

TENDER GRASS

AND

WATERS OF QUIETNESS.

FOR THE

Lambs and Sheep of Christ's Flock.

VOL. II.

NEW YORK:

LOIZEAUX BROTHERS, 63 FOURTH AVENUE.

1886.

THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE.

I WEEP as I read of the days
 When all who believed were as one,
 Yet, Lord, in my heart are the ways,—
 Thou endest what Thou hast begun.
 It is vain to lament o'er the *past*,
 To sigh for the time that is o'er;
 But Thou wilt unite us *at last*,
 Unite us to sunder no more.

How blest, in the flowings of grace,
 Thy saints, "of one heart and one soul,"—
 Yea, gathered to Thee, in one place,
 Thy Spirit their only control!
 It is sad to look 'round on the change!
 Oh, how can I choose but to weep?
 Afar on the mountain they range, (Jer. 1. 6.)
 The beautiful flock of Thy sheep!

Ah, once they were happy and free,—
 Not one had a claim of his own;
 Their voices gave witness to *Thee*,
 Thou Saviour and Shepherd, alone!
 They reposed in Thy pastures so green,
 They drank of the "water of life;"
 And, walking in truth, they were seen
 Afar from division and strife.

O Saviour, in pity look down,
 Behold the extent of our grief;
 The clouds of calamity frown,
 Thy coming is certain relief.
 We are watching, expectant, for Thee,
 The dangers are thickening fast;
 Lord Jesus, we pant to be free,
 Our refuge art Thou from the blast!

No more would we weep for the days,
Or sigh for the hours that are gone,
By grace we would chant to Thy praise,
The *glory* is hastening on!
To lament o'er the ruin is vain,
The time for repairing is o'er;
Unaltered Thy *Word* doth remain,
Our portion art *Thou* evermore.

UNDER A SHADOW.

THERE are very few of us who are not at some time in our lives brought under the shadow of a false accusation. The natural way to meet it is by denial and self-defence. But this is not the New-Testament way, nor the most effective way. There is a better, surer, and higher way. It is to give the false accusation a plain, simple, square denial, and then leave the life and the truth to do the rest. It is not my business to take care of my reputation; it is all I can do to take care of my character. If that is clean and pure and luminous, the light that is in me will shine on and out, and by and by will pierce the clouds and dispel them. For clouds are temporary, because earthly; but sunshine is eternal, because divine. Any one can distort my shadow, but no one but myself can distort me; and if I am not distorted, my shadow will not be distorted. But if it is, what matter?

Do not run after accusers. Do not trouble yourself about false accusations. Only be sure to make them false, then leave the falsehood to die. Go on with your life-work, and accept the position in which false accusation and consequent scandal and reproach place you, only as a new opportunity to bear witness to the truth and the life by your own manifest and glorious possession of them.—*Lyman Abbott.*

THE NAZARITE; OR, ONE SEPARATED.

"I raised up of your young men for Nazarites."

(Amos ii. 11.)

THE institution and the rules of the order of the Nazarite are given in the sixth chapter of Numbers. We must therefore turn to that chapter for an explanation of our text. There are three words used concerning this divine ordinance, of which we will give the import. 1. In ver. 2, When either man or woman "shall *separate*" themselves; in ver. 3, He "shall separate" himself; in ver. 5 and 6, He "separateth" himself unto the Lord. 2. In ver. 4, All the days of his "*separation*;" in ver. 5, All the days of the vow of his "separation;" in ver. 7, The "consecration" of his God is upon him. 3. In ver. 2, To vow a vow of a "*Nazarite*;" in ver. 13, This is the law of the "*Nazarite*;" in ver. 18, And the "*Nazarite*" shall shave the head of his consecration. The latter form of the word is given in Genesis xlix. 26, and Deuteronomy xxxiii. 16, in reference to the patriarch Joseph, "him that was *separated* from his brethren." The first form of the word signifies "to *separate*," or "set apart," and so "to consecrate" a person or thing unto God. The second form of the word signifies the *state* of being separated, or set apart, or "consecrated" to God; that is "consecration," or "Nazariteship." The third form of the word points out the *person* set apart unto God, "the separated one," or the "Nazarite." We proceed to consider the subject of our address.

I. *Who* can become a Nazarite, or one specially consecrated to God? This ordinance was appointed of God's people Israel, and for those who had, in his own way, joined themselves unto them. It was therefore an ordinance for a *redeemed* people,—for those who had been placed under the shelter of the blood of the slain lamb, and who had been fed upon the paschal sacrifice,—for those who had been preserved from the doom of Egypt, and who had been rescued from the power of its mighty monarch. Here, then, is the answer to the inquiry, Who can become a Nazarite? None but those who have already trusted in the precious blood of Christ, there confessing their sin, and thus become reconciled to God by the death of His Son. *No unsaved soul can be a Nazarite to God.* You must first be separated from the doom of this Egypt-world, and be delivered from the hand of the mighty evil one who directs its course, before you can take the special position of one separated or consecrated to God, after the manner of this divine ordinance. You must *first* be separated from guilt and condemnation, and thus be saved from wrath by the cross of Christ, before you can realize the power of that cross to separate you from all that which is contrary to the position and character of a true Nazarite.

Yet it is not *all* believers who are, in the strict sense of this word, truly separated ones. All Israelites were not Nazarites: all Christians are not thus specially devoted to God. Taking your place before the cross of Christ as a self-judged sinner, and resting your soul in faith on Him who died there, you become a believer—a *saved* man; but it is not until you learn the power of that cross upon your spirit, to deliver you from the at-

tractions of the world,—in short, to crucify you to the world, and the world to you, that you become a thorough disciple, or a truly *separated* one. To *come* to Christ for pardon and life is one thing: to take up your cross daily, and *follow* Him in His path of self-denying obedience to God, and of separation from this present evil world, is another thing. Addressing these words to you as Christians, I desire to urge upon you to endeavor to take up the blessed position of a true Nazarite. This character is essential to thorough Christian service, whether in the public ministry, in the work of the pastor or teacher; whether in caring for the young, or of living to God in the business of life, or in the family. This character is essential to a thorough following of the perfectly obedient One—Christ Jesus. We proceed to ask,—

II. *How* does a saved man *become* a Nazarite? The directions given by Moses imply that it must be a *voluntary* and deliberate act,—the willing consecration of ourselves; and, as an act of the renewed will, the consecration of the whole man to God. This will arise from the prayerful consideration of the claim of God upon us as His *redeemed* ones, and of the blessedness of the thing itself. Pondering such scriptures as these: “Ye are not your own; ye are *bought* with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”—“Forasmuch as ye were not *redeemed* with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ.”—“Be ye holy; for He that hath *called* you is holy.”—pondering such truths as these, the Christian will determine,

in the fear of God, by the power of the Holy Ghost, to consecrate his spirit, soul, and body,—his faculties, affections, and members wholly to his Father's will and service. Moved by the all-constraining love of Christ, his heart will yield itself to Him, and his will be bowed to His gracious, gentle, and resistless sway. Besought and impelled by the "mercies of God," he will "present his body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, as his reasonable service." Not being conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of his mind, he will "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Suffer me, my friends, in Christ's name, in God's sight, and by all the mighty motives found in the love of God, in the cross of Christ, and in the beauty of holiness, to lay this ordinance of God upon your hearts and consciences. Oh, if you would be like Christ,—if you would answer, in *this* world, the end for which you have been redeemed and renewed,—if you would gladden the heart that agonized and travailed and bled and was broken for you,—if you would have the special *complacency* of "the Father of spirits" resting upon you, then seek the light of His presence, and, in the realized power of the one great offering of Jesus, willingly and deliberately "*yield* yourselves unto God, as those who are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." We ask,—

III. *Wherein* consists the characteristics of a true Nazarite? They are *threefold*,—abstinence from *wine*, and all that appertains to the vine-tree, the allowing of the locks of the *hair* to grow, and the avoidance of *death*.

1. Thus runs the divine canon: "He shall separate himself from wine and strong drinks, and shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink; neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried. All the days of his Nazariteship he shall eat nothing that is made of the vine-tree, from the kernel even to the husk." This is the first law of the Nazarite. *Wine* is the emblem of earthly pleasure—the symbol of natural joy. "Then said the trees unto the vine, 'Come thou, and reign over us.' And the vine said unto them, 'Should I leave my wine, which *cheereth* God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?'" "He watereth the hills from His chambers, that He may bring forth food out of the earth; and wine, that *maketh glad* the heart of man." Jesus told His disciples that He would no more drink of the fruit of the vine, until He should drink it new with them in His Father's kingdom; implying that this earth would afford Him no joy until the kingdom of God should be established, the enemy bound, and Himself, with His glorified saints, reigning over the children of men. Clearly, then, the vine and its fruits are the symbols of this world's joys and pleasures. In the language of the *New Testament* it would read, "All that is in the world—the lust of the *flesh*, and the lust of the *eyes*, and and the pride of *life*—is not of the Father, but is of the world." The pleasures which the Father has not originated, into which His hand would not guide His children, and in which His presence would not cheer them,—the pleasures which men love rather than God,—all that from which the cross of Christ would separate the crucified members of Christ,—all that from which

the "pleasures which are at God's right hand" would attract the risen sons of God,—these, all these, are the "vine of earth" of which the Nazarite must not taste; for they are pleasures apart from God, and are therefore the pleasures of sin. Perhaps we should not travel out of the record if we were a little to particularize the illustrations here given.

Wine may be said to symbolize the more refined and elegant joys of earth. The pleasures of song, the subjects of taste and beauty, which fascinate the eye and entrance the ear and enchant the imagination, and which fills the sensuous part of man's being with manifold delights: things which it would be deemed the height of self-righteous pride to withdraw from, save by those who see them in the shade cast over them all by the *cross* of the rejected Son of Man, and who look upon them in the light of the coming *glory*.

Strong drink may characterize the more ambitious pleasures of mankind, referred to by the apostle John as "the pride of life." The kind of honor laid at the feet of Moses, who refused to be called "the son of Pharaoh's daughter." The pleasures which gratify the intellect and the higher aspirations of the natural man, and which stir the deepest passions of his being. The lust of power, of distinction, and of greatness; all that stands at the antipodes of the character of the meek and lowly Son of Man.

The *vinegar* of wine and strong drink may represent the rougher and ruder joys of a like kind with the preceding, with which the less refined and the less exalted of the human race seek to satisfy their craving for pleasure. Yet equally with the others, the pleasure of

sin sought to be enjoyed apart from Him who is the only source of true and lasting joy.

The *liquor* of grapes, the *moist* grapes and *dried*, may characterize the ordinary, every-day, and less-intoxicating gratifications of social life. The enjoyments with which men seek to make present existence happy, by which they modify its sorrows and cares, and whereby they drive away from them all intrusive thoughts of God, of truth, and of eternity. While the *kernel* may fitly symbolize the very essence of this world's joys, which can only be participated in by those of its devotees who possess the highest order of taste, and who have the most refined sense of its choicest pleasures. But of the *husks*—what shall we say of them? Are they not the pleasures sought and indulged in by those who dwell among the swine? Are they not the food of the fornicator, the covetous man, the drunkard, the gambler, the gluttonous man? Are they not the things which gratify the filthier lusts of the flesh, in all their abominable hideousness in the sight of God? concerning which the inspired apostle would say, "Let them not be once named among you, as becometh saints."

But here it might be asked, Must the Nazarite, then, forswear all connection with these things? Is the evil invariably in the things themselves, or in the uses made of them by the natural mind and heart of man? Only *one* kind of answer can be given to questions like these, and it will meet them all. Whatever a Christian can do in the fear of God, wherever he can go, led by the hand of God, whatever he can enjoy in the presence of God, and beneath His holy, loving, watchful eye, and whatever he can pursue consistent with the injunction,

“Do *all* in the name of the Lord Jesus,” and “unto the glory of God by Him,” that thing he may do, that thing he may enjoy, that thing he may pursue, and yet be one truly separated unto God, and not defile the head of his Nazariteship. Whatever you can take with you to the resurrection-side of the cross of Jesus, and delight in there, will befit your position as a consecrated servant of your divine Master and Lord.

“The *cares* of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things.” (Mark iv. 19.) “Cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life.” (Luke viii. 14.) “Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with *surfeiting*, and *drunkenness*, and the *cares* of this life,” etc. (Luke xxi. 34.) Thus much for the first rule of the holy order of Nazariteship.

2. The second law of the Nazarite is, that the locks of the *hair* should be allowed to grow. Three things are represented by the hair,—strength, comeliness, and subjection. *Strength*, as in the case of Samson, against which no power of the uncircumcised Philistine could prevail: *comeliness*, as in the case of Absalom; for “in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty; from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him. And when he polled his head, he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels.” Comeliness, as implied in the words of Jeremiah, “Cut off thine hair, O Jerusalem, and cast it away, and take up a lamentation on high places;” and in the words of Isaiah, “Instead of well-set hair, there shall be baldness:” *subjection*, as taught by the Spirit in the epistle to the Corinthians, “If a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her; for

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her hair is given her for a covering.”—“For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head, because of the angels.”

The spiritual truths taught in this second rule of Nazariteship are, then, these: that the Nazarite will be “strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might;” that he will be beautiful in the eyes of the Lord, as He beholdeth in him the features of the character of the perfect One whom he seeks to follow; and that he seeks to be wholly subject to his God in all things, and alway. That all his strength and comeliness are yielded up to God for His sole service and glory. Not that there is any strength in himself, for he is perfect weakness, and in his flesh good doth not dwell; but so far as Christ’s strength is perfected in his weakness, so far as Christ’s comeliness is developed in his character, he can render himself to God as His faithful and devoted servant, set apart to Him according to this holy ordinance. But oh, my friends, be assured of this, that only in the Nazarite-position,—the position of real separation to God by the cross of Jesus Christ—even in the power of the resurrection-life, will you find this strength, and be able to present to the eye of your God and Father the features of this comeliness. In no other element than that which is breathed in the divine presence will our spiritual strength grow; while in the atmosphere of earth the bloom of Nazarite-comeliness will surely wither and fade.

3. The third rule of Nazariteship was, that the separated one should come at no *dead* body. Thus ran the divine canon: “He shall not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother, or for his brother, or

for his sister, when they die; because the *consecration of his God is upon his head.*" Holy, solemn, and searching words! It is often through the nearest and dearest ties of earth, in the society, and through the influence of loved and cherished ones, that we unconsciously or unwittingly compromise the principle of practical obedience to God. It seems unnatural to abstain from things in which we may gratify those that love us, with such apparent little sacrifice of what appears to them to be merely a matter of opinion. But these words warn us of the possibility,—yea, of the probability that our dearest friends may become the means of drawing us from our true Nazarite-position. On the other hand, it is in the family that the Nazarite, as other Christians, is tempted to allow hastiness of spirit, feelings of unkindness, and words of carelessness to have place. It is often amongst those dearest to us that we show our *real* selves, and betray our *true* state, rather than to those outside the home-circle. Many a child or servant may pass for a consistent Christian abroad, who grieves God's Spirit and a Christian parent's heart by disobedience at home. Many a Christian parent or master may have a good report of them that are without, whose domestic character may not accord with the description of the true Nazarite. But this holy rule applies every where,—alike in the world, in the household, and in the church. We will let the New-Testament teaching instruct us on this part of our subject. The holy doctrine therein prescribed is *practical separation* from all that would cause spot or stain to the spirit or conscience—from all that has in it the nature of death. One word will suffice.—“Wherefore come out from

among them, and be ye *separate*, saith the Lord, and *touch not* the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from *all* filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Filthiness of the *spirit* has to be guarded against as well as the filthiness of the *flesh*. The thoughts of sin, the purposes of sin, the secret inward lust, as well as the outward evil word or act, will bring defilement, and mar the strength and beauty of the Nazarite-character. In pondering these sacred canons, are we not constrained to say, WHO is *sufficient* for these things? and have we not need to listen to the words of our divine Lord, "MY GRACE is *sufficient* for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness"?

IV. The Nazarite may *lose* his position.* A prayerless, unwatchful mood of mind, the intermingling with society into which the hand of the Father would not lead His little ones, the neglect of the "word of truth," carelessness of walk, may bring about this sad result. Indulgence in the wine-cup of earth's joy, seeking the sensuous pleasures of the world, contact with the defiling evil of the flesh, eating the husks of the vine-tree, repose in the Delilah-lap of pleasure, will shear us of our strength, cause our comeliness to lose its bloom, and render our subjection to God a difficult and pleasureless task. In vain does the shorn Nazarite assay to

*Not, of course, his standing before God in virtue of his Saviour's work, but "the joy of His salvation, the joy of the Lord which is his strength"—practical nearness to and communion with God.—Ed.

meet his enemies, and to do battle for his God, as at other times. And often the saddest part of this sad story is, that it must be said, as of Samson, "He *wist not* that his strength was departed from him;" and so he falls an easy prey to his vigilant and vigorous foes. Time forbids our lingering over this part of the picture; but we must urge each one of you to deal with his own soul in this matter. O Christian Nazarite, is thy hair shorn? has thy *strength* failed? is thy *comeliness* departed from thee? is the spirit of *subjection* of mind and heart and will to God gone? and has thy practical *obedience* virtually ceased? Oh, sad, disastrous loss! "How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed! The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter! Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing was of sapphire; their visage is darker than blackness; they are not known in the streets."

V. The Nazarite-position can be *restored* and regained: for this great mercy the Lord has made provision. Let us see what that provision is, and how happily it is adapted to meet the failure, and to restore the *practical* standing of the fallen one. "If any man hath defiled the head of his consecration, then he shall *shave* his head in the day of his cleansing; on the seventh day shall he shave it." This is the *first* thing to be done. On the day of rest, indicating the complacency which a holy God ought to have in His separated one, and the rest which the Nazarite ought to have in the favor of his God; on the day of rest he is to

stand *bare-headed* before the Lord. Every vestige of strength put off, every symbol of comeliness laid aside, and nothing but weakness and uncomeliness presented to the holy eye of God. The solemn *confession* that in all things he has failed, that his subjection to his Lord has been grievously neglected, that he has become unclean, and that the repose of his soul in the light of the divine face has been disturbed,—the heartfelt acknowledgment that all has been lost. The Nazarite bowing his bared head before God, presents a striking and fitting type of the *self-judged* saint in presence of his holy Father, confessing his sin, and avowing that he has defiled the head of his consecration of the strength and of the beauty that were dedicated to God. How *many* professedly separated ones this position becomes! and how *often* it becomes them! Let us *each* seek, by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, to learn, and let none neglect to take it, from high-mindedness or wrong thoughts of truth on the one hand, or from a sense of shame and worthlessness on the other.

But vain would be this act were not the *offerings* provided through which renewed cleansing can be justly effected. "In the *eighth* day"—the day after the Sabbath, when the great Surety, with all His Church came forth from under sin and death into the resurrection-state—"he shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons, to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation; and the priest shall offer the one for a sin-offering and the other for a burnt-offering, and make an atonement for him." Thus he shall come, appreciating the great truth of his resurrection in Christ, realizing that Jesus has borne the guilt of his failure, confessing that

the failure sprang out of the sin of his fallen flesh; but in faith avowing that nevertheless, in the fragrance of the great ascending offering, his God still regards him, and that this alone is the atonement—the covering for him. Putting all in the hands of the great High-Priest, to offer on his behalf before the Lord. “And he shall consecrate [or separate] unto the Lord the days of his separation [or consecration], and shall bring a lamb of the first year for a *trespass-offering*.” Thus, while avowing that trespass has been committed, for which the trespass-offering alone could atone, again cherishing and expressing the sincere and earnest desire to be afresh devoted to the service of his God. And how blessed the result of taking this place of lowly self-judgment, with the head thus bared before the Holy One! for thus runs the holy canon: He “shall *hallow his head that same day*.” All the preciousness of Christ, the ascending offering, shall consciously rest upon him; the sin shall be covered, and the trespass set aside, the stain cleared away, and God shall again look upon him as His consecrated servant. (“Restored to the joy of God’s salvation,” now “he can teach transgressors God’s ways, and sinners be converted unto Him.”—Ps. li.)

