may be sure that every word He uttered on the cross, as elsewhere, was true. The highest pitch of misery was His God forsaking Him. Whatever was the cause of that desertion, the fact is broadly stated.

The gathering clouds of previous desertion ; the forsaking of disciples and friends ; the mockery and scorn of wicked men ; the trial, the scourging, the cross, the shame, each and all, with an horror of great darkness overwhelming His body and His soul with pain and anguish, invited the last and worst foe of man to make Him his prey — Despair seized on Him, and in most awful paroxysm He exclaimed — “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?

God’s providence is our inheritance, and how varied, how rich, how wonderful an inheritance it is, considering what we are. But Christ purchased it for us, and fenced it about, and guards it ever with perpetual vigilance. The cost of it was infinite. To perfect the purchase, He made Himself of no reputation, took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man,

He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He gave His life a ransom. His blood cleanseth from all sin. The whole course of His earthly sojourn was a miracle of mercy and grace. The work of His arduous ministry cost Him His life. Flesh and blood assailed Him terribly, but no doubt principalities, and powers, and the rulers of this dark world, assailed Him much more terribly. All this was matter of course, as one may say, but to be deserted of God, to be forsaken of the Father, to be isolated from all aid human and divine — this is passing strange!

God's providence seemed to fail our Lord. Had provision been made proportional to His greatness, how different would have been His lot, as man reckons. Poverty, Sorrow, and Death attended Him from His cradle to His grave. Had that mind which is in us, been also in Christ Jesus, He would have exclaimed oftentimes, long before He hung on the cross — "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" His humble birthplace at Bethlehem would have been the first stumbling-stone in the way of His greatness, and would have given rise to strange misgivings concerning the providing care of God. When He had spent a decade of years in the ill-famed town of Nazareth, and toiled and laboured with assiduous diligence, He would have exclaimed doubtless, had our mind been His mind — "And is this a lot becoming my dignity; is this the place and the work beseeming the greatness of my parentage, and the glory of mine inheritance?"

Am I to toil on here in fellowship with Obscurity and Meanness? My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

His kindred, His friends, His disciples, carried backward and forward by the tide of fortune, afforded but little solace, and that by no means stable. "Neither did His brethren believe on Him," so we read. "From that time many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him." As He neared the climax of His misery one prop fell away after another, until at last He was left alone with His enemies. One might think the providence of God had given special orders to the ministers of mischief and misery to do their worst. Job's condition of misery and suffering were here to be repeated, and with addition. The pathway to the bitter cross was lined and guarded by malice, and scorn, and spite, and derision, and pain, and sorrow, and misery, and shame, and contempt, and our dear and precious Lord walked all alone, from one end to the other, without a murmur, without a complaint. He might have said, and He would have said, had His mind been like unto our mind, over and over again, as He trod the thorny pathway — "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

See now, how the net of subtlety and sin is made ready and brought forth to entangle and to catch the Lamb of God. Oh how busy were His enemies; and how busy was that great enemy in detaching from His presence and aid the body-guard of His disciples! The

prophetic anointing of His body for its burial, by the constraining love of that penitent woman, is pretext enough for the rising up of mischief — “When His disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying — to what purpose is this waste?” “Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said unto them, what will ye give me, and I will deliver Him unto you?” There at that supper — the last supper! what appeal does He make to their godly jealousy, sympathy, and regards — “Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.” “Take, eat, this is my body. Drink ye all, this is my blood.” The honest boldness of Peter, unconscious of his weakness. The fearful garden of Gethsemane. The agony and bloody sweat. The ominous deep slumber of Simon and the sons of Zebedee. The coming of the betrayer. The flare of lanterns and torches, and the glare of malice and spite. The fatal sign — the kiss of the false Apostle. “They laid hands on Jesus and took Him.” “Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled.”

Now they hurry Him to the hall of Caiaphas; now they seek their witnesses; now the High Priest makes his appeal, and counts Him guilty of blasphemy; now they spit in His face, and buffet Him; now they say — “Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee?” Now to Pontius Pilate, who knew that for envy they had delivered Him, and who was swayed by selfish considerations, to let bloodthirsty

guilt trample on holy innocence ; — “ Then released he Barabbas unto them, and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified.” Now the soldiers play their part in this fearful drama ; they take Jesus into the common hall ; they strip Him and put on Him a purple robe ; they plait a crown of thorns and put it upon His head, and with a reed in His right hand to perfect their model of mock majesty, retire a little space, and bow the knee before Him, and mock Him saying, “ *Hail King of the Jews !*”

(Is this true ? Do we hold for verity that the Son of God most high, for us men and for our salvation, willingly submitted to such indignities as these ?)

“ And they spit upon Him, and took the reed, and smote Him on the head. And after that they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, and put His own raiment on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him.” The vinegar and the gall ; the two thieves ; the reviling of the passers by ; the mockery of the chief priests and scribes and elders ; the miraculous darkness for three long hours — all direct our minds to the consummation of misery — about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, “ Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani ! that is to say — My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?” Now is the point of greatest obscurity ; now is the total eclipse ! Let us pause for a moment, and reflect on the marvellous scene !

As if unconscious of the pains and penalties of humanity, the soul of the Holy Jesus is absorbed in the misery of God's desertion. We can have little conception of the keenness of His anguish; the overpowering catastrophe of His unutterable sorrow.

Bear in mind what I have already said; consider the varied phases of His wonderful experience; the lines of feeling and of thought, that in the heart of Jesus seem to converge to a focus of inconceivable calamity; regard them as so many rehearsals of the cry in the text, and you will the more readily entertain the question — Why was all this? What necessity was laid on Him to go through such fearful experience, before He bowed His head and gave up the Ghost?

It was necessary for the redemption of fallen man; for his restoration to fixed happiness, that God should be manifest in the flesh. This was part of the ordained constitution of the world. We are not required to account for this ordinance of heaven, but only to acknowledge it as a fact, and to make that use of the fact which the Scriptures declare to us. Full of difficulty, of course, is the marvel; but there are difficulties in everything. We must learn to overcome difficulty by labour of thought, and faith, and prayer. The first announcement of victory over the author of sin declared that it should be accomplished through the seed of the woman. The Saviour was to be the son of man. The bruising of the head, and the bruising of the heel,

had reference doubtless to the fearful struggle between the Son of Man and man's great foe. As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself took part of the same, that *through death* He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. He is God with us — our Immanuel. When we reflect on the constitution of our nature in body and soul ; when we think about the house of our sojourning, this little world, as one of many mansions built by the same architect ; when we lose ourselves in thought of Past and Future, confess our utter ignorance, and feel a strange hope ; what solace and what stay come to our mind from knowledge of this fact — *we have a Divine Brother*. There is mode of communication between the heavenly spheres, and although we cannot as yet wing our way from earth, we believe in our risen and ascended Saviour, and that He who ascended is the same that descended first into the lower parts of the earth. The way to heaven is opened. We cannot indeed see with our eyes, or handle with our hands, the very body of our Master ; but we can believe the testimony of them who did so see and handle Him ; and we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

Being found in fashion as a man, Jesus Christ had to accomplish a mighty work. He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many. As by man came sin, by man must

come atonement for sin, and without shedding of blood there is no remission. As by man came misery, pain, sorrow, and death, so by man must come deliverance from all — happiness, health, joy, and resurrection from the dead. As by man the law was broken, so by man must the law be fulfilled. As by the sin of man a handwriting of ordinances from heaven against him was imposed as a penalty which he must bear or meet, so by the merits of the work of the Son of Man the handwriting of ordinances against us is blotted out, and taken out of the way, being nailed to the cross. The Man^o Christ Jesus is the Great Deliverer of our fallen race. As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law ; but thanks be unto God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The work, the sufferings, the life, the death of Jesus, are vicarious. He died, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. He made peace through the blood of the cross. There is reconciliation with God perfected for us “in the body of His flesh through death.” The enmity between races, and tribes, and families of man, through the bad purposes and laws of sin and sinfulness, is slain by the cross. The merits of Jesus are imputed to the faithful, and they are justified from all things through Him. God is just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. Let each

one of us learn to say, without faltering of unbelief —
“God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of
our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the world is crucified
unto me, and I unto the world.”

The extreme suffering which our Saviour experienced shows the arduous nature of the work He undertook to accomplish, and the fearful condition of our fallen race. We might well suppose that the mighty enemy of our souls, baffled, as he felt he was, at every turn of the conflict — from the birthplace of Bethlehem, whither he led the soldiers of Herod, to the closing scenes of life, where he entered into Judas Iscariot, and so strongly affected the whole company of the faithful; we might well suppose, I say, that he would make one effort more; lead on in person the forlorn hope of his strategy, and repair his falling fortunes by a stroke of desperate policy. But here he was outdone! here he found himself vanquished the most, for through death Jesus destroyed him.

Let us thankfully receive the inestimable benefit of our Saviour's death; let us daily endeavour ourselves to follow the example of His most holy life; let us bear in mind the victor's words on the accursed tree, and in our little way repeat them for ourselves, when we quit the scene of our labour, and reviewing the work which our Father gave us to do, availing ourselves of the grace of God in Christ, exclaim —

“IT IS FINISHED.”

The Reappearance.

THE REAPPEARANCE.

JOHN xi. 25.

"Jesus said, I am the Resurrection and the Life."

HOW great oftentimes is the power of circumstances, many minds give way to it. It is interesting and instructive, however, to notice the working of a great and noble mind, using circumstances as friends or servants, robing them in a veil of friendliness, or forcing them into servitude, that the great object in design may be accomplished. Great minds are masters of ceremonies and circumstances.

The power of the circumstances of this fallen world required the divine arm, and the divine heart, of Jesus Christ to force into servitude, or win into friendliness, its aiders and abettors. We can oftentimes trace the consummate policy of His proceedings, at other times we cannot so trace it, not having the clue. It will, no doubt, be a source of infinite pleasure, to trace the policy of the divine proceedings, when our position is such as shall enable us to do it with satisfaction.

We shall do well to study the mind of our Lord, as it is set before us by the circumstances recorded in the chapter from which the text is taken. It will form a kind of framework of that picture which I would set before you, namely, the reappearance of the sun, after the great eclipse which we have already considered.

Here we have craving for help, and that help vouchsafed. The sleep, the death of Lazarus, with all its attendant circumstances of sorrow, bereavement, and concern, gives the first impulse to that labour of love, which is here so strikingly set before us. The touching message ; the strange delay ; the mysterious announcement to the disciples ; the journey ; the conference with Martha ; the coming of Mary ; the trouble, the tears, the groaning of Jesus ; the crowd ; the cave ; the stone ; the commanding voice ; the coming forth of Lazarus — how do all these things one after another wake our interest, and rivet our attention. And how do all these things, when properly reflected on, prepare our minds for the due consideration of the words of Jesus to Martha, contained in the text — “*I am the Resurrection and the Life.*” In the burst of our entranced admiration and wonder, we instinctively exclaim — “It must be so, Master, the scene we have witnessed is sufficient testimony to the fact, that Thou art the Resurrection and the Life.” Our gracious Master replieth — “You shall see greater things than these.”

The language of the text needs but little explanation, it is tropical, and the trope we can easily master.

When our Lord calls Himself the Vine, the Shepherd, the Door, the Way, we are not perplexed but pleased to think, how He caused His great mind to stoop to the circumstances of our weak condition. He is a perfect Teacher, and can distribute instruction to every man severally, as every man hath need. Resurrection and Life are words of peculiar and mighty force certainly, but we are highly privileged, as the happy family of Bethany was, and have enjoyed the private converse and instruction of the Saviour of mankind, in our retired and favoured home. It is printed on the fleshly table of our heart, among the very rudiments of Christian knowledge, from our earliest infancy, that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life. The main scope of our duty is to keep the tablet clear, and not allow the damp of worldiness and sin to moss it over with neglect and indifference.

Jesus *announced* the Resurrection. It is a doctrine peculiar to Christianity. The intimations of it in the Old Testament are few and unsatisfactory, and would afford but a poor basis of faith and hope to the mass of the people. Those intimations seem *to us* clear and striking, but it is because of the shining of the Sun of Righteousness, which was then below the horizon. Life and Immortality are brought to light by the gospel. The types, the prophetic intimations, the hopeful struggles which the Old Testament writings set forth, need the history of the New Testament, to fix as facts for the study and service of mankind. The announcement

of our Saviour we receive with implicit faith; our duty is to fix the fact in its proper place, and allow it its legitimate scope of ministry. Teach us, divine Instructor, to "know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death."

The Apostles considered it a matter of prime importance, to testify concerning the Resurrection. Paul startled the novelty-loving Athenians, when he declared unto them Jesus and the Resurrection, and so thoroughly assured was he of the mighty importance of the subject, that he wrote to the Corinthians, and through them to all the world — "If there be no resurrection, then is not Christ raised; and if Christ be not raised, ye are yet in your sins, your faith is vain." The Christian religion is a gross and palpable imposture, if the resurrection of Jesus is not *a fact*.

But not only did Jesus Christ announce the resurrection, not only does His religion repeat the announcement, but He earned it by His merits, and accomplished it by His power, and His religion unfolds a life and a grace, which may be regarded as earnest and foretastes of the glory to be revealed, when the general resurrection shall be accomplished. Justice claimed infinite satisfaction; Righteousness required perfect obedience; Truth demanded death. To procure mercy and deliverance for the captives; to rescue man from the servitude of sin and Satan, the Son of God satisfied the claims of Justice; met the requirements of Righteousness;

tasted death for every man ; and being carried forward into the prison house of hell, demanded release as a right, and the stern guardians of that fell dungeon were constrained to let Him go, as if saying — “This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds.” He made His reappearance, and it was forthwith announced from heaven, in the charter of our liberties, — “He died for our sins, and rose again for our justification.” There flashed a gleam of bright light from the more excellent glory on that prominent portion of the mighty rock of truth — “O Death, I will be thy plague, O Grave, I will be thy destruction.

Our sins are atoned for ; the ransom is paid ; our Redeemer hath quitted the prison. To every penitent and believing child of Adam the risen and ascended Saviour says — “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee ; go and sin no more.” The merits of Christ earned His resurrection and our pardon. “He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, *wherefore* God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name.” “Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it.” “Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins ; and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.” The character of Christ is so peculiar and so blameless ; the power of Christ has been so

manifested in grace and goodness ; the providence of God has so set forth the one and the other, that the common measure of credence which we give to ordinary human testimony we have no right to withhold from Him when He says — “I am the Resurrection and the Life.”

The concurrence of the Holy Trinity is declared in the resurrection of Jesus, but it is ascribed also to His own power. “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up. He spake of the temple of His body.” “No man taketh my life from me: I lay it down of myself, I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again, this commandment have I received of my Father.” Jesus Christ died of His own free will, and He rose again of His own power, and well might He say, therefore, and well might we receive the words—“*I am the resurrection.*”

In the work of His ministry, going about doing good, although He allowed the King of Terrors to hold his wonted sway over mankind, He several times shook him on his throne, as if to give premonitory intimation of the overthrow of his power. The daughter of Jairus Death was forced to deliver from captivity, and lest, perhaps, men might say she was not really gone, at the gates of Nain, standing at the head of a funeral procession, and causing it to halt, the Lord of Life bid the Lord of Death let go his captive ; turning to the bier, He said—“Young man, I say unto thee, arise ; and he that was dead sat up and began to speak.” If

the wicked watchers could still through envy whisper about collusion, here in the instance more immediately before us, in the case of Lazarus, four days dead, Jesus asserted His power in a manner not to be gainsaid. It is true these three died again, and are still under bondage, but the fact of their being raised, and raised by Jesus, affords a hope, if nothing more, of the truth of our text. In the mouth of two or three witnesses facts are established, and the daughter of Jairus, the widow's son, and Lazarus, though dead, yet speak, and their testimony every candid mind will feel to be of great importance, when Jesus says — "*I am the Resurrection.*"

In company with the favoured three, Peter and James and John, retiring into a mountain apart to pray, He was transfigured before them; the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening; and behold there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias, who appeared in glory. The marvellous fact seems to announce, not only the living of the Lawgiver and the Prophet, but that they are ever in readiness to obey the summons of their Lord and Master to make their appearance. The elements of the world hold men in strange bondage, or we should see that we are indeed compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, and Abraham and Isaac and Jacob are living still; so also are Moses and Elias; and when, for a purpose, Jesus

summons two departed ones into His presence, and gives assurance of their identity to three of His disciples, we are the more constrained to hold with firm credence the truth of his announcement — “*I am the resurrection.*”

Strange movement there must have been in Paradise when Jesus entered, in company with him that He had rescued on the cross. In a sense very different from that of their first application, we may borrow the words of Isaiah, and say — “Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth: it hath raised up from their thrones all the Kings of the nations.” Christ was “put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit, by which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison.” If the interpretation will bear it, He announced in the shady realms of Hades, to the prisoners of hope, that He was their ransom, and would speedily summon them forth. “The graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves, after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.” The many that saw them must have been deeply impressed with the vision, and although they would be charged with credulity, or madness, by the unprivileged mass, they would ponder on the fact, and be the more disposed, as we are, to give assent to the words of Jesus when He says — “*I am the resurrection.*”

It seems unnecessary to review or restate the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Himself. Evidence so striking, so peculiar, so simple, and yet so multi-form, that we may boldly say, if it fails, there is no event in the history of the world that we can believe on the testimony of records. The fact is peculiar certainly, unique, and involves of necessity after considerations of great importance. He did not again return to corruption. He was not again beheld by the multitude. For forty days He tarried amid the scenes of His previous ministry; seen now and then by witnesses chosen before of God; then ascended up into heaven in their gaze, and, as the Sacred Story tells us, "sat on the right hand of God."

The resurrection of our Lord is the basis of our hope concerning our own resurrection, and the general resurrection, and all the after glories. We may well hold this truth with tenacious earnestness, and guard it with jealous care. For what are the expectations of mankind, if there shall be no resurrection of the dead? Why does the whole creation groan? Wherefore the strange longings after immortality? Can we believe for a moment that we shall sink into nothingness? Irrespective of the claims of Christianity, the claims of humanity hold us down to the hope of a resurrection. The inequalities of time, and the loud cries of injustice, alike demand the special interference of the Allwise Governor, to assert and to adjust the claims of Righteousness and Truth; and nothing meets the case

so fairly, nothing so satisfactorily, as the announcement of revelation — “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” And in order to this there must be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust. The resurrection of Jesus is a door which we look at with gratitude and hope, and although it be fastened on either side for the present, we regard it as a token and a pledge of the ransoming of humanity from the grave, and the manifestation of the sons of God in the presence of their Father.

“Since by man came death by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. Christ is risen from the dead and become the first-fruits of them that slept.” Was the offering of the first-fruits of the harvest amongst the Jews intended as a typical presentment of the resurrection of Christ, as well as a declaration of dependence and gratitude? The Apostle would have us infer as much — “Christ, the first-fruits, afterward they that are Christ’s at His coming.” “If the first-fruits be holy, the lump is also holy.” The fruitful earth, year after year, at the command of God, presents its offering of sustenance and beauty for our life and joy. And once, in the end of the world, by the same command, shall the fruitful grave disclose its treasures, and the glorious harvest of

the faithful wave before the eyes of the great God, and His servants, whereof He hath given assurance unto all men in raising His Son from the dead.

The words of Christ are plain and striking, and to us they are decisive—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." Lest this should be interpreted with limitations, He immediately added—"the hour is coming, in the which all that are in their graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." Obstacles of difficulty should not be allowed to stand in our way at the announcements of revelation. God hath not left Himself without witness. Difficulties of the most astounding character have already been overcome in the providence of God. Must we hasten over the province of truthful propriety assigned to us by the Great Lord of all, as an heritage of grace, and demand to be led forward into unknown regions, or we will despise our birthright? Let the restless and morbid craving of the people of old, who demanded a sign from heaven, deter us from so wicked and fruitless an enterprise. The great stone that is rolled to the mouth of the cave, where man sleeps in awful silence, that is sealed and guarded by Ignorance, Prejudice, Doubt, and Sin, can be rolled away by the ministry of Faith, that angel from heaven, whose countenance is

like lightning, and whose raiment is white as snow. In the treatment of this sacred subject, so full of interest, so full of hope, so full of marvel, capable of yielding such joy and peace, the appreciating agency may be recognised in the saying—"according to your faith, so be it unto you."

Suppose that, to-night, the king of day should go down to rest, invested with veil of darkness and robes of cloud and never appear again! No to-morrow dawn, but night for ever hold his awful sway! What should we think? What should we feel? . . . Farewell to beauty of life and loveliness of form! Farewell to joy and hope! Henceforth the children of men, adapting themselves to their altered condition, must settle down to live in darkness and the shadow of death! What a foolish supposition! how many exclaim. Foolish! why so? Might not He who imposed on the ruler of the day laws of fealty and obedience, by which he is forced to traverse the world in perpetual and regular order; might not He have ordained the rising again of the sun of righteousness as a necessary part of the constitution of the world? It was so ordered! The ordinances of heaven are kept! If there be no resurrection of Jesus, farewell to beauty of holiness, and loveliness of truth; farewell to joy and hope! Settling down into misery of despair, Christians must exclaim—"our faith is vain, we are yet in our sins!"

The reappearance of the sun of our soul; the resur-

rection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, is the passage to another world, the opening to a new realm of light and life. Without this we have no firm hold on eternity, with it we have full assurance of glory and blessedness. Faith bears us onward. We know that we have passed from death unto life. We are married to Him that is risen from the dead. Because He lives we live also. We are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead. The mighty restorer of life challenges our attention, and tests our faith, when He says, "He that believeth in me, though he were dead yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" We set our affection on things above, not on things on the earth. Jesus manifests Himself unto us, though not unto the world. Inside the world of words, and creeds, and forms, and ceremonies, there is a world of light and life, to which faith gives admission. Dwelling there we have peace and joy, and it affords a good standing point for beholding the Kingdom that is to be. We are begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. The Kingdom of God within us is maintained by faith in the risen Saviour, and the Kingdom of God before us, and beyond us, is ruled and governed by Him to whom the Father said

—"Sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

The circumstances of our condition are so altered by the resurrection of Jesus, that we can indulge in firmest hopes touching ourselves and others. "This mortal shall put on immortality," we exclaim, "this corruptible put on incorruption; and as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." With energy and courage renewed and redoubled, like the disciples after their master had made His reappearance, we shall go forth in our ministry, exclaiming aloud—"Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." In full reliance on the power and grace of the Holy Ghost, we shall work for fruits of righteousness to abound, in the children of men quickened into life, who were dead in trespasses and sins. The moral landscape shall be beautified, the sons of God shall appear; "the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." We shall be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, "forasmuch as we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord."

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The Flood of Light

THE FLOOD OF LIGHT.

ACTS II. 33.

“Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.”

TO have control over objects of sense must be regarded as a lower degree of power than over mind and spirit. The fact is, we are all more or less capable of shaping and controlling matter, whereas the peculiar quickness and eccentricity of the mind, in its varied operations, baffle our vigilance, bid defiance to our control, and therefore we the more readily say — matter is more manageable than mind. But to make and control the universe of matter and the universe of mind alike demand the issues of an Almighty power. To unite mind and matter, to hold them together by certain laws, to separate them again, to retain hold on either in their separation, and this for long periods of time, must be regarded as the work of a very wise and very powerful Being. In our Religion we have to think on such subjects ; such wonders are set before us in this

world, and it is interesting and profitable to study them, though we may not be able to compass all the difficulties which abound in such study.

It is true we observe aberrations many. Law and order do not force themselves on the attention of mankind, they are laid in the deep, or shut up in the enclosures of secrecy. This world seems like a house divided against itself. There is plainly what we may call cunning hostility at work. Laws, agencies, and influences counter to truth, and righteousness, and health, and life, thwart and baffle us. "An enemy hath done this." Mind and matter are affected both. "The whole Creation groaneth." Additional demands therefore are made on the overruling and controlling Mind of the universe. To make amends for the mischief consequent on sin, to rectify the disorders, to restore peace and perfectness, is the work of salvation, and God the Son is brought before us as accomplishing the mighty task. Assuming our nature He linked divinity with humanity. "As the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ." The obstacles that sin had thrown in man's way are removed one by one; the fetters wherewith His soul was bound are taken off, and redeemed and renewed man rejoices in the glorious liberty of the children of God. The divine man reformed the elements of the world.

We have considered some of the stages of salvation as exhibited in the Life, Death, and Resurrection of

Jesus Christ; we have now to proceed further, and behold new displays of the light of life. After forty days' tarriance in the regions of His earthly ministry, showing Himself now and then to chosen witnesses, the Lord ascended up to heaven. Great was the retinue that accompanied Him on His return to glory. The chariots of God, thousands of angels, and the Lord amongst them, entered in triumphal state through the golden gates of the heavenly Jerusalem, and the divine and human Conqueror of God's foes took His seat on the right hand of the King. "There He ever liveth making intercession for us; from henceforth expecting till all His enemies be made His footstool."

The bodily presence of the divine nature being therefore withdrawn into the remote region of heaven, the Spiritual Presence is to be manifested. God the Holy Ghost made His advent in power and state, giving earnest of the marvellous working of His grace — of the marvellous wideness of the spiritual realm of man's better and renewed nature. The light of life has now a new mode of display.

Doubtless from the very first this divine Being visited man. He dwelt in the saints of old. He sanctifieth all the elect people of God. By Him the prophets were moved, and taught, and inspired. Many a one through all the periods of past time was filled with the Holy Ghost, even as Zacharias or aged Simeon. But now, in the fulness of time, to honour, and to reward, and to confirm the work of

Christ, in fulfilment of promises, this Blessed one is to make a special display of His Presence.

The Redeemer sought to cheer His sorrowing disciples by assuring them that on His departure He would send another comforter unto them. His removal, He told them, was expedient ; and after His earthly work was finished, the same fact weighing on His mind, He said to them—“Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you : but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.” The promise that He had promised them was full of mighty import. The coming of the Comforter was to be regarded in the light of a prime fact in the constitution of His kingdom, even as the coming of Himself ; so that (as one might say) the history of this little world would afford marvellous and peculiar traits of reminiscence—the perpetual Presence of the Father—the actual sojourn of the Son in human nature—and the mighty display of the Holy Ghost in power and grace.

How wonderful and how mysterious are Creation and Redemption ! Perhaps the marvellous display of the power of God in the past eternity, will be eclipsed by the far more exceeding glories of the future ; even as, to use a similitude from puny man, the pleasures of the mind transcend the pleasures of the body.