VI. Let us consider next “the law of the Nazarite when the days of his separation are *fulfilled*.” He is to enter the presence of God, and stand before Him, still relying on the holy *burnt-offering*, and still and only seeking to be accepted in the perfectness of Jesus. He shall still confess that all rests on the basis of the unblemished *sin-offering*. He shall there own that, once at enmity with God, he found restoration and reconciliation only through the spotless *peace-sacrifice*. He

shall still acknowledge that God can feed on nothing but that which Christ is on behalf of His people. These various offerings, representing the different aspects of the one great and all-powerful Sacrifice, being presented by the priest for him, "the Nazarite shall shave the head of his separation, and shall take the hair of the head of his separation and put it in the fire which is under the sacrifice of his peace-offerings."*. On finally entering the presence of God's glory, with all the service which he may have rendered, and with all the strength and comeliness with which grace may have adorned him, he shall confess that all has been given him through the reconciling blood and death of Jesus, accepted for him by the fire of divine holiness, and that only through that reconciling blood could his holiest services be acceptable to God. And holding in his hand before the Lord the *shoulder* of the ram of the peace-offering, he shall thus own that all his strength and subjection were derived from Christ alone—the strength of Christ made perfect in his weakness; while the one unleavened cake and one unleavened wafer presented with the wave-shoulder shall indicate that all the beauty of his Nazarite-character was derived from the grace of Him who was the perfect Meat offering—grace ministered by the Holy Spirit. Thus shall the Nazarite, at the *end* of his course, stand before God, in the full consciousness that himself and his service are accepted in all the preciousness of God's

*Four offerings presenting Christ's work in its perfections on the cross, there is added two others, (meat) presenting His blameless and holy life, and (drink) "His soul exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Owing God's judgment and acceptance of him there, he burns his hair, expressing his own judgment.—ED.

precious Son, and in all the perfectness of His living and dying obedience for His people.

VII. "*After that, he may drink wine.*" This is the final law of divine Nazariteship. When the earth shall have received her King, when the risen and glorified saints shall be enthroned with her Lord, when the Spirit shall have been finally poured out upon restored Israel to win the nations to God, and the things of earth be used as *from* and *for* God by His millennial saint, *then* shall the Nazarite drink the fruit of the vine—the joy coming from earth—with Jesus in the kingdom of His Father. Till then, to find pleasure in this Christ-rejecting world is to deny our separation from it by the cross of Christ, is to forget our standing in the heights of glory in connection with our risen Head, and to falsify the confession of our strangership here through our hope in the coming One.

Brethren, *where* are the true Nazarites, who earnestly seek to walk according to these divine canons, and practically to maintain this holy standing? Alas! alas! might not the Lord bring against His Church now the solemn charge pressed upon Israel by the prophet, "I raised up your young men for Nazarites. Is it not thus, O ye children of Israel? saith the Lord. *But ye gave My Nazarites wine to drink?*"

(Adapted from Jno. Offord.)

—how happy the closing of this precious scripture (Num. vi.)! from which may the Lord grant us to learn His lessons for our souls: "The Lord *ble*ss thee, and *keep* thee; the Lord make His face *shine* upon thee, and be *gracious* unto thee; the Lord lift up His *countenance* upon thee, and give thee *peace.*" (vv. 24-26.)

TRUSTING LOVE.

AS we mix in life, there comes, especially to sensitive natures, a temptation to *distrust*. In young life, we throw ourselves with unbounded and glorious confidence on such as we think well of—an error soon corrected, for we soon find out—too soon—that men and women are not what they seem. Then comes disappointment; and the danger is, a reaction of desolating and universal mistrust. For we look on the doings of man with merely worldly eye, and pierce below the surface of character, we are apt to feel bitter scorn and disgust for our fellow-creatures. We have lived to see human hollowness—the ashes of the Dead-Sea shore—the falseness of what seemed so fair—the mouldering beneath the whited sepulchre; and no wonder if we are tempted to think “friendship *all* a cheat—smiles hypocrisy—words deceit;” and they who are what is called *thinking* in life contract by degrees, as the result of their experience, a hollow distrust of men, and learn to sneer at apparently good motives—that demoniacal sneer which we have seen—aye, perhaps felt, curling the lip at times, “Doth Job serve God for *naught*?”

The only preservation from this withering of the heart is *love*. Love is its own perennial fount of strength. The strength of affection is a proof, not of the worthiness of the object, but of the largeness of the soul which loves. Love *descends*, not ascends. The might of a river depends not on the quality of the soil through which it passes, but on the inexhaustibleness and depth of the *spring* from which it proceeds. The greater mind cleaves to the smaller with more force than the other to it. A parent loves the child more than the

child the parent; and partly because the parent's heart is larger, not because the child is worthier. The Saviour loved His disciples infinitely more than His disciples loved Him, because His heart was infinitely larger. Love *trusts* on—ever *hopes* and expects better things; and this, a true springing from itself, and out of its own deeps alone.

And more than this; it is the *trusting* love that makes men what they are trusted to be—so realizing itself. Would you make men *trustworthy*? *Trust* them. Would you make them *true*? *Believe* them.

And it is on this principle—that Christ wins the heart of His redeemed. He trusted the doubting Thomas, and Thomas arose with a faith worthy of “his Lord and his God.” He would not suffer even the lie of Peter to shake His conviction that Peter might love Him yet, and Peter answered nobly to that sublime forgiveness. He has loved *us*: God knows why—I do not; and we all, unworthy though we be, respond faithfully to that love, and try to be what He would have us.*

Therefore, come what may, hold fast to love. Though men should rend your heart, let them not embitter or harden it. We win by *tenderness*: we conquer by *forgiveness*. Oh, strive to enter into something of that large celestial charity which is meek, enduring, unretaliating, and which even the overbearing world cannot withstand forever. Learn the new commandment of the Son of God.—*Rowland Hill*.

THE best prayers have often more groans than words.
Bunyan.

*In the measure that we enjoy His love to us (1 Jno. iv. 19).—ED.
(20)

“YOUR FATHER KNOWETH.”

PRECIOUS thought—My *Father* knoweth!
 In His love I rest;
 For whate'er my *Father* doeth
 Must be always *best*.
 Well I know the heart that planneth
 Naught but good for me;
 Joy and sorrow interwoven,
 Love in all I see.

Precious thought—My *Father knoweth*,
Careth for His child;
 Bids me nestle closer to Him
 When the storm beats wild!
 Though my earthly hopes are shattered,
 And the tear-drops fall,
 Yet He is Himself my solace,—
 Yea, my “all in all”!

Sweet to tell Him all He knoweth,
 Roll on Him the care,
 Cast upon Himself the burden
 That I cannot bear.
 Then, without a care oppressing,
 Simply to lie still,
 Giving thanks to Him for all things,
 Since it is His will.

Oh, to trust Him, then, more fully!—
 Just to simply move
 In the conscious, calm enjoyment
 Of the *Father's* love,
 Knowing that life's checkered pathway
 Leadeth to His rest,
 Satisfied the way He taketh
 Must be always best.

L. W.

"I LEAVE IT ALL WITH JESUS."

[Written by a young lady previous to undergoing medical treatment for the removal of a disease which would have proved fatal had not the Lord blessed the means used to her perfect restoration.]

I LEAVE it all with Jesus;
Then wherefore should I fear?

I leave it all with Jesus,
And He is ever near.

I leave it all with Jesus—
Trust Him for what must be:

I leave it all with Jesus,
Who ever thinks *for* me.

I bring it all to Jesus,
In calm, believing prayer;

I bring it all to Jesus,
And I love to *leave* it there.

Each tear, each sigh, each trouble,
Each disappointment,—all,

I love to *give* to Jesus,
Who loves to *take* them all!

Then why should drooping spirits
Or sinking fears be known?

Why should *I* bear a burden
Which *Jesus* calls His own?

Ah, no! though dark and heavy
Ofttimes my way appears,

One look—one word from Jesus
Of holy comfort—cheers.

In *love* He has afflicted—
In *mercy* used the rod;

But it has made me humble,
And brought me nearer God!

And soon another token
Of His kindness will be given,

And the happy prospect gladdens,
Of either *health* or *heaven*! F. H. K.

WHAT ABOUT THE TERMINUS?

“I’M sick of the excitement, and of hearing every one you meet say, ‘Well, what about the *terminus?*’” Such were the words of a fair lady who sat opposite me at a table, while traveling recently. Her remark had reference to the likely issue as to the terminus of a line of rail, which, at the time, was a subject of general conversation, and certainly much disputed. Methought, dear reader, how well for you and me to transfer these words to another connection, and put the question home to our hearts as to *eternity*. WHAT ABOUT THE TERMINUS? No room in this for the cunning and crafty wiles of eager politicians; no room for the ebb and flow of hope and fear in the hearts of interested owners of real estate; no room for the high-strung, nervous desperation of the speculator; for here *certainty* may be ours, and *now*. And again, because it is so, no room for the passive on-looker, with unconcern as to the issues because he has nothing placed at stake, for all are concerned herein, “for what is *our life?* It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away;” and then comes our eternity. Then let us regard with interest this matter in which *we* are concerned, dear reader. How will it be as to the terminus of this line in which *we* each, perforce, have stocks,—are shareholders, either to our eternal bliss, as possessing “the unsearchable riches of Christ,” or otherwise, bankrupted, to our eternal woe, as “without God and without hope” forever? *Whither bound? Where*, let me ask, as one with you in this common interest, will it place you?—

nay, where are you *now* placed by His infallible disposal who "knows the end from the beginning," and before whom the light and the darkness are the same. Hear these words: "He that believeth on the Son *hath everlasting life*: and he that believeth not the Son *shall not see life*; but the wrath of God abideth on him." Such is the testimony of Him who cannot lie, and such is our condition on the one side or the other,—possessor of "eternal life," or "condemned already." No guess-work here, dear reader; no room for *doubt* upon the one hand, yet great room for *fear* on the other, if the former is not ours. Mark its certainty, absolute and eternal,—"*hath* [which must be now] *everlasting life*"—"condemned *already*." May God's voice reach thy heart of hearts, saying unto thee, "*Where art thou?*" Is it so, fellow-traveler to eternity, that thou art the possessor of everlasting life? or is it, can it be, that, "despising the riches of God's grace, thou treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God"? (Rom.ii.5.)

The Lord grant unto each beloved reader "an answer of *peace*"—the peace "*made* by the blood of His cross," *preached* unto us in the gospel, and *possessed* alone by *simply trusting* Him. *Ours*, this eternal good; *His*, the eternal praise.

B. C. G.

A COMMON device of Satan's is either to drive to despair, or to draw into false peace. If a man utterly despairs, he may easily be induced to destroy himself; if not, the rebound from despair will be some desperate penance and lying trust.

MAGGIE ALLEN'S WORK.

A Story of the Ministry of Tracts.

A YOUNG girl lay lonely and depressed on her couch. She had been a sufferer from serious and complicated diseases from her childhood upward, and although very moral, very thoughtful, engaging, and intelligent, had continued, until lately, a stranger to the power of divine grace. A near and dear friend had been the means of spiritual blessing to her soul, and after a long and anxious seeking-time, Margaret Allen had found *peace*. Henceforth her life was filled with a new light, brightened by a new experience; and, with the eager yearning of a newly converted soul, she longed to do good to somebody else. Fain would she have gone forth to engage in active service on behalf of her Saviour, but alas! she was a helpless invalid, and as such, doomed to perpetual inaction. She could sit and work with her fingers, or write, but she could not move from place to place without the aid of others.

Here, then, was a cross to bear—heavy indeed. To long to do good to the bodies and souls of others, and yet to be doomed to remain inactive,—cut off from all opportunities of active work,—seemed too great a trial of faith and patience. And as she noted how some other people—strong, active, and gifted—passed by all opportunities of doing good, seeking only their own pleasure or their own aggrandizement, it seemed harder than she could bear. At times she sought to question

God's wisdom in thus afflicting her, and would tearfully ask *why* He had dealt thus with her. It was in such a mood as this that she now lay, tearful and desponding, yearning, oh, so vainly, for something to do for the Master.

Just at this juncture, a knock was heard at the door—a knock, followed very speedily by the entrance of a visitor.

“Ah, Mrs. Willans! I am so glad to see you! I am so lonely!” was Maggie's first exclamation.

“What! Tears! What is the meaning of those tears? Are you crying as you count up your *mercies*? eh, Maggie?” The speaker was a middle-aged lady of refined and motherly aspect. She too had passed through many vicissitudes, and had experienced many trials of faith, but through it all, her Christian character had shone forth with a clear and steady light. It was by means of her ministrations that the invalid had passed from a state of faithless, cold indifference into the region of bright hope and “*joy and peace in believing.*”

“No, Mrs. Willans. Mercies! It seems to me sometimes as if I had far more *trials* than mercies. I would fain do something for Jesus, but I can't. See here, I am chained to my couch, while others, in the full flush of strength and health, care nothing at all about Christian work.”

“‘It is *well* that it was in *thine heart.*’ Was not this commendation given to David in response to his desire to build the house of God, a sacred privilege which, however, he was not permitted to enjoy. So, Maggie, God says to *you.*”

Mrs. Willans' soothing words fell like oil upon the

troubled waters of Maggie Allen's mind. Yes, truly, God knew that it was in her heart to do good; and knowing this, would He not accept the desire? Still—still—it was hard to sit still, in forced seclusion and pain, at twenty, the age of exuberant youthfulness, and do nothing!

“Stay,” said Mrs. Willans, “a sudden thought strikes me now. It is very near Valentine's day, and the post will bear many a missive of playful love and affection to many thousands of homes and hearts. Could you not utilize the same agency for doing good, Maggie?”

“How?” questioned the invalid, looking up surprised.

“In this way: You can write and compose very readily. Now suppose you were to make a service of this work for the Master between this time and next Valentine's day. You know some to whom a letter, or a leaflet, or a tract, would be a blessing. You know others who would be benefited most by an affectionate, faithful letter. Send a cheering tract to any poor tried child of God whom you may happen to know. Send a rousing, faithful communication to any friend who may be indifferent or careless; and a tract, with directions as to the way of salvation, to any who may be awakened or anxious. Thus you will work for Jesus as truly, and possibly more successfully, than as if you filled some public position in the world's eye. I earnestly counsel you to adopt this plan.”

“Do you really think that I shall succeed in doing good in this way?”

“I do indeed. You are told to ‘*sow beside all waters,*’ and the ministry of tracts and letters is so unobtrusive, so secret, and yet so comprehensive and far-reaching,

that Christians might do a vast amount of good in this way if they would only lend their energies to the work. As a special department in Christian work, it is too much neglected. I fancy that more souls might be won for Christ, and more wavering, anxious ones led to decide rightly, if this agency were only made use of to the extent which it might be."

"You have given me a new idea, Mrs. Willans," replied Maggie. "I should never have dreamt of using such an agency for doing good; but I think I'll try it. At any rate, the work will afford me mental occupation, and that is much to me. Then, doubtless, I shall get blessed myself also. Yes, I'll think about it, and see what I can do." A new energy sparkled in her eyes and animated her voice.

"No one can be the instrument of blessing to others without being blessed themselves in some way or another. And as a remedy for anxious worry and tearful despondency, commend me to some form of Christian activity. Having tried the prescription myself, I know it will answer. Now dry your tears, if you please, Maggie, and instead of thinking of your sickness and your incapacity for work, try to strike out a new line of usefulness for the Master. Who knows how many jewels you may be the means of winning for the Master's crown if you work faithfully and earnestly?"

Maggie said no more; but the suggestion had fallen into good soil, and, having done so, germinated, and bore fruit quickly. To the young girl's soul the advice of her friend came as a direct answer to her yearning for some path of usefulness. She could not teach in the Sabbath-school; it was not given to her to labor in

any of the various walks of feminine or Christian usefulness which are open to women generally; but here, in the quietude and solitude of her chamber, she could write words of warning or encouragement or sympathy, which should find a responsive echo in many hearts. Her list of acquaintances was large, in spite of her afflictions, seeing that she belonged to a wealthy family; and as she set her thoughts to work, she remembered one and another to whom this unobtrusive ministry would, in all likelihood, be useful. And with the eagerness of a young worker, she lost not a day in getting together a suitable stock of tracts, leaflets, and small books, calculated to serve her purpose. Then, with "*much prayer*" for wisdom and guidance, she addressed herself to the task.

* * * * *

Valentine's day came, and among the load of missives carried from house to house by the overworked postmen were some from Maggie Allen. Among them was one addressed to Hettie March, the liveliest, gayest, brightest girl of the whole singing-class. Her life seemed full of sunshine; nothing but prosperity, as it regarded temporal things, had beamed upon her; while her temperament was altogether of so sunny a character that she lived as happy and thoughtlessly almost as a butterfly. Some who saw her, and noted her vivacity and gay thoughtlessness, shook their heads sagely as they prophesied that "it would not last;" that "trials would come to her as well as to other folks." And many more envied her situation and prospects in life, as they contemplated their own shadowed paths. But to all this, Hettie turned an indifferent ear, and danced

her way through life perfectly heedless of the future, or the great hereafter. As usual, on this Valentine's morning, a shoal of valentines, presents, and letters containing "tokens of affection," came to hand, and the sunny-hearted girl rejoiced as she gathered all her little treasures together, thinking how rich she was in friends. It was not strange that the modest epistle, addressed in an unfamiliar hand, should escape notice until all the other more pretentious and larger epistles had been opened. Then her eye caught this, and taking it up wonderingly, she opened it. Before reading it, for it was closely written, as she could see by her rapid glance through the pages, she looked for the name of the writer. "Maggie Allen," thought she. "Surely, I know that name! Why, now I remember—she is the lame daughter of Alderman Allen. Whatever can she have to say to me, I wonder? We were never very much acquainted; but now I think of it, I saw her at a party at her father's house, and I remember pitying her for her enforced seclusion. But what makes her write to me?"

The next moment her eyes were rapidly scanning the printed pages, at first with a look of incredulous wonder on her face, then with eager curiosity, then of deep agitation. Some words in the "bow drawn at a venture" had penetrated between the joints of her armor of light-hearted worldliness, and gathering her letters and packets together, she withdrew from the family circle to the quietude of her own room. And once there, she perused again and again the following words, of new and strange import to her. Let us look over her shoulder, and see what words these were which so agitated her mind that she shook like an aspen leaf

while she read. It seemed as if the words came fraught with a message from "the far-off eternities," which would brook no delay.—

"Do not be angry with me, dear Hettie; do not turn my letter away with an impatient denial; for, believe me, I have prayed over what I am going to write, very much, and God has helped me to use my pen. He has given me courage, too, to wield this pen in His service; for, believe me, it is a great cross to take up. I am only a young Christian; I have not known the Lord many months; but for the time I have known Him, my life as been as happy and as full of joy as I can hope that it ever shall be, until I reach 'the better land.' You know, Hettie, dear, that I am an invalid—a helpless, hopeless cripple. No medical science can ameliorate the hopelessness of my lot, although papa has tried the most skillful physicians that we know. So I have to spend wearisome days and sleepless nights on my couch of pain, wondering, very often, why it pleased God that I should be so afflicted. And as I lay here, some days ago, yearning and praying for some work to do for Jesus, it was put into my mind that I might write letters or send tracts to those friends whom I knew, who might be benefited by such communications. This is how it came about. I want you to be *saved*—*saved from the wrath to come*. I am praying for your salvation, and expecting it. I long to know that you are numbered among Christ's people. I inclose a little tract, which will explain all about the way of salvation much better than any words of mine can; and if you will kindly read it, in response to my request, I shall take it as a personal favor. Oh, Hettie! what a

noble Christian you might make! With your talents, position in society, health, and opportunities of usefulness, you might do much work for souls. You might win many souls to Jesus, and so earn the plaudit of the Master, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.' I do not envy you in any thing, save your opportunities for doing good; but as I tearfully consider the contrast between you and me, I think, were I in your place, I would cheerfully sacrifice much to work for Jesus. Oh, Hettie! love Jesus, and all the rest will follow. He gave Himself for you; will you not love Him in return? And He is now waiting to receive you."