It was but about ten days from the time our Master quitted this earthly scene until the Holy Ghost came at Pentecost. We have no means of knowing, we have no right to inquire, what transpired in the interim.

If forty days sojourning on earth after His public ministry, was necessary, there was some necessity also, no doubt, for a further delay before the especial promise of another Comforter could be fulfilled. Besides, the divinely appointed times and ordinances of the Law were to be recognized and honoured by the institutions of the Gospel, to be perpetuated through all time, even to the end. Our Easter and Whitsuntide come to us by annual stages, not only through the eighteen hundred years of the reign of Christ, but through the thousand previous years of the reign of Moses. The great passover is presented to our notice once a year still, in an especial manner; and the great Pentecost also. The almanack of Christendom has ever marked, and will always mark, these two days of commemoration, as if at the bidding of divine suggestion. What transpired in heaven or earth, by angelic or other ministry, between the ascension of our Saviour, and the descent of our Comforter, no one knows but God. His ways are so unlike our ways. His preparations for mighty work are not clogged by a cumbrous ceremonial, or marred by rehearsal; all is order — all is law — all is grace! But what an interim to mortals! Suspense had never so heavy a load to bear. The minds of the Apostles were strangely affected. What with ignorance — what with fear — what with faith and hope and love, how marvellous was that phase of their experience. The world too and the wicked — the persecutors and

injurious — the scoffers and crucifiers — the evil one and his spirits — the holy angels and the blessed. As we commonly think and say — What an interim was this !

Now, as a matter of fact ; now, to be registered in the roll of authentic history, Peter says — “ This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.” The Father had promised, and now the promise was fulfilled. Jesus being raised up ; being at the right hand of God ; being exalted ; the voice from heaven seems to speak a second time to earth to confirm His work and divinity, and that with cloven tongues of fire. The sober and thoughtful review of the mighty scene may well inspire us with holy zeal to exclaim —

“ Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,

And visit with celestial fire.

Thou the anointing Spirit art,

Who dost thy sevenfold gifts impart.”

The fruits of sin it is impossible for us wholly to see or to understand. Sin was sown on the soil of human nature ; it took root downward, and bare fruit upward ; its fruitage has already been dreadful, and how much more will be reaped in the great harvest who can conceive ? Man is thoroughly affected by it ; there is no faculty, no member, no power he

possesses in his wonderful organization, which has not received baneful touch of sin. And when we ponder on the statement of Holy Writ, or contemplate the exhibition of human nature in the wide realms of heathendom, or study it in our own heart and experience, the strange facts of misery and sin stand out in bold and terrible relief. And yet, perhaps, the interferences of heaven for rectifying the disorders of mankind are more wonderful still. If sin abounded grace doth much more abound.

The displays of power by the Almighty, in this world, have been varied and wonderful, exerted mostly, after the creation, for the redeeming of His fallen creatures. When it pleased Him to call out a nation for His witnesses, with what signal display of power did He do it. The baptism of Moses in the cloud and in the sea introduced Israel into the special service of his Maker and Redeemer. When the fulness of time was come, and Israel after the flesh had accomplished the ministry designed them, the Son of God made an entrance to a higher state of privilege and service, became indeed the door through which men must pass to be partakers of the benefit. The baptism that He was baptised with was in blood, that blood which cleanseth from all sin. One stage more and the highest pitch of glory here below is gained. Pentecost was the day of baptism with fire. The wood, hay and stubble of man's device ; the worldly elements of ceremony and form, are now to be consumed by the purifying agency of

the Holy Ghost. Thus we see rays of the light of life converging to a focus, and we may with adoring wonder and awe contemplate, as the text suggests, the work — the Author — and the evidence, of the crowning miracle of grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The confusion of tongues, as we call it, was a terrible calamity, a fearful mark set on man in token of God's displeasure; an effectual barrier against unity and strength. The unity and strength which sinful man contemplated, was in opposition to heaven, and now after thousands of years had elapsed, at the feast of Pentecost at Jerusalem, by some strange and unheard of ministration, as if to show the resources of God, men are endowed with power to speak languages they had never learnt. The crowd of witnesses are astonished, as well they might be, at the singular phenomenon — "How hear we," they ask, "every man in our own tongue wherein we were born?" The order of heaven is reversed. The confusion of Babel is in a fair way of being remedied. Surely here is earnest of one universal language. "What meaneth this?" Peter replies — "This is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel; and it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." Wonderful and to be noted is the fact, that the Holy Ghost, at the first signal display of His power, should give men utterance to speak in different tongues, as if to assure us that the last command of the Redeemer

would be fulfilled — “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.”

Peter's exposition of the wonderful miracle is another proof of the Spirit's power. With what boldness, with what strength of reasoning, with what apt knowledge of scripture, with what earnest zeal, does this Peter set himself like a rock for the basis of a noble building. The gates of hell surely cannot prevail against it. This is the once timid, faltering, craven disciple! See now what change is wrought in him at Pentecost! Study the man; study his sermon; but oh! study the Man his great Teacher. Here we have an illustration of the power of the Holy Ghost. Man, in his natural state; or man, if you please, in ordinary intercourse with his Saviour, is weak and faltering, but man renewed by the Holy Ghost, holding that extraordinary intercourse with the Saviour, which it is the Spirit's province to bestow, is bold, and earnest, and true. Thank God, the promise is “to all that are afar off,” and therefore to us and to our children. May we hold it fast as part of our sacred heritage.

The result is another effect of the power of the Holy Ghost. “The same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.” This wonderful display passed not off in mere amazement; mockery could not quench it. The power of right reasoning, the power of truth, the power of the Holy Ghost prevailed thoroughly over this great multitude, and partially, no doubt, over others, who soon swelled the number of the

disciples to five thousand. Ignorance, Prejudice, Superstition, Associations many and strong, become like limber barriers against the overwhelming sweep of a mighty avalanche. And here we have in this result an earnest and foretaste of the results of the Holy Spirit's agency at all times. Evil habits and customs long formed and cherished; prejudices fed by ignorance or superstition; associations of earthly power and circumstance, will all give way before the gracious influence of the light of life exerted in the heart by the Holy Ghost. But let it ever be borne in mind, that if the Miracle of Pentecost appealed to every faculty of man, his bodily senses as well as his mental and moral powers, the exposition of the miracle by the inspired Apostle is leavened with reason and scripture, so as to suggest the wholesome injunction of the same Apostle, when writing for the confirmation in the faith of the dispersed disciples — "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear."

Miracles have been wrought of God, in sufficient number and variety, to certify to us that all the processes of nature, as we call them, are under His direct control. The whole realm of Creation owns Him as sovereign Lord. Miracles, from their very nature, can only appear at times. If we discern a law of periodical return they lose their nature. Hence the miracles wrought by our Saviour, or by our Comforter, eighteen hundred years ago, are now only contemplated as

matters of history; if the historians are trustworthy, we must believe in the reality of the miracles. The accepting or rejecting the testimony of witnesses, forms a part of our earthly probation. Unless we can destroy the evidence for the genuineness and authenticity of the Holy Scriptures, we are compelled, as honest men, to believe what those Scriptures declare. We have no more right to discard the facts of authenticated history from our creed, than we have to ignore the perpetual shining of the sun, or the beauty of scenery, or the shifting changes of men's earthly condition. The peculiar character of the miracles wrought at Pentecost is deserving of special attention. They seem to be employed for the removal of the impediments to knowledge. The dam gives way, and the waters of life flow forward in bolder course. Or, keeping more to our own set of images, the light of life is intensified, as if the light of the moon became the light of the sun, and the light of the sun was increased sevenfold. The former revelations of knowledge are concealed by the brighter display of the Holy Ghost, like as the numerous stars of heaven are lost to our gaze when the light of day from the sun diffuses its brighter glory.

When the miracles of Christianity are so manifestly wrought for the amelioration of the miseries of mankind, how strange it seems, that all do not instinctively manifest a great anxiety for their truth and reality; how singular that men can be found who seem to

struggle with all their powers to find flaws in the evidence, or other means, to undermine the belief in miracles, as held by their fellow-creatures. One might almost, if not quite, be tempted to think, that by some occult power or powers, they were in league and covenant with those men, who, though constrained of necessity to acknowledge the truth of the miracles, said of Him who taught them, "He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the prince of the devils." If so, may we not fear that the light which is in them is darkness, and that they are incapable of seeing the true foundation of moral and spiritual facts borne witness to by miracles which they repudiate?

"Tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not." And this sign from heaven, given on the day of Pentecost, performed its ministry for the conviction and conversion of unbelievers. The ministry of miracle, however, was short-lived, but the ministry of grace and salvation was permanent. The work of heaven on earth soon assumed its proper phase. The flood of light bursting in unwonted splendour of novelty, as light of creation at first, soon found, in the good providence of God, bearers to receive it, and to hold it forth to the world. In the short interval between the glorious display, and the setting, or adjusting, of its ordained ministry, we occasionally meet with strange and unseemly confusion; gifts clashing with grace, and display of power manifested to the disparagement of the power itself.

The Apostle Paul was constrained to use his apostolical authority to induce the gifted Christians of Corinth to do all things decently and in order. How this world would have fared had light remained as at its first creation ; how the Church would have fared had the light of Pentecost been perpetuated—it is not wholesome to inquire ; how either has fared, and how either was designed to fare by the ordinances of heaven is our study.

“Now there are diversities of gifts but the same Spirit.” “The word of wisdom ;” “the word of knowledge ;” “faith ;” “healing ;” “working of miracles ;” “prophecy ;” “discerning of spirits ;” “diverse kinds of tongues,” and “the interpretation of tongues ;” “all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.” This galaxy of miraculous displays was revealed for a short time ; it is a fact. The history of it was to be registered and left for the constant study of after ages. It would serve as a proof of God’s special thought and care about His Church, and of His Almighty power and grace exercised in behalf of His people. It would serve also as a token and an earnest of what He would finally do to enthrone His redeemed in glory.

The Holy Ghost guided the ministry of the Apostles, and blessed it. The period became, and has ever continued, the dispensation of the Spirit. He gave direct

commands. He unfolded revelations. He made holy men's bodies His temple. He taught and comforted penitent sinners, bringing to their memory the words, and works, and ways of Jesus. Miraculous powers He, by degrees, ceased to exert, but continued always to quicken, and enlighten, and sanctify all the elect people of God. This He doeth now, and with us. Of Him we are born, and of Him we are taught. Drawing closer to us than the man Christ Jesus, He dwelleth in our spirit. The secret aspiration of our souls for good ; the longing desire after godliness ; the love of Christ ; the yearning after holiness and the presence of God, these are some of the fruits of His ministry. We may well and truly say of the Divine Spirit, as shall be said with terrible force by some, of the Divine Son — "We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets." Nothing now should we so much dread as to grieve the Holy Spirit, or quench His sacred influence ; nothing should shock us more than to suppose that His gifts can be purchased with money. There is but one sin that is unpardonable, and if we commit that we are sealed to endless misery and pain.

Gleams.

GLEAMS.

ISAIAH 1. 10, 11.

“Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light ? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God. Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks : walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand ; ye shall lie down in sorrow.”

HOW fitful and transient is earthly happiness ! like the gleam of an April day. We cannot command it ; we cannot detain it. It seems strange, after so long experience, that men do not know its real character, have not sufficiently tested its pretensions, and gauged its powers, so as to demean themselves with propriety respecting it ; strange that they hold on still to the hopes of earthly happiness, after such signal discomfitures, and proofs of failure ! Every generation that cometh afresh seems to bring a fresh supply of hope for itself ; fathers and forefathers are forgotten ; the experience of the past they add not to their own experience, and so they hope on still. And what is this earthly happiness ? To what may we compare it ? It is like a gleam of sun-

shine from the midst of dark clouds ; bright, beautiful, and cheering, it may be, but set in darkness and the shadow of death.

In the highest regions of mortal experience, in the most heavenly elevation we can attain unto in this world, there is not perpetual sunshine. The Church is clouded. Truth appears to journey in a wayward course through this vale of tears, to day we catch her sunny features in such a place, and to-morrow she is gone !

There is something peculiar in our sea-girt, island home, that makes the sky so murky, the days so variable. And in this little world, the house of our mortality, begirt with sinfulness, there is something so peculiar, that the clouds of sorrow and affliction are never wholly chased away ; a storm may arise on the sudden, and threaten us with instant ruin ; were it not for the presence of a friend, knowing the power of the storm and able to stay it, we should not be saved. That friend is our Hope ; that is the servant of the Lord whose voice we must learn to obey.

The facts of history recorded in Holy Scripture, with reference to the fitful phases of happiness on earth, we shall do well habitually to bear in mind. This is not our home, this is but as the cradle of our existence. God hath prepared for us a house, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. This world had been our home probably if sin had not entered, though we cannot tell for sure. To remove the clouds and darkness of sin ; to wean man from his earthly

dwelling-place, and fit him for his heavenly, demanded peculiar care and wisdom ; the sufferer must be made to feel his misery, as well as to experience the grace of healing. Pride on the one hand must be guarded against, as well as despair on the other ; the world's sinfulness shall be made to check that, the grace of the Creator this. No sunshine of prosperity continues long in the world without monstrous productions of pride showing themselves, hence the sunshine has been in gleams. A state of despondency too long continued would settle down into despair, hence there have ever been gleams of heaven's light and grace. Review general history, Bible history, Church history, your own history, is it not matter of fact — there is no permanence of prosperity on earth — bright light is seen only in gleams ?

The passage of scripture which I have taken for my text may be pondered on with advantage in its bearing on this subject of ours, noticing, as it does, the accidental condition of our earthly circumstances, the tendencies of our evil nature to kindle a light that cannot guide ; declaring to us also the best mode of procedure, and disclosing the method of deliverance ; the righteous judgment of God, looming like a dark cloud in the distance, may serve for warning, a motive of holy fear.

God made man upright, but, according to popular belief, that state of bright glory was but a gleam ; he soon sought out numerous inventions, and became invested with clouds and shadows of sorrow, of suffering,

and of sin. There are good reasons for the popular belief that man's original state of uprightness was but short. We may try to picture that state, but we shall fail to do so. Our hope is in the future, we must not dally in the past. The gleam of Paradise is to us like the gleam of our early childhood, that we see through the vista of intervening years, a bright glow of light on the freshness of a new world.

The generations of the heavens and of the earth, the generation of man, in their original glory, will be seen and realized in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of His glory. The gleam of divinity that lit up the human face in Paradise, speedily followed by the clouds of care, and fear, and guilt, may be regarded as matters of fact, that faith will use ; but the new creation in Christ Jesus, not to be followed by cloud or shadow, but by permanence of glory, is matter of joyful hope and expectation. The portals of the palace of Time gleamed with heavenly lustre ; if, in its courts and halls, the light is artificial, or in occasional streams from without, finding their passage through some of its inlets, we are assured of a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory in the habitation of eternity ; there shall be no darkness at all. We wend our way thitherward, and although at times we may walk in darkness, and have no light, yet we trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon our God, His word being a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path.

When we move away from Paradise, and see in the distance the gleam of the flaming sword, and the Cherubims, how darksome is our course. Here and there we behold the glare of sacrifice, otherwise it is very dark. We shudder as we look on Cain ; we are moved with sorrow when we see Lamech and his two wives ; amongst the children of Seth there is much to vex us ; the other children of Adam, in their far-off wanderings, we lose sight of altogether. In the days of Noah a gleam of the Sun of Righteousness bursts forth, but is soon followed by the awful darkness of the deluge. The bow of grace on the dark cloud is a token of hope and mercy. After the flood we are confounded through the intricacies of the dark passages of sin and folly. The favoured son of Terah, led by a gleam of heavenly light, leaves the land of idolatry, and goes to a place pointed out, where afterwards, again and again, would bursts of glory from above give evidence of the thought, and care, and providence of the Father of lights. The children of Israel are more enlightened than their neighbours, but they shine the brightest when surrounded by sorrows and afflictions, as a brilliant when set in opaque. Egypt, the wilderness, settlement in Canaan, the Judges, the Kings — titles, which serve for spells to us, referring to mystic facts, and marvellous history, with their own particular gleams of light and clouds of darkness.

The glory of Solomon was but a gleam, fit emblem of man's best estate on earth ; bright and at-

tractive, but soon quenched in gloomy darkness. Who can tell us what was the latter end of Solomon, wisest of men? Who can tell how clouds are formed in the minds of the wise, and a band of darkness to compass them about? No period of history was greater in the eyes of the Jews than the reign of Solomon, yet it was but a gleam; the glory of God, had we eyes to see it, which finds a throne in the lilies of the field, or in the very grass that perisheth, being far more excellent than it. The whole period of Jewish story was very transitory. Reformation or revival passed off like the momentary smile of sunshine on the brow of a hill. If the record in books had not survived, who would have believed that Jerusalem was ever the joy of the whole earth? On the Holy Land, once so bright, how have clouds and darkness settled for many generations. The traveller visits it warily, and goes from place to place with fear and circumspection, as if surrounded by the perils and dangers of night.

Angels' visits; sudden appearance of Melchizedek, king of Salem; the burning bush; the glory of the Lord; prophetic dreams and impulses; the lyre of David; the voice from heaven; strains of divine rhapsody; the temple and its service — these are episodes of history — gleams of light — evidences of wisdom, of power, and of grace.

The glory of Christ Himself, when He came unto His own and His own received Him not, was beheld

only by a few, and by them only at times. No doubt the miracles, wonders, and signs, which He wrought ; the discourses He uttered ; the character He displayed, formed altogether such splendour of glory as man never saw before ; but the shadows of ignorance and prejudice, and the cloudy atmosphere of deceit and hypocrisy which surrounded the people of the Lord, hindered them from admiring the true light which shone in their midst. It has ever continued so. The glory of Christ is permanent and invariable, but the revelation of that glory through the mists and darkness of mortal circumstance has ever been in gleams.

The brightness of the Apostolic period soon passed away. While we admire the zeal and devotion of the first preachers of Christianity ; while we follow Paul, for instance, in his bright course of holy ardour ; while we see Church after Church established as light-bearers of the truth ; we are compelled also to mark the rising of a little cloud here, of a mist there, of flimsy vapours in the atmosphere of heaven, harbingers of future darkness. One might be tempted to say, Labour is vain, were it not for the knowledge we possess of the abnormal condition of our world, and the peculiar ministry of heaven to effect a regeneration. God hath given travail to the sons of men to be exercised in it, and no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end. Our duty is plain, however, whether it be light or dark about us, to trust in the Lord, and obey the voice of His servant.

Those favoured spots where Christianity was planted by apostolic hands, and became lighthouses to the world, centres of power and grace, from which in a measure the ministers of darkness withdrew themselves, and their baleful influence was mitigated ; those same spots were, too soon, alas ! invested by the powers of darkness and retaken. The sentinels were asleep, or the citadel was traitorous. The very light, in some cases, became darkness. The stronghold of the world, the centre of influence, where Paul was enabled to unfurl the banner of the cross, Darkness, by steady and insidious advances, contrived to make his own, and from thence there have been fulminated anathemas of condemnation against the faithful from generation to generation. The mystic Babylon may have, in fact, no settled locality ; but the fixed character of Rome gives advertisement to the world how fearful a likeness she bears to the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth. Would to God that a gleam of true light might yet shine upon that great metropolis of the world's history.

If the Apostles could return to earth, and say, as one of them said to his companion in days of old — “ Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do ” — how would their spirit be stirred in them to see the people given to idolatry ; the gleam of heaven's light, which they were the honoured instruments of holding forth to the world, having been

quenched in surrounding darkness. How would Peter weep over Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, to say nothing of that place where his name has been so often and so long taken in vain. How would the beloved John make sad lamentation over the sites of the seven churches where once he exercised the fostering care of apostolic power and love. The noble-hearted Paul, as he tracked his former pathway from Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum, would wring his hands in sorrow and anguish. Andrew in Scythia, and Thomas in Parthia ; Matthew and Bartholomew in Ethiopia or India ; and the others, here and there, wherever they exercised their ministry, all would have great cause of distress and perplexity ; and although they might behold other fields of light and grace, under the healing wings of the Sun of Righteousness, they would be forced to say, the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head in permanent abode, and that grace, mercy, and peace, light of the great salvation, shineth but in gleams.

The five Apostolical Fathers ; the Fathers all ; the Bishops and Pastors of the Catholic Church, along the whole line, although they bear testimony to the fact that God hath not left Himself without witness, cannot assure us that the Sun of Righteousness hath been felt by all under their rule and ministry. Indeed it is far otherwise. Occasional gleams of light, not settled sunshine, visited them from above. The raging storms of persecution swept away many a faithful Christian, but

the constancy, holiness, and peace of the martyrs, by heavenly agencies, formed a gleam of soft light, with peculiar radiance and lustre, which served to guide many a heathen wanderer to the bosom of Christ. Ignatius from the amphitheatre of Rome, and Polycarp from that of Smyrna, tell us that neither the fury of wild beasts, nor of flames of fire, can destroy the virtue of Christ. But what persecution failed to do prosperity accomplished. The smile and patronage of the world have caused greater darkness in Christendom than ever did peril and sword.

We can trace the gleam of Christian light, bursting forth from Jerusalem, as it beautifies with its smile, and enriches with its grace, one spot after another; in Asia far and wide; in the islands; on the mainland; fringing Africa; piercing across Europe, even to the utmost bounds of the West. As with ecstasy of heart we survey the chequered scene of loveliness from mountain height, when the glorious sun smiles here and there in royal grace and splendour, that little dark spot in the horizon portends a coming tempest. Anxieties fret our heart as we witness the onward sweep of clouds and storms that devastate the scene. So too in the Church, across the orbit of the Sun of Righteousness; malign influences from below, in mists and clouds of ignorance and sin, bedim or quench the radiance of heaven, and cause gloom of sorrow, and darkness of misery and despair. A gleam now and then, first in

one place and then in another, is all we have to look for here on earth.

The patronage of the world corrupted the simplicity of Christ. The conversion of Constantine, though a proof of the onward spread of Christianity, was not without ill effects. The manners of the Christians, as described by Chrysostom, by no means redound to their praise. A thin veil of light spread by degrees over the great seats of congress, but the pagans dwelt in darkness. When Mahomet arose the idolatry of Christians favoured his pretensions. The dark ages, popularly so called, were mainly produced by the pride and licentiousness of professing Christians. Here and there a bright gleam of light would burst forth, as amongst the Waldenses, but every effort was made to quench it. What a fearful condition of moral and intellectual darkness was the world in when Luther held up the lamp of God's truth, and the gleam of Reformation streamed forth. Who was foremost to put out the light of life? — the head of the Church — the Church herself. The eye was evil and the whole body full of darkness! Because their deeds were evil, men loved darkness rather than light, and would not receive instruction!

In our own Church, long periods of darkness, and short gleams of light have marked her history. The light of Christ shone on our isle very early; amongst the Britons first perhaps by Paul, or one of his companions; amongst the Saxons by Austin and his monks.

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Never hath the light gone out, though at times it hath shed its grace with feeble radiance. During the last fifty years the Sun of Righteousness hath shone forth with unusual splendour, even to the very ends of the earth, and the gleam of the nineteenth century, should future ages have to record its history, will be one of the most remarkable on record.

Cities, hamlets, households, and even individuals may be called to give testimony concerning the light of life. Through untoward causes, sin and infirmity, changes and chances, how variable is the light of Christians shining before men ! How few realize always the lifting up of God's countenance upon them ! Consistency of conduct, a conversation without covetousness, patient continuance in well-doing, in how few seen ! Holy joy and rapture, ecstasy of heavenly contemplation and spiritual delight, by how few experienced !

The Psalms of David, describing, as many of them do, the sudden changes of the heart's experience ; and the life of David, even as we can gather it from Holy Scripture, may well be studied, both to afford us information, to give us warning and hope. Trust in the Lord, obedience to His commands, diligent cleaving to holiness of life, are the most essential elements of that oil of grace which causeth the lamp of our character to shine in permanent light, and lustre of beauty. Yielding to temptation of sin, indulging in wayward follies, pride, and self-conceit — sparks kindled by sin and

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Satan in the dark chambers of the heart, form a fearful light for the guidance of our steps. The way of the wicked is as darkness, they know not at what they stumble. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. And He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day. Sorrow, infirmity, corruption of nature, may cause gloom ; sins may cause an horror of great darkness, but through the heavenly agencies of repentance and faith, through the blood of the cross, light may again return, a gleam of heaven's grace.

Let us learn to stand in awe, and take heed to our ways. When the world is so dark through sin, let us not loiter in its haunts of folly and dissipation, lest we even lose the gleams of heaven's light. When the Church is subject to such changes of light and shade, and from many sinister causes may be troubled with mists and clouds of error, false doctrine and sin, let us cast away the works of darkness, and take unto us the armour of light ; let us exercise ourselves to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man. When the heart by sudden temptation may be cast down into the darkness of sin and misery, let us learn to keep the heart with all diligence. When a gleam of holy light brightens our soul, affording a foretaste of the glory of heaven, let us seek to retain its influence by habitual devotion to Christ. May we

dread nothing more than vexing that Holy Spirit who sanctifieth the soul, by a careless persistence in the form of godliness, whilst the power thereof is denied. The advice of the Lord by His prophet may we act on in simplicity and sincerity of heart — trust in the name of the Lord and stay upon our God. If we indulge in subterfuges of sin, evil imaginations of the heart, unhallowed fire of our own kindling, we may kindle God's wrath against us, and provoke Him to plague us with condign punishment; leaving us to walk in our own ways, and eat the fruit of our doings, and giving in our case again a fearful fulfilment of the words—
“This shall ye have of mine hands, ye shall lie down in sorrow.”

The Ripening Harvest.

THE RIPENING HARVEST.

JOHN iv. 35.

"Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest."

WHEN a subject of study is set before the mind, how strange and wonderful are the transitions of thought which take place, as if all the mental powers were instantly aroused into activity and busied themselves, each in his vocation and ministry, to fulfil the duty imposed on them, and accomplish the task. The greater the knowledge, and the keener the susceptibilities of the mind are, the more diversified will be the character of those transitions. One thought suggests another, one train of ideas moves a second, until, from a seeming chaos of materials, the judgment moulds them into method, and sets them in order.

The mind that was in Christ Jesus was perfect in knowledge, the susceptibilities of His heart keen in the extreme. The conversation which He held with the woman of Samaria, and with His disciples afterwards, when, wearied with His journey, He sat on

Jacob's well by the city of Sychar, will afford an illustration of transitions of thought which would occur in His mind, and of the aptness with which He would ply knowledge to suit the peculiar condition of the minds about Him. And, more than this, it will give suggestive lessons for thoughtfulness, cast phases of practical truth, which may be made available always, even to the end, even to us, now anxious about that great harvest to which the words of the text refer.