Another careful, eager reading—this time, of the tract. This too spoke of offered mercy, and emphasized the message which the letter had opened out. One extract will suffice:—"You are a sinner! 'All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.' 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die.' As a sinner you will be judged. 'We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.' 'He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.' But as a sinner you may be saved. 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.' 'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.' 'Behold, now is the day of salvation.' These messages of salvation are for your acceptance, seeing they are worthy of all acceptation. They are not for you to reject. You desire forgiveness, peace, rest; you wish to sit at the feet of Jesus, and to do the will of God;

then you must, to obtain these blessings, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and know that your sins are forgiven, through the shedding of His blood. Oh, do not reject these words of mercy and love. 'He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My words, hath one that judgeth him.' Sinner, remain no longer in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity."

As Hettie March glanced down the pages, first of the letter, and then of the tract—not once, nor twice, but many times—a new experience seemed to pass over her. New views of divine truth and divine requirements opened up before her, and she saw herself to be a sinner. She had acknowledged this, in company with other people at church, many hundreds of times, in a heedless, formal sort of way; but now it was pressed home to her heart, with a strange conviction of its reality. And what wonder? seeing that far away, in the invalid-chamber, Maggie Allen was *praying* for Hettie March? Neither was it any wonder that, before long, the young girl sought out the sick-room of her faithful mentor; or that, in a little time, it might have been said of her, "*Behold, she prayeth!*" That Valentine's day was "*the beginning of days*" to Hettie March—the commencement of a period of faithful Christian service and honored usefulness in the cause of her Master.

* * * * *

The postman sped on his way, and this time reached the house of a poor tried child of God—one who had for many months been in the crucible of "fiery trials." Bereavement after bereavement had followed, until, all the members of her family gone, her house was "left

unto her desolate," and the weary-hearted woman had the bitterest experiences connected with solitude to endure. Then, as if to try her faith to its utmost limits of endurance, came yet another stroke: a dearly loved brother, far away, committed suicide, while laboring under a temporary clouding of the intellect. Then the poor woman was overwhelmed; "the proud waters" went over her soul, and faith itself seemed to be paralyzed. Maggie Allen heard of the circumstances, and, knowing the sufferer, remembered her also in her ministrations. To poor Widow Hartley a letter and a tract, full of Christian sympathy, went that morning. From out the stores of her own experience, gathered by the ministrations of years of discipline, Maggie could bring consolation; and so, with many prayers for divine wisdom and divine blessing, she sent the message.

It reached her. The postman's knock was an unusual one at Widow Hartley's door—and indeed, ever since that desolate morning on which he had brought the news of the suicide, she dreaded his appearance. Contrary to her expectation, and almost to her wish, he knocked, however, this morning, and delivered to her a letter. It was in a strange handwriting, but a very lady-like one; and, filled with curiosity, she opened it. Without a pause, she read it through; then, turning to the fire, she sat down in her long-accustomed seat, and, covering her face with her hands, wept. Ay; but they were tears of joy—grateful joy, that somebody belonging to her heavenly Father's great family had remembered her, and ministered consolation to her, in this way. Then she took up the letter, and read again—

"You cannot tell how much I sympathize with you;

but deep as my sympathy is, it bears just as much comparison to that of Jesus' as a dew-drop does to the great ocean. And He knows your sorrow. He estimates your heavy burden at its real weight. He 'was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.' He is touched, therefore, with the feeling of your infirmities. And knowing as He does your sorrows, will He not strengthen you to bear them? I know that sometimes your faith fails beneath the accumulated load of trial, and it seems as if you could not trust your Father. It is difficult to trust where you cannot trace Him; but you may have strength to 'endure, as seeing Him who is invisible.' And remember the Lord's gracious assurance to Peter, when the apostle's faith was almost gone,—'Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.' Oh, sister, Jesus is praying for you, that your faith may not fail. And I pray for you. I know what trial is; I know what long-continued physical suffering, and inability, and deep mental depression are, and I sympathize with you. Do not faint, dear sister in Christ, 'in the day of adversity.' By and by, or perhaps soon, you shall be brought out of the fire, as gold purified seven times."

These words fell upon the mourner's spirit like a strain of melody from the far-off glory-land. Surely, they were inspired by Him who "doeth all things well," and who noteth even the sparrows in their flight. Poor Widow Hartley "*thanked God, and took courage*" again. This assurance of sympathy, springing up in a quarter from whence she least expected it, soothed her spirit and stimulated her failing faith. From that time, Maggie

Allen never pined for work. She had found something to do for her Master; something which, though quiet and unobtrusive as her own life, was yet far-reaching and powerful in its results. Religious literature, in the shape of leaflets and tracts, were continually coming to her aid; and these were joyfully distributed, along with written messages of warning, encouragement, or direction, until it became acknowledged that this form of Christian usefulness had become a most valuable auxiliary to the work of the Lord in that town. Even wayfarers, who picked up scattered tracts in the meadow or by the way, were blessed abundantly—unknown to and unseen by the invalid worker who caused them to be thus scattered abroad. Truly, Maggie Allen had learned the precept well, "*Sow beside all waters,*" and, in learning it, she found a new joy in life.

E. R. P.

DOES this accord with the mind of the One I love? Any one else's mind I am not bound to consult. If I can respond to *that*, I am happy, and I am useful. Am I ever troubled at my little usefulness? To be sure I am. But I ask, What is my path? Am I to seek to satisfy my own feelings in the working, or to do exactly what He may define for me? Do I execute the little He places within my range efficiently, or as He would wish? If I must with shame answer No, how can I expect Him to introduce me into a sphere where I might see myself more useful, but where *He* would not be the end I sought.

"CHRIST has made us personally His objects, and He looks for us to make Him ours."

MATTHEW I.

“**J**ESUS Christ, Son of David, Son of Abraham.”
Fourfold character: Saviour (v. 21); *King* (ii. 2-6); *Root of Power* (Rev. xxi. 16); *Vessel of Promises* (Gal. iii. 16). Comp. Rom. xv. 8.

1. “*Judas and his brethren*”—supremacy over Israel shown. “Phares and Zara”—double testimony to his sin; God calls attention to the fact that *Judah*, from among his brethren, and in circumstances of sin and shame, is the forefather of our Lord and Saviour! “Out of the *eater* came forth meat”! “*Lion* of the tribe of Judah”—study Judah’s history.

2. “*David the king*”—(Root of David). Kingly power and exaltation through Solomon (“*Beloved of the Lord,*” “*Peaceful*”) comes in connection with his sin also. Comp. Heb. xii. 11—“Chastening,” and “*peaceable fruits.*”

3. “*Josias . . . Jechonias and his brethren . . . carried away to Babylon.*” Then, Lo-ammi—“*Not God’s people.*” Nation (Judah) and throne (David) gone, yet the Lord’s eyes are over them in the place their sins put them. Jehoahaz is made king by the *people*; Jehoiakim (his brother), by the king of *Egypt*; Zedekiah, by *Nebuchadnezzar*; Jehoiachin (son of Jehoiakim), by the *Lord*; and though carried to Babylon for his evil ways, becomes the centre of God’s dealings with the remnant. “*After . . . brought to Babylon,*” fruitful in the land of exile. God’s *mercy* endureth forever; His *compassions* fail not, though they reap His judgment for their sins. (Comp. 1 Pet. v. 10; Gal. vi. 7.)

4. "*Joseph the husband of Mary*"—connection with the sovereignty of God's grace in the birth of Jesus,—to *human* eyes, like former cases of sin and shame.

Four witnesses to the *sovereignty* of God in grace:—

"*Judas and his brethren.*"....."*Phares and Zara.*"
 "*David the king.*"....."*Wife of Urias.*"
 "*Jechonias and his brethren.*".....*Carrying away.*
 "*Joseph, husband of Mary.*".."*Before . . found,*" (v. 18.)

Four witnesses of human need and ruin:—

"*Thamar*"—in our *sins*.....Col. ii. 13.
 "*Rachab*"—under *judgment*.....Eph. ii. 3.
 "*Ruth*"—*afar off* (Gentile ground).....Eph. ii. 13.
 "*Bathsheba*"—*unfaithful*1 Cor. i. 27-29.

The Lord, in grace, identifies Himself with all. (Isa. lix. 16.)

"Birth of Jesus Christ *on this wise*:" born of a *virgin*.
 Testimony as to His being a *man*, Son of David and *Abraham*; apparently and *legally*, Son of Joseph. "Jesus of Nazareth, a *man*," etc. (Acts ii, 22.)

Son of Mary—the one through whom He comes:—

"*Mary, of whom was born Jesus*" (v. 16); "His mother *Mary*" (v. 18); "*She shall bring forth a Son*" (v. 21); "*Behold, a virgin,*" etc. (v. 23); "*She brought forth her first-born Son*" (v. 25).

Son of *Joseph*; *legally*, and in the eyes of others:—

"*Joseph the husband of Mary*" (v. 16); "*Mary . . espoused to Joseph*" (v. 18); "*Joseph her husband*" (v. 19); "*Mary thy wife*" (v. 20); "*Took unto him his wife*" (v. 24); "*Thou shalt call His name Jesus*" (v. 21); "*He called His name Jesus*" (v. 25).

His name, { JESUS—"Jehovah, to save His people."
 { *Emmanuel*—"God with us."

Legally, Son of Joseph.

Actually, Son of Mary.

Personally, JESUS—Emmanuel.

JOSEPH, (not Mary, as Luke i,) the one God's dealings are with here, to substantiate the claims of our Lord to the *throne* of David. "*Before they came together*" (v. 18); "*Thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife*" (v. 20). "*All this was done*"—to make Him, in the sight of men, Son of *Joseph*, while actually born of the *virgin*, and in Himself, Jesus-Emmanuel, the Saviour-God. (Comp. Titus ii. 13; iii. 6.)

"Joseph, raised up from sleep, did" unquestioning *obedience* to the will of God, and *self-control*; to him *first* God reveals the wondrous mystery that He who was born of Mary was Jehovah, Saviour of His people.

1. The line in which the Messiah comes.
2. Who He is—Jesus Christ, Son of David, Abraham, Joseph.
3. Manner of His birth—Born of the virgin Mary—Jesus, Emmanuel.
4. Scope of His mission—"Judas and his brethren,"
"Jechonias and his brethren."

All Israel—represented in the feeble returned remnant, its immediate range at His birth.

UNBELIEF says, "*How* can such and such things be?" It is full of "*hows*;" but faith has one great answer to ten thousand "*hows*," and that answer is—*God*.

DAY-DRILL.

HOME is day-drill. If you are not up to day-drill, how can you expect to go through your evolutions on a field-day? "Prepare thy work, and make it fit for thyself in *the* field." There is a tone and a ring about one who has controlled himself at home, which must tell on others when he is abroad. If I have practiced restraint when I am free to do as I like, surely I can submit to it with ease and truthfulness when it is required of me. To be always in buckle and armor is very irksome, but the sorest part of the exercise is getting inured to it. Habit is second nature. When you are well up to drill at home, you will be ready for all that is required in open battle.—
(*Extract.*)

OH, how delightful it is to cultivate a spirit of praise and thankfulness!—to be always ready to cry "Halleluiah!" It does so glorify God when His people live in an atmosphere of praise. It imparts a heavenly tone to their character, and speaks more powerfully to the hearts of those around them than if they were preaching to them from morning till night. A Christian should always be happy, always bright with the spirit of praise, always reflecting back upon this dark world the blessed beams of his Father's countenance.
(*"Things New and Old."*)

I KNOW nothing *stronger* than the grace of God, and I know nothing *weaker* than myself.—*J. N. D.*

“THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD.”

“THE Lord is *my* Shepherd,” oh, words full of peace!
 How sweetly they cause all desponding to cease!
 My soul, as it hears them, is hushed into rest,
 With calmness and gladness and glory possessed.

The Lord is my Shepherd, the God of all might,
 The thought of my weakness no more can affright;
 He hears me, and carries me all the day long;
 I love to be helpless while He is so strong.

The Lord is my *Shepherd*, my footsteps to guide,
 From harm to protect me, for want to provide;
 He is mine just as truly as though I alone
 Were tended and cherished and kept for His own.

He “goeth *before*” me to show me the way;
 I have but to follow His steps day by day:
 ’Tis He who goes first, so it is not for me
 To know what the way for to-morrow will be.

He “*makes* me lie down” with a tender constraint,
 Which thoughts cannot picture, and words cannot
 He gently compels me to cease from all strife, [paint;
 To rest on His love, and to live in His life.

He goeth *before* who “restoreth my soul;”
 Beside me “the *waters of quietness*” roll;

Rich goodness and mercy are following nigh,
And all round about me the green pastures lie.

He "*leadeth* me" on where the calm waters flow,
He keeps me "beside" them wherever I go;
O glorious paradox, wondrous and blest!
He leads me along, yet I'm lying at rest.

I fear not "the shadow of death" and the grave,
For He who is "with" me is mighty to save;
The terrible substance, O Lord, was for Thee,
Now only the "*shadow*" can fall upon me.

I have not within the dark vale to abide,
'Tis but to walk through to the opposite side;
And even the shadow no darkness can wear,
Since Thou, blessed Saviour, will shine on me there.

"Thou spreadest my table" in sight of my foes,
They stand and look on, but they cannot oppose;
"My cup runneth over" with joy and with praise,
Thy goodness and mercy shall crown all my days.

A king and a priest I am made unto Thee;
"Thy house," O my Lord, shall my dwelling-place be;
There, under Thy shadow, my soul finds her rest;
And dwelling in Thee, I know well I am blest.

(*Selected.*)

PRAISE.

(Lecture, Montreal, Nov., 1885.)

THE *first* occasion for praise mentioned in the Bible was the works of God in *creation*. "When the foundations of the earth were laid," then "the morning stars *sang* together, and all the sons of God shouted for *joy*." (Job xxxviii. 6, 7.) The *second* cause for praise was what we get in that familiar fifteenth of Exodus—Israel's *redemption* from their bondage in Egypt by the Lord's right hand of *power*. Then we get no praise for well-nigh forty years. Their toil in the desert took it all away—the hot sands wore it all out of them, and for forty weary years not one note of praise are we told arose from that "redeemed," because *erring*, people. The desert stillness indeed was often broken, not with songs of praise, but with *murmurings*. Now just before they leave the wilderness, we hear one more song of praise, and its notes are very sweet, its occasion striking, and its lessons precious for our souls,—this time, not the song of redemption, but the song of *restoring grace* (Num. xxi. 17–18).

Their forty years' probation and trial had well-nigh run their course, their "men of war" all gone, "their carcasses fallen in the wilderness," and their children, which they said would be a prey, stood right in view of the promised land. Aaron had been replaced by Eleazar, and Moses was soon to die and be replaced by Joshua, who was to lead the people into Canaan. "Then sang Israel,"—THEN, when they were about to turn their backs on the wilderness and go in to "possess

the land"—when they were about to exchange the desert-sands for the "land flowing with milk and honey." Then, after God was "oft grieved with that generation," ere they left the desert for good, we hear Him say, as it were, "I am going to teach them now the *blessing* they *ought to* and *might* have had going through this wilderness, *all along the way.*" God is going to supply a rebellious people with water out of the dry and desert sands, over which they had been passing these forty years. The very spots which only brought forth their chidings and murmurings, and told of the rebellion of their *hearts* within them, ought to have been the occasion of realizing their richest blessing—the presence with them of the *living God*. "They went to *Beer*: that is the *well* whereof the Lord spake unto Moses, '*Gather* the people together, and *I will give* them *water.*'" Once more the Lord was going to display Himself in sovereign grace, and pluck His hand out of His bosom in behalf of His people; once more tell His poor wayward ones that, despite their waywardness, "in all their affliction *He* was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them, in His love and in His pity He redeemed them, and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old." Their song is unto *the well*; they call upon *it* to respond to their *need* because of Him who was in their midst to answer it, and then upon *themselves* to *sing* or answer to the blessing in appreciative thankfulness and praise. Precious, and unaccustomed employ for poor erring, murmuring hearts and lips! And how much, alas! can each of us truly own to being their "fellows," and it be said of us "These are *murmurers* and *complainers*," instead of

“Happy are these Thy servants, which stand continually before Thee and hear Thy wisdom”—whose hearts say, “Praise *waiteth* for Thee, O God.” “How excellent is Thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings. They shall be *abundantly satisfied* with the fatness of Thy house, and Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures.” But *how* does He do it? “The *princes* digged the well, the *nobles* of the people digged it, by the direction of the *lawgiver*, with their *staves*.” (v. 18.) What a humbling thing, menial work, for princes and nobles to be engaged in—digging a well! The lesson is plain: they must needs be humbled, and learn that “the *lofty* looks of man shall be humbled, and the *haughtiness* of men shall be bowed down, and the *Lord alone* shall be exalted in that day.” And in the very *manner* of digging the well, they owned the folly and sin of all their murmurings—“with their *staves*”—the pilgrim-badge. Thus God’s restoring grace to a rebellious people brought forth their praises. So if we find *our* hearts, as theirs, saying, “And wherefore hath the Lord brought us into this land to fall by the sword?” be assured, it is because we are not broken that these murmurings arise in our hearts. Jesus says, “Take My *yoke* upon you, and *learn* of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls;” *this* is the great lesson of a Christian’s heart—learning subjection to the yoke of Christ. Thus, we read, “Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee; in whose heart are the ways of them. Who passing through the valley of Baca *make it a well*.” (Ps. lxxxiv.

5, 6.) Are we willing to come down to *dig* in the very sands which cause so much weeping and sorrow, and learn in them God's ways in grace toward us? If so, God will cause to "*spring up*" out of those scorching sands of "the great and terrible wilderness" streams of *refreshing* all along the way, to draw forth our praises continually. The Christian makes a mistake if he thinks he can avoid or shirk the trials and tribulations of the wilderness. Our Lord has said, "In the world ye *shall* have *tribulation*;" but also, "In Me ye shall have *peace*." So instead of murmuring, let it be the occasion of a deeper knowledge of God our Father and of Jesus our Lord and Saviour. With the mention of but one more—the song of *Moses* (Deut. xxxii.), we will come to the psalm mentioned. This song is, as it were "of *mercy* and of *judgment*." In a New-Testament expression, "The God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you *perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle* you" (1 Pet. v. 10), is what it speaks to your hearts.

It commences with publishing the name of the Lord and the greatness of our God, declaring Him "the Rock, whose work is perfect and His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He." Then, retracing on the dark background of His people's perversity and crookedness how He *chose, found, led, instructed, kept, fed, and chastened* them; and then, finally, "The Lord shall judge His people, and repent Himself for His servants, when He seeth that their *power is gone*, and there is *none shut up, or left*." (Deut. xxxii. 36.) "Mercy rejoicing against judgment."

1. (1-7.)

O give THANKS unto the Lord, { HE is good :
 for { HIS mercy endureth forever.

Let THE REDEEMED OF THE LORD say so, whom HE hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy, and gathered them out of all lands, { East.
 West.
 North.
 South.

THEY wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way ;
 found no CITY to dwell in.