If the whole economy of nature and of grace was known to Christ ; if His divine mind could take an instant survey of the processes of both ; if His Father's work of creation and sustentation, and His own work of redemption, and the work of the Holy Ghost, could be regarded by Him in one view, at one time, how marvellous must have been the contemplation. We may well suppose that when wearied with travel, sitting on Jacob's well, He was left alone to muse, this would be a most likely occasion for His mind thus to act, and the history which we have in the gospel affords intimations enough to give plausible ground for the correctness of our supposition.

The wonderful processes of nature, that harbinger and prepare the annual harvest of the fruits of the earth, can only be known to Him who at first ordained them. They are so multifarious and mysterious, that we cannot possibly find them all out, but they afford suggestive types of those more mysterious agencies ever at work for the perfecting that great harvest at the end

of the world. The water which we drink, or use for ablution, becomes a symbol of that spring of life which the Redeemer opens up in the renewed heart — of that cleansing grace which removeth the stains of guilt. The bread which we prepare at so much daily cost, for sustaining the fabric of our mortal body, becomes a type of the invigorating and sustaining properties of knowing and doing the will of God.

The woman of Samaria might well be surprised at the strange words she heard ; no wonder she exclaimed — “ Sir, I perceive that Thou art a prophet.” His disciples might well marvel at His mysterious intimations respecting food, and ask one another — “ Hath any man brought Him aught to eat ? ” “ Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest ; ” such an utterance must have astounded their minds. “ What fields does He mean ? ” “ Where can we behold them ? ” They might have added — “ Master, remove the scales of ignorance from our vision ; expound to us the marvel of thy words ; is it matter of fact or matter of prophecy that Thou commandest us to regard ? ”

See in all this the grace of God in Christ ; the anxious Heart, the helping Hand, of the Father of our spirits. To use another simile, behold the quickening, invigorating power of the Sun of Righteousness, in the processes of spiritual husbandry, perfecting the glorious harvest of Salvation.

One great object our Saviour ever had in view, all other objects were minor and subordinate. If you meet Him on a sudden, and catch the sound of the working of His mind, you will most likely hear these, if no other, words, . . . "*The will of Him that sent me.*" You will ever find Him in the path of duty. He might have said to every body through life, as He once said to His mother in the early dawn of youth — "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" The needful care of His body was absorbed in the cares of redemption — "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work." The great object of His earthly existence being accomplished, there was no need for Him to continue longer an exile from His glorious home — "It is finished," He exclaimed, and then departed.

That same great object, which was in the mind of Christ Jesus all important, is also the first in the minds of His disciples — the will of God — the salvation of men — the coming, the impending harvest! They busy themselves, as He did, to further the processes of grace. Believing that the field is the world; that Christians are God's husbandry; that they are workers together with Him; they plough, they sow, they water, they watch, they lift up their eyes, and look on the fields again and again, and are permitted to see continually in the never-failing providence of God, in one country or another, in this place or that, fields white already to harvest. As the fruitful earth

yields perpetually, somewhere or other, a constant harvest of its products for the life and joy of mankind, so does the soil of humanity, enriched with the grace of heaven, bring forth those fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the praise and glory of God. The fruitage of the Spirit is ripe or ripening ever, and borne off by angel reapers to the garner of God. Our minds are kept in constant attention, and buoyed up with a never-dying hope; we are not allowed to loiter or to say — “Yet four months,” or, yet so many years, and then cometh the harvest; but we are urged to present and active service, to reap and gather fruit unto eternal life, “that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.”

The water which the woman drew from Jacob's well; the meat which the disciples fetched from Sychar, lose their attractive power in the mind of Christ, when He sees the white fields of spiritual fruitage ready to be reaped. The pleasures of sense, the pomps and vanities of the world, lose their attractions, when the soul of man feels that he is about to move to another and higher sphere of life. Happy he, who, when the time comes, can be “satisfied from himself,” and behold the white field of his ripened experience ready for the reaping.

The field of Sychar is first presented to their gaze; thence must fruit be gathered unto eternal life. The ignorance and prejudices of the disciples might urge them to say — “Master, let us hasten on; can any

good fruit come out of Samaria?" But the earnestness and solemnity of their Lord, coupled with the interest and concern of the woman, might suffice to reply — "Come and see." Two days sojourn of the Saviour of all will work marvels, and many a good Samaritan will be held in His bosom. Prejudices, ill-grounded hopes, that hamper and impede the good corn in its growth, must be checked, and the Saviour of mankind would check them in His disciples, by showing a white field in the questionable soil of Samaria.

We need a caution. In every nation, among every sect and party — "He that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him." The Jews were tempted to think that salvation was confined to them. John stands forward as the spokesman of the disciples, saying, "Master, we saw one casting out devils, in thy name, and he followeth not us; and we forbid him because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, forbid him not; he that is not against us is on our part." They who are loudest, exclaiming — "the Temple of the Lord; the Temple of the Lord; the church; the church are we!" are oftentimes wanting in those characteristics of holiness and devotion which strengthen and beautify the Lord's House. Let us remember that the most corrupt branch of the Catholic Church has laid it down as a dogma — "out of which (namely the Romish Church) there is no salvation."

We need another caution — not to expect too great a display, or manifestation, of the faithful in Christ

Jesus. The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. "One of a city and two of a family," may be the limits of many a field of the Lord's spiritual husbandry. They are not all Christian that are called Christian. "*One sinner that repenteth*" will cause joy in the presence of the angels of God, and should cause joy to us. If ten righteous would save Sodom, we may heartily rejoice at every single grain of salt that is savoured by the grace of Christ. Oh let us see to it that we are ourselves verily and indeed members of that little flock, from which the Saviour would cast out fear by assuring them — "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

In the tangled maze of a complicated experience the woman of Samaria had knowledge of Messias. That little seed must now expand and burst into life. Other men laboured on this field. If these Samaritans had nothing but the Pentateuch for their guidance in religion, they now, by a sudden casualty of Providence, as men would say, had Him for their teacher, of whom Moses in the Pentateuch wrote. The woman's testimony had good effect in honest minds, but the words and presence of Jesus ripened their hope into assurance of knowledge, and they said unto her — "Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." Mark the agents and agencies employed by the heavenly husbandman to perfect the fruitage of His spiritual harvest.

When the compassionate Redeemer saw the multitude scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd, then saith He unto His disciples — “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few, pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth labourers into His harvest.” Forthwith, giving example to confirm faith by works, He called unto Him His twelve disciples, and sent them forth on a mission of mercy and grace, limiting, however, the scope of their ministry to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. No doubt as these twelve busied themselves in their work, they were cheered with many a hopeful sign, and lifted up their eyes on many a field white already to harvest. We are sure that it was so afterwards, when the Lord sent forth other seventy also, for they returned with joy, saying — “Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.” The work of faith never goes unrewarded ; the labour of love is never lost ; the patience of hope will be crowned with success. All who are engaged in spiritual husbandry may be full of enterprise ; they may sow beside all waters, and send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass. The harvest is plenteous, the labourers are few.

As the purposes of God unfolded, so the hopes of His people were enlarged. At Pentecost what a wide field burst forth suddenly on the vision of the Apostles. Three thousand souls converted to the faith, if but a tythe of them continued faithful, was a sight to cheer

the heart. And when Peter afterwards saw in a vision the accession of the Gentiles to the fold of Christ, all bounds and limits would give way, and Hope would have a lawful field of ministry as wide as the world. The last great commission of the Lord to His servants would recur to their minds with renewed force — “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” Perhaps this very visit of Christ to Samaria, and reaping the little field of Sychar, would enliven their memory afresh, and with exulting heart and enlarged experience, they would repeat the words with new application — “Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields ; for they are white already to harvest.”

The healing beams of the Sun of Righteousness conveyed grace to many a heart that was, in the thoughts of men, most unlikely to be affected by it, as unlikely as the soil of Samaria in the thoughts of the twelve. When, for instance, the Christians saw, as they must have seen, the ardour, and zeal, and abilities, of Saul of Tarsus, and only trembled perhaps, lest he should turn timid ones out of the narrow way of truth, how little did they think that in so short a time he would be a disciple himself. The noble field of his honest heart, ploughed with Christ's plough, and sowed with the incorruptible seed of the gospel, yielded a hundred-fold for the enriching of others, and for the glory of God. (Let us ever pray for persecutors and injurious. God's ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts our thoughts.) The motive power being changed, Paul the

Apostle was as ardent and zealous and able as before, but in a nobler cause — “The love of Christ constraineth us,” — so he expounded the force of his principles. As Peter was the Apostle of the circumcision, so Paul went forth to the Gentiles, and in his faithful ministry the truth of the words of the text cheered him ever, we may perhaps expound that truth thus — “Fear not Paul, . . . for I have much people in this city.”

“Obedience to the faith among all nations,” was Paul’s earnest expectation and hope; for this noble object, he said, he had received “grace and apostleship,” and nothing short of this would satisfy his ambition. This motto stamped upon the fleshly table of his heart, or as perhaps we may say, wrought into his very being, by the spirit of Christ, will explain to us the noble enthusiasm of his devoted labours. Hope never forsook him, and whether amid the concourse of his own people at Jerusalem, or with the learned Greeks on Mars’ Hill, by the river side in Macedonia amongst a few pious women, in the inner prison of Philippi with his feet fast in the stocks, in the great sea surrounded by the perils of the deep, or in the very face of martyrdom, with firm hand he thrusts his sickle into the white fields of grace, and exclaims, “For me to live is Christ and to die is gain.” If all Christians were like Paul, with what emotions should we look upon the wide field of the world!

The zeal and devotion of the great Apostle of the Gentiles would serve as a stimulus to many others in

after time. As the fields of Christian culture became more numerous ; as regions beyond afforded room for hope to exercise her ministry afresh ; as converts from idolatry and heathenism swelled the number of the saints ; so the minds of the faithful would be invigorated with the cheering prospect of a general gathering. "The time is at hand," they would instinctively exclaim, "let us work whilst it is called to day, for the night cometh when no man can work."

From Asia to Europe, from Europe to Africa, from one country or city to another, the husbandmen of the gospel bent their steps. The salvation of men was their object ; this was the harvest they would reap. Some here and some there were gathered to Christ ; the labourers were multiplied, yet ever continued few, for the white fields stretched onward and onward before them, and the words of their Lord, simple and grand, taught and cheered them ever — "*the field is the world.*" Before Constantine gave a new phase to the character of the Church, it is delightful to witness the triumphs of Christ over the idolatry, and superstition, and philosophy, and ignorance, and sin of the many places where the gospel was preached.

The poor formed the bulk of the field of the Church ever, they found riches and strength in the service of Christ ; but the great and the learned furnished converts also, the nobility and wisdom of Christ they found better than their own. Not only did Nicodemus become a disciple, and Dionysius the Areopagite cleave unto

Paul, but many more in after time, rich, noble, and learned made profession of their faith in Christ, and the Emperor Constantine himself, either from principle or policy, joined the ranks of the Christians. Among whatever company the labourers found themselves, amid all sorts and conditions of men, as unlikely oftentimes, humanly speaking, to acknowledge Christ as the people of Samaria, the words of the text had application — “Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.”

The long period of the dark ages may seem to furnish an exception, and the command of Christ here find no fulfilment, but, doubtless, there were faithful ones in secret, who, by prayer and painstaking ministered to Christ, and as workers together with God helped on the general harvest. One here and there appears before the world, whilst of others we hear no more than of the great bulk to whom our Saviour made allusion in the words of the text. In moody melancholy we may make lamentation, as the prophet did of old, whereas, if more knowledge of the facts of the case was vouchsafed to us, we should feel ourselves reprov'd as he was reprov'd, when the Lord announced — “I have left me seven thousand in Israel, which have not bowed unto Baal.”

At the period of the Reformation fields white to harvest were presented to the vision. The world was permitted to see through the evil working of tyranny and superstition the beautiful contrast of freedom and joy in Christ. The art of printing, by disseminating the

seed of the word through the fields of Christendom, was a great and good instrument in the Providence of God for promoting the general harvest. We must not be surprised if then appeared the tares also. No great movement for good can ever take place in the individual, the family, the Church, or the nation, without a counter movement of opposition from that enemy of God and man, who, at one time, roams about like a devouring lion, and at another time assumes the guise of an angel of light, but always to destroy.

During the last fifty years what wonderful events have been crowded together! We may boldly say, without fear of contradiction, that no fifty years of the world's history have been so eventful. Science and learning, civilization, refinement, and religion have all made most rapid progress. The nations of the earth draw near together. Time is redeemed, and space overcome. We must, one would think, be drawing nigh the great consummation of all things. The night of ignorance and sin, we may hope, is far spent, and the day of knowledge and holiness close at hand.

During the last fifty years how great have been the triumphs of Christ. This "era of missions" has been a fruitful season. If, at the beginning of the century, the spirit of prophecy had withdrawn the veil of the future from before the mental eye of some saint of God, and permitted him to behold what would take place, how would he have rejoiced in spirit, like Simeon of old, and exclaimed — "Lord

now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

It is no exaggeration of the poet, no dream of the enthusiast — at the foot of Greenland's icy mountains the love of Christ warms the heart of man. On the coral strand of India the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, donative of Christ, gives far better adornment than all the gems of the East. The heart of Africa is touched by the finger of God. Into the four quarters of the earth the messengers of Christ have gone. Standing here, on the favoured soil of Britain, high above the nations, how does our heart swell with a hope full of immortality, as we hear the words of our Lord — "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest."

What a highly favoured nation ours has been in the work of Christ. We, the descendants of Japheth, have gone and dwelt in the tents of Shem, and Canaan has been our servant. If the love of gold has stirred many, the love of Christ has stirred a few. If the few have chosen, like Solomon of old, wisdom rather than riches, the great Lord of all has given that which they asked not — riches and honour; and now, at this moment, the Anglo-Saxon race has a station in every part of the world, and did but the love of Christ constrain them, what blessed issues would result. Be it ours, each in his several post, to be workers together with God in His sacred husbandry, that in the harvest in the end of the world, reaping what we sowed, our bosom may be full of fruit.

The Last Morning.

THE LAST MORNING.

GENESIS xix. 23.

"The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar."

THE marvellous scene of beauty, of richness, of splendour, and I may perhaps add, of peace and safety, which these words refer to, it is difficult, if not impossible, for us to realize. Our dull and murky atmosphere, unlike the clear sky of the East, will not allow the more gorgeous pictures of nature to be displayed. That rich plain, endowed with varied gifts, even as the garden of the Lord in olden time, must have glowed in luxury of splendour, on that fateful morning, when the sun shed his golden rays of light upon its fertile bosom. Sleep was unloosing her silken bonds, and the people of Sodom and Gomorrah were waking afresh to scenes of life and joy. The ministers of their sinful pleasures, and consequent misery, were as ready that day as any day to do them service. Pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness, lent their ready aid. There was no sign of

danger or of sorrow ; no suggestive symbol of uneasiness ; peace and safety were the watchwords of the morning ; they did all break their fast in peace and plenty. The footsteps of Retribution are not heard by the wicked even when at the very door ; carousals within, with their noise and merriment, drown all other sounds.

What position Lot occupied in Sodom we cannot tell ; amongst a people so well off he would not be conspicuous for wealth, or worldly greatness. He dwelt among them, however, and being a righteous man, his soul was vexed with their unlawful deeds. Often, doubtless, did he rue the day, when separating from Abraham, he chose that fertile plain for his future dwelling-place. Words of advice and warning, a life of purity and holiness, were alike lost on these men of Sodom ; they took no heed, but revelled in their sins. How sad it is that Prosperity should be so often attended by Pride, and Ruin follow at his heels. Independence is bad for sinful man ; it is too much for him ; ten to one but that it fosters selfishness and sloth, and invites the ministers of justice to suspect and watch his proceedings. Prosperity and Independence helped forward the ruin of Sodom.

The righteous God who ruleth in the world was making inquisition concerning the character of the cities of the plain. Three men appeared to Abraham, messengers of heaven, who were sent to inspect the cities of which such ill report had arisen. The Father

of the faithful was informed by the Lord of the impending doom of Sodom, the residence of his nephew, and earnestly did he plead in its behalf ; but his prayer was not granted. An example was about to be made of a wicked people, that all who after should live ungodly might see the fearful consequences of such a course.

The arrival of the two angels at Sodom ; Lot's entertainment of them ; the fearful catastrophe of sin, and miracle of blindness in consequence ; the announcement of the destruction of the city ; the gracious extension of mercy to Lot's kindred ; the derision of his sons-in-law ; the unseemly lingering of Lot, and the constraining urgency of the angels ; the plea for Zoar, and its acceptance of the Lord — are all told in a page or two of the sacred narrative. What a crowding together of fearful incidents ! And there, in the entrance to the little city, with feelings of wonder and awe, akin in some respects to those of Peter in after days, who, when delivered from prison by miracle, “wist not that it was true which was done by the angel, but thought he saw a vision” — there, Lot beheld for the last time the doomed and sinful cities of the plain. In the last day, when our doom shall come, how will the many and varied phases of our past life, with all their sins and follies, flash in a moment through our conscience, and show us the way we must go !

“Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of

heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground."

What a symbol of mercy and judgment is the little city of Zoar. As the smoke of the ruined cities rolled in clouds onward through the sky, Abraham and Lot from their respective stations must have beheld the fatal scene with fear and trembling. The wife and mother, fixed like a statue midway betwixt ruin and safety, would serve for a token of God's displeasure against disobedience from generation to generation. The Saviour's advice should be printed on every doorway of a divided heart—"Remember Lot's wife!" Surely we must be very dull if we learn no lesson from this history; surely we shall be to blame if we simply hang up a picture of it in our mind, and give no more heed to it than we do to the pictures we hang on our walls for ornaments. Believe the record, and how does the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah assure us, that agencies of retribution are near enough at hand, when the word of the Lord gives commission for their exercise. The material elements of man's dwelling-place can be turned in a moment into ministers of justice, to arrest and to punish its guilty tenants. There is intimate connexion between body and soul of man, guilt in this will cause pain in that.

"If thou do ill, the joy fades, not the pains;
If well, the pain doth fade, the joy remains."

Sentence against evil work may not be executed speedily, but it will be executed some time. The long-suffering of our Lord is salvation. The condition of the world consequent on sin is met by peculiar arrangements of the Great Moral Governor of the universe, so peculiar that the mind needs special teaching to acknowledge the propriety of them, or submit willingly, with awe, to their mysterious display. Vicarious suffering it is hard to believe, and yet our hopes of salvation, as set before us in Holy Scripture, depend on the vicarious sufferings of the Son of God. Prayer and alms exercise a beneficial influence in the world, and are had in remembrance before God. The righteous are the salt of the earth, and keep it from corruption. Ten righteous would have saved Sodom.

In the first terrible visitation of God's displeasure against sin, special means are ordained for the preservation of Noah and his family; opening the windows of heaven and breaking up the fountains of the great deep, are enough to destroy the world with a deluge. The God of the spirits of all flesh is the God of all the earth; the constituent elements of matter and of spirit are all under His control. When the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up Korah and his company, and they went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them, the Lord made a new thing for the punishment of transgressors. When Herod sat on his throne, and with bloated pride made

unseemly display of royal state, an angel smote him, and he was eaten of worms, the invisible stroke of the angel of the Lord was forthwith succeeded by the visible ministers of judgment and justice. The Lord can summon an army of locusts before which the earth shall quake, and the heavens tremble, all faces gather blackness, and the stoutest armies of men quail. The framework of the human system is strangely furnished with apparatus of pains and penalties for the punishment of disobedience. The mind of the guilty may be so perverted by sin, as to feed the gnawing worm of remorse, and fan the flame of despair for ever. The power of a single angel may be enough at the last trump to withdraw elements of conservative grace from the strange compound of organized and unorganized matter whereof the world is made, to produce immediate combustion. Oh how marvellous will be the power of the great army, headed by the righteous King, when the morning of the great day of doom shall open on the world !

Authentic history, like genuine experience, is a great teacher. Had God allowed no records of the past to remain, no tale of experience to be told, our responsibility as reasonable creatures had been considerably lightened. Or had he allowed the remains of Sodom to be discovered in after ages, as the remains of Nineveh, and men to find out the cause of its destruction as best they could, how different would have been our position in the schoolroom of the world from what it

is now, when we read in inspired writ — “The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”

Accumulative testimony concerning facts of importance will, if disregarded, greatly increase the guilt of neglecters. The question of the Apostle, put two thousand years ago almost, comes with great increase of power to us in this day and place — “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” Sodom and Gomorrah will be more leniently dealt with ; their punishment will be more tolerable, in the day of judgment, than the cities where Christ spake and acted ; how much more so than despisers now, counting the accumulated testimony of eighteen centuries of little worth.

The Bible is a record of facts, made, as is popularly believed, by the special guidance of God. Before a man presumes to disregard that record, he has a mighty work to achieve, even to show and to prove that the popular belief is founded in fallacy ; most professing Christians are ready to say — This is an impossible work ! To correct the Bible, to expurgate it, demands consummate wisdom ; the thought of such an attempt makes me tremble, as I should have

trembled had I seen the breach upon Uzzah. Our age is a sifting age, and God may take the wise in their own craftiness, if they presume with unhallowed boldness to sift the writings of the Old and New Testaments. That which claims for itself the title of divine must not be flippantly disregarded, nor studied with prejudice or haste. The inspiration of Holy Scripture is the great topic of the day; be satisfied on this head, and your course is clear. But it is not an easy study, it never was an easy study, any more than the study of our responsibility to God. Look all difficulties in the face; be honest; be just; "simpering is but a lay hypocrisy." After all, the great bulk of mankind will be, must be, led by authority, and I would rather submit to the authority of ages and generations of wise men, than to any empirics or modern Gnostics, who are cleverer in unsettling the minds of the weak than satisfying the needs of the strong.

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; the miracles recorded in the Old Testament, and perhaps in the New; all that does not square with the notions of the new philosophy, will lose their force of significance and their lessons of instruction, if the inspiration of the record is disallowed. The very coming of a last day, and of a judgment, may be treated as fables, and scoffers boldly ask — "Where is the promise of his coming, for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the Creation?"

Our Saviour regarded the destruction of Sodom as a fact ; one of those facts of authentic history full of lessons of practical importance. The flood also, in the days of Noah, He believed to be real. The history of both events was well known to Him, and all the attendant circumstances. One circumstance He especially singles out for consideration — the *suddenness* of either event. A greater event than either, because charged with greater consequences, He assured His disciples would break on the world with equal suddenness. The destruction of Jerusalem stands in the foreground of the prophetic picture, and forms a kind of admonitory type of the great destruction of the wicked at the consummation of all things. The vision of the greater event is sometimes lost by the intervention of the smaller. The confusion to us is, however, removed ; Jerusalem has been long ago destroyed, and now “the day when the Son of Man is revealed” means *the last day* of this world’s strange and eventful history.

“As it was in the days of Lot ; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded ; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. *Even thus* shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.”

The demands of our mortal nature have ever, since sin was introduced, interfered too much with the demands of our immortal nature. The vision of faith has been obscured, and a life of sense has usurped

authority over the soul. With bodily vision we cannot see beyond this world, except the outside of things in miniature; and even with spiritual vision the objects of hope are but dimly realized. The pursuits of ordinary life engross the attention of men, hence the unseemly exhibition of reasonable creatures, endowed with immortality, neglecting their chief concerns. Time eclipses eternity. This exhibition is not confined to the people of Sodom; it was, in some respects, worse, in the days of our Saviour, and He entreated men to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. It is the same now. Should the Great Judge of mankind make His appearance to-morrow, the suddenness of His arrival would be a dreadful shock to the world. Should He delay His advent a thousand years, or a thousand ages, we have every reason to believe that the event would be as little expected, or prepared for, then, as now. The history of the period would be expressed in the same words — “They did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold — until the very day!” The ordinary pursuits of time will engross the thoughts of any future generation, as it engrosses the thoughts of this one, and righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, will be comparatively disregarded. As it is with a man, so it is with the world, habits confirmed become a law of life, not to be broken without uncommon power.

In the mind of the Apostles, and during the Apostolic period of the Church, the second advent of Christ

was regarded as imminent. So overwhelming was the consideration of it with some, that the duties of common life were disregarded, and the Apostle Paul strove to correct the mistake. And yet the language of Scripture is marked and striking, quite enough to arouse the minds of Christian men to an expectation of an immediate return of their Lord. "As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be," are the words of Christ Himself; and these again, often repeated — "Behold, I come quickly." "Your-selves know perfectly," says the Apostle, "that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape." "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night," says St. Peter, "in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up."

The flow of two thousand years will not destroy the fact of Christ's return, though it may tend to make its suddenness the more manifest; men mistaking the measurements of time, and presuming on the grace of God. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." As an old man

reviewing his past life counts it but a dream, so the whole period of the world's duration, as regarded at the close of it, will appear equally brief, although the marvellous work of redemption will have been accomplished in the interim.

When the sun rises upon the earth on the morning of the last day, the multitudes of people will not be conscious of the fact. Many a fertile vale will glow in the sunshine ; many a Sodom wake up from slumbering. The instruments of business and of pleasure will be brought out as usual ; the routine of ordinary life will be observed ; and yet what a revolution will take place before nightfall ! Not empires, and cities, and oceans, and mountains ; not fertile plains and sterile wastes ; not living and moving creatures many — not these alone crowd the field of vision. The works of sin, the works of grace — righteousness and judgment — retribution and recompense — the reckoning of the Great Master with His servants for their work in the field of the world from first to last — all these, and more than these, now stand out in bold relief.

Business is never at a stand-still ; men are always on 'change, or in the market ; they will buy and sell and get gain. If Time removes the traffickers, he brings others in their stead. It is politic to keep up the bustle of life. On the morning of the last day news will go forth, as usual, and be read with accustomed eagerness ; prices current will be noted ; crowds

will go to their farm and their merchandize ; only the idle, the dissolute, and the sick, will be away. The glorious sun will shine as before ; the birds will sing ; the flowers unfold their petals ; the brooklets make their wonted music. Children will play, and mothers fondle their little ones. The angels will not show themselves just yet ; the trumpet has not actually sounded. What a fearful bankruptcy that will be, the bankruptcy of the world ! Now, when a vessel goes down, laden with stores of treasure, fitted with all needful appliances, how do men relax their hold of gold and silver, and turn to prayers ; mercy of heaven being of more value in their eyes than riches of earth. Then, in the last day, when the vessel of the world shall go down, laden with varied merchandize, what a prayer will be prayed to God for mercy, and the prayer will not be answered. Of what avail were all the riches of the East when the Lord rained down the fire and brimstone upon the wicked inhabitants ? Of what avail will the staple of our character be when the day of perdition of ungodly men shall dawn upon the world ?