{ Hungry,
 Thirsty,
 Faint.

Then
 THEY cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and HE delivered them out of their distresses.

HE led them forth by the right way, that they might go unto a city of habitation.

2. (8-14.)

O that men would praise the Lord, for HIS goodness,
 for HIS wonderful works unto the children of men !
 for HE satisfieth the longing soul,
 filleth the hungry soul with
 with goodness.

SUCH as sit in DARKNESS, and in the shadow of DEATH, being bound in AFFLICTION and IRON ;

Because
 THEY rebelled against the words of God, contemned the counsel of the most High : therefore HE brought down their heart with labor ;

THEY fell down, and there was none to help.

Then
 THEY cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and HE saved them out of their distresses.

HE *brought* them out of *darkness* and the *shadow of death*, *brake* their bands in sunder.

3. (15-20.)

O that men would praise
the Lord, for HIS *goodness*,
HIS *wonderful works* to the
children of men!
for HE hath *broken* the *gates* of
brass, and *cut* the *bars* of
iron in sunder.

FOOLS

Because { THEIR *transgressions*
of { THEIR *iniquities*
{ *are afflicted*.
{ THEIR soul *abhorreth* all
manner of meat,
{ THEY draw near to the
gates of death.

Then
THEY cry unto the Lord in
their trouble, and HE { *saveth* them out of their
distresses.
sent His word, and
healed them,
delivered them from
their destructions.

4. (21-30.)

Oh that men
would { *praise* the LORD for HIS { *goodness*,
And let them { *sacrifice* the sacri- HIS { *wonderful works* to the
fices of thanks- children of men.
giving,
and { *declare* His works
with rejoicing.

THEY { *go down* to the sea
that { *in ships*,
{ *do business* in great
waters,

These see { the works of the
Lord,
{ His wonders in
the deep. HE { *commandeth*,
raiseth the stormy wind
which lifteth up the
waves thereof.

THEY { *mount up* to the
 heavens,
 go down again to the
 the depths;
Their { soul is melted be-
 cause of trouble.

THEY { reel to and fro,
 stagger like a drunk-
 en man,
 are at their wit's end.

THEN

THEY cry unto the Lord in
their trouble;

HE *bringeth* them out of
their distresses,
HE *maketh* the storm a *calm*,
so that the waves thereof
are *still*;

Then

THEY { are glad
THEY { be quiet;

so HE *bringeth* them to their
desired *haven*.

5. (31-43.)

Oh that men would *praise* { HIS *goodness*,
 the Lord, for { HIS *wonderful works* to the
 children of men!

Let

THEM *exalt* Him also in the
congregation of the people,
praise Him in the assembly
of the elders.

HE *turneth* rivers into a *wil-*
derness.
water-springs into
dry ground.
fruitful land into
barrenness;

for

THEIR wickedness that dwell
therein.

HE *turneth* the wilderness in-
to a *standing*
water,
dry ground into
water-springs.

There HE *maketh* the hungry to
 dwell,

That

THEY { may *prepare* a city for
 habitation;
 and *sow* the fields,
 and *plant* vineyards

which may yield
fruits of increase.

HE *blesseth* them also,
suffereth not their cattle
to decrease.

So that

THEY are multiplied greatly;

Again,

THEY are minished

and brought low

through { oppression,
affliction,
sorrow.

HE *poureth* contempt upon
PRINCES,
causeth them to wander
in the wilderness,
where there is no way.

Yet HE *setteth* the POOR on
high from affliction,
maketh him families like
a flock.

A few thoughts on this psalm (so often blessed to the hearts of God's beloved people,) it is now upon one's heart to present, in the hope that it may still further result in yielding *God* the praise of which it speaks, and *us* the blessing He loves so well to bestow. Its order is simple and precious, its divisions marked with beautiful precision, and its diversity and varying lessons abundant. They are thus:—

The psalm is divided into five parts, each part giving a distinct cause for praise. Verses 1-7, 8-14, 15-20, 21-30, 31-43.

PART I. (*v.* 1-7.) *Redemption* is the cause which draws forth praise: not only redemption *from* (*v.* 2), but also redemption *to* (*v.* 3). First, the desire that praise might be yielded for the Lord's "goodness and His wonderful works" is expressed, and then the recital of them.

The call to praise—Jehovah's goodness and enduring mercy—Himself and the display of His character.

Ver. 1.—The cause for praise is twofold: "He is *good*, and His *mercy* endureth forever." Then we see,—

2. *Who* is the object of praise—He who alone is worthy of it, because of what He *is*; His goodness and mercy unailing to meet us in all our need and circumstances; and of what He has *done*—*redeemed, satisfied, delivered, preserved, and cherished* His people.

3. *Who* are to praise Him—"The *redeemed* of the Lord . . . whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy; and gathered" around Himself as the centre, from every clime and nation.

Only His redeemed know what the goodness and mercy of God is; so ver. 2 says, "Let the *redeemed* of the Lord say so." *Redemption* can be looked at in various ways. Here, first, it is redemption from the hand of the *enemy*. That is, we were under the power of Satan, and needed deliverance; and so it is written, "He hath delivered us from the power of *darkness*,"—"turned us from darkness into light, and from the power of *Satan* unto God." To accomplish this, Jesus came where *we* were, that He might bring us where *He* is. Ver. 3, "gathered." Ver. 2 was redemption *from*, ver. 3 is redemption *to*. We are looked at as at a *distance* from God and needing to be brought *nigh*. We were "without Christ," being "aliens," "strangers," etc. (Eph. ii.) "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were *far off* are *made nigh* by the blood of Christ." Thus we have the condition *out* of which we were redeemed, and the place *into* which redemption

puts us. For *us*, it is *gathered* to the name of Christ, waiting for the time when, with all the saints who have gone before, we shall sing, "Thou art worthy for Thou wast slain, and hast *redeemed* us by Thy blood." (Rev. v.) "*Wandered*" (v. 4). Here we have another feature of redemption. A Christian is not a "wanderer," he is a "*pilgrim*." A wanderer is a tramp, a slave of circumstances; he has no object before him, as in this verse, they had no certain path and no destination before them. What they needed was a *way* and a *city*,—in other words, a *path* and a *home*. We have both in Christ through redemption. He is "the *way*, the truth, and the life," and "He has left us an example, that we should *follow* His steps." And in Him, too, we have a *home* in the Father's house. His going there has "prepared a place for us," and now we are to wait for the fulfillment of His promise, "If I go away, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that *where I am*, there *ye* may be also." And just as a journey makes us value the rest of home at the end, so it is in the path we gain the competency to enjoy heaven. Such, then, is our "calling on high of God in Christ Jesus"—"partakers of the heavenly calling"—"pilgrims and strangers;" but just as soon as a Christian gets out of communion, he becomes *practically* a wanderer instead.

Thus, *oppressed* by "the hand of the enemy," *scattered* to the winds of heaven, *wanderers*, *homeless*, *hungry*, *thirsty*, and *faint* is the sevenfold picture drawn of their condition; and "THEN they *cried* unto the Lord . . . and He *delivered* . . and *led* them forth," etc. (v.6,7.) The two things most needed He provides—"the *right*

way," and "a *city* of habitation." Blessed fourfold redemption this, embracing,—

1. Redemption from the hand of the enemy.
2. Gathering to Himself from all parts.
3. Deliverance out of all distresses.
4. Leading by the right way to the city of habitation.

PART II. (v. 8-14.) *Restoring grace* is the cause of praise. We have one verse showing His grace in *general*, several to show the *special* need, and one to show the *cause* of praise in His meeting it. This is the divine way. First, God impresses us with a sense of our need; and then, when we cry unto Him, He comes in in His own boundless grace to hear and answer us. Ver. 10 is the condition into which we may get—"darkness and bondage," "the shadow of death." Ver. 11 is what causes us to get into that condition. We *rebel* against the *words* of God (not word). But the special word He has for us *at the moment* is the very one we may like to dodge. We slight, neglect, or refuse His *word* and *counsel*: we are preoccupied with our own plans, forgetting that "the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps," and this brings us into "darkness and bondage." Ver. 12. We then need Him to come down, as at Babel, and pour contempt on all our *pride*. How often we commence the day without a thorough sense of our need of dependence on God. "When I said, 'My foot slip-peth,' Thy mercy, O Lord, *held me up*." When not so, our feet slip, and down we go. "Without Me ye can do nothing." Jesus is as much my *strength* as He is my *salvation*. (Ps. xxvii. 1.) Ver. 14 speaks for itself.

He again answers in grace as they cried to Him in need.

PART III. (v. 15-20.) *Healing and deliverance* causes praise. Ver. 16-18 is what they passed through under God's mighty hand; "*then they cried* unto the Lord." When we fail to use the Word to *keep* us up, God follows us with it to *pick* us up. "He sent His word, and healed them." This part says to us, as in Micah vi. 9, "*Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it;*" and Heb. xii.—"*Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him.*" If Satan cannot get us to be careless about what the Father is doing, He tries to make us feel the rod so heavy that we hardly know it to be the *Father's hand* that holds it. We dodge the discipline here, and it meets us at the next corner. "*Submit ourselves to the Father of spirits, and live;*" then the dealings of God with us "yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness," being "*exercised thereby.*" To learn to see the Father's hand when it comes through *another* is often what tests us the most. For instance, some one does us an injury. We are very likely to set about finding out the source of it, and in impressing the one who did it with the injustice of it; instead of leaving it to God, and saying, Father, *what does this mean for me?* and "*committing ourselves to Him that judgeth righteously.*"

PART IV. (v. 21-30.) "*The calm and desired haven.*" Grace using even the tribulations of the way as the occasion of praise. Ver. 23, 24, it is they who "do business in *great waters*" that "see the works of the

Lord, and His wonders in the deep." In passing through *tribulation* (great waters), how often we learn in a deeper measure these "*wonders of the Lord.*" Ver. 26, 27—If God cannot teach us by ordinary means, He must use *extraordinary* ones. When we have learned the lesson that He would teach us, then "He maketh the *storm* a *calm*," and says to the winds and waves, "Peace: be still." Do not our lives often say, "Master, carest Thou not that we perish?" Like Elijah, we sit down under the juniper-tree, (1 Kings xix.) and wish the discipline were ended even by our death.

Once more the call for praise as formerly, and how added,—

"Let them exalt Him also in the *congregation* of the people, and praise Him in the *assembly* of the elders;" and then the occasion—"He TURNETH *rivers* [vast general sources of supply] into a wilderness, and *water-springs* [lesser and more special sources of refreshment] into dry ground, a *fruitful land* [a sphere of labor in which we expect recompense (Heb. vi. 7)] into barrenness." How often is it so! we depend upon the rivers—long-trusted resources, and our own water-springs of refreshing—means of grace, so termed, etc., or the sphere of labor we may be engaged in, and suddenly all fails, and God reveals a needs-be we should look higher than the creature, up to Himself, the fountain-head above.

PART V. (v. 31-43.) *The Lord's judgments and His mercies* are the cause for praise. Paul in prison is an example of all this. Those whom we would think

would have been a comfort to him were "preaching Christ of contention, supposing to add affliction to his bonds;" "all sought their own, not the things that were Jesus Christ's;" all Asia had turned away from him; "many walk enemies of the cross of Christ;" and yet withal he could say, "I have learned, in *whatsoever state* I am, therewith to be *content*." This is the lesson here. We want to find Christ *enough* under *all* circumstances. If He is not enough for me just *now*, He will not be further on. God dries up the "water-springs," etc. Some creature-stream dries up. Something we have been depending on, no matter what, as soon as our hearts depend upon it, God in His grace and wisdom dries it up. Jonah's gourd is an example. There is nothing wrong in Jonah having a gourd; God gave it to him for shelter, and to lead his heart above—not to usurp His place. But Jonah got occupied with it, "was exceeding glad because of the gourd"—satisfied to rest under it, in forgetfulness of Him who gave it; so God had to take it away. How He would like to trust us with more than He now can! but we are so apt to get occupied with *what* He gives us, that He has often to remove our blessings, dry up the streams that have refreshed us, that we may be more cast upon *Himself* alone.

But this is not *all* He does, blessed be His name! for if He blights *human* hopes, it is only that He may give us *divine* ones; if He teaches us that "we have no sufficiency of *ourselves*," it is only that He may teach us also that "all our sufficiency is *of Him*;" if He lets us be "pressed out of measure, above strength, despairing even of life," it is to give "the sentence of

death in ourselves, that we should not trust in *ourselves*, but in *God* who raiseth up the dead." Thus did the apostle learn it, and hence could say, "Who *delivered* us from so great a death, and *doth* deliver; in whom we trust that He will *yet* deliver," God compassing him round on every side. Some find it here. He who dries up rivers and water-springs, and makes the fruitful land barren, in His holy discipline of us, next "turns the *wilderness* into a standing [lasting] water, and *dry ground* into water-springs;"—opens up sources of supply and refreshment where our hearts thought not of them, that thus we may be constrained to say, "What hath God wrought?"

"And there He maketh the hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a *city*," etc.—become established in the Lord's blessing, "which maketh rich, adding no sorrow thereto." Beautiful fulfillment of His promise!—"When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the vallèys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah-tree, and the mirtle, and the oil-tree; I will set in the desert the fir-tree, and the pine, and the box together: that they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it." (Is. xli. 17-20.) God displaying Himself as the "God of *patience* and *consolation*," "God of all *comfort*," "God of all *grace*." But alas! for *man*, after His turning of the wilderness

into blessing, and making the hungry to dwell, blessing them also, and suffering it not to decrease, "AGAIN they are *minished* and *brought low*." How small the measure of blessing! and how brief the space of time He can intrust us with it! and yet how His heart yearns over His people to do them good! saying, "Oh that My people had hearkened unto Me, and Israel had walked in My ways! I should soon have *subdued* their enemies *fed* them also with the finest of the wheat; and with honey out of the rock should I have *satisfied* thee." (Ps. lxxxi. 13-16.) "O that thou hadst hearkened to My commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea." (Is. xlvi. 18.) Once again He must "appoint the *rod*," and do "His strange work in *judgment*," bringing them low, pouring contempt on princes, and causing them to wander—come to the end of their own resources. "Yet setteth He the *poor* on high from affliction"—"shows grace to the lowly," and "maketh him families like a flock," causing even the barren to be *fruitful*. "Worthy of all our *praise*," we may surely say; and worthy of our consideration too, surely, are His blessed *ways*, in which, as in Himself, there is "no *variableness*, neither *shadow of turning*"! Scantly, and "here a little and there a little," we have seen them; and may we delight in being as the wise—"observing these things," and so "*understanding* the loving-kindness of the Lord." Thus, if He takes away our blessing, it is to give us back twice as much again—Himself and added lasting blessing also. For this, may we ever thank Him: *He* is ever what He is, and He is ever *ours*.

B. C. G.

HURRY. WORRY. WAIT.

HOW very few persons there are to be found who do not know the meaning of these two first words! In a single day, it is an oft-repeated expression, "Oh, do make haste! I am in such a hurry; I can't wait!" Does not hurry bring worry, and cause wasted strength?

Even when we were children, do we not remember the spirit of impatience that prompted us to help the crocus out of its silver covering; the arum to unfold a little quicker; to just give a touch to the slowly developing leaf of the india-rubber plant? For we longed to see them expand; but alas! our childish fingers hurried God's work, and spoiled that which would have been beautiful had it had the whole time He intended to give it to expand in. How many children ask for the unripe fruit, and will take no denial! It looks pretty, though green; it must be nice. The fruit is gathered and given; it has no sweetness, all because it needed time and sunshine.

Never be in haste, except about two things. Haste to be *saved*: make haste to *obey* God's commands.

The angels had to hasten Lot from the land of Sodom, and all his family (Gen. xix. 15-17).

David sets a good example of cheerful obedience, after having thought on his ways: "I made haste, and delayed not to keep Thy commandments" (Ps. cxix. 59, 60).

We have lately entered on a new year: the past may have been one of wrong hurry,—of worry and unrest; and because we may have yielded to this, our peace has been disturbed, our spirits fretted, and communion lost. Trials have come and gone; have we learned in

any measure the truth of Isaiah xxviii. 16, "He that believeth shall not make haste"? Believing in the Lord and His power gives patience, and the questioning spirit of Why? and How? is lulled to rest. There is so much said about *waiting on the Lord* in the Book; so much to encourage patience—"Wait on the Lord *all the day*" (Ps. xxv. 5; xxvii. 14; xxxvii. 34). Do not do it once and then leave off, but "*wait continually*" (Hos. xii. 6); then, "*wait only*" (Ps. lxi. 5). If we will do this in all trouble and difficulty, God is so gracious that He will show us His way and means of deliverance.

"He changeth not; He falleth never;
So trust in Him to-day,—forever."

Again we are told to wait patiently (Ps. lii. 9). The experience of some may be, "We wait for light, but behold obscurity" (Isa. lix. 9; Job xxx. 26). God wants to shut us up to Himself. There is not a chink of light—but *wait*: every hope gone—but wait: it is dark all around—but wait. It is true, man's extremity is God's opportunity. Tried, tempted, discouraged one, listen! "The Lord is good to them that wait for Him" (Lam. iii. 25). "Blessed are all they that wait for Him" (Isa. xxx. 18). What grieved the Lord so with Israel of old? "They waited not for His counsel" (Ps. cvi. 13). And have we not thus grieved Him also many times, not waiting for His counsel and direction?

Oh, let us learn this year to wait on the Lord. He may try our faith, but there is no truer promise—"They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me" (Isa. xlix. 23).

No hurry, no worry, can we have if we "wait on the Lord."— "Wait thou His time, so shall thy night
Soon end in glorious day."

Catharine Ellis.

“THEN SHALL EVERY MAN HAVE PRAISE OF GOD.”

(1 Cor. iv.)

AND *can* it be, my God! that Thou ere long
wilt stoop
To *praise* Thy purchased ones—and pub-
licly announce
To gazing, wondering multitudes that this poor
deed
Was done for Thee,—that act of self-renouncing
love,
Observed by none down here—that quiet patient
course
Of *waiting* on the Lord, though earth and hell
opposed?
All these Thine eye doth see, Thy loving heart
approve;
And Thou dost deem them worth a record in the
book
Of Thy remembrance—worth rewarding in that
day,
When we must all appear before the judgment-
seat,
When that glad word, “Well done” shall greet
the raptured ear
Of many a one whose spirit here was wounded
oft,—
Whose words and deeds had oft been misinter-
preted,—
By bosom *friends*, by *brethren*, not by foes alone.
E’en now, the sense that Thine all-searching
eye looks on
Gives rest to weary hearts, and strength to fal-
tering steps,

What will it be to have *Thy* welcome and *Thy* praise!

To adore the grace which kept in sore temptation's hour!

And, with full heart, to give the glory all to Thee.

Surely that joyful day will recompense for *all!*

The ocean crossed—the haven reached—at home with Thee!

O Father God! 'tis sweet to know *Thy* watchful eye

Is *ever* on *Thy* children's path—*Thy* loving arm

Upholds the feeble ones. Help us to lean on Thee,

And still to trust *Thy* guidance and *Thy* faithfulness;—

Not reckon on results,—but simply to *obey*;—

Having the mind of Him who came down here to do

His Father's will—who trod the path of suffering,

That He might know to sympathize with aching hearts—

To succor tempted souls—who drank the cup of wrath

For us,—that we might share His *glory* and His *throne*.

M. A. L.

THE children of God are apt to think meanly of their prayers and holy things, and to doubt the acceptance of their offerings, because of imperfections. It is well indeed to have the humble mind, but unbelief is not pleasing to God. The prattlings of a child are sweeter in the father's ear than all the best-spoken words of a bond-servant. "Without faith, it is impossible to please God."

SYMPATHY.