How will the votaries of sinful pleasures be astonished when those pleasures come to an end for evermore ! The revelry and dissipation of thoughtless mirth will be succeeded by weeping and wailing. The pleasures of sin for a season will yield awful harvest when that season is over ! The words of the prophet will then have terrible force of meaning — “All the merry-hearted do sigh ; the mirth of tabrets

ceaseth, the noise of them that rejoice endeth, the joy of the harp ceaseth." Sinful pleasures will be the harbinger of ruin when the sun rises on the earth for the last time.

How will Right and Truth find relief in the light of the last day! The prison-house of Tyranny will be broken up, and Freedom be triumphant. After a strange misrule of thousands of years, Sin will be cast into Hell, and the Lord alone be exalted in that day.

From the dungeon of the Grave shall the faithful come forth to life and glory; the unfaithful to shame and everlasting contempt.

The secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, and the mystery of iniquity be at an end.

The ministers of retribution will show themselves when wanted; the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements melt with fervent heat.

And this day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness? Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless.

The Glog.

THE GLORY.

REVELATION **xxi.** 23.

"And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

THE future life of man is but ill defined in Scripture. The *fact* of a future existence is borne witness to continually, but *how* that life will be constituted or sustained, or *where* spent, we are not clearly told. Enough for us to know, that God hath prepared for them that love Him such good things as pass man's understanding. Those good things must be perfect of their kind, designed and calculated to promote the essential welfare of redeemed man, and the glory of God Most High. We may well leave the disposition of things to Him who made all things for Himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.

It will yield both pleasure and profit to trace, so far as we can, the designs of the Almighty concerning the future condition of the noblest of His creatures in this lower world. We have no other sure guide but Holy Scripture. Reason, Learning, Philosophy, can do little

by themselves, but as the handmaids of Truth they can do much. In their company, and with their aid, sitting at the feet of Jesus, with becoming attention and reverence, hearkening to the gracious words that proceed out of His lips, studying his character, and imbibing His Spirit, we may learn to be assured that Life and Immortality are brought to light by the Gospel; and that, although we know not yet what we shall be, we know that when He doth appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

It is important to bear constantly in mind, that the revelation of God has never been vouchsafed, and probably never will be vouchsafed, to the intellectual, so much as to the moral, faculties of man. A certain condition of character is required to understand and appreciate the wisdom of God. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned." "I thank Thee, O Father," these are the words of our gracious Master, "because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes, even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight." "Blessed are the pure in heart," said the same Divine Teacher, "for they shall see God." The world by wisdom knew not God in the olden time; neither now, by all the searchings of philosophy, can men find out the Almighty unto perfection. To be heartily obedient to the divine commands is the best way to attain unto wise counsels.

"If any man will do His will," says the Great Author of our religion, "he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." It is written, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."

There is no absolute necessity for Philosophy and Science to clash with the moral and spiritual agents of man's regeneration and salvation, in their respective fields of labour; but they often do clash, when their characters are not in affinity the one with the other. Knowledge puffeth up, but Charity edifieth. The bold daring of human learning will not always brook the restraints of reverential awe, and the fear of God. The wise are sometimes taken in their own craftiness, and the wisdom of this world accounted foolishness with God.

The constitution of our globe; its past history and present state; the nature of man; Life and its conditions; Death and its work; these are matters of study, in a greater or less degree, for Science, Philosophy, and Religion, in common. Let one mind preside in their councils, and direct their deliberations, and all will be well; but Envy, or Malice, or Jealousy, any one of them, will suggest evil counsels and cause sad confusion. Alas! a great enemy of God and man

has insinuated himself into our nature, and works perpetually with great subtlety and deceit to blind and to ruin us. Two minds are ever present in all our conferences, and so long as this continues, there must be confusion and every evil work. Be it ours to yield unto God, and implicitly obey the inspirations of His Spirit.

Man was made for immortality. The great pains bestowed on his creation, his varied faculties and endowments, assure us of His divine nobility and greatness. The fearful catastrophe of the Fall filled the mind of God with exceeding sorrow and disappointment. The family of man has caused Him especial concern. The resources of the Divine mind have been taxed to the uttermost (we may perhaps say), to repair the ravages of sin. The Father of our spirits has taken infinite pains to restore His fallen children to favour. It ill becomes us to question His mode of procedure in the matter; let us wonder, and be properly affected with a due sense of all His mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful.

Death was the fearful punishment threatened for disobedience. It is vain, the attempt to know what man had been had he continued faithful. What he might have been under the circumstances, is not our study, but what he is under his present circumstances, and what God hath designed for him in future. When shame, on account of disobedience, begins to work in our nature, how strange it is! Oh! how exceeding

strange must have been the first rising and gradual spread of shame in the pure and spotless nature of Adam and Eve ! Had they died then, literally fulfilling the Word of God, the wonderful history of our world had never been. In that flimsy mist of Sin and Shame, the great deceiver scattered the seeds of sorrow and of death ; and the fallen nature of man, from generation to generation, has yielded a fearful harvest of lamentation, and mourning, and woe. In consequence of sin, it is appointed unto all men once to die ; and so far, death hath passed upon all men, for all have sinned.

Sicknesses, and sorrows, and infirmities many, have kept man company from the beginning, and still attend him ; they attend him ever in his journey, and exercise their ministry with too much faithfulness, until — limbs faltering, and strength failing, and breath ceasing — they deliver him over to Death, who consigns him to the stern guardianship of the cold and silent grave.

Evil surmisings, and fear ; doubt concerning God's being, and providence, and the future ; and base hopes, and anguish, have preyed on man's mind perpetually, and do still prey on it too much, even yet. This is the state of man.

To watch the purposes of God gradually unfolding themselves in His providence, from the fall until now. To mark how, with wisdom, and power, and grace, He works out His will for the redemption of mankind.

To see kings and kingdoms, lawgivers and laws, powers of nature, ministers of sin — all under control, for the accomplishment of the one great object. To realise in one's own mystic being a movement onward and upward, the metamorphosis of our nature to the image of God ! Oh, this is a glorious subject, and most worthy of thought and realization !

Moses is first commissioned to record the history of redemption. He spake of Christ by prophetic intimation, type, and sacrifice. The seed of the woman was to bruise the serpent's head ; he lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even as the Son of man should be lifted up ; the blood of bulls and goats was shed in profusion to symbolize the blood-shedding of the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.

The prophets enlarge the testimony, and the benefits of redemption assume a more definite shape. Deliverance from infirmity and sin, from death and the grave is announced. "Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." "O Death, I will be thy plagues ; O Grave, I will be thy destruction." "He will swallow up Death in victory." "I create new heavens and a new earth."

The Evangelist assures us that the Redeemer is come ; come to do the will of God ! The people that sat in darkness saw great light ; the ignorant were taught as they were never taught before ; the sick were healed ; the afflicted cheered ; the sinful pardoned ;

the dead raised to life ; the works of the devil destroyed ; the powers of darkness overthrown ; Death vanquished ; and the Grave dismantled. Works of mercy, of power, and of grace, wrought by the Redeemer as earnest of the great deliverance when the end shall be.

The Apostles confirm the tidings of redemption ; and now, bursting forth in all directions, the light of salvation shines from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. The Holy Spirit takes the place of Christ, and reveals to the elect the deep things of God. The confines of heaven are reached, but one more stage, "and the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads ; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

The house of the saints, that great city, the holy Jerusalem, having the glory of God, and her light like unto a stone most precious, has no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city has no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it ; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

This is the place of our rest and glory !

The patriarchs and faithful of the Old Testament looked not merely for temporal promises, but eternal. Probably Abel, with his eye of faith, beheld more than temporal objects ; certainly Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and others, desired a better country than one on earth ;

they confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims here; they desired a better country, that is, an heavenly, for God had prepared for them a city—the same city whither prophets, evangelists, apostles, saints afterwards would bend their steps—Jerusalem which is above!

The Jewish nation, its polity and circumstances, are not brought before us in Scripture, with such amplitude, for ordinary instruction merely, like the history of any other nation; but to reveal to us, in a certain manner and degree, the overruling Providence of God; His constant recognition of the ways and doings of men; some of the agencies of His moral government; and to lead us on in joyful expectation to a state of universal peace and blessedness, when a King shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment; when the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth.

The blessed Jesus did not only visit the earth like an ordinary mortal, and take His place in the genealogy of Adam's sons; He did not only accomplish the work of our salvation; but He did also afford assurance to the children of men that there are modes of intercourse between heaven and earth, the residence of God and the residence of man; that even physical difficulties, as we regard them, are easily overcome; and,

ascending up to heaven with a body received on earth, He gives a kind of tangible reality to the words He spake to his disciples — “In my Father’s house are many mansions ; I go to prepare a place for you, and I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also.”

The illuminations vouchsafed by the Holy Spirit to the minds of Apostles ; the disclosures of principalities and powers in heavenly places : the exposing to view of mystic miniatures of the kingdom of heaven in the renewed nature of man ; are not only to be regarded as facts of great significance in the spiritual kingdom of Christ, but as earnest and foretastes of the grandeur of heaven’s glory, when we shall be like Him, who first made man in His own image, and when he had fallen, renewed him in holiness with the assurance of perpetual stability, and permanence of glory. Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gifts !

Let God’s world be personified, and requested to give utterance to his experience, and thus and thus will he speak — “When I was a child I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child. My Father treated me as a child. He taught me with pictures, and symbols, and types, the meaning of which I understood not then, though now I do. He pitied my weakness, and gradually stored my memory with facts of significance, and my heart with varied experience. When I became a man, I put away childish things ; thought and reason took the place of symbol

and picture ; the great and holy Spirit filled my soul ; a thorn in my flesh keeps me from being exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelation ; the time is coming, and is not far distant, when there shall be a new heaven and a new earth ; and although now I see through a glass darkly, I shall then see face to face ; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known."

Heaven is not only a state or character, but a locality. The topography (if I may so speak) of the glorious city we have not, except in unconnected fragments. We know not for certainty whether it will be upon this earth, or in some other part of God's extensive dominions. We need not perplex our minds about this subject of secondary importance. *God hath prepared for us a city !* — this is enough. The description of that city, as given in the end of the roll of revelation, is sufficiently significant and striking. Listen to it — "I saw a new heaven and a new earth ; for the first heaven and the first earth was passed away ; and there was no more sea. And I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes ; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor

crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

“And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.” This ravishing description of the glorious city may well incite us to gird up the loins of our mind, to make us confess that we are strangers and pilgrims upon earth, and to address ourselves with earnest heartiness to our journey heavenward.

Let us now consider the character and condition of the blessed inhabitants of this holy place.

Man — fallen, sinful, redeemed to God by the blood of the Lamb, sanctified, glorified — will dwell in this place.

Life and immortality, which are brought to light by the gospel, will, in the heavenly city, form a portion of the inheritance of the saints. For me to live is Christ, said the Apostle, and to die is gain. To dwell with Christ in Hades is gain, but to dwell with Him in Zion is greater gain. Our life here, and our mortality, will soon cease, but in heaven life will be immortal. There shall be no more death. We are so straitened here by the conditions of our life, we are so shrouded by the shadows of death, that the hope of life eternal cheers our soul. The supports of immortal life are also provided, for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters. And there is the tree of life.

Infirmity, sorrow, sickness, will not be allowed to interfere with the perfect enjoyments of heaven. The inhabitant shall not say—I am sick. The redeemed shall ascribe their health to Him to whom they ascribe their salvation, and exclaim, in words having fuller meaning than ordinary, and wider application—Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.

A spiritual body will also be a portion of the saints' inheritance. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. After that Death and the Grave have performed their humbling ministries, the Resurrection and the Life will bring forth other vestments for the souls of the redeemed, and as they have borne the

image of the earthly, they shall also bear the image of the heavenly. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body; the one shall be destroyed, the other will remain indestructible.

The company of the saints will be a multitude which no man can number. The breach of bereavement will be effectually healed. The bond of brotherhood will be perfect. Christ will be all and in all. Here will be happy recognition of lost relations. Here will be greetings, and conferences, and rejoicings. Here reminiscence of the past will heighten the happiness of the present. Adam and Abel and Enoch will confer with Noah, Daniel, and Job. Isaiah, once a prophet, and Paul, once an apostle, shall meet as kings and priests. The noble army of martyrs shall rest in their glory. The poor in spirit, and the meek, and the merciful, and the pure in heart, shall see God. The once persecuted for righteousness sake, who fought their way to the city, shall rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is the reward in heaven. From the East, and West, and North, and South, the elect are gathered together, and sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

How the saints will be employed for God in the future; what will be the scope of their ministry, we cannot tell — let us wait, and so long as we sojourn here, labour to enter into that rest, lest, after all, we be cast away

What may be the marvels of God in other parts of creation we cannot tell, possibly as wonderful as his marvels in this. How, through the endless temple of eternity the Lord thereof has and will exercise his power, we are incapable of understanding. Invested with life — reason — faculties many; placed in a tenancy of responsibility and grace; prisoners of hope; heirs of immortality — whilst we employ ourselves (as in duty bound) with the business of our earthly life, we should be especially anxious about our future and more enduring inheritance. To trifle here is worse than madness. As workers together with God we should not only read the history of redemption, and marvel, and adore, but apply ourselves diligently, day by day, to experience the saving grace of the Redeemer. The gradual development of grace, of beauty, and order, in the world at large, from the moral chaos of sin, by the mediation of Christ, will cheer us in our individual prayers and endeavours, because we know that the will of God is *our* sanctification. Our glory upon earth is to be more and more like our Master in mind, in act, in character, as our glory in heaven will be — *to be like Him* — to Whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and praise, for ever — Amen.

The Church Porch.

THE CHURCH PORCH

PSALMS xcv. 6.

"O come, let us worship and bow down : let us kneel
before the Lord our Maker."

THE Church is God's House ; we should regard it therefore with reverence and love. It's very Porch is sacred ; and, as we bare our head on entering, so should we school our thoughts, lest we defile the holy courts with vanity and sin. Form, and Ceremony, and Custom, and Habit will fret the holy garments of Religion, if we are not very careful ; and Sabbaths, and Churches, and Bibles and all other sacred things, will be soiled and polluted, instead of sanctified and blessed.

I wish to call your attention to the offices of divine service, with which it is our high privilege to be familiar. I want to rouse you and myself to greater thoughtfulness and spirituality in the use of our Liturgy. May God bless the humble attempts, by causing us to realize His Presence, and worship Him in spirit and in truth, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Whenever we address ourselves to any strange undertaking, the novelty of the thing makes due preparation necessary ; we must think and plan before we act ; but the more ordinary occupations of life, which habit has made natural to us, we are apt to go through with listlessness or indifference. The sacred offices of divine worship may, through want of thought in the worshippers, be sadly marred or distorted. Let me endeavour to describe some of those associations of thought and feeling which may properly characterize the mind of the humble Christian *before* he enters on the more immediate acts of worship. The porch of his soul, if I may be allowed the expression, is what I would now paint.

What strange power there is in scenes and associations ! Habit is indeed a second nature ! The gold of the bright sun, for instance, is brighter on the Sabbath than on the week day ! How calm and how still is the holy morn ! We miss the grinding of wheels, and the straining and the noise of labour ! What relief is given to the birds' song, and the lowing of the cattle ! The sound of the Church-going bell echoes back through our memory till lost in the distance of earliest childhood. Our father ; our mother ; our pastor ; our friends and companions, and even the stranger ; one and all, come around us afresh, as we muse and draw nigh to the porch of that holy place where they met, and nigh which, many of them, sleep in the dust ! Our nature seems charged with peculiar emotions on the

Sabbath day. This is our birthright. Oh! I would not willingly part with it for worlds!

By a little effort and painstaking we can deepen these sacred impressions. We can burst the cords of selfishness, and go hither and thither through time and space, making the world our neighbourhood. More than this, we can peer into the future, and, with lamp in hand, descry the porch of the home of the saints! More than this we cannot do; but this is enough, my brethren, for we instinctively exclaim — "There remaineth therefore a rest for the people of God." Our souls are stirred to noble daring, and we labour to enter into that rest.

"We seek a rest beyond the skies,

In everlasting day;

Through floods and flames the passage lies,

But Jesus guards the way."

Our Church stands like a monitor in our midst; grey with age it can talk to us of the past, and remind us of scenes, and generations of men, very unlike the present. One great, long, funeral procession seems to wend its way before us, coming from the dark recesses of the past, along the centuries of time, shaking its plumes and weepers, and reminding us that presently we must fall in the rear, and swell the mighty pageant. But this is not all. Faith, and Hope, and Charity, these three especially, are seen busied with the living all along; they weave together the present and the future, the employments of time, and the destinies of eternity, into

goodly raiment or mortal man. This world is perhaps like Nazareth, a place with an ill name, but where the Saviour of man has ennobled labour, and given distinction to retirement. If any place, reared by mortal hands, can remind us of the sorrows and pains of Death, and the joys and happiness of Life, we ought to treat it with respect and awe, and surely the Church of our fathers does this. It has two inscriptions on it, engraved, as if by the finger of God ; on the east — “*disce vivere,*” *learn to live !* on the west — “*memento mori,*” *remember you must die !*

Our little village Church is one of a multitude, counted not by hundreds only, but by thousands. All together they are like the heaven-born mystery of Sacraments, outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace. Man would never, with such perpetual labour and cost, have erected so many buildings of this sort, unless he had been urged thereto by instinctive promptings of a better nature, or the direct command of heaven, or both combined. Tell me not that the places of worship in Christian, or Jewish, or even heathen lands, are the erections of blind chance, or trembling fear ; they are evidences of a far-seeing life, and firm and vigorous hand. Man's selfishness is strong, but conviction of futurity is stronger. He will build himself a house, ceiling it with cedar and painting it with vermilion, but he will be wretched and restless until he has erected another more costly and magnificent, and dedicated it to a higher power, even though

the inscription thereon may be this — “To the unknown God !”

I know not how it was in Paradise, neither need we distress ourselves about our ignorance ; the whole world was a temple, without a flaw, without a stain !

Sin made an altar needful, and soiled the world with blood. Doubt, and Fear, and Sorrow, and Hope, lent their ministry to Adam and Eve as they offered slain beasts in sacrifice to God. There was no house erected then mayhap ; under the broad arch and canopy of heaven man said his prayers.

As human life decreased in length, and contracted to a span, so the worship of the Almighty was marked by more definite symbols of Form and Ceremony, and there was a Place where God was pleased more especially to set His Name. Sin was not allowed to blot out the notices of Heaven. What meaneth this, and this, and this ? children would ask of their sires. Evidences of God should abound on all sides ; so that if man, through wildness or wilfulness, might wish to forget Him, he would not be able to do so, without dreadful painstaking.

“How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel !” exclaimed the prophet of the east, as he descried, from a mountain height, the chosen of the Lord in set array. But Solomon built Him an house, wonderful and glorious ! It fell and gave place to another ; *and that fell !* So true is it that houses made with hands can only be figures of the true ;

Time and mortal circumstance bringing them all to the dust.

The first Christians worshipped in strange places ; dens, and caves, and catacombs were oftentimes consecrated to the worship of God. It might be said of the servant as of the Master — “A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” When the sword of the Spirit had fought a way in the world for Christ’s service, then Superstition, and even Pomp and Power were seen tendering their service, and doing homage. Fashion then craved Christening, and gorgeous places of worship were seen on every side. Alas ! it is a painful confession to make, but we may make it with truth — poverty and sickness are better for the soul than riches and health. The chants, and hymns, and litanies, that have been sung and said in dens and caves, sounded better in heaven, I think, than when through the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault, the pealing anthem swelled the note of praise !

Mistake not my meaning, brethren, it is quite right of man to give to God the best of all. When our minds wander through this favoured land of ours, and see the noble piles, cathedrals, minsters, churches many, signs and symbols of God and godliness, we cannot but be glad. What ! did Superstition rear them all, and not the love of Christ ? There is confusion in this world indeed, and in the Church, but there is order also. There are evil spirits who know Christ, and there are good spirits who love Him. “She hath done what

she could," said the loving Saviour, and, be sure, that what some call waste, God may count a memorial unto Himself. Let us adorn and beautify our churches with chaste emblems of virtue and godliness, and never let it be said — "They stint charity to endow selfishness."

These temples of His grace,
How beautiful they stand !
The honours of our native place,
The bulwarks of our land.

I need only just remind you of the fact, that all through the heathen's land places were built and endowed for the worship of their false gods, and this through the power of imitation, and also the promptings of conscience, ill at ease.

But here we have no continuing city. As the people of the Lord wandered in the desert, and reared their tabernacle here and there in constant change, so have the people of the Lord wandered ever since. Churches which once flourished are now gone. The scenes of the Apostles' labours have strangely altered. Even the favoured Church to which we belong has experienced strange vicissitudes, since amongst the ancient Britons apostolic men first unfurled the standard of the cross. These very walls could tell us a strange tale, had they but a voice ; and that old yew in the churchyard has been the silent witness of many a scene, through many a century, since first it took root in consecrated soil.

We do well to acquaint ourselves, in some measure at least, with the history of the Church. Here we study

men in the whole range of their nature. Time and Eternity both ply their powers, and the enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent is seen at work. Our Church is not without her faults, wonderful that she has so few, considering all the circumstances of her past history ! What with bribes of mammon, and smiles of the world ; what with the idolatry of Rome, and the giddiness of Protestant license ; what with the blandishments of Ease, and irksomeness of Restraint ; it is wonderful, I repeat, how God hath favoured our Zion. May He give our Church rulers grace to set this house in order ; may we all mend our ways ; may glory be to God !

Abbots, and friars, and monks, and priests, workmen many, have set their hand to the plough, and turned the sacred glebe. Penance, and indulgence, and shrift ; priestly blessing and priestly curse, have one and all been used in the husbandry of the Church. Shroud of darkness, and bursts of light ; sleep of formalism, and the wakings of reformation, have, in turn visited our people. Wondrous play of varied feeling the Church's heart hath felt ! And having obtained help of God we continue unto this day. It is of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed. May we be instruments of his grace.

As we stand in the Church porch ; as we dress ourselves for devotion ; as we school and discipline our mind for public worship, such subjects as I have touched on may well engage our thoughts ; and others also of a kindred character will force themselves on our

observation. The service we engage in ; the words framed for our use ; the common prayer of untold multitudes. Oh ! what a spell, what a charm is on us ; or, speaking more correctly, with what divine influence do we gird up the loins of our mind, as, with bent knee, and clasped hand, and devout soul, we worship the Lord our Maker !

Set forms of prayer, public liturgies, have ever been used by the Church. Extempore forms are a novelty. As it pleased God in His goodness to have strains of inspiration *written down* for the instruction of mankind, so it pleased God in His providence to have prayers and praises set forth by authority as guides and helps in public worship. How had we fared if the words of inspiration had been *spoken* only, and not committed to writing ? How had we fared if the Church had never put before her children set forms of devotion ? I feel convinced, that in spite of the tamperings of Rome, public liturgies have been noble buttresses to the Church of Christ. As John the Baptist taught his disciples to pray, so did Jesus ; and, in strict keeping with such examples, the Church framed prayers and hymns for her children's use. I put it to you, my brethren, in a simple, practical way — did you ever hear extempore prayers that would bear comparison with the prayers of the Church ? For heavenly fervour, for holy staidness, for comprehensive meaning, for grace of language, the prayers of the Church are unmatched.

We live in restless days. Many are running to and

fro. All seem in a hurry. Novelty is a special charm. The hoar of antiquity is too often counted a blight. Restraint is irksome. The voice of authority is too often drowned by the rude gibes of license and worldly merriment. Laughter is a kind of God! The Church suffers from this strange condition of things. Schism, divisions, party, pray upon her vitals. Some are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. The respect due to ministers of Christ is but seldom regarded. The noble and dignified simplicity of our Church service is deformed, or treated with scorn. "*Let us go and hear this man ; — Let us go and hear that*"—and excitement intoxicates the mind as new wine the body. Oh that men would submit themselves to the golden yoke of Order and Discipline, and receive their donations of Quietness and Confidence!

In our Church we want not change of formularies, so much as change of formalism, and the enforcement by authority, of so much godly discipline and regiment as would necessitate a man to take a place either for Christ or against Him. Let us not be found trimming in our course. Let us please our neighbour *for his good* to edification.

With only common attention how much might a man learn by regular attendance on divine worship. A case has come under my own observation of a man, unable to read, correcting the faults of a reader of Scripture, simply from the knowledge he had gathered by hearsay from the Lessons of his Church. "*It was the man in*

the white gown," said a humble Christian woman, giving an account of her conversion from formalism to reality.

There is a charm in novelty, but it very soon loses its power. There is a staidness of satisfaction in that old institute which has stood the brunt of hundreds of years, and the ebb and flow of worldly fashion, and the sneers and scoffs of ignorance and conceit. But it becomes us to keep in constant and good repair that fabric which was destined at its foundation to stand as long as the world. Time will eat at all things, and the damp of worldliness will frame soil for ugly parasites which we should wipe off. Much is said now-a-days about the Prayer Book. Some would alter it in one way, and some in another, and some would alter it not at all. There are seemingly many private revelations, and men are not so willing, as they should be, to submit to authority. Alas! the voice of authority seems broken, and pipes and whistles in its sound. The secular arm of convocation is palsied, and to work with one arm would be an anomaly. These evils spring from sleep, and the torpor of carelessness. "Whilst men slept the enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way." We, waking, visiting our field, exclaim, — "Whence hath it tares?"

If you will read the preface to the Book of Common Prayer you will find a goodly exposition of common sense and practical wisdom on the subjects it handles; I cannot forbear quoting a part of the last sentence. "We think it convenient that every country should use

such ceremonies as they shall think best to the setting forth of God's honour and glory, and to the reducing of the people to a most perfect and godly living, without error or superstition ; and that they should put away other things, which *from time to time* they perceived to be most abused, as in man's ordinances it often chanceth diversly in divers countries." Had this good sober advice been acted on continually ; had *little things* been rectified or removed *from time to time* as occasion required, the sad and unsightly exhibitions we have been witnesses of in our day had never been made, But it is as true now as ever, the seeds of Indolence, and Ease, and worldly Conformity in the vineyard of Christ, will produce rods and scorpions wherewith to scourge the vinedressers.