LOVE is said to be the noblest passion of the soul, a beam caught from the divine Sun; for we are told "God is love." Now if we examine this attribute, we shall find sympathy its fairest and rarest ingredient. Love is a mighty river, which, winding onward and onward, is a source of wealth and pleasure wherever it flows. Sympathy is that river overleaping its boundaries, and silently finding its way into innumerable recesses, a thing of joy and beauty, where it is impossible for us to follow its course. Love stoops from its pedestal to scatter blessings on the objects of its affections, but sympathy steps off that pedestal, and actually becomes a sharer of the joys and sorrows of those whom it is endeavoring to reach. Ah the magic in sympathy!—like some white-robed angel from above, she pushes her way through all barriers into our hearts, and we feel, though we cannot explain it, that our burden is lifted because it is shared. To follow in this path is no light thing; our own spirits may perforce have to bleed in the cause, for it is a rule in life that what costs us little accomplishes little. The tree that furnishes the healing balm has to submit to have the knife plunged into its own heart, and may we not draw from this analogy the reason why we have felt the sharpness of suffering? Who can guide another's footsteps like the one who has traveled the same road? Whose tears fall with such healing balm on wounded hearts as those who have known the same sorrow? It is no light thing to find an open sesame to the hearts of our fellow-creatures; and he who does so must submit to the inevitable process, and

find that loss and gain ever go hand in hand. Ah, but there is a reflex influence,—the tide of sympathy flows out from our hearts to return to us with a mellowed but a richer influence, and bearing on its bosom gifts far more precious than ever the stagnant waters of self-serving could yield.

“No man liveth to himself.” To live so as neither to give nor receive impression on those around us is impossible; and when the pages of our life are open before us, we shall be startled to find how wide-spread has been the influence of our most reserved actions. Rather let us throw away harsh judgments, casting a rich mantle of love and sympathy around us, for “the least flower with a brimming cup may stand and share its dew-drops with another near.”

We are told, if two instruments are tuned in perfect harmony, and placed side by side, when one is struck, the vibration is carried to the other, and the sound repeated by it. Let us remember that we must have our hearts so in unison with those whom we are endeavoring to comfort that unconsciously to themselves they will respond. Are we feeling the touch of bereavement in our homes? let us write the memories of our loved ones in deeds of light and love in the hearts of other sufferers. Are our hands palsied from long waiting in the furnace? strive to clasp our feeble fingers in another’s still more helpless; the touch will revive our own powers.

“Art thou stricken in life’s battle?
 Many wounded round thee moan;
 Lavish on their wounds thy balsam,
 And that balm shall heal thine own.”

May the prayers, efforts, and tears exhaled like dew-drops from our hearts return in such living showers, that under their influence our souls, expanded and ennobled, even here may join hands with that saintly ministration from above, and by and by find our place in that service where love and sympathy reign supreme.

MEDITATION.

HAVE you ever thought much of the exercise of *meditation*, and how frequently it is spoken of in Scripture?

Perhaps it may be from the want of this holy exercise, and really comprehending it, that the Church of the living God is wanting in unity of doctrine, and in spirituality of mind.

The *study* of God's Word may be concentrated, deep, constant, like searching for a vein of gold; and *memory* may marvelously retain and bring forth what *study* has discovered. But *meditation* is not the discovery of more or of new things, but a calm sitting down with God to *enrich itself* with what study has discovered, and *feeding with Him* upon the stores which memory has laid up.

Study and memory make the ready and admired speaker; meditation, the sweet, living *exhibition* of Jesus every where, whether speaking or silent (Josh. i. 8; Ps. civ. 34; cxix. 15). The former hunts for something new, when weary of the old; the latter finds renewed life, strength, and refreshment from the old, which are never old to meditation. Truths from an infinite, all-wise God—they have in them more than the best meditative faculty has ever or can ever digest.

May the Lord unfold to thee and me some of His own rich stores. They are so deep! But I am only at the surface of them. They are "our inheritance: it shall be forever."

“HE LEADETH ME.”

(Ps. xxiii.)

IN “pastures green”? *Not always*; sometimes He
Who knoweth best, in kindness leadeth me
In weary ways, where heavy shadows be—

Out of the sunshine, warm and soft and bright,
Out of the sunshine, into darkest night.

I oft would faint with sorrow and affright,

Only for this: I *know* He holds my hand;
So, whether led in green or desert land,
I *trust*, although I may not understand.

Beside “*still waters?*”—No, *not always* so;
Ofttimes the heavy tempests round me blow,
And o’er my soul the waves and billows go.

But when the storms beat loudest, and I cry
Aloud for help, the Master standeth by,
And whispers to my soul, “*Lo, it is I!*”

Above the tempest wild I hear Him say,
“*Beyond* this darkness lies the perfect day;
In *every* path of thine I lead the way.”

So, whether on the hill-tops high and fair
I dwell, or in the sunless valleys where
The shadows lie, what matter? *He is there.*

And more than this: where’er the pathway lead,
He gives me no helpless, broken reed,
But *His own hand*, sufficient for my need.

So, *where* He leads me, I can safely go;
And in the blest hereafter I shall know
Why, in His wisdom, He hath led me so.

Anon.

WHAT A SAVIOUR!

WHAT Christian has not sometimes given expression to the feelings of his heart in some such language as this, "*What a Saviour!*" That there should be to us, lost and ruined sinners, *any* Saviour, is marvelous mercy—is worthy of our highest admiration; but that there should be to us *such* a Saviour is still more astonishing. I have thought that we might have had a Saviour who should have been able to save us, and should have actually saved many, and yet not been such a Saviour as Him we have. Less tender, less condescending, less forbearing, I have thought He might have been, and yet have been a Saviour. Perhaps I have thought wrong. But certainly there is in the character of the blessed Lord Jesus much to draw forth the exclamation, "*What a Saviour!*"

. It seems as if Jesus had said more kind things and done more kind acts than were absolutely *necessary* to have been said and done by Him. Need He have made that apology for His disciples—who could sleep when He was in His agony,—“The spirit indeed is *willing*, but the flesh is weak”? I wonder how they could have slept in such an hour, but I wonder more at the apology their Master made for them. Need He have uttered that prayer on the cross, “Father, forgive them, for they *know not* what they do”? We don't expect such things from the innocent when dying by the hand of violence. If He had maintained silence during these hours of inconceivable anguish, we should have been satisfied. But oh, think of His forgetting Himself; and when they were deriding and in every

way insulting Him, hear Him meekly addressing His Father on their behalf, asking Him to forgive them, and pleading for them that they knew not what they did. It was not necessary that He should have paid any visible attention to the supplication of the thief,—it could not have been expected of Him; but that He should have turned His head and looked such forgiveness and love, while He said, “To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise,” is a strange mystery of love.

“*What a Saviour!*” How wonderfully constituted! He was *God*, as it was necessary He should be; and yet not merely God, but *man* too. A Saviour with two natures—one reaching up to God, the other down to us. How wonderful that He should not only have taken our nature (sin apart), but come down to our condition, and surrounded Himself with our circumstances,—become subject to such temptations as we are subject to! (See Heb. ii. 10.) Oh, “what a Saviour!” Why, He knows from experience what pain is; He has had the trials I have; He has been through this vale of tears; He knows how I am tried; He remembers how He was tried. If He never smiled, yet He wept—even over the very city and people whose soil and hands were about to be stained with His blood.

I wonder I love Him so little; I wonder He is not more precious to me; I wonder any should be offended in Him. How can He appear a root out of a dry ground? Why do not all see His form and comeliness? Why do not all come unto Him, who is “able to save to the uttermost”? It is no matter how *many* come to Him, He is able to save them *all*. Should all mankind agree to come, (blessed agreement!) or were

the population of the earth ten thousand times multiplied and they should all apply, He would save that countless company with the same ease as He can a single individual. Himself as "our righteousness" is capable of being applied to any number. The efficacy of His atonement can not only not be exhausted, but is incapable of diminution. The care of such a multitude as has been just supposed to come to Him would not distract Him, and the weight of such a charge as the salvation of the whole would not weary Him. There would be no danger of any one being overlooked or unheard or unprotected, for His eye and ear and arm are every where. No matter how long this world may last, and how great a multitude every generation of it may contribute to the kingdom of heaven; when the last invitation shall have been sent forth, and the last guest shall have entered in, still there will be room. *He is able to save to the uttermost.*

To the uttermost, in respect of the *character*, of the applicants. It is no matter how great the guilt, how many and black the crimes, and how deep the depravity of any one; Christ can save him as easily as if his guilt were less, and his crimes fewer in number and lighter in color; for such virtue has His blood, that whatever stain it touches it instantaneously removes. Let all hear it: "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin,"—*i. e.*, from sin of every kind, of every degree, of every aggravation. It makes no difference what species of sins we may have been distinguished for—whether they have been sins of impiety, or injustice, or intemperance, or inhumanity,—though we should have disregarded God, rejected His Son, and

grieved His Spirit, as well as injured our fellow-creatures and abused our own soul and body; nor does it matter under what aggravations we have sinned, what light we have shut our eyes upon, what motives we have resisted, and what privileges and means we have abused, or for how many years we have persisted in sin and hardened ourselves against God,—though we should have grown gray in iniquity, and our sins have brought us almost to the grave, provided only that we have come to God by Christ Jesus. These things will indeed mightily aggravate and enhance our condemnation if we remained unbelieving, but if we apply to Christ, they shall be no obstacles in the way of our being saved by Him. He is able to save the greatest sinners, and as willing to save them as any others; so that there is nothing more unscriptural than to give as a reason for not going to Christ that our sins are very many and very great. Admit that they are mighty as mountains, numerous as the stars, and red as scarlet, do they transcend the virtue of His blood and the efficacy of His Spirit? Has the world bound us by such a chain that the revealed loveliness of Jesus Christ cannot break the spell? Has Satan riveted his chains so fast upon us that the Redeemer's almighty arm cannot tear them off? Can any say of that love that brought Him down and bore Him through, that hitherto it goes, but no further, and that they are beyond its utmost reach? What if their case be a peculiar one? (though there is no reason to believe that it is, and they think so only because they are not acquainted with other cases, and every convinced sinner thinks he has reason to regard his case as peculiar,)—what if it be

the very worst case that was ever laid before the Saviour? according to the principles of the gospel, it is altogether immaterial. Is not Christ fully equal to it? But some one will say, "Is there not, however, one kind of sin that is unpardonable, and one description of transgressors for whom there remaineth no sacrifice? What if I have the guilt of that sin on my soul? Is not here an exception?—can Christ do any thing for me if this be my case? and I know not but it is." We say that the fact of your asking such questions and indulging such thoughts is proof sufficient that you have not committed that sin. And we say, furthermore, that if the blasphemer of the Holy Ghost were to come to God through Christ, Christ would be *competent* to save him. But this supposition can never become matter of fact, for the sin in question involves a malignant and determined rejection of Christ; so that to ask if such a person can be saved, is the same as to ask if he can be saved who obstinately perseveres in refusing the only method and means of salvation. It is the same as to ask whether the finally impenitent can be saved. Of course he cannot. But the reason, after all, is, that he *will* not.

To the uttermost. Consider it as having reference to the *perfection of salvation*. He can save completely; He can do all that is necessary to be done; He is able to carry on and consummate the work He commences. He does not perform one part of it and leave the rest to be performed by others, or to be left unperformed. Whenever He begins to build, He shows Himself able to finish. He is equal to the *whole* work. From the *love* and *pollution* and the *power* of sin He can deliver,

as well as from its *guilt*. He can sanctify those whom He forgives. There is not only a "robe of righteousness" with Him, but "treasures of wisdom," and the "faith that purifies." He can remove every temptation; or, if it seem better to Him, give grace to withstand it. He can support under every trial, can relieve in every extremity, is prepared for every emergency, is able to deliver from every sorrow, and to pluck from every hostile hand. For them that come to God by Him, He reigns, for them He pleads. He is all-powerful as a king, and all-prevailing as an intercessor. All His people are "taught of God." He has said that "sin shall not have dominion over them," and He is able to make it good. He can, and agreeable to His promise He will, shortly "bruise Satan under their feet." Oh, believer! whatever difficulties you labor under, whatever temptations harass you, whatever sins oppress you, whatever griefs afflict you, Christ has power to remove them all. Apply to Him; He is able to save *to the uttermost*. To them that believe, He is, "of God, made *wisdom* and *righteousness* and *sanctification* and *redemption*." "What a Saviour!"

Finally, consider this language as having respect to *duration: to the uttermost,—i. e., forever*. He is able to save as long as He liveth, and He is "alive for evermore." However protracted your pilgrimage on earth, and however wearisome and tedious the road you travel, He is able to lead and defend you. Besides, He can pluck out the sting of death, and take away the terror of the grave. He has power to keep securely the spirit that is commended to Him; and while the body lies mouldering in its dark and dreary receptacle,

His eye watches it until "the word of His power" shall raise it. He is able to unite again the divorced parts, and to introduce the complete persons of all His redeemed in the place and society which He has prepared for them; where, with a hand that can never tire, and from a fullness that can never be exhausted, He can and He will bless and continue to bless them, in a way and to an extent beyond the power of thought to conceive. Never, throughout eternity, will His love cool or His resources fail. Nor shall there be the sense of want, or the fear of change, or the apprehension of an end, felt in any bosom of all that shall beat with ecstasy about His throne. "He is able to save to the uttermost,"—even with *everlasting salvation*. Well may we exclaim, "*What a Saviour!*"

Say, what the key-note to that ceaseless song
 With which enraptured angel-voices swell?
 Redeemed sinner, ere thou join that throng,
 Methinks *thou* canst the tuneful story tell.
 Ah, *yes!* a chord, not seraph-hand could sweep,
My praise shall through eternal years proclaim;
 Joy all unknown to souls that ne'er could weep
 Shall tune my harp to *Christ my Saviour's* name.

GOSPEL GEMS.

THE Christian life is *in* Christ, *on* Christ, *by* Christ, *for* Christ, *with* Christ.

We have bitterness sometimes from God's saints: *Christ is sweet!* Faithlessness in this world: *Christ* is faithful. Deeper discoveries of our own sin: *His* blood cleanseth and His grace is sufficient. I find the ear of those who love me, at best,

partially closed : I have One that bends His ear to me, stoops to listen to me, never leaves me nor forsakes me, The sympathy of Christ!—that one truth is enough to break our hearts ; and the blood of Christ presenting us before God without a spot, and all this through free, unmerited grace,—this is enough for every day and hour and moment of our existence.

Never begin with obedience ; you will never attain it ! *Begin with faith*, and upon faith found this. “ He that loveth Me keepeth My commandments.”

Go to Calvary ; see who is dying there. Not *angels*, nor *man*, but, O strange sight ! the divine, the spotless Son of God, in man’s nature,—the beloved of the Father’s soul, that has been in the bosom of the Father from all eternity.

CHRIST’S LOSS OUR GAIN. Oh what a melting consideration is this ! that out of His agony comes our victory ; out of His condemnation, our justification ; out of His pain, our ease ; out of His stripes, our healing ; out of His gall and vinegar, our honey ; out of His curse, our blessing ; out of His crown of thorns, our crown of glory ; out of His death, our life.

Lord Jesus, Thou Light of Truth and Sun of Righteousness, shed Thy bright beams upon my heart, that I may know and, knowing, love Thee. Help me, my Strength, by whom I am sustained ; shine upon me, my Light, by whom alone I see ; and quicken me, my Life, by whom alone I live : for Thou art my Help and my Light, my Life and my Joy, my Lord and my God !

Well may we exclaim,—

“ *What a Saviour !*”

"THERE IS NOTHING BETTER."

"There is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines." (1 Sam. xxvii. 1.)

THIS was the language of David immediately after God had delivered him, in a most remarkable manner, from the hand of Saul. For a long while Saul had been hunting David from place to place, with the full intention of putting him to death; and now, for the second time, God had put Saul into David's power, so that, had David wished it, he could have taken Saul's life and put an end to his own dangers. But, as on the previous occasion, David refused to hurt the anointed king; and Saul was so touched by his magnanimity that he was constrained to say, "I have sinned: return, my son David, for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day" (1 Sam. xxvi. 21). And in fulfillment of this promise, Saul abandoned his pursuit of David, and "returned to his place" (v. 25).

One would have thought that all this would have been the means of encouraging David's heart, and inspiring him with fresh confidence in God's watchful care of him. But strange to say, it was just the other way, for the next chapter opens thus: "And David said in his heart, 'I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines.'" Think of it! The man who years before had gone out in the name of the Lord of Hosts to meet the giant champion of the Philistines, and had slain him,

now says that there is nothing better for him than to seek a refuge among those enemies of the Lord and of Israel. *Nothing* better for him?—oh, what a little step there seems to be between faith's triumphs and a complete downfall! When the danger was pressing and imminent, David was cast upon God, and God delivered him; but as soon as the danger was withdrawn for a time, David began to look at circumstances and probabilities. "It is not to be expected," he seemed to say to himself, "that I shall always escape so fortunately. I shall be sure to fall into Saul's hands some day." Why so? Would the *Lord* change, or cease to be able to protect His servant? Oh, no! but David was forgetting God now, and the next moment he was turning in heart to the Lord's enemies for help.

Has it never been so with us? In time of pressing need we have cast ourselves upon God, and He did not fail us; but when the pressure was past, we got our eyes off God and upon the difficulties. It seemed as though we could not always expect help and deliverance; and then we began to parley with sin, and to try and justify ourselves for yielding. "There is nothing better," we thought, than a compromise; and we settled down to a position that was wholly dishonoring to God. While the Lord lives and reigns, it is downright unbelief on our part that would lead us to be satisfied with anything short of a real and complete *obedience*. "There is nothing better" means, in effect, the Lord is no longer able to hold me up.

“TRUST HIM.”

“Trust in the Lord at all times.”

“I will trust and not be afraid.”

TRUST Him and fear not ; He will hold thy hand,
 And gently lead thee onward day by day ;
 The desert shall rejoice, and through the sand
 Refreshing streams shall mark thy onward way.

Trust Him, for He alone can safely guide ;
 Each step thou takest He has trod before ;
 Trust only Him, whatever may betide,—
 Trust Him to-day, trust Him for evermore.

Trust Him when danger thickens round thy way ;
 Trust Him though anguish fills thy grief-wrung
 heart ;
 Still put thy trust in Him, though He should slay ;
 The peace of perfect trust bids fear depart.

Trust Him at all times, trust in Him alone ;
 When thou art weary, lean upon His breast ;
 Has He not called thee His beloved—His own ?
 His presence shall go with thee, giving rest.

Trust Him in all thy weakness ; lean on Him
 Who is thine everlasting strength and stay ;
 Trust Him, for though thine eyes with tears be dim,
 His blessed hand shall wipe those tears away.

Trust Him, for He is the almighty power ;
 Trust Him, His showers of blessing fall on thee ;
 Trust Him each moment, trust Him every hour ;
 Trust Him through life, and for eternity.

ONE OF THESE DAYS.

ONE of these days it will all be over,
 Sorrow and laughter, and loss and gain,
 Meetings and partings of friend and lover,
 Joy that was ever so edged with pain.
 One of these days will our hands be folded,
 One of these days will the work be done,
 Finished the pattern our lives have moulded,
 Ended our labor beneath the sun.

One of these days will the heart-ache leave us,
 One of these days will the burden drop;
 Never again shall a hope deceive us,
 Never again will our progress stop.
 Freed from the blight of the vain endeavor,
 Winged with the health of immortal life,
 One of these days we shall quit forever
 All that is vexing in earthly strife.

One of these days we shall know the reason,
 Haply, of much that perplexes now;
 One of these days, in the Lord's good season,
 Light of His peace shall adorn the brow.
 Blessed, though out of tribulation
 Lifted to dwell in His sun-bright smile,
 Happy to share in the great salvation,
 Well may we tarry a little while.

Mrs. M. E. Sangster.

“BE YE STEADFAST, UNMOVABLE.”

(1 Cor. xv. 58.)

IF our hearts are not close to Christ, we are apt to get weary in the way.

All is a vain show around us, but that which is inside abides and is true, being the life of Christ. All else goes! When the heart gets hold of this fact, it becomes (as to things around) like one taken into a house to work for the day, who performs the duties well, but passes through instead of living in the circumstances. To Israel, the cloud came down, and they stayed; it lifted up, and on they went. It was all the same to them. Why? Because had they stayed when the cloud went on, they would not have had the Lord. One may be daily at the desk for fifty years, yet with Christ, the desk is only the circumstance; it is the doing God's will, making manifest the savor of Christ, which is the simple and great thing. Whether I go or you go, I stay or you stay, may that one word be realized in each of us—“steadfast, unmovable”! In whatever sphere, as matter of providence, we may be found, let the divine life be manifested—Christ manifested. This abides; all else changes, but the life remains and abides forever—ay, forever.

Not a single thing in which we have served Christ shall be forgotten. Lazy, alas! we all are in service, but all shall come out that is *real*, and what is *real* is Christ in us, and this only. The appearance now may be very little—not much even in a religious view, but what is real will abide. Our hearts clinging closely to Christ, we shall sustain one another in the body of

Christ. The love of Christ shall hold the whole together, Christ being every thing and we content to be nothing, helping one another, praying one for the other. I *ask* not for the prayers of the saints; I reckon on them. The Lord keep us going on in simplicity, fulfilling as the hireling our day, till Christ shall come; and then "shall every man have praise of God"—praise of God! Be that our object, and may God knit all our hearts together thoroughly and eternally.

J. N. D.

A LITTLE deaf and dumb boy at an examination at the institution in London a few years ago, on being asked "Who made the world?" immediately wrote,—

"In the beginning God created the heavens and earth."

He was asked, in a similar manner, "Why did Jesus come into the world?" when again the little boy, with a bright smile on his countenance, indicating delight and gratitude, wrote,—

*"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all
acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into
the world to save sinners."*

A third question was then proposed, evidently adapted to call the most powerful feelings into exercise: "Why were you born deaf and dumb, while I can hear and speak?"

"Never," said an eye-witness, "shall I forget the resignation which sat upon his countenance as he took up the chalk and wrote,—

*'Even so, Father, for so it seemed good
in Thy sight.'*"

OUR LOVED ONES GONE BEFORE.

JUST "absent from the body,"
 But "present with the Lord;"
 Blest, divine reality,
 The purchase of His blood.
 And thus our Father's calling
 Our loved ones from our side,
 "His own Beloved" waiting,—
 The Bridegroom, for His bride.

And thus our hearts, with anguish,
 Find solace at His feet;
 We murmur not, nor languish,
 But songs of praise repeat.
 Our earthly treasures vanish
 Just from our sense of sight,
 And heaven comes the nearer
 With faith's increasing light.

Our earthly ties are weakened;
 Our drooping hands hang down;
 Our little circle's broken
 By loneliness profound.
 Yet even this, "far better,"
 Since Jesus fills the place,
 And lights up all the darkness
 With His most blessed face.

The throne of judgment sprinkled
 With His most precious blood,
 "Within the vail we enter,"—
 "We are the sons of God."
 "The Holy Ghost is witness"
 That God is satisfied,—
 "With Christ we now are risen,"
 "And shall be glorified."

He whispers, for our comfort,
 " 'Tis but 'a little while,'
 And you shall share My glory
 In treasures undefiled,
 In mansions that are waiting,—
 In circles not of time,—
 In one eternal greeting
 Of love and joy divine."

With this our "song at midnight"
 The night is noonday clear,—
 The dawning of the twilight
 Speaks of that morning near.
 That azure morn is streaming
 Just o'er the hills of light,
 And glory! glory! beaming
 Upon our ravished sight.

With Him, "the vale of Baca"
 Springs up a well at noon;
 With Him, the "thorns and briars"
 Spring forth in Eden bloom;
 With Him, the desert blossoms,
 And fragrance fills the air;
 With Him, among ten thousand,
 The fairest of the fair.

Himself, our daily portion
 Of "Manna" by the way,—
 "Our rod and staff of comfort,"—
 Our bread and wine to stay,—
 Our rest for weary nature,—
 Our joy of what's to come,—
 The blest anticipation
 Of victories He has won.

C. E. H.

ALWAYS SEEING THE BRIGHT SIDE.

THE darkest cloud that ever comes over the believer has two sides, the earthward and the heavenward side. Remaining under the cloud and looking only at its earthward side, "the shadow of death" spreads like a pall over the soul, and over all things around; when above the cloud, and when viewing it on its heavenward side, however, all darkness changes into eternal sunlight, and the soul finds itself and all things around bathed in the everlasting light of God. "MEN do not see the bright light which is in the clouds." Believers, however, may ever see that light and dwell in it. Before the eye and footsteps of faith, "darkness becomes light, and crooked things straight, and rough places plain," and the darkest providences reflect upon the soul the everlasting smile of God. Say not, reader, that this is fiction, or an overdrawn representation of the possibilities or actualities of faith. All this is possible to every believer, and has been actual in the experience of multitudes in every age and condition of human existence.

Permit me here to instance a fact of actual occurrence, and to state the fact as it actually occurred. During the late war in the United States, a chaplain in the northern army lay in his tent, burning and racked with pain from a southern fever. Early one morning, a dark face peered into his tent. A colored woman entered, and with ineffable tenderness inquired,—

"Massa, does you see de bright side of dis 'ere?"

"No Nannie," replied the minister; "all seems dark where I am."

"Well, massa, I allus sees de bright side."

"How is this, Nannie? it may be you have not seen any great trouble."

"Mebbe I haben't, massa," she replied.

Then in her broken way she told him that, when a slave in Virginia, all her children had been sold, one at a time, and taken down south. Then her husband was sold from an auction-block and driven off likewise. Last of all, she was sold in a similar manner, and driven off to labor, and, as she expected, to die in those rice-swamps. There she was, all alone, not having seen one of her relations for years.

"May be I haben't seen any great trouble, massa."

"Well, Nannie, is it *always* bright with you?"

"Allus, massa, allus."

"How is it, Nannie, that you always see the bright side? Do tell me."

"Well, when I sees de dark, black cloud risin' and about to come crushing down upon me," and then she waved her hand as if she saw the cloud coming down within the tent,— "when I sees de dark, black cloud comin' crushing down upon me, I jist slips round on de udder side, and *dar* I finds Jesus. Den its all bright and clar. Its allus bright, massa, where *Jesus* is."

"Well, Nannie, if you can do that, I ought to do it."

"It 'pears like you orter to, since you is a minister ob Jesus."

Nannie disappeared, and the minister, turning over on his blanket, said, "'The Lord is my Shepherd,' and now come sickness or health, life or death, burial on the Yazo Bluff or among friends at home, all is well."

With the peace of God in his heart, he quietly fell asleep. When he awoke he found himself in a gentle perspiration. The cloud had been lifted from his soul, only the bright side being visible, and the fever had left his body. Nannie's faith had saved him.—*King's Highway*.

THE GRACE OF GOD.

(Titus ii. 9-14.)

Notes of an Address.

HOW small a thing God can use for His purpose, as here! an exhortation to servants, used as a basis for the development of a whole circle of divine truth!

“The grace of God,”—an expression often used in Scripture, and often on the lips and in the writings of men; part of the superscription on British coins (“*Victoria, Dei Gratia.*”); and yet little understood. The word “grace” occurs less than forty times in our English Old Testament, of which only thirteen times is it connected with God; nearly one hundred and thirty times in the New Testament, and always connected with God or the Lord Jesus Christ. I mention this, not as disparaging the Old Testament, but as showing difference in character. Then, the “*fullness of the time*” had not come,—man was still on his trial, and God dwelt in thick darkness; now, in the New Testament, God is revealed as “in the light,” man’s complete ruin made manifest, and grace, the only thing that could meet the need of *any*, declared to *all*.

In order to see this, and to grasp the meaning of the expression, let us look at the use of it in the Old Testament.

1. When “God saw the wickedness of man,” and that “*all* flesh had corrupted His way upon the earth,” Noah, the “just man,” “found *grace* in the eyes of the Lord.” (Gen. vi. 8.) How solemn! *One* man in the whole earth! What a contrast to *this* (as we call it) “day of grace”! To-day it is so; to-morrow it may not be, if the Lord Jesus come.

2. In Exodus xxxiii, Moses, the faithful one, finds "grace" when all is over with Israel under law; who, having covenanted (Ex. xxiv.) to be obedient to the law, which says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me," worship the golden calf within forty days. Five times in this chapter, and once in the next (v. 9), we find the word "*grace*;" one man in the midst of a nation. Moses links himself with the people and says, "I and Thy people have found *grace*;" "carry us," etc. God retreats into Himself and says, "I will be *gracious* to whom I will be gracious," etc. "I will make My *goodness* [not My righteousness] pass before thee."

3. Judges vi.—The angel came to Gideon, when Israel cried to the Lord, and Gideon asks for a sign upon the ground of *grace*. Who is this? Just as in previous cases; *one* man, and he the *least* in his father's house, which was *poor* in Manasseh, the *smallest* of the tribes of Israel!

4. Ezra ix.—The princes tell Ezra that Israel, a poor returned remnant, had committed great sin, and Ezra falls before God and owns it, and speaks of "*grace*" for a little moment (v. 8 *margin*).

5. Psalm xlv.—A very different Person is spoken of,—One of whom it is said, "Thou art fairer than the children of men: *grace* is poured into Thy lips:" God's King, whose "throne . . . is forever and ever."

6. Psalm lxxxiv.—The godly Jew who has learned the blessedness of trusting in the Lord of Hosts and longs for communion with Him in the sanctuary says, "The Lord will give *grace* and glory."

7. Proverbs iii. 34.—The lowly find "*grace*;" a divine principle which never changes.

8. Jeremiah xxxi. 2.—God showing Jeremiah the future restoration of Israel, recalls His *sovereign grace* in the wilderness in the day of Exodus xxxiii.

Now we turn to the New Testament.

In John i. 17, "*grace* and truth *came* by Jesus Christ," in contrast with the *law given* by Moses. Law and grace will not mingle, though He puts them together in connection with the second giving of the law (Ex. xxxiv.), in order that He might be able to bear for the time with Israel, whom He was testing, and who hadn't yet come to the end of themselves; and at the same time be free to forgive and bless the individual who in any measure knew and owned his condition. But now we have TRUTH that fully reveals *our* hearts, and GRACE that reveals *God's*.

In the Acts of the Apostles we find the disciples with "*great grace*" upon them as they give witness to "the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" (iv. 33); the Lord gave testimony unto the word of His *grace*, and granted signs and wonders to be done (xiv. 3), while Paul counts not his life 'dear unto him, so that he might "testify the gospel of the *grace of God*" (xx. 24).

In Romans, *all that believe* are "justified freely (gratuitously) by His *grace*" (iii. 22-24); for if *any* of man's works were admitted, no matter how small, a debt would be contracted, and God will not be *man's debtor* (iv. 4, 5).

In Ephesians i, we read of "the *glory* of His *grace*," and "the *riches* of His *grace*."

These are but a few of the nearly one hundred and thirty uses of the word in the New Testament; a blessed stream to trace. The grace of God (here, Titus ii.)—

1. Brings *salvation* to *all* men.
2. Teaches certain *practical* truths for this present life.
3. Presents a blessed *hope*.

Salvation is the complete deliverance (soul and body) of the one who believes in Christ. Salvation, liberty, blessing, are the portion of those who enter by Him (Jno. x.). In Exodus xiv, we get a divine picture of salvation. What an extremity was theirs! Shut in on every side, they are told, "Stand still, and see the salvation of God." "Thus the Lord saved Israel;" and now for the first time they sing—never before. Not in the brick-kilns of Egypt, nor on the night of the pass-over, but now they can say, "HE is become my *salvation*."

Jesus saves from *sins* (Matt. i.); not only from their *guilt*, but from the *pollution* of sin, and its *power*. Salvation is presented in three ways in the New Testament:—

1. As *accomplished*: 1 Cor. i. 18, xv. 2; Eph. ii. 8; Tit. iii. 5, and 1 Pet. i. 9.

2. *Continuous*: 2 Cor. i. 6; Phil. i. 19, 28; ii. 12. These, not the salvation of the soul, but practical salvation along the way.

3. *Future*. Most frequently used in this sense in New Testament, being the full blessing *with* Christ in resurrection-glory when He comes. See Rom. i. 16; v. 9, 10; viii. 24; x. 9; xiii. 11; Heb. ix. 28, etc., etc.

In 1 Peter i. 5, we "are kept . . . unto salvation *ready* to be revealed in the last time," but deferred that the gospel might come to any poor sinner now.

How is salvation to be had? One passage will suffice to answer: Romans x. 9.

The lessons grace teaches are most solemn, viz., that we should live *soberly* as to our own individual conduct, *righteously* as to others, and *godly* in our relationship to God.

The *hope* that grace teaches us to look for is only a "blessed" one to *believers*. Should the Lord Jesus come to-night, would you be glad to see Him? If not, it is not a "*blessed* hope" to you (Heb. ix. 26–28).

H. A. G.

BEN, THE FISHERMAN.

THERE was a calm look on the old fisherman's face—the calm which had only been reached after many a storm; but he looked as though he had heard the Master's "Peace I leave with you: *My* peace I give unto you," and was resting with that in his heart.

He was not lonely,—how could he be, when he had sweet memories connected with every plank of the poor wooden cot?—And there are words in the large, carefully treasured Bible too, which he ponders out aloud as he sits alone;—loving, comforting words, such as his aged wife was wont to read with him in the old days, before Mat, poor lost Mat, left his father's home.

"And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask *anything according to His will*, He heareth us; and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we *have* the petitions that we desired of Him." Old Ben Watts was uttering the words aloud as he tidied up the place after his evening meal; and he went on: "Well, isn't it according to His will as Mat should be landed safe ashore when the dear Lord calls him? For sure *He wants* him to give up the drink and the old ways o' sin, an' come an' follow Him. Why! didn't the Saviour die for Mat? an' don't He want him to believe it!"

In a few minutes more, as he laid carefully together the embers of his little fire, a beautiful smile flitted across his aged face, and he exclaimed reverently, "'So He bringeth them to their desired haven.' Ah! *I knowed* as He'd bring me a comfortin' thought."

He was too much occupied with his peaceful thoughts to heed the tip-toed entrance of a little blue-eyed child, who, however, soon claimed his attention, by a question she had asked some fifty times before.

“Be Mat a-comin’ home to-night, uncle Ben?”

She stood beside him, enjoying the glow from his tiny bit of fire. “Be you ’spectin’ him to-night?”

“Maybe he will, dearie; he’s bound to come some time.”

“Has ye bin asking God to make him come, uncle Ben?”

“Aye, lassie, in His own good time.”

“Didn’t ye ask Him to send him home *quick, quick*, fear you’d be dead first?”

The old man gently shook his head at the child as he answered, “I always say, ‘according to His will:’ maybe *that* wouldn’t be His will; but Mat will come home. It *may* be to-night, dearie: God knows the best time.”

“Well, uncle Ben, He’s a long, long while ’bout it. D’ye think as Mat’s *dead*, p’raps?”

“Nay, nay, lassie; I’ve been *a-trustin’ the Lord for him all these here ten year—trustin’ God for him*. Mat knows I be, and I’ve got that confidence as *he’ll come*, —he’ll come yet.”

The little girl stole her tiny hand into his wrinkled one, and laid her head caressingly against his breast, and for a while was quite silent. It was plain there was a perfect understanding between the pair; but by and by, to the fisherman’s great surprise, a tear made its way down the child’s sun-browned cheek, and fell upon his hand, then a pent-up sob burst forth. “Why, Alice, child! what is it?” he asked tenderly.

“Oh, uncle Ben, *I beent* trustin’ God for poor Mat, ye know; an’ oh I *do* want him to come home so bad! Do ye think, if you an’ me was to ask God *together*, He’d send him home right away,—you an’ me askin’ Him *together*?”

“We’ll try, dearie,” replied the old man, touched more than he cared to show; and they knelt down side by side, while a simple, earnest prayer went up on high from the heart and lips of both.

“Uncle Ben,” said the child, as she clung to him again, “did ye used to ask Him to make *me* love Jesus?”

“Aye, aye, lassie, a sight o’ times; and He heard me, didn’t He? Ye *do* love Him, Alice?”

A glad smile parted the little girl’s lips as she gave him one more look of love, and then sped off like an arrow along the sandy shore.

Since that evening, day after day found the old fisherman and his little friend uniting in simple prayer for the wild reckless sailor, until the pleasant autumn gave way to the first winter’s cold.

“I be goin’ away for a whole week,” said the child one day. “An’ I’ve bin thinkin’, uncle Ben, *I’ll* pray at N——, an’ *you’ll* pray *here*, an’ God will *join the prayers together* when He gets ’em up there.”

“Aye, aye,” said the old man, “His Holy Spirit will do that surely. Wonderful Intercessors!” he murmured; “the Spirit and the Son of God always making intercession for us—always.”

Ben Watts began to feel a little bit lonesome that evening—a very unusual thing with him; and he tried singing, but the poor old voice fairly broke down when he came to the words—

Thou canst help the weak ones onward,
 Thou canst raise up those that fall;
 But remember, while thou servest,
 Still *tell Jesus*—tell Him all.

There was no question what to do next. He would go and “tell Jesus;” and the old calm and peace settled over his kindly, time-worn face again.

Presently, at a slight “click” of the old door-latch, and a rustling sound outside, he turns his calm old face toward the entrance and listens; not for long, however, for—oh what a moment of joy! what a glad “welcome home”!—the strong, broad-chested mariner outside is speedily brought in and folded in a close embrace; logs are piled on the poor little homely fire, and father and son find that they have *one* thing in common which they never had before, even the love of Christ in their hearts.

“I heard you a-singing ‘Go to Jesus—tell Him all,’ father; and then I heard you a-telling Him. Oh, father, and so you’ve been a-trusting God *for me all these here ten year*, though you knew what a wicked chap I was? And I—I never cared naught for breaking poor mother’s heart, nor nothing, till this very last autumn as was. Not long since, when death stared us all in the face, and it seemed as if we must have gone down before morning, it all came over me *then* what a wretch I was, and I thought of how you and mother prayed for me. And I remembered how you’d said, that last night, ‘Bad as ye are, Mat, I shall pray day and night for you, and go on trusting God for you that you’ll come to Him at last.’ It were that as give me hope, and I *came to Him*, father. At early dawn we sighted a vessel; she saw our signals, and sent boats out, and here I am. Oh, father, thank God for me; for ever since I stood listening at the door, my heart’s been saying, ‘Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.’ Father, He *do* hear prayer, for, oh, how I prayed that night! Father, let’s you and me thank the Lord together for the first time in our lives.”—*Helen Moore*.

THE FEVERISH HAND.

IT was a Monday morning, and a rainy one, too. "Mother" was busy from the moment she sprang out of bed; at the first sound of the rising bell. Others beside children get out of bed "on the *wrong* side," as this mother can testify. She began by thinking over all that lay before her. It made her "feel like flying!"

Bridget would be cross, as it was rainy; there was a chance of company for lunch, so the parlor must be tidied, as well as dining-rooms swept, dishes washed, lamps trimmed, beds made, and children started for school. Her hands grew hot as she buttered bread for luncheons, waited on those who had to start early, and tried to pacify the little ones and Bridget. "My dear, you are feverish," said her husband, as he held her hands a moment. "Let the work go, and rest yourself — you'll find it *pays*."