May the Great Head of the Church be pleased in His mercy and goodness so to give wisdom and grace to our rulers, that there formation in these present days may result in the firm setting of the Holy Gospel, that pearl of great price, in the solid enamelling of Order and Law !

And now I would move on another step in the Church's Porch.

Our head is bare, our backs towards the world, and our faces towards Zion. Angels throng us about, and even Satan presents himself before the Lord to watch our demeanour and profit by accidents.

Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God. Be sober, be vigilant. Let memorials of the dead, and

presence of the living ; let associations of the past, and hopes of the future ; let mortality and immortality, bear thee company. With the works of darkness cast off, as much as possible, the trammels of care, and even the burden of lawful business. Look on the little one who walks at thy side, and let the simplicity and innocence of the child, let the warm-hearted confidence of one untainted by worldliness, teach thee a lesson. Make not your Father's house a house of merchandise. Remember the meekness and gentleness of Christ, and never forget that where two or three are gathered together in His name there He is in the midst of them.

In Church the rich and poor meet together, the Lord is the Maker of them all. Noble and ignoble, gentle and simple, high and low, are all on a level, as presently they will be again, when they do homage to the King of Terrors, and go down to the bars of the pit, and rest together in the dust, and make the grave their home, and their bed in the darkness, and say to corruption — “Thou art my father ; to the worm — thou art my mother, and my sister.”

“When once thy foot enters the Church he bare,
God is more there than thou : for thou art there
Only by His permission. Then beware,
And make thyself all reverence and fear.

Kneeling ne'er spoiled silk stocking : quit thy state,
All equal are within the Church's gate.”

The arrangement of a Church should be such, that even a stranger might suppose on entering, that only

one family used it. We should not hold the faith of Christ with respect of persons. A man with a gold ring and goodly apparel should not challenge greater respect than the poor man in vile raiment. I am very much afraid that our Church has sadly suffered from neglect of this ; but she is mending her faults, and if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. The poor are, as a class, as conscious of propriety, as the rich, and it might be proved to demonstration that there will be no violence of the laws of decency and order, if, when all meet together in holy Christian worship, a living response is made from the heart of the people to the first utterings of their pastor, — “*Dearly beloved brethren !*”

Pride, pomp, ceremony, custom, form, out of the abundance of the sinful heart of man are the goods and chattels, the wares of merchandize that defile the courts of the Lord. Some of these, I fear, put up those unsightly pews that mar and disfigure too many of our Churches, and about which, what bickerings and animosity, what feuds and contention, have troubled our flocks. If all Christian people would clothe themselves with humility, and thus recognize the truth and spirit of their holy religion, all would be well ; in calm composure of mind ; in holy and solemn thoughtfulness ; in deep penitence and godly fear, they would worship and fall down, and kneel before the Lord their Maker, to the strengthening and refreshing of their souls.

Flippancy and irreverence too much abound in our midst. I am not surprised that some go and pay court to superstition when they see so many in thralldom to levity. Discipline is departed, and one outbids another in excitement. Hearers are many, but doers few in comparison. Itching ears will create flattering preachers. There is no such thing as schism now-a-days, one might fancy. "Obey them that have the rule over you," is an awkward text to preach from. Rome must gain when Church principles are ignored or neglected, and Infidelity will make a prey of them who slip from liberty to licentiousness. Let us be especially thankful that we are members of a Church that has stood in our midst from time immemorial, Apostolical in order, Evangelical in doctrine. The Reformation was not our beginning. We are Catholics, and, as such, let us go forth into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. In the exercise of our holy religion, especially in our public assemblies for worship, let us bear in mind that *holy and reverend* is His name we honour. May we draw nigh with reverence and godly fear !

Office bearers, who, as a matter of course, are ever present in the house of the Lord, should be particularly watchful, or they will *commonize* their sacred employments. Not only the Minister, but the Clerk, the Sexton, the Singers, each in his set office, should strive to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. A stranger coming in, and noticing one or other of these

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officers careless or irreverent, will form a bad opinion of the character of the place. Religion has often been wounded in the house of her friends. To be a door-keeper in the house of the Lord should be regarded as an honour, and the duties of office should be performed with reverence and godly fear. May the Holy God inspire us all with a wise and understanding heart for the service of His sanctuary !

From Sabbath to Sabbath, as from step to step, higher and higher still, may we ascend up towards the glorious Palace of Heaven. With songs of degrees, with solemn thought and earnest prayer, may we exercise ourselves unto godliness. Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, may we realize the communion of saints. Prizing, with sacred jealousy, the means of instruction and of grace, may we always be glad when we enter into the courts of the Lord. May our lips, our feet, our hearts be kept and schooled by holy discipline. And as we depart, one by one, from the Church below, may our places be filled by our children, and carried by angels to the Church above, may we join the worshippers there, and wait till the trumpet shall sound, and the glory of Christ be seen. — *Amen.*

Holy Scripture.

HOLY SCRIPTURE.

ROMANS iii. 2.

“Unto them were committed the oracles of God.”

THE Church is the Keeper of Holy Writ — God’s “custos rotulorum.” The gracious Father of mankind did not think fit to leave the records of His will in the mere fortress of His Providence ; but deposited them, with solemn and set purpose, in the Ark of his Church. They are safe ! and will ride over the waves of this sea of Time, until the sacred vessel casts anchor on the shore of Eternity.

Every man that liveth hath a talent at least committed to his trust ; he is responsible for its use. Some have five talents, some have ten, according to the measure of the gift of Christ ; and unto whom much is given, of them shall much be required. The busy life of this world is only the prelude to another, and good would it be for all men were they ever conscious of the attributes of Responsibility. The words of Paul to Timothy may be counted as the words of Christ to *me*, — to *thee*, — “That good thing which was

committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us." Every Christian man should be jealous of the trust reposed in him by God ; as the Church, which is the congregation of faithful people, should be jealous of the sacred deposit of truth committed to her charge. "Hold fast the form of sound words," God seems to say, "which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."

Two books God hath thought fit to give us ; the book of Creation, and the book of Redemption. The one stands out in bold and varied character ; look where you will, some page or other of its manifold contents is before your eye. Illustrations of the Wisdom, and Power, and Goodness of the Author, in light of life, again and again appear. Bound in azure and spangled with gold the Book of Creation is set before us, in the Library of God's providence, for our pleasure and instruction. God give us grace to read it right ! In the custody of Laws and Angels this Book will not moulder away, but being newly impressed at the Will of its Author, will afford everlasting study to innumerable scholars.

The other book is the Bible ; a record, in human language, given, as we believe, by inspiration of God, concerning those things which are necessary to salvation. A guide book for travellers to Eternity. Taking the simplest view of things, we must endeavour to account for this Book. It is as much *a fact* as the other. Full of mysteries ; of strange and varied products ; types and antitypes ; forms, and shows, and Life, — they

both are. The elements of either very subtle. The Bible is quite as easy, quite as hard, of understanding as Creation. We are lost amid the darkness of olden time as we strive to unravel the Genesis of Revelation; we come to the oldest bed of erudition, the granite of intelligence, and we can go no further. The after formations of Poets, and Philosophers, and Orators, and Historians of men, are as novels by the side of Holy Writ. Holy Spirit fill our minds with awe, and lead us on !

The written records which Moses studied ; the mass of tradition which was in that day ; the processes of his mind in setting the first types, so to speak, of the Book of the Word of God, are deep and curious subjects of thought. It is difficult to tell the exact place where we must cease to search for intelligence, and bow our head in conscious weakness. There is such a place. The supernatural aids vouchsafed to one man and not to another, constituting the inspiration of Prophets, and Apostles, is a subject that cannot be grasped by common thought, much less described by ordinary language. This is the border land between human and divine, and cannot be crossed without the grant of a safe conduct from Heaven. Happy that man (so I think) who here stands in awe. It is foolish, it is vain, it is wicked, for puny man to cast thunderbolts at God.

Moses began the Holy Book, and Samuel, and David, and Solomon, and Isaiah, and Daniel, and

others, lent a helping hand. At sundry times and in diverse manners, or by different portions, the Book increased in bulk. The light from heaven seemed to shine more and more unto the perfect day. We have perfection of intelligence in the simplicity of Christ in the Gospels. Each separate book was put into the crucible of opinion and judgment of good and learned men, and standing the ordeals of Providence took its place by God assigned. Holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and the Church, the corporate body of the faithful, by degrees settled and determined the Canon of Scripture. And now for fifteen hundred years and more, the Holy Bible, as we have it, made up of sixty-six separate treatises, has taken its place in the world and done a wonderful work. Its safe-keeping is a marvellous fact, and may well engage our study.

Had man continued to live for as many hundreds as now scores of years; had Methusaleh's life been taken as the average; in spite of the waywardness of sinful mortality, tradition had, probably, sufficed, without a written record, to preserve so much pure knowledge as would have met the needs of the world. But the virtues of the tree of Life, or the innate powers of pristine perfection, giving way by degrees, until the age of man was reduced to a span, rendered it necessary to have knowledge properly accredited, and safely guarded, and handed down from generation to generation,—hence *the Holy Writings*;—hence the Jews as a

people, the Librarians appointed of God to keep the archives of heaven. For, whatever benefits came upon the Jewish people because of their singular character and condition, this is put in the fore front by the Apostle Paul. "What advantage hath the Jew?" an objector asks; "Much every way," replies the Apostle, "*Chiefly* because that unto them were committed the oracles of God." In the land of Israel stands the world's oracle. "In Jewry is God known." Jerusalem is the city set on the hill, and let Prejudice, let Ignorance, let Malice do their worst, it cannot be hid. The Light of revealed truth should stream from the holy focus; the beams should go into all the earth; the world should be enlightened. Oh! we live in the latter days, and at the ends of the earth, and instinctively exclaim, urged by force of truth—"The law of the Lord *is* perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord *is* sure, making wise the simple. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: *and* in keeping of them *there is* great reward."

The confusion of Babel entailed a toilsome ministry on the Church of God. Had man spoken ever but one language, how different had been the brotherhood of nations, the fortunes of the world. As it is, barriers more formidable to the spread of knowledge than mountains and seas, to the passage of wayfaring men, have forced on the mind and heart of mankind a labour of thought and feeling most difficult to accomplish. Amongst ourselves, speaking all the same

mother tongue, half our disagreements spring from the weakness of our words, not bearing the weight we put on them. No wonder the tongues many, that convey the same tidings by diverse methods of sound, should puzzle and perplex the missionaries of Truth and Righteousness, and make their ministry so hard. The translation of God's will from one tongue to another is a work of arduous toilsomeness ; yet without it how could the millions of Adam's sons have learnt the grace of God ? The Church is bound to remove the great stone of human frailty and accidents from the mouth of the well of salvation that all her children might slake their thirst. How happy are we, to hear and to read in our own tongue, wherein we were born, the wonderful works of God !

Purity of intelligence may suffer loss by transmission from one language to another ; like as the pure rain of heaven becomes impregnated with the varied strata of the earth before it comes into common use ; yet how precious to the thirsty in spite of the lets of crooked circumstance. It would be better for us if we used more the Scriptures, translated as they are, than murmur at their want of perfectness. How many thousands and tens of thousands, now in the happy land of Knowledge and Glory, were guided and supported in their journey thitherward by that store of sacred treasures — *the English Bible* !

Faithful to her Lord, our Church hath presented to her children the oracles of God done into their own

tongue ; so that now, through the length and breadth of the land, from the Royal Palace to the lowly cot ; “with joy may we draw water out of the wells of salvation.”

My memory bears me back to early childhood ; I had just stepped over the threshold of Experience ; I had gone forth with lightsome tread into the wonderful fields of God's word, a new world to me ; words fresh and striking, as silver streamlet down the mountain's side, caught my eye, my ear, my heart—“When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right he shall save his soul alive.” These words are as fresh this day as then ; the extremes of my experience meet in recognition of Holy Truth. It was the voice of the Church, that, with words from Heaven, arrested my infant mind, and like a mother spake home to my soul. May I never lose her loving voice—may I never quit her guiding hand. Licence and Liberty (falsely so called) shall never take off me the golden yoke of Authority and Love—God being my helper !

We cannot come to Church without hearing much of God's Holy Word. Next to the Bible the Prayer Book holds most of Heaven's grace and wisdom. More than half its contents is in the very words of Scripture, and the remaining part glistens with gems of inspiration. Could we all exclude from the holy place of assembly the unhallowed presence of Formality and

Ignorance, and permit our souls to exult in that glorious liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, what better vehicles of expression, what more forcible words, could we devise than have been devised for us, and tested by thousands and millions of tongues and hearts all up the mighty nave of eighteen centuries from the very entrance door of Pentecost ?

How easy it is to decry the works of another. Malice and Envy are ever at our elbows to prompt words of slander. What a flippant zeal many have in assaulting monuments of antiquity. "*Let us have reform ; let us have reform,*" they cry. Novelty and excitement are like the Dan and Bethel of their upstart kingdoms ; you will find idols set up there if you will but carefully make inspection. This race of empirics is as old as Job at least—"No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you !" If they had but sense enough *to reform themselves* how good it would be for them, how happy a riddance would the world have of much noise and folly ?

Men will hardly find fault with the sun or the moon ; or lay violent hands on mountains and streams. Even the poisons that lurk in minerals or hide themselves in the mystic recesses of vegetation, they will pass over without spiteful comment ; but when Law, and Restraint, and righteous Judgment, demand an audience of their soul, Sin shows its virulence in opposition or subterfuge. No wonder therefore that the Scriptures have been subjected to a fiery ordeal ; no wonder that

the Prayer Book is decried and defamed, for these are mighty barriers against the floods of iniquity. And yet now, in spite of all the assaults of the wicked, from the days of Moses to our own days, how has the citadel of Revelation stood firm in the world ; this rock at least has never been dashed in pieces, or fretted away by the constant ebb and flow of the tide of time and mortal accidents. Look at it ! how strong it is ! how noble ! What man will be fool enough to lead the forlorn hope against this Strong-Hold of God ?

The Prayer Book was compiled with great cost of labour and travail. At sundry times and in divers manners, this book was set up. It is not the offspring of haste or the product of chance. How little do we think, perhaps, of the wisdom and power and grace employed in the shaping of our every-day blessings. We regard that as a matter of course which angels desire to look into ; which many prophets and righteous men desired to partake of, or even to see, but were not permitted. Whatever changes we would make in the Prayer Book, surely we would not alter the holy words of Scripture which are the strength of its character ; these at least we would retain with joy. Call to mind the many portions of the Bible you have heard this morning, in the course of the services. There is enough of Scripture embodied in our formularies to lead us all in safety through the dark pass of Time to the bright land of a glorious Eternity.

Permit me to urge on your attention the direct

Scriptural portion of our Book of Common Prayer. It is most important that we should *realize* the truth of holy words. We cannot surely be cold in our devotions if we do but press to our heart this one fact—“*What we are saying is the result of inspiration ; or, if not that, the words of martyrs and saints, now in glory, that have been uttered again and again by the Holy Catholic Church through many centuries of the world's short life-time !*” We can catch fire from strains of martial prowess ; we can kindle enthusiasm at the recital of noble deeds ; our souls can thrill with ecstasy when Poets sing praises of father-land ; and shall the strains of inspired men—shall the noble deeds of man's redemption—shall the praises of heavenly glory, be launched from the shore of our lips with cold Formality by thoughtless Habit and empty Ceremony ? Heaven forbid !

“Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire !”

At the very entrance of our service, like guards and sentinels set on purpose, are the words of Holy Writ ! You cannot proceed to Confession, you cannot receive Absolution, you cannot even bend in prayer, without first of all encountering the challenge of inspired men. The vestibule of our Common Prayer hath this inscription in legible characters—“Let God be true !” Realize this ; it will set you on your guard ; you will be the more disposed to stand in awe, and not to sin ! The singing of a Hymn or a Psalm does not seem so much

in place as the Minister reading with a loud voice one or more sentences of the Scriptures.

The Book of Psalms is appointed to be read through every month. Here we have, divided into thirty daily portions, the Songs of Zion ; the holy strains of the Sweet Psalmist of Israel. For variety of subject ; for poetical beauty ; for fervour of devotion ; for deep and wide experience ; for holy rhapsody and enthusiasm, what parts of Scripture are like to these ? For three thousand years almost, have these inspired songs animated the souls of innumerable multitudes, and now, at this time, all round the world, wherever the name of Christ is praised, there are the Psalms of David heard. These are forms and may be used formally, but they were made at God's direction, and our Church has wisely set them for the special edifying of her children. Study them, my brethren, acquaint yourselves thoroughly with the meaning of the words ; understand the allusion ; the private history and the general truths ; the prophetic intimations and the experimental power. May the Holy Spirit be pleased to bless us in the use of this portion of our daily service.

Two portions of Scripture, duly appointed, are presented to our study every time we assemble together ; these are, with great significance, called — *The Lessons*. Make them such ! As children gather round their teacher day after day to learn the lessons brought before them, so let us sit at the feet of Jesus and learn the lessons of Wisdom and Grace. The Minister is

strictly enjoined to read the lessons distinctly, with an audible voice, so standing and turning himself, as he may best be heard of all such as are present. Special pains being taken here, because he is called upon to give utterance to words of inspiration, and all cavil and conceit, all critical power, are held in abeyance — *it is God that speaks !* A regular attendance at Church, and a serious and becoming attention to the Lessons there delivered would, in course of time, without any other instruction, store the mind with great treasures of true Knowledge.

The Epistle and Gospel, as they are popularly called, for every Sunday and Holiday, are very profitable portions of Scripture. They generally hang together by a thread of sacred meaning, and together with the collect which precedes, form a small store of holy knowledge which may serve for special study through the respective periods of the Christian year to which they bear reference. These are passages which we might well require our children to store in their memories ; which we could easily bring before our servants ; which might form for ourselves a kind of highway of holy thoughtfulness through the whole journey of this life's business.

Thus you see, my dear brethren, with what care and forethought, with what painstaking diligence and zeal, with what lovingkindness and sympathy, does the Church, like a spiritual mother, provide her children with daily bread. Oh, if we die from want, we die in

the midst of abundance ; if we perish from lack of knowledge we perish by our own wilfulness. From the cradle to the grave, from earliest childhood to hoary years, lessons of instruction and means of grace are ever at hand to teach, to discipline, and to bless us. With line upon line, and precept upon precept, does the Church from Holy Writ address and admonish us. With words of greeting we are met on the entrance of our course, with words of hopeful joy at its close. Our birth and our death are alike considered, and the new birth unto righteousness, and the resurrection to eternal life, according to the revelation of Christ Jesus, are diligently set before our regards. How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation ? As often as we meet together here, a portion of that highly-favoured family which has the Almighty God for Father, Brother, and Friend ; as often as we sit together at the board which is furnished with such choice dainties from the stores of Heaven ; as often as we urge one another to partake of the spiritual food set before us, let us, oh let us, bear in mind at what infinite cost of miracle, wonder, and sign ; with what mighty toil of thought, of feeling, of effort ; through what strange passages of time and space ; with what marvellous moral power and spiritual results hath the Great Architect of the Universe, and the Maker of us all, brought in safety and in triumph that Holy Treasury we call the Bible. Let us hand it on to our children with reverence and love, and bid them regard it as the

most sacred legacy bequeathed them by their fathers, and for the safe keeping of which they are held responsible. Amid all the strange vicissitudes of life, amid the wear and tear of labour and of sorrow, amid even the conflicting agencies of misery and death, may they ever feel proud of this — “that unto them were committed the oracles of God.”

Æ Triple Chain.

A TRIPLE CHAIN.

EZEKIEL, xvi. 49.

“Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness.”

THE causes of the prosperity and adversity of nations is a subject that baffles the power of shrewdest minds. There are so many variable accidents, so many elements of confusion, that lie beyond the region of man's research, that variety of opinion will ever be held concerning the rise and fall of states. And we must not much wonder at this, because there is no general consent amongst mankind concerning what really constitutes greatness ; and if we have no ideal, no model, we grope in the dark, or we work at random. Christians pay deference to the Scriptures certainly, but they do not all understand these Scriptures alike, or the Scriptures themselves do not meet the case ; for there is a great diversity of opinion amongst *Christians*, as amongst others, concerning the elements of national greatness and stability ; our knowledge is at fault.

In a state of probation knowledge must be limited, ignorance must be conquered by painstaking ; probabi-

lity will often be the only lamp to light us ; the only necessity that is laid upon us is the necessity of using the means at our disposal in the best possible way. If we keep clear of prejudice, be thoroughly possessed by purity of intention, and habitually live in the practice of the presence of God, we may hope for safe conduct through all the crooked passages of time and mortal circumstance.

When we leave the consideration of nations and come to families, or even individuals, there is as much diversity here as there. What are the causes of prosperity and adversity ? Indeed, we may ask the preliminary question. *What is prosperity ?* Are we all agreed on this ? Many men have small minds, and many have small hearts ; they see but little ; they feel but little, and yet perhaps they talk more and louder than the rest of mankind. Bold assertions will often gain a footing when modest truth is denied an entrance. "How unlucky I am," many a man has said — "I never prosper." "There seems a fate against me !" He has not the mind, he has not the heart, to search into causes ; and if you should show him the causes, he has not the moral courage to lay his axe to the root of the tree, and clear the soil for better hope of fruitage. It is easier to charge the Providence of God with want of provision, or paucity of instruments, than it is pleasant to charge himself with pride, self-indulgence, or idleness. To hear some men talk, my brethren, we might fancy *Chance* was the name of their God, and

that he had a great hand in moulding their character and destiny. Chance, you know, is the sand on which if a man build, his house will shelve into the abyss of disappointment and ruin.

Run your mind, my brethren, over what you know on the nonce of the rise and fall of nations ; of our own nation, if you like and can ; of the rise, I mean, *fall ! shall we ever fall ?* Troy fell ; Egypt ; mighty Babylon ; Persia ; Greece ; Rome ; and others too, nearer home, have fallen. These all seem to mutter to us out of the dust — “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” We may possibly fall, my brethren, in time, if so, the same or kindred elements of weakness and confusion will work ruin here as elsewhere. There is nothing new under the sun in this sense as well as in many another. The laws of retribution are as certain and as fixed, as the laws of gravitation.

We cannot, I think, as thoughtful beings, ignore the influence of heaven, certainly we cannot as Christians. The chains of providence, the bonds of truth, the working of moral and spiritual agencies, are the ministers of the Great King all across His wide domains of space, just as surely as the attraction of gravitation, or the beams of light. Prayer is as real as motion, and both are the ordinances of heaven.

Run over in your mind, you who are old enough, the history of many of your neighbours, as that history has been *forced* on the general attention. Do

you trace no causes of prosperity? Do you see no ministers of adversity? Do you say—“*it's chance work?*” if so, you need attend to no more words of mine, they will be foolishness unto you. But I cannot believe this of any one here present. “Patient continuance in well doing,” we all acknowledge to be a prime cause, in the main, in the long run, of prosperity—worldly prosperity and religious prosperity. Business and Religion are as one. Trickery in either is dishonesty, a little leaven, that unless speedily cast out, will leaven the whole lump. It has been said that an honest man is the noblest work of God, and there is great truth in the saying. He who honestly, towards God and man, pursues his journey through this world, is the noblest of mankind. Pride, self-indulgence and idleness we shall regard as sturdy ministers in the manufacture of disappointment, misery, and ruin. What if we cannot calculate these things as we calculate the mechanical forces, must we say that they do not hold a place in things? Why, my brethren, surely Pride and Perseverance are as real as gold and bread, and those invisible agents play a part in the world as truly as these more immediate and homely menials of necessity.

But let us come to the text. My remarks are intended as a pathway to it. The prophet is showing God's people their transgression, and the house of Israel their sin—that transgression shocking, that sin fearful! The daughter of Zion is told to look at two

of her sisters ; her elder sister, at her right hand — Samaria ; her younger sister, at her left — Sodom. She is told to consider the cause of the ruin of her sister Sodom (and this is our subject). “Behold ! this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom,” so the words of the text run, “*pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness*, was in her and in her daughters ; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy ; and they were haughty and committed abomination before me, therefore I took them away as I saw good.” The popular history so current ; the pictures so common and so graphic, of the destruction of the cities of the plain, have here a basis exhibited. It was not fire and brimstone that destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, so much as “*iniquity*” — the pride, and self-indulgence and idleness of its inhabitants. There are moral and spiritual cogs (if you will forgive me using the word) that fit into physical wheels in the wonderful providence of God. If we can trace causes let us trace them ; the nearer we come to the great first cause the more satisfied we are, and the more able to trace the works in general.

It was not delirium tremens that killed the man, so much as the previous drunkenness, or rather, taking a step further, the lust of the flesh. If you never sow the seed ; or if you persevere in cutting off the young and tender blade, you need not fear the after-growth. *Principiis obsta*, stop things in their beginnings, is a good motto to bear ever in mind.

A properly accredited and duly recognised explanation, or even statement, of moral and spiritual causes working physical results must be regarded as a boon. Therefore the Bible is of great value to us in this respect ; this is properly accredited to us Christians ; this is duly recognized by us. We are not staggered in believing that moral agencies work physical results, when we read in our book that God turneth a fruitful land into barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwell therein. We are gratified, that, in addition to the account that God rained fire and brimstone out of heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah, we are told that a deeper cause was their *iniquity*, showing itself in pride, luxury, and idleness.

Let us take these things in the order of their course, and first — *Pride*. Sodom was proud ; her daughters were “haughty.” This was part of her iniquity, that caused her ruin. We will say it, for it is on the tip of our tongue — “pride must have a fall !”