"Just like a *man*!" thought the mother. "Why, I haven't time for my *prayers*!"

But the little woman had resolved that she would read a few verses early each morning; so, standing by her bureau, she opened to the eighth chapter of Matthew, and read these words: "And He touched her hand, and the *fever* left her; and she arose and ministered unto them."

It seemed to that busy wife as if Jesus Himself stood ready to heal her—to take the fever out of her hands, that she might minister wisely to her dear ones. The beds could wait till later in the day—the parlor might be a little disordered—she *must* feel His touch! She knelt, and He whispered, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength' (not yours, child,) 'is made per-

fect in weakness.' 'As thy days, so shall thy *strength* be.' 'My yoke is easy' (this yoke you have been galled by is the world's yoke—the yoke of public opinion or housewifely ambition). 'Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; . . . ye shall find *rest*.'" (2 Cor. xii. 9; Deut. xxxiii. 25; Matt. xi. 29, 30; Jer. vi. 16; Isa. xlviii. 18.)

The day was no brighter, the work had still to be done; but the fever had left her, and all the day she sang, "This God is our God—my Lord and my God!" It is true that, when the friends came to lunch, there had not been time to arrange the parlor, and no fancy dishes had been prepared for the table, but the hostess' heart was filled for them, as members with her, of Christ; and they went away hungering for such realization of Him as they saw she had.

"Ah," said her husband when he held her hands once more, "I see you took my advice, dear: the fever is quite gone."

The wife hesitated,—could she tell her secret? Was it not almost too sacred? Yet—it was "the secret of the *Lord*" (not hers), and would glorify Him. Later on, when the two sat together, she told *who* had cured her fever, and said, quietly, "I see that there is a more important ministry than the housekeeping, though I don't mean to neglect *that*."

"Let us ask the Lord to keep hold of our hands," said her husband. "Mine grow feverish in eager business, as yours in too eager house-keeping."

This is no fancy sketch. Dear mothers, busy, anxious housekeepers, as well as all others, let us go again and again to Him, that He may touch

our hands, lest they be feverish and so we cannot minister, in the highest sense, to those about us.

“He came and took her by the hand, and *lifted her up*; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.” (Mk. i. 31.)

“They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.” (Isa. xl. 31.)

“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by *every word* that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” (Matt. iv. 4.)

“As new-born babes, *desire* the sincere milk of the *Word*, that ye may grow thereby.” (1 Pet. ii. 2.)

“They gathered it [the manna] every morning, every man according to his eating; and *when the sun waxed hot, it melted.*” (Ex. xvi. 21.)

“Those that seek Me *early* shall find Me.” (Prov. viii. 17.)

“Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Matt. vi. 33.)

THE WAY THROUGH.

IT is very natural for people to look upon their own sorrow and affliction as greater than that of almost any one else, and to think that God can help and deliver others easily, but their own startled skein of trouble and care they doubt whether even the Almighty can straighten it out so that the thread of life

shall unwind beautifully and evenly *in the order of the Lord*. It often happens that the childish, the inexperienced hands, so willing to do the work, tangle the skein dreadfully, and then they cry, "O Father!" and in still trying to fix it themselves, the threads are broken, vows are broken, friendships broken, prospects for usefulness broken; and the unseemly knots come in that mar the symmetry and beauty of Christian character so much. Then the cry comes up again, "O Father!"

We remember, in childhood, how quickly a patient mother's hands straightened the skein, and a smile encouraged our work.

"All we want is a little more faith in Jesus."

But we still keep trying, and *God lets us*, and the more we try the worse things are, till our all of strength fails, and we have no wisdom, and we can do nothing, and we get the experience of those who "have no confidence in the flesh." Then we look to God, and keep still.

"Therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength is to sit still." (Isa. xxx. 7.)

Now, God comes in with a miracle of love. He does not upbraid; He does not condemn. His patient hand, His wise hand, His willing hand, straightens all the threads—for He hath *promised*—(Ps. l. 15); and

"No word He hath spoken
Hath ever been broken,—
The Lord will provide."

So we learn a lesson we could not learn in any other way. It is not taught by flesh and blood.—*Mrs. H. A. Crouch.*

IN THE HOUR OF TEMPTATION.

IN the hour of temptation, "be vigilant." This watchfulness, joined with sobriety, extends to all the estate and ways of a Christian, being surrounded with hazards and snares. "He that despiseth His way shall die," says Solomon. We think not on it; but there are snares laid for us in every path we walk in, and in every step we take,—in our meat and in our drink, in our calling and labor, in our house at home, in our journeying abroad,—yea, even in God's house, and in our spiritual exercises both there and in private.

And meantime, our "adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." Be alarmed to watchfulness of our grand adversary. Observe here his strength, his diligence, and his cruelty. His strength, a lion; his diligence, going about and seeking; his cruelty, roaring and seeking to devour. Is it not most reasonable, hence, to press watchfulness; to keep continual watch to see what comes in and what goes out, to try what is under every offer of the world, every motion of our natural hearts, whether there be not some secret intelligence or not? Especially after a time of some special seasons of grace and some special new supplies of grace received in such seasons, thou wilt be set on most eagerly when he knows of the richest booty. The pirates that let the ship pass as they go by empty, watch them well when they return richly laden; so doth this great pirate. Did he not assault our Saviour straight after his baptism?

And that we may watch, it concerns us to be sober.

The instruction is military: a drunken soldier is not fit to be on the watch. The most of us are drunken with our several fancies and vanities, and so exposed to this adversary. And when we have gained some advantage in conflict, or when the enemy seems to retire and be gone, yet even then are we to be watchful; yea, then especially. How many, presuming on false safeties that way, sitting down to carouse, or lying down to sleep, have been re-assaulted and cut off? Oh, beware when you think yourselves most safe! That very thought makes yourselves most unsafe. Be like Gideon's army—fit to follow God and be victorious in time; not lying down to drink, but taking of it only as for necessity—in passing. Take our Saviour's own word,—“Take heed, lest at any time your hearts be surcharged with surfeitings and drunkenness, and the cares of this life.” These will overcharge you, and make you drunk and cast you asleep. Oh, mind your work and warfare always, more than your ease and pleasure. Seek them not here; your rest is not here. Oh, poor, short rest, if it were! But follow the Lord Jesus through conflicts and sufferings. A little while and you shall have certain victory, and after it everlasting triumph.—*Archbishop Leighton.*

“SERVICE is not *doing* a great deal, but *following the Master*, and the world and the half-hearted Christians do not like that. There is plenty of doing in the world, but ‘if any man *serve Me*, let him *follow Me.*’”

MATTHEW II.

WE now have "the young child" as the object alike of human *worship* by those drawn of God to Him, and of *hatred* by those who "loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

When Jesus was born,—“days of *Herod* the king”—told its tale, upon *man's* side, of the failure and apostasy of the people witnessed by a king under Roman yoke. Shiloh now come, and the throne He was to fill occupied by an usurper,—fitting picture of the hearts of men who will yet receive “*another* coming in his own name,” and of this present world of whom Satan is *prince* and *god*.

Where He was born—“*Bethlehem* of *Judea*.” On the other hand, speaking of *God's* resources—*Bethlehem* (the House of Bread) reminding of “the sure mercies of *David*”—the “covenant enduring forever.” (Is. lv. 3; 2 Sam. xxiii. 5; Ps. lxxxix. 28.) *Judea* (Praise), the tribe of royalty, endowed by divine *grace*, from which “the sceptre was not to depart until Shiloh came, and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.” (Gen. xlix. 10; Ps. lxxvi. 1.)

“There came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,”—dawning of Israel's day of blessing—“the Sun of Righteousness arising with healing in His wings.” On *God's* part, all is ready. The “King to reign in righteousness,” of whom the prophets had spoken, has come; the witness of *heaven* and *earth* (and the testimony of *two* is true) are alike borne to Him,—the “*star* in the east,” and the wise *men* saying, “WHERE IS HE?” Creation animate and inanimate alike proclaim Him.

In this gospel it is not *angelic* testimony, as in Luke

to the shepherds of Bethlehem (Jews), but that which left even the heathen without excuse—"the *heavens* declaring the glory of God," etc. (Ps. xix. 1.); showing how these God-drawn, Heaven-impressed men were faithful to the light they had, and proved that "to him that hath shall more be given," etc. Bold and blessed and yet withal humble testimony is theirs—"We have *seen* . . . and are *come to worship*;" "*Where is He?*" owning their lack of God's full revelation, for "*salvation was of the Jews.*"

"When *Herod* the king heard, . . . he was *troubled*, and all *Jerusalem* with him." Strange effects upon the latter, we may surely think; the former, holding that which he knew by right was not his, it is little marvel to read this of. *Whence*, then, this trouble at the advent of their King? Has Immanuel's land no *need* for His deliverance? Alas! it was barren for its people's sins, and they enslaved to a hard and iron yoke. Then are they not responsive to the call of jubilee's trumpets "to sing as in the days of their youth," and proclaim "deliverance to the captive," saying, "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulders," etc. (Isa. ix. 6)? Sorrow of sorrows!—"they *know not* the time of their visitation"—"they *received Him not*," and He at last bewails their hapless choice: "How often would I have gathered you . . . and *ye would not.*"

Each (wise men and Jerusalem) have had a twofold testimony: wise men, the star and the prophecy; Jerusalem, lips of the wise men and their own *prophets*. But "to one, it is the savor of *life* unto life; to the other, of *death* unto death."

MARAH AND ELIM.

Exodus xv. 23-27.

TO-DAY 'tis *Elim*, with its palms and wells,
 And happy shade for desert-weariness;
 'Twas *Marah* yesterday—all rock and sand,
 Unshaded solitude and bitterness.

Yet the same desert holds them both; the same
 Soft breezes wander o'er the lonely ground;
 The same low stretch of valley shelters both,
 And the same mountains compass them around.

So it is here with us on earth; and so
 I do remember it has ever been:
 The bitter and the sweet, the grief and joy,
 Lie *near* together, but a day between.

Sometimes God turns our bitter into sweet;
 Sometimes He gives us pleasant water-springs;
 Sometimes He shades us with His pillar-cloud,
 And sometimes to a blessed palm-shade brings.

What matters it? The time will not be *long*;
 Marah and Elim will alike be past;
 Our desert-wells and palms will soon be done;
 We reach the city of our God at last.

O happy land! beyond these lonely hills,
 Where gush in joy the everlasting springs;
 O holy paradise! above these heavens,
 Where we shall *end* our desert-wanderings.

H. Bonar.

“THEY THAT BELIEVED WERE TOGETHER.”

HOW brightly the light of God's truth shone around
 When His saints to Himself and each other
 were bound !
 Ere division came in the union to sever,—
 Then, “*all* that believed in the Lord were together.”

It reads like a legend, but yet it is true,—
 “One Lord” and “one body” alone the saints knew,
 No interests conflicting the union did sever,
 For all that believed in the Lord were together.”

Then, “all things” were theirs, and the “gifts” that
 were given
 Were used and received as the bounties of Heaven ;
 To comfort and strengthen was each one's endeavor,
 For “all that believed in the Lord were together.”

Naught called they their own, things common had they,
 And all that were needy were helped day by day.
 Their love, it was active, as true love is ever,
 And “all that believed in the Lord were together.”

And still there is power Christ's members to bind,
 Though in ruins the Church all around us we find ;
 We have the same Spirit as Christians had ever
 When “all who believed in the Lord were together.”

O would that we sought “the communion of saints,”
 Giving up all our earthly and “carnal” restraints !
 Our Jesus would own it, though weak the “endeavor,”
 For He would have “all who believe be together.”

And oh, it is blessed by faith to look on [have gone ;
 To the time when from earth the saved ones shall
 How happy the thought is, that nothing shall sever
 The saints that in glory are gathered together !

(Selected.)

THE CLOSET, THE BATTLE-FIELD OF FAITH.

1 Samuel xvii.

DAVID had been preparing for public service, in the secret school of God. God will always have to do in secret with that soul which He intends to serve Him in public. In the desert he had learnt the resources which faith has in God. He had slain the lion and the bear.

Are not our failures invariably here, that we have not been in secret with the living God? This is the essential and primary matter. Do we esteem communion with God our highest privilege? Our strength is in walking in fellowship with the living God. David had already gone through trial, and had therefore proved the God in whom he trusted. There had been dealing between his soul and God in the wilderness. O beloved, where is it that the saints really learn to get the victory? I believe where no eye sees us save God's. The heartily denying of self, the taking up the cross in secret, the knowing the way, in the retirement of our closets, to cast down imaginations, and every thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God,—these are our highest achievements. The closet is the great battle-field of faith. Let the foe be met and conquered there. He who has much to do with God in secret, cannot use carnal weapons; and this should show us the importance of coming forth from the presence of the living God into all our service, that we may be thus prepared to detect and mortify all the pretensions of the flesh. It is sad indeed to see a saint trying

to fight in the Lord's name, but clothed in the world's armor.

David said, moreover, "God hath delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." He knew that one was as easy to God as the other. When we are in communion with God, we do not put difficulty by the side of difficulty, for what is difficulty to Him? Faith measures every difficulty by the power of God, and then the mountain becomes as the plain. Too often we think that in little things less than Omnipotence will do, and then it is that we fail. Have we not seen zealous and devoted saints fail in some trifling thing? The cause is, that they have not thought of bringing God by faith into all their ways. Abraham could leave his family and his father's house, and go out at the command of God, not knowing whither he went, but the moment he meets a difficulty in his own wisdom, and gets down into Egypt, what does he do? He constantly fails in comparatively small things.

Faith discerns our own weakness so clearly that it sees nothing less than the power of God can enable us to overcome in any thing. So that faith never makes light of the danger, for it knows what we are, just as on the other hand faith never faints at danger, because it knows what God is.

"If you really had the sense of what it is to have Christ's place in heaven, your heart would claim, out of pure simple affection, Christ's place on earth."

CHRISTIAN CALMNESS.

“When He giveth *quietness*, who then can make trouble? and when He *hideth His face*, who then can behold Him? whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only.” (Job xxxiv. 29.)

IF there were to be offered for sale some charm or medicine which had the effect of preserving the person who possessed it from evil of all sorts all his life long, who would not be anxious to buy it? I cannot tell you of any such charm or medicine, my brethren; but the Bible tells both you and me where we may obtain what will not indeed free us from evil, but what will so blunt the edge of evil, and weaken its force, that it shall have no power to hurt us. Strange that such a blessing should be offered, in so many instances, in vain! Yet not strange either, when we consider how few there are who seriously believe its existence.

It is of this blessing that Elihu reminds Job in the passage which I have just read. And its blessedness is set off and enhanced the more by its contrast with that which is the opposite to it: “When He *giveth quietness*, who then can make trouble? and when He *hideth His face*,” (which is the opposite to giving quietness,) “who then can behold Him?” And it is all one, whether it be a whole nation or only an individual that is affected. Most comforting, cheering, blessed truth, to those who can heartily and sincerely enter into it—who know, by happy experience, something of that “peace of God which passeth all understanding,” and who have found it keeping their hearts and minds in the midst of trials, or the apprehension of trials, which otherwise would have nigh overwhelmed them!

Let us consider,—

I. What is the *nature* of the quietness here spoken of.

II. Who is the *Author* and *Giver* of it.

III. *How* it is to be obtained.

I. The nature of the quietness spoken of. “When He giveth quietness,”—calmness and repose,—when He enables a man to rest peacefully, tranquilly, without let or hindrance, without any thing to molest or harm or disturb or terrify him, “who can make trouble” then?

i. Now this may be, first, *external* quietness; as when God interposes in the defense of His people, and does not suffer their enemies to assault them, or the evils which threatened them to fall upon them. When He giveth quietness in *such* a case, who then can make trouble?

A very striking instance of this we have in the history of the Israelites, when they had come out of Egypt and were on their way to the land of Canaan. Balak, king of Moab, would fain have stopped their course; and he sent for Balaam to curse them, hoping that by this means he would be the more sure to prevail against them. But God filled Balaam’s mouth with blessings instead of curses: “How shall I curse”—that unrighteous prophet was constrained to say—“How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? and how shall I defy whom the Lord hath not defied?” God had given Israel *quietness*, and it was not in the power of man to make trouble.

So it was when the three Hebrew youths were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace; so it was

when Daniel was thrown into the lions' den ; so it was when Hezekiah and His people were besieged by the Assyrians ; so it was when Peter was shut up in prison, and was looking to be brought forth the next morning to be put to death. God interposed to defend His servants ; and neither the violence of the flames was suffered to hurt, nor the fierceness of the wild beasts to destroy, nor the numbers and might of an invading army to overwhelm, nor the strength and security of a prison to keep, those whom He had determined to deliver.

Here, then, is the Christian's comfort, my brethren,—that no harm can happen to him without God's *permission*. If He gives quietness, no evil can come nigh his person or his dwelling. He is safe beyond the reach of danger. (Ps. xci.)

2. But yet, it must be owned, we cannot be certain that it is God's will or pleasure to deliver us to this extent. It may be for His glory and for our good that the evil which we dread should *come* upon us ; or, at all events, that we should be kept in suspense while it hangs over us and threatens us.

There is *another* way, then, in which God gives quietness, even while He allows us to be kept in suspense, or even to be actually involved in the very troubles which we feared. This is by supplying us with *inward* peace—such peace as shall set us free from anxious fears as to trials that *may be coming* upon us, or shall bear us up and sustain us in the midst of trials which *have come*.

And of this also we have striking examples in Scripture. Acts xvi.—Here are two men in prison, their

feet made fast in the stocks, their backs covered with bruises caused by stripes which they have received. One would have supposed their minds would have been soured by such treatment, and that they would have had no room for any other thoughts than murmuring and complaining and vowing revenge. But hark! In the darkness and silence of night they are "praying and singing praises to God." God has given them *quietness*; and neither the discomfort of their situation, nor the pains nor insults they have suffered, are able to discompose them.

Here is one of these men, again, at a later period, journeying to Jerusalem with the certain knowledge that "bonds and afflictions *await* him there." Yet hear with what calmness and tranquility he can look forward to the sufferings he has to go through: "*None of these things move me,*" he says; "neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." (Acts xxii.) God has given him *quietness*; and the prospect of coming troubles, however certain, is not able to disturb it.

Here is this same man, again, in a letter written much about the same time, describing the trials through which he was then actually *passing*, together with the support with which he was sustained under them. "We are *troubled*," he says, "on every side, yet not distressed; we are *perplexed*, but not in despair; *persecuted*, but not forsaken; *cast down*, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our

mortal flesh. . . . For our *light affliction*, which is but for *a moment*, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Cor. iv.) It is God who has given him this quietness, which all the trials and sufferings he is passing through are unable to ruffle or discompose. "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, is *keeping* [keeping as in a garrison, securely,] his heart and mind through Christ Jesus."

And the same support and consolation are free to *us*, my brethren; as there certainly will be occasions enough in the course of our lives when we shall need them.

There may be, for instance, the *prospect* of coming trials; and the prospect, as we all know, is often more formidable than the trials themselves. Often the trials which we dread do not come; and often, when they do come, they prove less than we had imagined. But in any case, if God gives *quietness*, no prospect of trials will be able to make us anxious.

And God gives quietness in such cases, by enabling us to look up to Him as our Father, as reconciled to Him in Christ Jesus; and so to feel assured that we are under His protection, the objects of His fatherly love and care; and to bear in mind that even the "very hairs of our head are all numbered," that nothing can happen to us but by His permission, and that whatever does happen must be for good.

And it is our privilege, as Christians, to *enjoy* this

quietness. We live below our privilege, we rob ourselves of that which of right belongs to us, if we fail to enjoy it.