It is easier to recognize pride in its actings than to define what it is in words. It is difficult to analyze moral and spiritual poison ; our instruments are too clumsy, our knowledge too limited. Yet we are all conscious of such poison ; and we are as sure that people indulge in it as they do in laudanum, or narcotic drugs. We are apt to say, pride is born of prosperity and affluence, if so, it must be from some such cause as that noxious creatures are bred in the dung heap through action of the sun. Prosperity is a

blessing, and so is affluence, *in itself*, but there is some moral virus in every man that is naturally engendered of the off-spring of Adam which is apt to breed pride and selfishness. The glorious sun of prosperity is found by experience to call out and to foster the pride of man, sad that it should be so, but is it not a fact? A master in our Israel has said — “There is in the heart of every proud man, first, an error of understanding, a vain opinion whereby he thinketh his own excellency, and by reason thereof his worthiness of estimation regard and honour, to be greater than in truth it is. This maketh him in all his affections accordingly to raise up himself, and by his inward affections his outward acts are fashioned.” A very little change need be made in the words and they will suit a nation as well as an individual. We are not wrong in speaking of the *mind* of a nation, the *character* of a whole people. The mind of Sodom was leavened with pride, however that leaven was made. The character of Sodom was stiffened with pride, although we may not know for certainty the real elements of rigidity. Basking in the golden sun of prosperity, the inhabitants of that Eden-like valley forced the contour of propriety beyond its proper limits, and bloated and swollen, they became the prey of an evil genius, and Sodom has coined a word of infamy, the very echo of which shocks our inmost spirit. Sodom bred a reptile whose filthy trail has soiled the world all over. This comes of

pride, or rather of that leash whereof this pride is one.

Think now of Pharaoh, of Nebuchadnezzar, of Herod. Think of any king or private man inflated with pride, and setting his mouth and his actions against the heavens, and then think what came of him ; you will be the less surprised to hear of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. You will the more readily give your assent to the assertion — “them that walk in pride He (that is, God) is able to abase.” Of course we do not *see* these results in all cases ; the great and grand settlement will be in the judgment day, but the degradation of Nebuchadnezzar, or the smiting of Herod is enough to the wise. All cheats and liars need not be struck dead. Ananias and Sapphira will do for examples. One apostle out of twelve should suffice to warn hypocrites and false disciples of the pains and penalties of apostacy, and the righteous judgment of God. . . . It is of the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed. . . . If thou Lord shouldst be extreme to mark what is done amiss, who would stand ? but there is forgiveness with thee that thou mightest be *feared* !

Pride interferes with the sovereignty of heaven ; it is an excrescence which the righteous king is bound to remove at any cost. It was the downfall of Satan, and it is one of the chief agencies to accomplish the downfall of man. Let him sow the tares of pride in the field of a nation, or of an individual, and there

will be terrible labour to repair the mischief, or a terrible harvest to reap at last.

I need not dwell on conceit and affectations many, those little parasites that cling to the trunk of pride. Cut down the old tree, and conceits will then be innocuous, for they will be forced to feed on the dead limbs of their parent, and soon their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust.

Thus far briefly concerning pride, now let us proceed to the next mentioned — “*fulness of bread.*”

The plain of Jordan was well watered every where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord. The ground brought forth abundantly ; the people had bread without scarceness, and they said, like the fool in the parable — “eat, drink, and be merry.” The prosperity of fools shall destroy them. Luxury is a couch on which pride and idleness will ever dally. Man presumes. The products of the ground, dealt out with richer profusion than ordinary, are not used for food only, but for surfeit. Man does not naturally love his neighbour as himself ; and the inhabitants of the hills and borders might have profited by the surcharge of the valley, had the tenants thereof been charitably disposed. But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly.

Mind and matter are intimately connected together in this world, just as thoughts and actions are. How sad a thing it is for the human body to be made a clog

to the spirit ; for food of one to be turned into poison for the other ; fulness of bread to become an element of iniquity, yet so it often is. So it was with the inhabitants of Sodom. Would to God it had died with them ! But he who first introduced sin into the world by eating ; he who tried so hard to swerve the allegiance of the son of man when He was "an hungry," knows well how to convert vehicles of nourishment into vehicles of temptation. Be sober ; be vigilant ; take heed lest at any time your heart be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and so that day come upon you unawares. Keep under the body and bring it into subjection.

A rich man can hardly enter into the kingdom of God. "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God ;" these are the words of one whose authority we cannot gainsay. "They that *will* be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition ;" these are the words of one very high in authority over us. Money is no evil, but it is the love of money that is the root of all evil. Riches rightly used must be counted a great blessing, but abused a great curse. How strange and mysterious is the constitution of human nature, that poverty and sorrow should be better ministers of Virtue and Religion than riches and merriment. The soil of human nature is so filled with the seeds of evil, that if God were not the

husbandman the culture would be altogether unprofitable.

When we contemplate the bountiful provisions, see the golden harvest of earth wave to and fro, think on the blaze and splendour of the vivifying sun, or the fruitful showers that drop so gently on the glebe below leavened with life, how should we turn away sickened with disappointment, to behold the most highly favoured and most richly endowed of all God's creatures, prostituting his noble faculties in luxury and sin !

Take your stand on that summit which commands a view of the golden valley of Sodom. Nature's robes are brighter, and the crown of the king of day more resplendent than here in the cold and murky west. Mark with what wantonness the daughters of the land, arrayed in fashion and in pride, move slowly to and fro. The men no better, but rather worse, licensing their lusts, give themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh. The presence of a righteous man amongst them is like a dam of gossamer across the sweeping current of their passions. Fire and brimstone ! Why, their pride and luxury are worse by far than those destructive agencies of nature ; these are a canker that eat into the very vitals of their being. Who will covet fulness of bread, who will walk in pride, if they must be attended by such followers as these ? Welcome rather sternest poverty ! Welcome cleanness of teeth !

But let us break off and take another step in thought to "*abundance of idleness*," the last mentioned item of the explosive combustibles of misery and ruin.

How some men long for leisure ; how others crave pastimes. In the halls of Idleness what strange doings there are ! Sodom had leisure ; she invented pastimes ; and built, without any trouble, spacious halls of idleness. Upon their beds of ivory and stretched upon their couches, drinking wine in bowls, and inventing to themselves instruments of music, if they wanted such appliances ; they put far away the evil day, and caused the seat of violence to come near. They actually said — "peace and safety," when lo ! sudden destruction came upon them. Abundance of idleness was like fuel to their lusts, and fuel for their destruction. "After their hardness and impenitent heart they treasured up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

Alas for the man who has nothing to do ! And if Pride and Fulness minister to him in his Leisure, the odds are that he falls into irrecoverable ruin. For so great a work as working out our salvation threescore and ten years seem but a short period. If you take from this the time spent in sleep and other works of nature and necessity, how is the little span of our lifetime abridged ! That man surely cannot realize that he is a probationer who takes no count of his leisure moments. Spare time is not a desert, it is

cropped with your thoughts. Sodom in her leisure sowed the wind, and reaped the whirlwind. Bad seed bad harvest ; but it is true, whatsoever a man soweth that shall he reap.

Intervals of business there ought to be. Recreation is necessary. But take heed lest, while the bow is unstrung the crafty enemy takes you by stratagem ! The nursery song is true, and idle hands will have work found for them in mischief. When you gambol with your children, or play with your companions ; when you laugh and sing with your neighbours and friends, or otherwise, as you judge best, fill up those gaps of time that God in His providence gives you for recreation — be guiltless — be pure — be simple-minded and charitable. Avoid idleness ; be not slothful. Remember Sodom, the sister of Judah, and therefore related to us it may be ; remember how abundance of idleness filled up the measure of her iniquity and caused her downfall.

This triple chain of pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness, that held in dreadful slavery and bondage the fair daughter of Sodom, may well be thought on with deepest concern. Think on it ! It clinks in my ear ! it rattles in my heart ! It had an ominous sound in Sodom, but Sodom heard it not. (The wicked do not hear the sound of alarm.) It was like the deep-toned knell that with us summons the guilty culprit, in broad day, in the face of the world, to pay the penalty demanded of Justice.

T

Dear brethren, there is another triple chain (if I may so speak) wherewith it is lawful, it is right, to bind the inner man in servitude to Christ. Faith, Hope, Charity, *these three!* Let Faith be instead of Pride. Let Hope displace Satiety. And let Charity, divine Charity, supply us with good occupation, that Idleness may never do us hurt, that so iniquity may not be our ruin, as it was the ruin of Sodom!

Sunday Schools.

SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

2 TIMOTHY, i. 5.

"Thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice."

HOW forcible are right words ! Words have a peculiar power, especially when, like electric wires running from another world, they seem to be charged with messages from the departed — "thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice !" When Timothy caught these words, reading the letter from his beloved Paul, his father in the faith, what emotions moved him, what power affected his whole being. Not only were pictures instantly drawn, by the power of his memory, of these his beloved friends and nearest relatives ; but their love and tender regards in his behalf ; their diligent and painstaking efforts in his education ; their unfeigned faith in God ; these, and more than these, shed a bright radiance on the picture, that death only could mellow. "My dear mother ! God be praised for thee, my mother ! Yes, as soon as I could speak, and even before, there thou wast, watching me with intensest love, with keenest

interest. Walking, thinking, eating, dressing, thy genius wrought at all . . . And dear old grandmother! How well I remember that sacred scroll from which I learnt — ‘honour thy father and thy mother.’ And that look of thine into my mother’s face, which seemed to reflect on me . . . ‘dear child’! Oh, this is all gone. Gone? no! The love and care of my mother, and of my grandmother will never go. I feel them now at work in my heart, after the lapse of so much time. . . . Yes! I will come presently, and meet you again. Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life!”

And we, my brethren, have had a mother, and a grandmother, and our memory, perhaps, will take us into their presence; or, mayhap, we have one or other, or both of them still. They are very near to us. They exercise great influence for our weal or our woe. I want to speak to you about these things. May God direct our thoughts and bless us!

I hardly know which way to turn; whether to address myself to parents, or children. You must *all* be attentive, if you please. Sift and sort my words, as I go on, and let parents take to themselves, and children to themselves, what suits their case; then nothing will be lost, not even my labour. I should like his labour to be lost, who goeth diligently about, in Christian assemblies, to catch away the seed of the word as soon as it touches the soil of the heart, lest men should be saved.

The influence of parents !

Nature teaches us here, and common sense. Doth not nature teach? Is there not force in common sense? Behold the wonderful variety in God's creation! Behold the wonderful sameness! There is a law of permanence, as well as a law of decay. The herb yields seed, and the fruit tree yields fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself. God blessed the creatures, and said, "*be fruitful and multiply.*" Generation after generation have come and gone, and there is a generation now. Living creatures many, trees, flowers, herbs, have come and gone, many times over, and the world is as full as ever. Seed abounds yet. Be not afraid, my brethren, the heavenly husbandman will not let this world become a desert. Be you afraid of sowing tares amongst his wheat.

Common observation of nature teaches us this — "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." Wheat will bring wheat, and barley will bring barley. The cub of a lion is a lion, and the young of a sheep is a lamb, that will be a sheep by and by. Look at the farmer. Look at the gardener. Ploughing; harrowing; sowing; pruning; training; watching — thus our bread is made. Common sense says, my brethren, doth it not — "If a man will not work neither let him eat." Idleness is a foul blot. The sluggard is a curse. Now, suppose man takes a holiday, as it is called. Suppose he says — "Let the earth bring forth fruit of itself; we will withhold our

labour." Come again, this time twelvemonth, and how will things be looking then? The mill; the works; the gardens; the fields; the men, and women, and little children. Oh, what a plight they will all be in! Never fear! man will never give himself such a holiday as this; necessity is laid upon him, and woe be unto him if he does not work! Well but, all this is sublunary. This is of the earth, earthy. Is there no other state than this? Does man lie down in his cold and narrow bed, the grave, when his work-day is over, never expecting to wake again? Is there no hereafter? What says common sense? What says nature? Do they shake their head, and say — "*we cannot tell!*" The poor heathen; the philosophers of Greece; the greater bulk of mankind, have never had any further help, and they seem to lisp — "*there will be a future.*" But we, we Christians, have a revelation from God. Life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel. We have the gospel. May we be kept from neglecting it; from abusing it! We shall live for ever. What then should be our main duty upon earth? To fit us for heaven. And what our main duty towards our little ones? To train them for the skies. Yes! Shall our fields be looked after; and our gardens, and shall we neglect to look after our children? God forbid!

Many are apt to say about training for the skies — "this is an anomaly;" that is, no law can touch it. And why do they say this? Because they are not

disposed to bestow the required labour. And why are they not disposed ? Because they are sinners and have no heart for the work. *This is too true !* They actually give themselves a holiday, and say — “let the children do the best they can !” And look at the state of things. Do you mean to say, that if parents worked at their children, and for their children, doing their very best, according to their means, as much as farmers and gardeners work at the soil of the earth for the bread of mankind ; do you mean to say that things would be in the state they are in this favoured Christian country ? I say boldly, from my innermost soul, without fear of contradiction — *they would not !* I have greater faith in God’s mercy and grace, through Christ ; or, if this does not suit the turn of your mind, I have greater faith in nature and common sense.

Woe worth the day when Satan came to this little world, and craftily deposited the leaven of sin within it. But, Christian ! Christ is stronger than Satan. The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head. Realise your favoured position ; keep firm hold on Faith, on Hope, above all, on Charity, *and then work*, “forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

Lois had unfeigned faith in God’s word. She taught her child Eunice. The child had unfeigned faith in God’s word also. They both taught Timothy. He had unfeigned faith in God’s word too. Now, I am not going to say, that faith runs in the blood, but

I will say this, here is great encouragement for parents. And I will say more, endorse it all of you ; if we all had unfeigned faith in God's word, our children would be better than they are ! Does the idle man say — " my tree hath cast its fruit ? " Look at his tree ! It is not properly trained or pruned. Its wild branches are instruments that the winds use to tear it from its holdings. No wonder it cast its fruit ! Do you say — " my children are bad ? " Let me look at *you*. Have you not neglected to train and to prune ? *Are you not bad ?* I have heard a mother say ; I have indeed, about her children, that I thought were neglected ; and it was said, too, in no sorrowful tone of voice. I have heard a mother say — " Well, Sir ! I hope God will convert them ! " My nature ; my common sense ; my faith, were shocked. Said I to myself — here's a case of spiritual indolence and presumption. Here is liberty run to licentiousness. I cannot force myself to believe that the grandmother and mother of Timothy were of this turn of mind.

You will surely ransack your memories, and tell me of this good man, and that, from the Scriptures, and from common books, who had bad children. " Their training failed," you say. " We can never be sure ! " Of one good man we are *told* that he did not guide his sons aright. " They made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." And of other good men could we be *told*, we should find failures in training, before we could find flaws in God's promises. " Train up

a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he shall not depart from it."

Christian Religion here in England now is in evil case. Men will have religion of one kind or other. Some turn to forms, and ceremonies, and antiquity, as they call it. Some turn to wild license, and freedom (falsely so called). The golden mean, guarded by discipline and a sober mind, is not so prized as it should be.

The influence of parents on their children is very great. Always live with a man and he will be sure to exercise an influence on you. If this may be said of a comparative stranger, what must we say of our own flesh and blood? You see the likeness of a father stamped on the features of his child. It is most likely the relatives and friends said of Timothy — "he is very like his mother!" — "and his grandmother!" another would add. And as the features of the countenance are in a certain sense transmitted from father to son, so are the features of character. There are exceptions of course, but only enough to prove the rule.

The word of God urges on parents the duty of teaching and training their children aright. I need not bring passages to prove this. Example is stronger than precept. In training and teaching children, therefore, the example of the parent will go farther than his verbal instructions. "My father says one thing, and does another," many a child will think. And the child may draw this inference — "My father

does not really value what he tells me is of so great importance, for if he valued it, he would practise it himself!" Churches; Schools; Preachers and Teachers, cannot possibly over-master Parents. It is contrary to *law* that they should. Hence the little progress true religion, and truth of any sort, has ever made in the world. "God's grace does the work," some one whispers. Yes, I know. God's grace is a law unto itself. If it were not for that we had better close our churches, and schoolrooms, and bid our preachers and teachers turn to another trade. The bias of our nature is against the grace of God, hence men have naturally no heart for God's true service. It is God's grace that gives them a new heart—a right spirit, and whenever a man is renewed in the spirit of his mind you will see him anxious about his duty, and if he is a father, he will diligently teach and train his children.

Remember also that parents are *responsible* for the training of their children. Perhaps our Sunday Schools have done harm, by tempting parents to think that the training of their children belongs to the school, and not to *them*. It would be a much pleasanter sight to me, my brethren, to see your children by your side than to see them where they are. Reverence is a tender plant, and parents should take special pains in training that plant. You seldom see much reverence in children when they are all put together in the House of God, far from the influence of their parents. But I should be sorry to say any thing to mar the work

of the place. I am here to plead for funds to defray the expenses attendant on the Sunday School. Let me, at the same time, plead for the children, that they may have the good example, and fostering care, of parents and friends. Preaching is of little use without practise. It is next to no use to say — “be good, my child,” unless that child sees that *we* try to be good.

Are we to consider the Sunday School a permanent institution? I regard it as a necessary evil — evidence of neglect, evidence of concern. *Neglect* on the part of parents and guardians; *concern* on the part of others. I consider that a model Parish which *needs* no Sunday School; but where Parents, recognizing their bounden duty, teach the children themselves, and *take* them to the house of God to pray at their side. Depend upon it, my brethren, if we relax parental obligation, we relax the bonds of morality and religion; and, working counter to the institution of God, do more harm than good. But I will break off from this strain, knowing that it sorts not with the ordinary notions of professing Christian people.

The character of children.

Let me speak of the plastic habitudes of the young. Original sin is an awful fact, but make not too much of it. The virgin soil of the heart, if rightly cultured, will yield good crop. We live in Christ's Vineyard. The influences of heaven are genial. The leaven of grace is within us. Oh despise not the blessings of the life unto righteousness. “Go, work in my vine-

yard," the heavenly husbandman whispers in our ears every morning of our life. Training tender plants is a special part of our daily labour. Our flowers, our trees, are all the better for training and pruning ; they flourish the more as we judiciously enrich their soil. So with our children, the trees of the Lord's planting — *if we regard them as such*. Timothy's mind was gently trained in the Jew's religion. Lois and Eunice watched the tender plant. Now and then they used the knife of discipline, and now and then the firm bond of duty was imposed. Kindness, love, grace, were as the genial sunshine, that caused the flowers to swell, and burst, and glow with beauty. Oh the mind of Timothy was perfumed ever with the sweet odour of his parent's character.

Call to mind from the stores of your knowledge, gathered together by reading and hearsay ; call to mind the sayings of good men about the tender training of their parents, especially of their *mother*. Why, I can remember the efforts made in my behalf, in early childhood, for God and for good. And you can remember your early dawn of life, the mother standing in the foreground. If you felt the wayward working of sin, you felt also, did you not, the yearning grace of love in your behalf ? "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother ; for they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck." The perfection of character consists in childlike simplicity. Our Saviour

tells us so. It was a child taken at random, if I may so speak, that our Saviour set in the midst of His disciples, and said to them — “Become like this little child !” Many a one who despised the kind ministry of loving parents has uttered a wish, in the hour of despair, for another visit of grace — “Oh call my mother back !” But no ! the door through which that mother passed is firmly bolted on the inner side, and she will never come out again, until the day of doom.

Take heed and sin not. Be very heedful and diligent in using the benefits which God in His great mercy has put within your reach. Store your memory with passages of Scripture. Ponder often on the dealings of Providence. Pray without ceasing for more grace, heavenly illumination, self-denying power, holy ardour, and Christian love, and let the success which attended the efforts of Lois and Eunice of old, as manifested in the character of Timothy, cheer you always in your work of faith, and labour of love and patience of hope. Oh, my brethren, foster the agencies of heaven’s grace ; and, above all, children, prize the fostering warmth of a mother’s heart.

But there is a love that passeth the love of women. The heart of Jesus is tenderer and larger than the heart even of a mother. Let us all learn to realize more and more the fostering of a Saviour’s love ; and, leaning on His sacred bosom, may we inhale His very breathing, and treasure in our heart of hearts the gracious words that proceed out of His lips.

Drunkenness.

DRUNKENNESS.

1 COR. viii. 13.

"If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."

GODLY jealousy of the Pastor is one of the main safeguards of the flock. A sensitive apprehension of impending danger, and a wise and speedy method of defence will always be a characteristic of the good watchman. Happy is that parent whose blood and judgment are so well commingled that deep love and practical wisdom go hand in hand together in the management of children. For a pastor, and a watchman, and a spiritual father the Apostle Paul stands high, indeed we should have difficulty in finding a more eminent example. The man Christ Jesus finds a beautiful reflection in this His chosen vessel.

In dealing with the varied forms of sin, and ignorance, and infirmity, which marked the Church at Corinth, we can distinctly trace the working of godly jealousy, and holy zeal, and self-denying charity, in the character of Paul the Apostle. As a nursing mother watches her child, so did Paul watch the infant

Church at Corinth. As he said to a neighbour so may we apply the words here — “Being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.”

It appears, that at Corinth, some Christians, at the invitation of their heathen friends, or relatives, were occasionally found partaking of the feasts in an idolatrous temple. Those who were strong in the faith might have done this in hopes of using their influence for the conversion of their kindred. They knew that an idol was nothing ; they knew that the earth is the Lord's ; that every creature of God is good ; and whatsoever was set before them they partook of, asking no questions. Other Christians, perhaps, made this compliance to avoid persecution. But there were some, weak in the faith, and scrupulous in conscience, who regarded the idol as an exponent of a real power, or evil spirit, and were tempted to the sin of idolatry by the example of their brethren. The Apostle's opinion was probably asked concerning this thing, and in this part of the epistle he gives it. We may well express the spirit of the Apostle's injunction in words used to another Church — “We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.” The gratifying ourselves, even in a lawful thing, must at times be denied, for the sake of others. If we do not so deny ourselves we may be guilty of sin both against man and God. The words of the

Apostle on the occasion before us are very striking — “When ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.” Then, with a burst of benevolent zeal, showing that the immortal interests of men worked ever in his heart of hearts, he gave expression to the words of the text — “Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend (that is, *to sin*) I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.”

The literal and exact application of these words may now, with us, have no force. The idol’s temple may be destroyed ; the matter of conscience removed. But a Christian man, stirred by godly jealousy, having an anxious solicitude for the good of mankind, may lawfully apply this passage in a case where his judgment assures him the application is legitimate. And he will be the more emboldened to do this, if he possesses, or is desirous to possess, that under current of love which constrained the Apostle to become all things to all men, that he might by all means save some. Such are the circumstances of our country and of our times (as they appear to me) that with the change of a single word, the text expresses my deliberate resolve — “If *drink* make my brother to offend (that is *to sin*) I will take no drink while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.”

How stands the case ?

We have information from all quarters ; reports reach us perpetually ; witnesses by thousands, from all

sorts and conditions of men, judges, magistrates, ministers of religion, testify to the same sad truth, that an awful pest rages amongst men, carrying away to Death, through the dark realms of misery, and crime, and wretchedness, and insanity, more captives than famine, pestilence and war combined. Who or what is this which works such terrible havoc in the sons of men ? *It is drunkenness.* It springs from the immoderate use of strong drink. It is not like a calamity of providence, as earthquake, tornado, or blight. It is not like an ordinary misfortune as blindness, or poverty, or pain. It springs not of itself, like so many sins whose seeds seem to be natively in our flesh. It is super-induced by taste, depraved and corrupted, and then maintained at a fearful cost of body, and soul, and substance. Its production looks like a miracle of the evil one, and its continuance in our midst like a series of lying wonders. Just as if men could raise tempests at pleasure, or make earthquakes for pastime ; as if they could fling blindness about like ashes, or blight a fertile country to show their skill ; as if they could torture the living by fastening them to the dead, or rob heaven itself of its glory by the infernal blandishments of hell. Tell us that a foe is approaching the shores of our country, and forthwith those shores bristle with the bayonets of innumerable defenders. No nation, no union of nations, shall rob us of our freedom, or dare to defile with their hostile presence the sanctuary of our island home. Liberty inspires us

with valour, and Religion gives infinite value to our altar and our hearth. But tell us that an insidious foe is actually at work in our midst, more than decimating our ranks, laying siege to the fortress of our soul as well as our body, and undermining the stronghold of eternal life, which, at infinite cost, our Maker hath prepared for us, and hardly any effort is made for our defence. Aiders and defenders of the enemy start forth from our own ranks, and under the banners of *law*, and *social enjoyment*, and *mirth*, and *jollity*, and *custom*, foster the fiend.

It is very true, that every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving ; it is true that we have liberty to eat and to drink whatever we please ; but when such fearful ravages are committed by over indulgence in strong drink, it becomes us, as men and as Christians, to devise and to execute some special means for the prevention, as well as for the cure, of the special and awful scourge. If upon a thorough consideration of the subject, and nothing less than a thorough consideration of the subject can be allowed, we conceive that the best mode to give practical demonstration of our earnestness is to decline the ordinary use of that which is so fearfully abused, let us pledge ourselves to a manly avowal of our determination, and not permit any liberty of ours to become a stumbling-block to them that are weak.

Call this drunkenness an idol, regard it as an unclean spirit, and thousands of idolatrous temples, and

tens of thousands of devotees, fill the field of our vision. Our attendance in those temples, our consorting with those devotees, *may* have a baneful influence on the minds of others, and tempt them to do that, which we ourselves *may* be free from ; the *possibility* of such a result will make the sensitive Christian pause in his course.

The first mention made of drunkenness in history is, I think, in connexion with Noah, and the second in connexion with Lot. Noah, Daniel, and Job are singled out in Scripture as exemplars, patterns of piety ; and Lot was a good man, whose righteous soul was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked inhabitants of Sodom. And yet both these good men, Noah and Lot, have their characters soiled with the foul stain of drunkenness. The fact should give great force to the exhortation of the Apostle, when sounded in our ears — “ Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” The record of the fact should assure us of the impartial portraiture of character in the sacred Scriptures. In both these cases, so recorded, we find drunkenness connected with other sins, shameful sins of uncleanness were associated with it. Is it not always so ? When does drunkenness stand alone ? What a crowd of unclean spirits are close at the heels of drunkenness, to do the bidding of Lust, and Malice, and Violence, and Sin of any name, as soon as the Demon cries havoc and lets them slip from restraint !

! The time would fail me, if I attempted merely to epitomize the history of drunkenness, or tell a tithe of the deeds, the foul deeds, done at its instigation. The roll would be huge indeed, and it would be written within and without, and there would be written therein lamentation, and mourning, and woe. A recital of the murders, the adulteries, the thefts, the cruelties, the sins many, that must not be named, which own drunkenness for their father, would appal us with horror and dismay. And to think that *now*, in this age of boasted enlightenment and reason, in this nineteenth century of the reign of Christ, in this free and Christian land of ours, to think that, the foul tyrant's throne is still so firm, and that he wields his sceptre over more subjects than Truth, or Honesty, or Religion, or perhaps than all of these combined ! How fearful is the thought ! How terrible is the scourge ! How infatuated are the subjects of this filthy realm !

Poverty, Crime, Wretchedness, and Insanity, in this enlightened, refined, and Christian kingdom of ours, owe more of their strength and influence to the single cause of drunkenness than to all other causes put together. And when we look at our Workhouses, our Gaols, our Hospitals, and Asylums many, who will say that Poverty, Crime, Wretchedness and Insanity, do not form an ugly quaternion of spies and of watchers, if not of guards, in this stronghold of Christendom ? Taxes ! what demands or collects more taxes than drunkenness ? Education ! how can education flourish

when the mind is besotted with drink? The Gospel! the heavenly music thereof is drowned by the rollicking laugh, and the loud and fiendish songs of the drunken. Lord of heaven, interpose in our behalf, and cast out this unclean spirit, whose name is Legion, that afflicts so terribly the wretched creature he possesses, who has his dwelling among the tombs, and no man can bind, no not with the chains, nor fetters. Have compassion upon us and help us!

The statistics of drunkenness may vary with different collectors; from the nature of the case, exact returns cannot be made, but if you take the lowest numbers, they are fearful to count and to contemplate. If we say that sixty thousand victims of drunkenness are carried off in triumph by horrid Death, year after year, from this Christian land of ours, it is enough to make us start. What an awful wave this presents to our gaze, rolling into the dark ocean of eternity! A very competent person, a credible witness, informs us, that — “Nine-tenths of the crime that is committed, and nearly all the poverty and wretchedness of the poor man’s dwelling, may be attributed to drink.”* Another competent witness asserts, that “Six out of every ten cases of insanity in England and America, may be traced to intemperance.”† Think for a moment, on the receipt of this testimony, what would be some of the effects of the removal of drunkenness — *nine*

* Sir R. W. Carden, Lord Mayor of London. † Lord Shaftesbury.

tenths of the crime and nearly all the poverty and wretchedness of the poor man's dwelling would be removed! Crime will often make a man reckless of consequences, never let him be branded and you give the man an interest in his own character, and if nine times out of every ten that the mark is made on a man it is in consequence of strong drink, if you remove the cause of the crime you remove the instrument that brands the criminal with a stigma. What a terribly gloomy land, what a fierce howling wilderness the man lives in who has lost the sunshine of reason and sanity! If, by the removal of drunkenness we prevent six out of every ten from setting foot in that awful realm what blessings we confer!

Sobriety, clearness of thought, healthful energy of heart, and contentment, are very nearly related. Oh if we could enlist all these to set themselves to work to cleanse, to furnish, and to adorn the abodes of poverty and wretchedness, what benefactors we should be of the human race!

Let us take away the stone from the well's mouth! Let common sense, let reason, let benevolence, let every lawful agent and agency be employed, strenuously employed, to unloose the fetters of drunkenness from the bodies and souls of our over-tempted and over-deluded fellow-men. We may, we must, rely on God's grace, but we may, we must also do what in us lies, though we may not be able to define, there is no necessity for us to define, the boundary mark of God's

grace and man's ability. On working a mighty miracle the Redeemer of men said — "*Take ye away the stone !*"

Suppose fifty or sixty thousand persons, year after year, formed themselves into rank and file, and deliberately marched to the edge of a mighty precipice, beetling over its base into the sea, and dropped down to be lost for ever in the all-devouring ocean ! What should we think of it ? What would the government of the country think of it ? Would no means be used to prevent such an awful and unnatural sacrifice of human life ? Surely if the government refused to interfere, myriads of individuals would watch and guard the line of march, and if need be, force back the infatuated crowds ! The suicide of a wretched individual is bad enough, but the suicide of a host is most horrible. Behold the march of drunkenness ! See the banners of Liberty and License, of Laughter and Jollity, of Society and Custom, of Sin and Satan, floating in the breeze ! The sovereignty of reason is unthroned ; the restraints of law are broken ; the grace of God unheeded ; and over and over again, army after army, plunges headlong into the depths of hell ! This is no romance ; this is not the language of unbecoming excitement ; this is true history ; this is fact ! Shall we pay twenty millions of money to emancipate our slaves, to knock off the iron fetters of bodily bondage, and make no *adequate* effort to remove the fetters of drunkenness from the souls as well from the bodies of more slaves than ever our colonies held ?

The effects of drunkenness on mind, body and estate, *in a measure*, are known and read of all men. If six out of every ten cases of insanity spring from over indulgence in drink—behold its effect on the *mind* ! If nearly all the poverty and wretchedness of the poor man's dwelling come from drunkenness—behold its effect on the *body and estate*.

The complication of miseries, offspring of drunkenness, cannot be told. The uncleanness, the obscenity, the awful sayings and doings of secrecy and darkness, that spring from drunkenness, as vipers are bred in the dung heap, must not be thought on ! With intense pain of sorrow and anguish of spirit, I turn away from the foul and loathsome mass of corruption.

The apology for drunkenness.

What is the apology for drunkenness ? There is none ! Even the poor infatuated devotee, when the unclean spirit of his debauch is gone away, confesses that there is no good in drunkenness. Sometimes with sorrow, real or seeming, with wringing of hands, and other signs of distress, the poor wretch confesses his fault and longs to be delivered. Yet perhaps within a while, by stratagem of slyness, like a very child deceiving a parent ; or by stupid besotment of intellect, he goes again to his sin, like a dog to his vomit, or like a sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. What is the attraction ? Where lies the spell ?

The effect of strong drink on the human system is exhilarating ; it stimulates to unnatural action ; it

produces pleasurable emotion ; it rouses the passions. Many men are bold and daring under its influence. The intellect has been known to flash with wit and humour by its power. It gives a dreamy exhilaration of spirit, which, for a short season, may invest with a species of torpidity, the consciousness of misery and want. But it is subtle as deceitful poison, and holds enmity with blood of man.

Wine maketh glad the heart of man—This is lawful. Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging—This is unlawful. There is but a step from law to license, and that step is easily taken. Lawful things may not be always expedient, and as the Apostle in the text assures us, that he would forego the lawful use of meat when there was danger of sin, so ought we to forego the lawful use of wine, if our liberty may lead another to bondage.

Some say, the social customs of our country loudly demand permission, nay insist upon us, to use wine and strong drinks. Others reply, may their numbers swell daily ! The social condition of our country demands permission, nay insists upon us, *not* to make common use of wine and strong drinks. Our national and other feasts, our festive gatherings, our family circles, our love of good ch  er, our lawful merrymakings, tell us to bring in the creatures of God that help to make us glad. Our asylums, our gaols, our courts of justice, our dens of infamy, our reeling drunkards, tell us to take out the creatures of God that help, by their

abuse, to tax, to debase, and to ruin us. Which set of ministers shall we summon to our service, the ministers of self-indulgence, or the ministers of self-denial? We have a choice to make, we have a duty to do. The cross is the Badge of our Order. The flesh with its affections and lusts, side with our enemies. Who will fill or help to fill a drunkard's grave?

Education, social progress, civil and religious liberty, true manliness, can make little way so long as the blight of drunkenness settles on all we do. To cure this blight we must deny ourselves a lawful indulgence, for the sake of example, to show our anxiety and determination, at any cost, by the grace of God, to restore health and freshness.

The phases of drunkenness are sometimes so ludicrous, that we are thrown off our guard, and smile when we should rather weep. The sin is too often palliated even by many who are not guilty of it themselves. With glozing of words, forced from their proper meaning, the popular voice gives lustre rather than a tarnish to the foul offence. Crowds who do not habitually commit the sin yet are guilty of it sometimes, and justify rather than condemn their conduct; and until we learn to abhor that which is evil, we shall not cleave to that which is good.

But it is a pleasing fact, that many can now be found sober and in their right mind, who once were the votaries of drunkenness. Hard working men come before us, and say that they can do their work as well,

or better, without the stimulant of strong drink, as they formerly did with it. Many houses may be visited, once the foul dens of uncleanness, now the abodes of comfort, of peace, of happiness, because drunkenness has been cast out. Whatever charges may be brought against the intemperate advocates of any principle, let us be careful how we bring charges against the principle itself. Religion has had many unwise expositors and defenders, but it is not the less true on that account. We may well pardon the violent and unseemly language of a total abstinence advocate, when we are told that for years drunkenness robbed him of his heritage, and dragged him to the very brink of the bottomless pit from which he felt that he was rescued as by a miracle.

Passages of scripture need not be cited to show the sin, or point out the punishment, of the drunkard. Everybody knows them. Everybody knows — *the drunkard shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

Let me entreat you then, my brethren, to give the subject your *special* consideration. Let me entreat you to follow up your consideration with action befitting the case. Let a definite line of policy in your life be seen of men to mark your abhorrence of drunkenness, and your anxious determination, by the grace of God, *to do your best*, to cure or prevent the foul disease which ruins so many souls and bodies of your fellow-men and fellow-Christians. May God of His infinite goodness crown our humble endeavours with success !

Rich and Poor.

RICH AND POOR.

PROVERBS xvii. 1.

**"Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than
an house full of sacrifices with strife."**

THE book of Proverbs is a very valuable part of the Bible. The more we read it the more it commends itself to our admiration. It is like a cabinet of rare treasures; each proverb is like a precious gem in itself, and all of them together, in the safe keeping of the Book, are of surpassing value. You may take them one by one, examine them, and be delighted with their individual beauties and excellencies, and then you may regard the whole in its entirety as of inestimable value, more to be desired than gold, more precious than rubies, more lasting than time.

Teaching by proverbs has ever been a favourite mode with wise men, and there is a stock of them interwoven with the mother tongue of every man, so that all nations and languages have proverbs many engrained with the very texture of their every-day talk. We have many English ones, and how good they are. Pardon me for repeating one or two — "Ill

weeds grow apace" — "Look before you leap" — "Never carry two faces under one hood" — "Plain dealing's a jewel." But I will say no more, only let me remark, that there is a great deal of practical wisdom enclosed in proverbs, and you can easily carry them in your memory, and draw them out for the inspection and benefit of others.

It has pleased the great Author of all true wisdom, to have bound up in the sacred oracles of Revelation a book of proverbs, mainly written and collected together by that king whose character for wisdom has passed into a proverb, for we hear from every mouth this saying — "As wise as Solomon!" The guard of inspiration is about this book; there is set on it a crown of divinity; and however much we may value the common and wise sayings of our mother tongue, we should hold in special observance the proverbial philosophy of Holy Writ.

Let us now turn our attention to the proverb of the text — "Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices and strife."

We may gather many a striking and useful lesson from this proverb. It seems to tell us, that happiness does not consist so much in external things as in internal; and if so, it whispers this much more, that men are nearer on a level than at first sight might appear, because that which is the main ingredient of happiness is as near the poor man as the rich, as near the subject as the prince. It seems to draw two

pictures, and set them before us. A lowly cottage with a family of labouring people eating a dry crust, and being satisfied ; and a splendid mansion with good cheer of all sorts, but the occupants sadly at unrest because strife ravens there. Quietness and contentment ; Fulness and Strife ; which do you choose ? Which set is the better ? Oh there can be but one opinion amongst all men having thought and feeling. Give me the dry morsel and quietness therewith, rather than the house full of good cheer with strife. The one is like the antechamber of heaven, the other the lobby of hell. The universal acknowledgment of the power of Truth, the acquiescence of mankind to the demands of right Reason, assures us, that there is in man a relic of his original God-likeness, which may be appealed to, and which gives foundation to his responsibility. The universal prayer is — “ Let me die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like his ! ”

Happiness does not consist so much in external things as in internal. “ A house full of good cheer,” sounds better certainly than “ a dry morsel ; ” but when you take into account the quietness with the one, and the strife with the other, the scales alter their balance, and the house full of good cheer instantly loses its main charms, and the dry morsel is welcomed the rather. A root of bitterness springing up suddenly defileth the many sacrifices ; as, on the other hand, the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit

gives a relish and a grace to that which otherwise would be accounted hard and unpleasant.

External things are changed in their qualities and affections by internals, and we estimate things by the life that is in them ; a living dog is better than a dead lion. Our ears drink in readily now that whisper which a little while since was drowned in the noise and turmoil of popular commotion — “Men are more on a level as regards happiness than you might at first suppose.” The great Author of our being, the controller of our destiny doth weave wisely the thread of our life, and the flimsy tissue of human experience shall turn out at last a work of consummate skill, and divine fairness. We are bungling workmen, but God doeth all things well. We are for pulling down our barns, and building bigger, and giving advice to our souls to eat, drink, and be merry, forgetting all the while that a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesseth, and that angels’ food and heavenly manna oftentimes feed him who hath no barn to enlarge nor to care about, and is saved the trouble of saying to his heaven-born soul, eat, drink, and be merry!

Externals! Who has not heard of the Emperor Charles the 5th of Germany, who cast aside all the trappings of greatness, and betook himself to the seclusion of a monastery, and the cell of a monk, hoping to find internal rest? Externals! Did you never hear of John of Constantinople, commonly

called Saint Chrysostom, one of whose prayers we constantly use? Speaking of the anchorites of Antioch he saith — “Their nourishment is bread and salt; they go barefooted, have no property, and never pronounce the words *mine* and *thine*; undisturbed peace dwells in their habitations, and a cheerfulness scarcely known in this world.”

We may easily cast our eyes on some of God's servants who preferred poverty and peace with God, before riches and estrangement from Him. Look at Moses; few men ever had better chance of preferment; adopted by Pharoah's daughter he was looked upon as if he had been her son; he received the best education; he was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians; the treasures of Egypt were his; yet, when the God of the Hebrews met with him, and gave him a commission in His service, he cast aside all his hopes of worldly greatness; he refused to be called the son of Pharoah's daughter; *choosing rather* to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; and why? because he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. *Faith* gave him a substance of greater value than sense; and he had evidence within of things far more lasting and precious than the gaudy glory of Pharoah's court and kingdom. Had he sided with Egypt, had he set his mind on worldly riches, he might have had his house full of good cheer, but there would have been strife in his heart. As it was he took his dry morsel,

his stinted measure of earthly happiness, and had quietness in his soul therewith, and he said, it was better ; his actions, his life, tell all the world that it was better in his eyes.

And if we turn from Moses the lawgiver of Israel to Paul the Apostle of the Gentiles, we shall see another noted instance of a man who preferred internal peace to external glory, going through a whole catalogue of things accounted great and good by men, declaring that all of them were his, in the same breath he added—"But what things were gain to me those I counted loss for Christ, yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my lord ; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ." Had Paul continued in his early ways ; if in his fiery zeal he had gone on breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, and haling men and women committed them to prison, he might have been a most renowned doctor of the law, probably he might have surpassed Gamaliel at whose feet he was brought up ; but, as it was, how was the whole complexion of his life altered ; he could look for no preferment but bonds, imprisonment, and death ; his hands must minister unto his necessities, and he must be tossed up and down the world by the strong hands of malice and spite ; but none of these things moved him ; and why ? Because he looked not at the things which are seen, but at the things which

are not seen, by mortal eye, and he knew that when the earthly house of this tabernacle was dissolved, he had a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. It was but a dry morsel that Paul had to eat, but he had quietness and confidence therewith, and he preferred it to a house full of sacrifices with strife.

There is no peace like the peace of God ruling in the heart ; there is no strife like the strife of an evil conscience warring against God in wicked works. It is true the proverb of the text points more directly to worldly things, but it does not exclude spiritual and heavenly, and since the most wonderful house ever built is the human body, and the most worthy tenant that ever inhabited a house is the immortal soul, therefore we should pay especial regards to the sacred dwelling of our spirit, and see that all the faculties and endowments of our mystic life are at unity with themselves, at peace with God ; in other words we should say, each one, as Paul says—"Herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man ;" and, "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called, and be ye thankful."

Externals are as nothing to internals ! And if you demand another instance of the truth of this position, let me lead you to Him whose name we all bear ; let us go and sojourn for a while with the Holy Jesus, and ponder on the eventful bearings of His most wondrous

life. Look at His cradle ! If cradle worthy of so great a being had been provided, the richest jewels of heaven had been fashioned by Cherubim and Seraphim ; as it was the Son of the Most High, the Son of Mary, was laid in a manger ! Why you all had a better cradle than that ! Go and spend a day with Him at Nazareth, and afterwards at Capernaum ; climb the silent mountain and spend a night of prayer with Him ; or, take a day's journey with Him, and mark how His enemies dog His steps. See Him in the wilderness with the wild beasts, tempted of the devil In the garden ! In the hall of judgment ! On the road to Calvary ! At the very Cross ! Now, pause and think ! Did Jesus deserve such treatment ? Why did our Saviour submit to such ignominies ? Why ?—to make our peace with God ; to bring in everlasting righteousness. Behold the man ! a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief ; a poor man, not having where to lay His head ; and yet, say some who watched Him narrowly, and knew Him well—“ We beheld His glory, full of grace and truth ;” of that fulness may we all receive, and grace for grace. Within reach of every poor sinner, however needy his condition, there are the ample stores of salvation, “ Come buy without money and without price.” If God gives you a dry morsel He will give you quietness therewith ; if your house is full of good cheer, perhaps, as a blight on your enjoyment, and a counterpoise to your worldly sufficiency, there lurks about, like an angel of darkness,

that fell strife which ever mars true pleasure. Be contented with a little. Learn to regard greatness as a thing of the soul. Things are more equally balanced than you are aware, and when the time of reckoning comes all will be well.

But now let us visit the houses, which we said at the beginning, the subject of the text sets before us. The poor cottage and the lofty mansion ; quietness there, strife here. Not that it is always so. Alas, no ! In many a cottage there is terrible strife ; in many a mansion there are quietness and peace. It is the blessing of heaven that makes the difference. It is the ministration of the Spirit. Come now, look in there ; the husband and wife are not well matched ; they are not yoke-fellows in temper ; they cross each other, and strife springs up between them ; one while sullen and another while petulant and hasty ; their house is full of good cheer, but there is no true happiness. Better to be in that lowly cot, where husband and wife live as one ; where a net-work of heavenly sympathies encloses two hearts, and each esteems the other better than itself ; the morsel may be dry, but there is quietness therewith. Husbands and wives, look to it that you love one another with pure hearts fervently.

Look in at that house where the parents seem to have lost all control over their children ; where early indulgence, succeeded by wild license and liberty, have contrived to make a throne for strife to lord it as a tyrant ; it is a wretched scene, and we turn away in

sorrow and in anger. This is the kind of arsenal from which Satan gains his strongest weapons, wherewith to urge the horrid war of strife and sin. What if the house be full of silver and gold, there is no joy, no comfort, no happiness. That other house is far better where the children live in peace, obey their parents in all things, fondle each other in mutual regards, and strive ever with rivalry of love to outdo each other in kindness. Let the morsel be dry that they partake of in common there will be no lack of relish, for quietness is there, meet handmaid for household ordered so well. Oh, fathers and mothers look to your children ! Look to your rule ; and what you would wish them to be, be yourselves.

And so we may go on, calling here and there, and marking well the tokens of character, but I will not detain you longer thus ; let each one pay a visit to the house of his heart ; yes, be a constant visitor there. What is its character ? Be not offended at the simple question. Do not betray annoyance when the preacher biddeth thee "Know thyself." A time will come, if it be not come now, when self-knowledge will be all engrossing ; when every child of Adam will be searching for credentials of character, if so be he may manage to claim kinship with the Son of God, and go in to heavenly mansions. Why are we so backward in self-examinings ? Why is so much time spent in eyeing the characters of others, so little in minding our own ? Are we conscious of a fault, and do we like to leave it

as long as possible before we set ourselves to correct it? Oh fatal folly of delay. Oh syren sleep of carelessness, device of the Evil One! Look well, look well, to your own house, the home of your soul, and the house of your body.

Have you quietness or have you strife? Do not mistake me; *not* that morbid quietness which may be called indifference, but that quietness and serenity of soul, arising from consciousness of friendship with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; *not* that strife which ever attends the Christian warfare, but that turmoil and commotion of soul springing from the restlessness of unbelief, and the craving appetites of evil lusts. Oh in what state is the house of your soul? May He who built it repair it well. May it be an habitation of God through the Spirit. May grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, dwell always in the home of your souls; and then however poor your earthly condition, however pinched your lot, however dry your morsel, all will be well; you shall soon be called to the marriage supper of the Lamb, and feed on the glorious abundance of your Father's house.

And now to the house where for a while you sojourn, and wherein you meet day by day your kindred and friends. How is that ordered? Husbands, do you love your wives, and are you never bitter against them? Wives, do you submit yourselves to your own husbands in all things? Parents,

do you bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? Children, do you obey your parents, and live in peace one with another? Masters, are you just and equal to your servants? Servants, do you follow your calling, not with eye service as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ doing the will of God from the heart? If so, all must be well. If not, look to it, for trouble is before you. Be not anxious for good cheer, for a house full of sacrifices; be anxious rather for the possession of quietness, for the exclusion of strife, and depend upon it, you will endorse the saying of the proverb, you will take it as your own — “Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices with strife!”

Bread of Deceit.

BREAD OF DECEIT.

PROVERBS xx. 17.

"Bread of deceit is sweet to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel."

WE are told in the marriage service of the Church, that Isaac and Rebekah lived faithfully together. Alas, then, that we should read such accounts as are brought before us in the first Scripture lesson for this morning.*

The reading of this portion of Scripture always strikes me with peculiar sorrow and distress. Isaac and Rebekah faithful! Alas for the flaws and shortcomings of faithfulness in Holy Wedlock. If such as these, husbands and wives, ever cross your experience, alas for your happiness! It is sad to think that the Church could find no better instance than that of Isaac and Rebekah to set before the newly-married for exhortation and behoof! But, perhaps, even now,

* The second Sunday in Lent.

there is not so much faithfulness in wedded life as there should be.

And yet, in the main, Isaac and Rebekah, doubtless *did* live faithfully together ; and if we knew all the circumstances of the case we should not be so startled, perhaps, as now we are ; yet, whatever the circumstances might have been, it is a most shocking exhibition of deceit and sin.

The blame was not all on one side, we may be sure, it seldom is so in family disagreements. Isaac knew, as well as Rebekah, that Jacob was to have the supremacy over Esau ; that the blessing was to pass along the line of Jacob, the younger son, and not along the line of Esau. And this appointment of heaven was seen to be good, possibly, even from the character of the two men as known and read by others. Consider how Esau had despised his birthright, and given signs of contempt of Religion, which ill fitted with the character of one who should be a chosen vessel of heaven for special service.

Rebekah had uppermost in her mind, probably, all along, the spiritual blessings that would come on Jacob, and on the world, through his seed. Isaac leaned more towards Esau through some temporal considerations. How even the best of mortals are influenced at times by unworthy motives, or warped in their judgment and actions by prejudice or infirmity, and often too when they are not conscious themselves that such agencies are at work. One

might have fancied from the specimen of their conduct as given in this chapter that Isaac and Rebekah had been ill matched ; that they were not helps meet for each other ; like mixed marriages amongst us, when husband and wife are of different religions ; or when one marries the other for the sake of riches or worldly advantage ; no real good ever springs of such unions. But no ! Isaac and Rebekah lived faithfully together we will say, and we will believe.

It was a very critical turn in the tide of their fortunes ; the old father, pressed down by infirmities, having some forebodings of death, would settle his affairs, and amongst these, the transferring, in solemn mode, the blessing to his posterity, was first and foremost. Whatever had been the thoughts, arguments, converse, between Isaac and Rebekah on this subject, Esau must needs be blessed and not Jacob, thus the old father thought and would make preparation for the accomplishment of his purpose. But, said Rebekah, No ! Jacob must be blessed and not Esau ; it is the will of heaven, and shall be accomplished. And then she conceived the mode. It was wrong altogether, the conception was wrong, the mode of accomplishing wrong. Let us be careful, however, how we bestow our blame, lest whilst condemning another we condemn ourself. Perhaps we have been guilty of equal deceit ; and, had it not been for the wonderful providence of God, which takes into account even our very indiscretions, the end had not been shaped for good but for evil.

But let us trace the working of this evil leaven in the heart of Rebekah, and in the heart of Jacob, her younger son. She overhears the talk between Isaac and Esau—"That shall never be"—"That shall never be," she said. If my husband will not regard wise counsel, perhaps she added, if he will be found fighting against God, I must needs do what I can to frustrate his evil purposes. And she spake to Jacob her younger son forthwith—"Obey my voice," she said, "that he may bless thee before his death." Now Jacob was a plain man, we are told, yet Rebekah his mother hid her leaven in his heart, and it spread there. Let us not trust in ourselves; let us not make our honesty, or plain dealing, the ground of our confidence; the infirmities and falls of good men urge upou us caution and mistrust of ourselves. What influence mothers have, and exercise, for weal or for woe. Let the deceitful working of Rebekah have its lesson of warning to all who would use unlawful means to accomplish the purposes of heaven.

Jacob *had* the birthright, must he not have also the blessing? He must. "I shall seem to him as a deceiver," said he to his mother, and bring a curse and not a blessing. "*Upon me* be the curse," she replied, "only obey my voice." She played her part, oh how skilfully, and he must play his. "My father sit and eat of my venison that thy soul may bless me;" and Isaac said, "How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son?" "Because the Lord

thy God brought it to me." Deceit is bad enough always, but deceit covered up with religion, is indeed bad. . . . "The voice is Jacob's voice," said the old man, "but the hands are the hands of Esau." Not far off, we may be sure, was the wife and mother, anxiously bent on the accomplishment of her scheme. . . . "Art thou my very son Esau?" "I am." And Jacob was a plain man! And now, solemnly, in set form, the old patriarch confers the blessing; it cannot be reversed; it seems to have been a law in those patriarchal days. I wonder how Jacob and his mother felt when they retired from the presence of father and husband, so cruelly, so shamefully, deceived by them? Did you never tell a lie? What was the temptation, the motive, the incitement? What were the attributes of selfishness with which it was robed? How long was it before your conscience smote you for the sin of it?

And now Esau enters — "Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me. And Isaac his father said unto him — Who art thou? And he said — I am thy son, thy first-born Esau; and Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who? Where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him, yea and he shall be blessed?" Then came the great and exceeding bitter cry from the profane Esau, who had despised his birthright. "Bless me, even me also, O my father, and he lifted up his

voice and wept." But he found no place of repentance; his father would not be turned from his purpose. Oh! nobody can describe the experience of that moment in the heart of the father and son; disappointment, cruel and dark, oppressed them with misery and dismay. The heavens must reign, perhaps each one of them felt. I ought to have blessed Jacob, thought the father; I ought not to have despised my birthright, thought the son. But it was too late; it was too late! Oh, my brethren, when men have quitted this mortal place of probation, and find themselves in the presence of their Judge, how many will say, Oh! I ought not to have despised my birthright, and the exceeding great and bitter cry that will then arise, will be of no avail in the ears of offended Majesty—too late!—too late!

Is not he rightly named Jacob, said the enraged brother, for he hath supplanted me these two times; he took away my birthright, and behold now, he hath taken away my blessing. And Esau hated his brother, and he said, I will slay my brother Jacob; Rebekah interposed again; and it was forty years before the infirm Isaac closed his eyes in death, and strange though it may seem and sound, the two brothers shed tears together over the grave, each one wringing his hands, and saying—Alas, my father!

Bread of deceit is sweet to a man, says the text, but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel; and here, in this strange story from the family history of

the patriarchs of old, we have an illustration of the truth of the after saying of Solomon.

Some have stoutly maintained that the end justifies the means, and that we may continue in sin that grace may abound. Alas for such false reasoning! Whether in the short sum of human life, or in the long run of time and eternity, it will ever be found, that whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap; that if he soweth corn, whereof to make the bread of deceit, the end of his eating shall be as if his mouth was filled with gravel. We know enough of the life of Jacob to be sure, that bitterness, disappointment, and sorrow, were powerful ingredients in the bread he had to eat, and which must have been as gravel in his mouth; and who can tell how Rebekah rued the day when she conceived and carried into execution the plan of deceit for her husband and her son?

Little did the patriarch and his wife think, in their family feuds and trials, that, by order from heaven, the whole account should be written in a book, and read, and read, over and over again, by all sorts and conditions of people, from that time to the end. And little do we think that the same God, who ordered the narrative to be stamped with perpetuity, has a book Himself, and in that book is written down an account of every thing concerning us, and that at the last it will be read aloud. What meaneth this — “There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid that shall not be known; therefore whatsoever ye

have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and whatsoever ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the house tops?" Suppose the Great Observer of all should give orders to have our family concerns written down and published, for the reading of mankind, would it be better than the narrative we have been considering? Would it not be a sorry tale? I am ashamed when I think how my history would read; I am thankful that with Him only is lodged my secret life, who is my Saviour, and my merciful God. Cleanse thou me from my secret sins!

But now, for our benefit, if it may be, let us listen to the talk of different people, after the reading of the chapter about which we have been speaking. "Well! for my part, I think these good people no better than others," exclaims a man, who is fond of himself, and of his sins, to one of his boon companions; "what trickery and deceit, what lying and sin! Sure if people were all to act in this way, there would be no truth, nor honesty, under the sun!" Alas, it is very true, that whatever view we take of man, there is much humiliation and shame in the scene. But remember, it has pleased God to allow a faithful portrait of man to be drawn on the sacred tablet of Holy Writ. When we write a biography, we are partial, perhaps of necessity, through ignorance and prejudice. When we put our friend to sit for his portrait, if he has a flaw of infirmity that is visible, we turn it from us, that so it

may not appear in the picture; but not so the wise and faithful God. The Holy Book faithfully records the dark as well as bright traits of a man's character. And this is a lesson we may draw from it — "There is forgiveness with God, that He might be feared." Let us stand in awe, and sin not. They who find fault with religious people, and magnify their sins and infirmities, only blazon forth their own folly and ignorance. Which is better, to have sins and confess them; or to have sins and hide them? Which is more likely to *end* well, to mourn over the sins of ourselves and others, or to trifle with our own, and make a kind of triumph of the falls of others? Never excuse thyself because of the shortcomings of another; it may be the sweet bread of deceit, but afterwards thy mouth will be filled with gravel. But to return.

"We ought to be more careful, my love," says a wife to her husband, "when we see here the great evils of a want of confidence. Why should we distrust each other? And, above all, in the sacred matter of religion, why should there be such studied silence? One in holy bonds; one in house and home, in bed and board, why are we not one in heart? Our children reap the fruits of our reserve. Do you not perceive how they strive to hide their sins and follies under the cloak of our character? They will be as we are; and if the sacred bond of peace is untied by the sinful fingers of deceit, woe worth the day when we were wed!" My brethren, many a wife might say this

much, and oh, how much more! I must not shock you by a picture of multitudes of husbands and wives, who, in the matter of religion, eat the bread of deceit. There may be a seeming sweetness at the time, but in the end their mouth shall be filled with gravel. But to return once again.

"This is a very awful picture," says a young man, all alone, "this Esau! How careless, how profane he seems. How he barter away his birthright for a little selfish gratification. I have done the like! He had privileges, but did not regard them; he minded earthly things—so do I! Though Jacob was so deceitful, and his mother Rebekah, Esau received but his due: he did not deserve the blessing—nor do I! What a keen, piercing cry it must have been, that cry of despair; but it was of no use—neither will mine be of use if I neglect so great salvation!"

Strange, my brethren, that a young man when alone should be visited with reflections and compunctions like these, but when he goes forth to his companions is ashamed of them, or has not root in himself to dare the opposition which a faithful *acting* of them ever creates. This is too often true. And would that it was confined to young men! Many a young man, I think I may say, has promised me fair, when I have had him alone; but when I have seen him afterwards in the company of his associates, he has laughed me to scorn. This bread of deceit may have a relish of sweetness in

it, but be sure at last the mouth shall be filled with gravel!

I need mention no more instances. Holy Scripture, when allowed to work in the mind, is ever suggesting good and wholesome thoughts, and our own experience and observation will furnish instances, many, for illustration and profit.

Let us be careful, my dear brethren, for you know our hearts are deceitful, and if we feed ourselves on their natural productions, that is, on bread of deceit, it may be pleasant for the time, but afterwards our mouth shall be filled with gravel.

We need but the power to abhor that which is evil, and to cleave to that which is good; to carry out our conviction of uprightness and honesty into the every-day concerns of life; to root out deceit and to cultivate simplicity and sincerity of character. This power is from Him who worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure; from Him who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. The means to possess ourselves of this power are close at hand; let us use them, thoughtfully, diligently, earnestly, and feed on the true bread of heaven, the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

It is sorry food that is leavened with the leaven of deceit; and if this is our daily bread, we must not be surprised if our mouth is filled with gravel — there! there! in that miserable place where all deceitful workers will be crowded together, and the gravel

stones of despair shall cause weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth ! Oh, how far better, beloved, to eat the bread of affliction and godly sorrow, that at last we may be partakers of the bounty board of Heaven's King in His glorious Palace of Eternity.

Self-Help God's Help.

SELF-HELP GOD'S HELP.

ROMANS II. 7.

"By patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory
and honour and immortality."

IN all labour there is profit. Idleness is a blight and a curse. Some, indeed, labour at random, and hardly know the bent of their endeavours; they have no plan, no method, no knowledge in their work. Others labour foolishly; they spend their money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not. But however it may be, all are on the move doing something. You may as well try to stop the flow of rivers as stop man in his activities. Life is a busy scene, and you hear the hum and the bustle of the labours of man, until death stops your ears, and covers you in the silent grave.

God would have us work. He enjoined labour in Paradise, how much more when we are doomed to eat bread in the sweat of our brow. But the work which our Maker would have us do is not the mere work of this world. We may, and we must, follow our trade or occupation, it is true, and that diligently. Farmers, and merchants, and shopkeepers, and artizans,

and labourers we must have. But there is better employment than these furnish. God has endowed us with nobler purposes, and fired our souls with a greater ambition, than can be found at work on the fleeting elements of time and sense. A work of faith, and labours of love engage our energies. The longings of our better nature are after Paradise, and we would fain make a road back to that lost abode of innocence and happiness ; and God, in His boundless grace and goodness, sets us on a way of working, and helps us in our doings, and furthers our purposes, and enlarges our knowledge, and if we do but follow His guidance aright, and obey His commands, and seek after glory and honor, and immortality, we shall not fail at last to attain unto eternal life. Oh ! this is an object worth labouring for ! This is a prize we may well be proud of ! And this is set before us in the gospel, and the way made plain.

The world and religion use sometimes the same words to express their doings and hopes, as here in the text mention is made of glory and honour. Glory ! it is the proud man's special hope and prize. Honour ! how many covet it most intensely. But Religion has the advantage of the world, she talks of immortality also, the world knows nothing of this. Death is the black boundary of the world's kingdom ; but there are regions far away beyond that Religion calls her own, even an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

Let us turn aside, and take as good a view as we can of the objects of faith and hope which in the words of the text are mentioned as the noble prizes for which true Christians strive and contend. Glory, Honour, Immortality !

Glory ! And what is glory ? How shall I describe it ? If I look on the heavens, I see one glory of the sun, and another of the moon, another of the stars, and the very heavens themselves declare the glory of God. If I look on the earth, the mountains and hills, the fertile valleys and streams, the cedars and the lilies, and all the hosts of animate and inanimate forms, how *glorious* is the sight ! If I look on man, fallen though he be, humbled by sin and vanity, the child of misery, the prey of death, there is nevertheless some beaming of glory from within, which hope lays hold on and traces to God. My nature is stirred, and I instinctively exclaim, "Awake up, my glory !" I go down to the abode of the lost, the dark prison of hell ; that is the only place without show of glory ; on its awful entrance is written "*Ichabod*," in letters of fire — the glory is departed.

If I look on kings and royal states, there is glory — the glory of Solomon, of Nebuchadnezzar, of Napoleon, of Victoria. One monarch differeth from another monarch in glory. If I look on noble deeds they are deeds of glory, there is a brightness about them which men admire. There is the glory of wisdom, and of knowledge ; the glory of riches and power ; the glory

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of virtue and benevolence. How many beauties and glories hang about noble buildings — Cathedrals, Palaces, Halls ! When the tempter showed the Son of Man all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said, all these things will I give thee, and the glory of them — they had no glory in the eyes of the Saviour because of the glory that excelleth. All the paths of worldly glory lead but to the grave. There is a glory in Religion. There is a glory in Jesus. There is the glory of God. The glory of heaven. Paul speaks of them who seek this glory, this combination of glories. With some there is no glory in Religion, their eyes are holden that they do not see it, therefore they seek Religion coldly, with no pleasure, no devotion. To many who profess and call themselves His disciples, there is no glory in Jesus Christ ; there is no beauty in Him that they should admire Him ; they pay Him outward reverence and a bodily service ; they call Him Lord, Lord ! but they see not His glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth. The glory of Heaven and the glory of God ! how many regard neither the one nor the other. But true Christians seek this glory, they have found by experience as well as by hearsay, that all the glory of man is as the flower of the grass, and that true glory consists in likeness to God through Jesus Christ. They diligently seek it therefore, and whilst so engaged glories surround them in every direction ; tribulations to them have a glory,

and infirmities and trials of life. The cross of Christ has a marvellous glory in it, and the true Christian exclaims — God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Jesus Christ, whereby the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world.

The tempter sets before us the glory of this world, and bids us bow down. "See," he says, "the great glory of riches and worldly renown. Behold the glory of Pleasure and of Vanity. Seek the glory of Beauty, and of Flattery, and of Pride. Go not aside to that low and debasing thing, the religion of Christ. Was not the author of it born in a stable? Had he not poor relations? Are not his followers tame and mean-spirited? Do they not cast away from them all the pleasures and enjoyments of life? Be not like them; eat, drink, and be merry." May we ever resist such base suggestions, and, steadfast in the faith, seek the glory of God.

There is another thing which Christians seek, and so indeed do men of the world, it is *Honour*. What is honour? Dignity, reputation, respect, paid to persons for their real or fancied good qualities, and by which they are exalted above their fellows. It is our duty to give honour to whom honour is due, as it is to give tribute to whom tribute, or fear to whom fear is due. Honour also signifies real service which we pay to those who are situated in an honourable position with regard to us. Honour thy father and thy mother. This precept requires not only that we should show

our parents respect and deference, but likewise that we should assist and relieve them, and perform such services for them as they may stand in need of. Thus says the Apostle, "honour widows that are widows indeed," that is, relieve them. "Let elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour," that is, let them have a liberal maintenance. "I thought to promote thee to great honour," said the king of Moab to Balaam, "but lo, the Lord hath kept thee back from honour," that is, hath deprived thee of the reward I designed for thee. Honour is also put for an honourable function or office, "no man taketh this honour unto himself," that is, this honourable office.

But there are honours higher than all these ; there is a dignity, reputation, and respect, conferred on men by God himself. "The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance, whilst the memory of the wicked shall rot." Wisdom, or Religion, has in her left hand riches and honour. What titles of greatness does the Lord confer on His people, and what gifts and endowments of grace does He shower down on them. They are His servants, His saints, His children ! He has prepared for them such good things as pass man's understanding. Such honour have all His saints ! Who would not seek the honour that cometh from God ? If worldly people think so much of worldly honours, what should we think of heavenly ? If they strive so as to gain this title, or that greatness, to be treated with honour, respect, and admiration ; how should we strive

to be called saints, to be lifted up to the honour and greatness of heaven? To be treated with respect and admiration by the holy angels? I would rather be called "a servant of God" than the highest title that men can confer on me. Those great blessings and enjoyments, those good things of heaven, those pleasures for evermore, which are brought to light by the gospel, may well excite our admiration and engage our hearts. No wonder that Christians seek for glory and honour, and set their affections on things above. May we be moved more and more in the pursuit of these precious treasures, that our faith may be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

And now the Christian and the man of the world must part company. They can go on together no longer. Concerning glory and honour they can talk together, the Christian interpreting the terms in one way, and the worldling in another. But now they must part, for the man of God tells his companion that he seeks for *immortality*. The other has his vision bounded by time and sense. The glories and honours of the world go not with us beyond the tomb. They are set up in the fields of time, not in the regions of eternity. It is true we *say*, this man or that has immortalized himself, but it is more a *saying* than a reality. Did not Abel immortalize himself by his offering of faith; and Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham, and others, men of honour, men of God? It is true, their honour and glory will last as long as time flows,

but that will not be long. They have in heaven a better and a more enduring substance. Perhaps murderers will say Cain has immortalized himself; and mighty hunters, Nimrod; and false prophets, Balaam; and wicked women, Jezebel. It is true so long as the world lasts these people will be held in everlasting remembrance, and have a kind of immortality — an immortality of guilt; but where are they? What are a thousand years, or ten thousand? They are as nothing compared with eternity. And is there an eternity of happiness? There is! Life and Immortality are brought to light by the gospel. The son of God, our Saviour Jesus Christ, hath abolished death. All things are ours if we are Christ's — whether life, or death, or things present, or things to come. Walking in the paths of the gospel we seek glory, honour, and *immortality* also.

You see then your calling, brethren. Instead of the fading glories of time, you have set before you the unfading glories of eternity. Instead of the honour that cometh from man, you have the honour that cometh from God. And instead of the uncertain treasures of mortality, the unsearchable riches of Christ, the sure and certain hope of a glorious immortality.

But how shall we seek these things? How shall we address ourselves to the task and labour of acquiring them? Let us not for a moment suppose that they will be ours as a matter of necessity, that they are heirlooms, not to be lost, not to be taken away from us.

Christians are men of business ; men of labour ; men of thought, and enterprise, and persevering devotion. Glory, and Honour, and Immortality, are the prizes of their heavenly calling. Jesus Christ hath purchased these by His blood ; and hath redeemed to Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. The *Merit* of salvation is His. The spring of salvation is from Him. No man will ever put his hand to the gospel plough, and work well, unless God, by His Spirit, worketh within him both to will and to do. But He influences them with a variety of emotions : their *hopes* He quickens by heavenly rewards ; their *fears* by dreadful punishments ; their faculties He employs in doing His will ; and so it must be said, as in the words of the text, — “ By patient continuance in well doing they seek for glory and honour and immortality.” They expect not these things as a reward for their good works, for they are ever conscious of being unprofitable servants ; but they apply themselves diligently to do the will of their Father, fully assured that as they can gain no good thing on earth without painstaking diligence, so they cannot expect to be partakers of the kingdom of heaven without giving all diligence to make their calling and election sure. Their self-help is God's help, and they work the more heartily because God is on their side.

Is there need to explain what is meant by “*well doing*?” Can you read the gospel, or even the law ; can you talk to your conscience, or even your neighbour, and not agree as to what is meant by well-doing ?

Have you not understanding of the meaning of those words which at the last great day the righteous Judge shall say to the redeemed — "Well done?"

But more than well-doing is mentioned; there is *continuance* in well-doing. It is not a single deed, nor the deeds of a single day, that give character to the Christian, it is the tenor of his life. We ask a homely question when one wishes to be introduced to us. — "What sort of a man is he?" And a very proper question it is, for we like not every sort of man. And when we make inquiry what sort of a man is a Christian, the answer can be drawn from the words of the text; one who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seeks for glory, and honour, and immortality.

But there is an addition to continuance in well-doing, even *patient* continuance. We have need of patience; there are many enemies, many lets and hindrances. Gloomy doubts and forebodings are apt to damp the ardour of our expectations. But the assurances of scripture warrant us to proceed. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. Be it so. The word of God is surer than the word of man, let us believe and trust. The work of God is better than the work of man, let us be doing it. The rewards of heaven are better than those of earth; give us grace therefore, O God, that by patient continuance, in well doing, we may seek glory, and honour, and immortality, and finally, by Thy mercy attain everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Benediction.

BENEDICTION.

2 COR. xiii. 14.

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

THIS is Trinity Sunday, so called from that holy word which leads our souls to think about this sacred and awful mystery, that there are Three Persons in One Godhead.

The Church of Christ from the very beginning in her daily offices of devotion, ascribed praises to the Holy Trinity in her doxologies, hymns, and creeds, and there was no need to set apart a special day for the pressing home on the hearts of God's people the holy truth of the Trinity. But as errors rose and spread, as heretics with wild fire sought to burn away, from the vineyard of Christ, whatever did not suit the turn of their unhallowed mind, the Church thought well to stamp the impress of her authority on the revealed will of heaven concerning the Holy Trinity, by appointing a day for its set contemplation. In early times, some observed this day on the Sunday

immediately before Advent, as if perhaps to note their sense of the importance of it, by making it the entrance door of all holy mysteries. The Greek Church observes it on Whit-Sunday, I believe, this Sunday being dedicated by it as the festival of All Saints. The greater part, however, of Christendom, thought that the Sunday after Pentecost was a good time for the purpose. After having gone, in something like regular order, along the heavenly path of holy truths, as revealed to us by God the Father concerning His blessed Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ; after having been witnesses of the marvellous descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost (our Whitsuntide); very meet and proper it seems that we should ascribe special praises and give glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in more than ordinary strains of devotion.

Oh may our souls be in raptures at this blessed season ! May we be carried up above the world ; and untie, as much as possible, those chains and bands of our sins and infirmities, that so clog and hamper us in heavenly meditations.

I am not going to enter on the holy theme concerning the blessed Trinity in set form of discourse ; I have no need to teach you, that there are three persons in one undivided Godhead. All that I would wish to do now is this, to arouse you more to a sense of the manifold gifts of wisdom and grace, that the Triune God hath provided for us ; and to excite you to a more diligent use of those means of grace, by

which you may be made partakers of a greater spiritual benefit. You may well think that I am sincere in this, from the choice of my text, presenting to you, as it does, such a broad face of practical blessedness, so that if we look on it well, a reflection of the divine effulgence may lighten up our souls more. Let us not be found talking of days, and using words, and keeping festivals, without striving more and more to apprehend the marvels, the joys, the hopes, the graces of heavenly verities.

“Now to the great and sacred Three,
The Father, Son, and Spirit, be,
Eternal praise and glory given,
Through all the worlds where God is known,
By all the angels near the throne,
And all the saints in earth and heaven.”

With the words of the text we close our morning and evening common prayer; and how often too, no doubt, when we assemble for social worship, or bend in secret, do we conclude our petitions with those very same words. How extensively are they dedicated to the service of Christian souls; how have they been consecrated all along by the Catholic Church for the use of her members; how has the sacred vault of heaven, if I may so speak, and the still more sacred vault of immortal souls, echoed and re-echoed these precious words, and been quickened into joy and ardour, and intensest hopes by the meaning of them.

Oh it is the forceful meaning that I would have you feel and enjoy. Come, then, with me while I visit the holy land of revelation, and point out to you some of the mysterious glories of that meaning as therein set before us.

I will take the words as they come. The subject will naturally arrange itself in a threefold form ; and since, in the Holy Trinity, none is afore or after another, none is greater or less than another, we do no violence to truth by speaking of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ before the love of God the Father, or the communion of the Holy Ghost.

Let me remind you, however, even now, of the *practical* turn of the subject — “*be with you all.*” These words must ever insinuate their meaning, if you please, into your hearts ; may the heavenly benediction ever rest upon you.

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.” This is our first theme of thought. How shall I set it before you ? How can I possibly manage to gather together, and enclose in form of words, however aptly chosen, the mighty and marvellous truth embodied in the words — “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ” ? I can only fasten on certain visible symbols of the grace of Christ ; I can only lay hold on the more sensible and tangible facts of His grace ; and holding them up before your minds, pray secretly, pray earnestly, that the powers and endowments of your immortal souls may work well and healthily, and

that thus the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may be with you.

The word *grace* means favour; it also means help. When we say, for instance, "we are saved by grace," we mean that we are saved by the favour of God, and in no other way can we look for salvation. When Paul said — "By the grace of God I am what I am," he did not mean merely favour *shewed* to him, but *conferred* upon him in living agencies, coming up to our word *help*; God helped him! And how wonderful is the help which God through Christ vouchsafes to us. We are not merely told that Christ loved us in heaven above, but that He came down from heaven to help us. He was conceived of the Holy Ghost; born of the Virgin Mary; angels carolled His birth; the wise men did Him homage. He experienced marvellous changes and chances of mortal life; He vanquished Sin and Satan, Death and the Grave; and then ascended up where He was before. When we consider these things and believe they were for our salvation, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ assumes a mighty meaning of reality. Surely there is no necessity for me to tell you how this grace may be with you. Amongst ourselves, if one whom we love bestows upon us the favour we crave, how do joy, peace, gratitude, and devotion come with the gift vouchsafed. We have souls; we have sympathies; we have many and varied emotions, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ more than any thing else affects us as Christians. We know

the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich yet for our sakes He became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich. We love Him because He first loved us ; and it becomes a privilege and a delight, as well as a duty, to show forth His praises.

But let us take another view of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. We live in a Christian country ; we are members of the Christian Church ; we breathe sacred air, and walk amid sensible symbols of heavenly things. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ encloses us about, like the loving arms of a tender mother guardeth the sacred treasure of her infant child. There is a font in every church ; there is a Holy table. Why is not the one a fountain of grace to every child baptized therein ? Why is not the holy table a source of spiritual feasting to every member of the church of age to be admitted to it ? Doth not the Master rule and preside in His own house ? Oh how many come to holy places ; how many use holy books ; how many partake of the blessings of the gospel outwardly, who do not receive the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, because of their want of faith, their unhallowed reasonings and proud bearing. And yet, how near to us is the unspeakable gift brought !

May we be more wary ; more reverent and devout ; more conscious of the presence of Christ, and more anxious to be like Him in meekness of heart, in holiness of life.

"May the love of God be with you." We may meditate on the love of God in its most ample developments, as embracing within it His wisdom in our creation; His providence in our support, but we should especially do so in His inestimable love in our redemption. The sun shining upon us; the moon and stars lighting up the night; the gentle showers and the distilled dew; these and multitudes of other things prove His love to us, but the everlasting glories of salvation, these will be everlasting tokens of love and everlasting themes of praise. Here the love of God is manifested with most excellent glory. Do we not love God? then that is proof that the love of God is not with us, for it is impossible for the love of God to be apprehended by us without our loving Him in return; and if we love God we keep His commandments, or strive habitually to do so; and His commandments are not grievous.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. The love of God should be so with us as to influence our lives; to school and discipline our hearts; to govern, and moderate, and direct our love to each other. In our intercourse with Christians, in all our proceedings, passing along this vale of tears, love should be the main spring of our actions; the love of God should be with us; the great love which God hath showed towards us should ever be present to our consciousness, we should remember and forget it not; we should be moved by the mighty presence; our hearts

should expand, our souls be elevated, our hands never hang down, nor our knees be feeble, faith working by love should ever be our guide and our guard.

“May the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you.” The word communion signifies sometimes the communication of something *to* others ; it also means the partaking of something *with* others. In our text it means the joint fruition, or the participation of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit. We withdraw our thoughts from those miracles which the Holy Ghost wrought in the first days of Christianity. We set them upon those heavenly gifts and graces which all true Christians have in measure at all times ; for like as the human soul pervades in his manifold powers the various members of the body, the glory of which He is, so doth the Divine Spirit dwell in the body of Christ, which is His Church, giving manifold gifts and graces according to the will of God. He giveth life ; He maintaineth it ; He causeth fruits to abound ; He beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God ; He helpeth our infirmities, and teacheth us to pray ; He sanctifieth all the elect people of God. In a word, we are His temple ; an habitation of God through the Spirit.

In all public transactions Christians should be animated by one spirit ; they should strive to be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment, that the world may see that they are all of one communion and fellowship. In social and private

intercourse, they should manifest all tender concern and solicitude for the well being of the body, members of which they are, and be filled with the Spirit. In private, whether at prayer or meditation, in the ordinary occupations of life, they should bear in mind, that He who is the ground of their hopes is a Divine Spirit, ever present, all seeing, all wise, all gracious, Holy ; not regarding themselves as individuals so much as members one of another, heirs of heaven, and joint partakers of a common benefit, and that benefit — eternal salvation. Oh may the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all.

Let us meditate, dear brethren, on the great, glorious, and revealed mystery of the Holy Trinity. May the threefold Name be written on the fleshly table of our heart. Conscious that the possession of life, in this fair though blighted earthly scene, is a blessing, may that consciousness be widened, ennobled, and sanctified, in a Christian experience. Not only may we roam with wonder and delight, amid the manifold beauties of creation, but amid the more marvellous facts, and mysterious blessings of redemption. Taking our place, however the providence of God may ordain, whether high or low as man reckons, may the heart of Privilege nerve the hand of Duty, that so we may not be slothful in business, but be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Amid the varied trials of life, through the chequered scenes of our mortal existence, along the

dark valley of the shadow of death, onward, still onward, in the mysterious transit of our soul, with convoy of angels to the Paradise of God, to join company with the spirits of the just made perfect, may

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost,
be with us all
evermore.
Amen.

FINIS.