But again, it may not be the prospect of coming trials which tends to discompose and harass us: we may be even *now* in the furnace: we may be actually suffering from one or other of the afflictions to which our race is liable. Even so, it is possible for us to be calm and tranquil, and full of peace and cheerfulness. There may be sunshine within, however stormy it may be without. It will be so, if only *God* give quietness.

Let us look a little at some of the trials to which we are subject while we continue here. The words which we are considering were spoken to *Job*, and were intended, in the first instance, for his special consideration. Let us look at *Job's* trials, which are common trials enough; only it is not common for so many of them, and in such extreme severity, to fall all together to the lot of one person.

The first of these was the loss of his *property*. In one day, word was brought him of the carrying off of his oxen and asses by one body of plunderers, and of his camels by another, and of the destruction of his sheep by lightning; so that he found himself suddenly stripped of all that he had.

This was a trial which of itself would have bowed most men to the ground; but it was followed immediately by another still heavier—the loss of his *children*.

Now these are trials which, in measure at least, we are as liable to as *Job*. We may be stripped of our property, we may be deprived of those whom we dearly love; and, in either case, we know what a tumult of disturbed

passions is likely to be stirred up. Often, under such circumstances, the description which the prophet gives of Rachel, in the bitterness of her grief, as "refusing to be comforted," is again exemplified.

But let God give quietness, let Him shed abroad His peace in the soul, and all these stormy waves of passionate sorrow die down; just as when our Lord said to the wild waters on the sea of Galilee, "*Peace, be still.*" Yes, let God give quietness, and not even losses such as these can make trouble. *Felt* they will be, no doubt, —God meant them to be felt; but the Christian, in exact proportion as he is enabled to put his faith in exercise, and cast his care upon God, will learn to acquiesce meekly and with resignation to his Father's will. "The Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away; *blessed* be the name of the Lord." This was Job's reflection, and it will be ours, if we are partakers of Job's faith and Job's patience. And if we are not, yet we shall aim at nothing short of it, and be content with nothing short of it. For even though the standard set before us is higher than we have reached, we shall still keep it in view, and strive to come as near to it as we can. The Christian is not one who has attained perfection—*i. e.*, as to his *walk* and *state*, but going on to it (Phil. iii. 12); while yet he *may have* as to the *object* of his life (v. 15), and *has* as to his *standing*, through the finished work of Christ (Heb. x. 1-14): on the contrary, he is conscious of very much imperfection; but yet he is always aiming at perfection, and never allowing himself to rest satisfied with any thing short of it.

Another trial which Job was called to pass through was *sickness*. This too is a trial to which every one of us

is liable, and which one day or other every one of us will almost certainly have to pass through. And it is a trial in which the mind is very apt to be disquieted and discomposed, unless it be stayed up by consolations such as the text refers to. If the illness be a painful one, or a lingering one, there is danger of our fretting and complaining, and "kicking against the pricks," as it were, and making matters worse by impatience. If it be an alarming one, and such as threatens to terminate fatally, while at the same time the mind is left in possession of its faculties, so that it can look forward to the prospect before it, what a tumultuous, troubled scene does that mind present where the peace of God is not realized to keep and protect it!

But now let *God give quietness* in such a season, and *who* then, or *what* then, can make trouble? Pain will be endured, delay borne with, because the sufferer feels a Father's hand and a Father's love supporting him, smoothing his pillow, and making all his bed in his sickness; and because he has the sense of God's presence, and the assurance of God's favor, and the hope of God's glory, which are better than a thousand cordials, and enable him to take his sickness, not only patiently, but cheerfully. And even where the disease under which he labors assumes a fatal character, and sets before his eyes the prospect of a speedy summons from this world into the eternity, he is enabled, through that peace which keeps his heart and mind, to look forward calmly and tranquilly to the solemn hour, because he knows in whom he has believed, and because he has learnt to put his trust in Him, who "through *death* overcame him that had the power of death, that He might

deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. ii.), knowing that "death is ours" through Him.

There was one other trial to which Job was subjected, and this too is far from an uncommon one: it was to have his *sincerity* suspected, and his *character* misrepresented and traduced, and that by those who had formerly been, and still professed themselves to be, his friends. It is a most touching picture of aggravated misery which is drawn, where he is represented as overwhelmed with his sufferings, and those who had come for the purpose of comforting him adding tenfold to their weight by upbraiding him with them, and suggesting to him that they were an argument that he was a *hypocrite*: "Behold, thou has instructed many," they say, "and thou hast strengthened the weak hands: thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou has strengthened the feeble knees. But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled. Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope, the uprightness of thy ways?"—that is, is not this what they have all come to? "Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off? Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same."

No doubt this is a very hard trial to bear—perhaps it was the *hardest* of all Job's trials, for it penetrated the deepest: the others touched him outwardly first, but this went at once to the quick. Yet even this, if God only give quietness, may be borne, and all its edge and keenness taken away. What does it signify (the Christian may well console himself) though my motives

are misconstrued, and my character misrepresented, and my sincerity and integrity questioned, painful as the trial is to flesh and blood—what does it signify so long as God owns me as His child, and cheers me with the light of His countenance?

Such, then, is the nature of that quietness which God gives to His children, of that peace which is pre-eminently “the peace of God,” and “which passeth all understanding”—which must be felt in order that we may have any notion of it. In some instances it consists in actual *deliverance from* outward calamities; in others, and far more frequently, it consists in *support* under them—support arising from the sense of God’s presence, and the assurance of His favor, and the hope of glory to be enjoyed with Him forever.

II. And mark very particularly, however briefly, *who* is the author of this blessed peace—GOD. “When He giveth quietness,” Elihu asks, as though in the triumphant assurance that his question admitted of no answer to contradict him—“When *He* giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?” No, we are secure—perfectly secure from all molestation and all danger, because He that keeps us is the eternal, unchangeable, almighty, ever-present God. It is true that Satan and ungodly men, his servants, are suffered to have their course up to a certain point and for a certain time; but God holds their chain, and the moment they seek to stray beyond their prescribed bounds, they are reminded, “Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther.” Nay, not only so, but even the mischief they are permitted to do is controlled and overruled for good, to those who love God, and give up themselves to His service.

III. It remains to be considered in *what way* this quietness is to be obtained.

1. The first step toward it is to make sure that we are in a state of *reconciliation* with God; and this is to be attained, if we are not now in the actual enjoyment of it, by earnestly and heartily turning to Him through our Lord Jesus Christ. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."—"The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." As long as a man is living at "enmity with God," as long as he has an accusing conscience within his breast, so long he can have no true, substantial, solid peace. While all goes smoothly around him, indeed, and nothing arises to alarm him, he may be at his ease, "eat, drink, and be merry;" but let severe trials come upon him, or only appear in prospect, and he will be filled with disquietude. Remember, then, the *first* step toward the enjoyment of that calmness and tranquillity and evenness of mind of which the text speaks, is to make sure that we are in a state of reconciliation with God,—"*peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

2. And the second, which indeed grows out of the first, is to *live closely* to God—to walk before Him in all holy obedience, serving Him faithfully, unreservedly, diligently. We may rest assured that real, solid, well-grounded peace is to be enjoyed by none but those who do thus serve Him. It is the reward of faithfulness and diligence, according to the prophet's words,—"*The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever.*" Whereas, on the contrary, indolence and slothfulness and half-heartedness in God's service have their reward in fearfulness and alarm, not only according to the reason of the case, but beyond the reason. So God threatened the Jews, in the event of their forsaking Him, that He would send a faintness into their hearts, and the sound of a shaken leaf should chase them, and they should flee as fleeing from the sword, and they should fall when

none pursued. Remember, then, that if we would enjoy and maintain that peace of God, and that quietness and assurance which shall raise us above fear and alarm, we must live closely to God, we must walk before Him in all holy, faithful, diligent obedience.

3. And a third point is, that we must learn to "cast all our care upon God," in the full assurance that "He careth for us." We must look off from ourselves, and from the world around us, and keep our eyes fixed upon that almighty arm which is stretched out to defend us, and those eternal and unspeakable joys which are laid up in store for us. We must "walk by faith, not by sight;" we must "look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." *This* is the way to live above the world, and to rise superior to the anxieties and alarms which are continually succeeding one another in this changeful scene. How little we should be moved by trials and sufferings, whether in the endurance or in the prospect, if we did but realize the thought of God's fatherly love and care, and live as those whose home is in heaven, toward which every day is hastening their progress!

4. Lastly, it is of great consequence toward enjoying this blessed quietness and composure, to acquire the habit of carrying our cares and anxieties and sorrows to God, and spread them before Him in *prayer*. It is true He knows them all without our telling Him, but He would have us tell Him notwithstanding. Prayer is His own appointed ordinance, through which we may disburden our hearts of their load of trouble, and receive instead calmness and tranquillity. "Be careful for nothing," is the apostle's direction (let nothing press upon your spirits and make you anxious), "but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God;" and then follows the promise—"The *peace of God*, which passeth all understanding, shall *keep* your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Phil. iv.)—*Adapted, C. A. H.*

PSALM XXXII. 1-5.

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord;’ and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.”

OH, there is so much in the grace and goodness of our God to make us happy; it seems strange that we should ever allow ourselves to be in an unhappy state for an hour. But our poor weak heads and weaker hearts, taking up labor and travail, which is but to fret ourselves and to dishonor Him, no wonder we are then unhappy! I am not happy because I try to think I am happy, but because I know He is happy for me to bring all my sins and failure to Him.

A legal conscience is a hard master. It finds more distress over the failure of others than its own. The Psalmist found it in the seventy-third psalm, when he was envious at the prosperity of the wicked. But he found the remedy, even God's remedy, for it, when he got *into "the sanctuary."* Then he could say, not "*Their eyes stand out with fatness,*" but "*So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before Thee.*"

This is a good solid confession. It goes to the bottom! It proves a "*spirit without guile.*" And then he could add, "*Nevertheless I am continually with*

Thee: Thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with Thy *counsel*,"—not by my foolish fretting,—“and afterward receive me to glory.” And *then what?* “Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and *there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee.*”

So in this thirty-second psalm,—when he had acknowledged his sin, and confessed his transgression, it was all forgiven, and the blessedness was his, even the “blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, and in whose spirit there is no guile.” A spirit *without guile* is a heart fully opened out before God—nothing kept back. For see! “When I kept silence,”—when I tried to cover my iniquity, to keep it back, to hide it from myself and God,—“my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.” How opposite to blessedness this! “*The drought of summer!*” But how sweet the blessedness of the one who has kept nothing back, but has been all *searched out* in the light of His presence! All confessed is all forgiven. It is human to err, but Godlike to forgive. The “woman” which was “a sinner” “loved much” because she had much forgiven. (Luke vii.) And we know what grace is, only in the measure that we have much forgiven, because much confessed. Forgiveness is a thousand times sweeter than innocence. “If we *confess* our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

C. E. H.

STEWARDSHIP.

“Every one of us shall give account of himself to God.”

(Rom. xiv. 12.)

SALVATION is the free gift of God through Christ Jesus our Lord; “not of works, lest any man should boast.” But after we are saved, we are no more our own; we are bought with a price, and every thing we have belongs to Christ.

Thus we are *stewards*, and responsible to Him for the use we make of every thing He commits to us. Health, wealth, time, strength, influence, position, powers of mind, etc., etc., are all so many talents, of which we shall have to give an account in the day of Christ; and our eternal position and capabilities will depend upon the way in which we use these talents.

We have no hard Master to deal with. He knows exactly how much He has committed to us, and it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not (2 Cor. viii. 12).

If He has given us *money*, we are responsible to use it for Him; and if we are unfaithful in the unrighteous mammon, He will not trust us with the true riches, nor make us eternal stewards (Luke xvi. 2-11; xix. 24-26).

So with our *time*. If the Lord has so ordered for us that we have our time at our own disposal, He asks for our time. - We have no right to spend any of it for self-pleasing. It is the *Lord's*, and should be laid out most carefully and industriously in His service.

So with *strength*. It should be taken care of and used for Him; not wasted, but husbanded and spent for Him.

So with *influence, position in life*. All may be used for *Him*. They *belong* to Him, and we are *robbing* Him if in any way we use them to exalt and glorify ourselves.

Mental gifts and powers the same. If we use them for self, to get praise from man, we are wasting our Lord's goods, and we shall be eternal losers.

Let us judge ourselves, our circumstances, our powers, and see whether we are being good stewards,—whether the Lord will be able to say to us, “Well done, good and faithful servant!” and if not, let us gird our loins at once, and seek henceforth to spend and be spent *for Him*. We have only a little while left. Let us make the most of it, and see how much time, strength, money, influence, powers, we can send up to heaven (1 Tim. vi. 17–19).

“IN the presence of wants innumerable, there is one resource for God's people—Christ . . . God would have the tendrils of our hearts clasped around Christ, not trailing on the earth; there is a place there for them . . . and no where else.”

“HUMILITY in the heart makes a man slow to speak.”

“Patience is the thing that shows power.”

“Strength is only found in the path of obedience.”

“The instant there is perfect submission, there is perfect peace.”

“It requires much grace in one's self to discern a little grace in another.”

“God *for* us, Christ *with* us, the Holy Ghost *in* us.”

“More than conquerors through Him that loved us.”

“IN EVERY THING GIVE THANKS.”

(1 Thess. v. 18.)

“IN every thing give thanks”—
 My God, is this Thy will?
 Give thanks for disappointments given,
 For prayers unanswered still!

Give thanks! though oft I've prayed
 That I may useful be,
 And by the Spirit's helpful aid
 Bring many souls to Thee.

Give thanks when, in the place
 Of health and usefulness,
 Thro' sickness Thou hast paled my face
 With pain and weariness!

Give thanks! if 'twere Thy will
Submission to demand,
 I then might bid myself be still,
 And bow to Thy command.

But hush!—beneath Thine eye
 I see, in words of blood,
 “Will He who gave His Son to die
 Refuse thee *any good?*”

Give thanks!—yes, Lord, I *do*;
 And, by Thy help, I *will*
Give thanks for blessings not received,
 Although expected still;—

Give thanks for mercies given,
 Unnoticed oft by me;
 Give thanks for *sins* forgiven,
 Known only, Lord, to Thee.

Oh! grant me, by Thy grace,
 To walk by *faith* alone,
 Until, before my Father's face,
I know as I am known.

“FOLLOWING FULLY.”

I WOULD *follow* Jesus
 Wholly in the way,
 Doing all He pleases,
 Loving to *obey*.
 At His feet be sitting,
 Resting on His word,
 Daily lessons learning
 Of my risen Lord.

Learning in the *desert*
 Lessons of His grace,
 Catching through the portals
 Glimpses of His face,
 Shining from the glory
 Of my home above,
 Shedding sunshine o'er me,
 Telling of His love.

Knowing “Jesus *only*,”
 Setting man aside,
 Taking Him who's worthy
 As my only Guide;
 Resting 'neath His shadow,
 Where no earth-mists come,
 On His arm be leaning
 Till I reach my home.

Gently to the haven
 Nearing day by day,
 Walking with my Saviour
 In the narrow way.
 I would follow Jesus
 Wholly in the way,
 Doing what He pleases,
 Loving to obey.

THE UNSEEN HAND.

“**T**HANK you very much!—that was *such* a help to me,” said a sick woman as she dropped exhausted on her pillow, after her bed had been made for her.

The friend to whom she spoke looked up in surprise. She had not touched the invalid, for she had feared to give pain, even by laying her hand upon her.

She knew that the worn body was so racked with many pains, and had become so tender and sensitive, that she could not bear to be lifted or supported in any way. All that her friends could do was to stand quietly by.

“I did nothing to help you, dear. I wished to be of use, but only stood behind without touching you at all; I was afraid of hurting you.”

“*That* was just it,” said the invalid, with a bright smile; “I knew you were *there*, and that if I slipped, I could not fall, and the thought gave me confidence. It was of no consequence that you did not touch me, and that I could neither *see, hear, nor feel* you. I knew I was *safe* all the same, because you were ready to receive me into your arms if needful,”

The sufferer paused a moment, and then, with a still brighter smile on her face, she added,—

“What a sweet thought this has brought to my mind! It is the same with my *heavenly* Friend. ‘Fear not, for I will be *with* thee’ is the promise; and thanks be to God, I know He is *faithful that promised*. I can neither see, hear, nor touch Him with the mortal sense; but just as I knew you were behind, with loving arms

extended, so I know that *beneath* me are 'the everlasting arms.' ”

(Selected.)

A CHILD'S FAITH.

A MOTHER, with her three children, was clinging to the wreck of the steamer *Bohemia*, when the mother said she *must* let go her hold, and be drowned.

Her little girl replied, “Hold on a little longer, mother. Jesus walked upon the water and saved Peter, and perhaps He will save *us*.”

The little girl's words so strengthened her mother that she held on a few moments more, when a boat was sent to their rescue.

Whatsoever things are *true*,
 Whatsoever things are *honest*,
 Whatsoever things are *just*,
 Whatsoever things are *pure*,
 Whatsoever things are *lovely*,—

Think on *these things*. (Phil. iv. 8.)

“WOULDST thou know that the matters contained in the word of Christ are *real* things? Then never read them for mere knowledge sake. Look for some beams of Christ's glory in every verse. Account nothing knowledge but as it is seasoned with some revelation of the glorious presence of Christ by His quickening Spirit. Use no conference about spiritual truths for conference sake, but still mind the promoting of edification. Use not duties for custom and mere service sake, but for nearer *communion with God*.”

ELISHA. (I)

(1 Kings xix. 19-21; 2 Kings ii.)

THESE beautiful histories of Elijah and Elisha are so interwoven that one can scarcely speak of the one without the other; and yet, though so intimately connected, their characters and testimony are strikingly different, and their lessons for our hearts very various.

We may learn divine *principles* from the lives of these Old-Testament saints of immense value for our daily path in these more favored days; for there are things that, thank God! dispensations can never change, and in which it should be to us cause for unfeigned joy that we may be found in such holy company. While there is surely a vast difference between the *portion* and *calling* of the Jew and the Christian, and in these respects great *contrast* between them, if we inquire what is the *principle* on which the godly then acted and the Christian is now to act, we shall find that therein they are at one. If we look back over the list of Old-Testament worthies given in Hebrews xi, we shall find this amply illustrated. Taking Abel and Enoch, we read of the one, "By faith he *offered* unto God . . . sacrifice;" and of the other, "He *walked* with God;" thus briefly and significantly setting forth the whole *position* and *path* of the child of God in any day. Thus, whatever we may rejoice in, higher than they, as to the blessed and full results of accomplished redemption, and the indwelling of the Spirit, higher blessings *vitally* we could not have than to be "partakers of *like precious faith*," by which alone

we can please God, and which rests on the perfection of the sacrifice which He finds delight in, and walking in a *path* well pleasing to Him also. Next, "by *faith*, Noah . . . prepared an ark to the *saving* of his house," teaching us of "the grace that brings *salvation*, teaching us to live *soberly, righteously, and godly*,"—in short, *separation from the world*. We then find, "Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should afterward receive for an inheritance, *obeyed*," etc., teaching us the path of the pilgrim worshiper in true, unwavering *obedience* to God; and thus as to the many more enumerated. So we may safely conclude that if "by *faith* the elders obtained a good report," that while blessings were laid up in store for us that they do not share, that they in common with ourselves were called upon to live a *life of faith* in God, according to what He reveals of Himself to us,—that that was the principle on which they lived and acted. Many a saint then, I judge, would put us to the blush as to *practical godliness*, because more true to the divine call and "faithful with his God" than we who have far more light.

Brethren, "suffer this word of exhortation" on this the threshold of our consideration of Elisha, for I honestly believe that the true contemplation of his life, as the Lord may enable us, will tend to make us more like that holy man of God. Though rejoicing to know that God views us, and we are to view ourselves, as "men *in Christ*," how far short of being really "men *of God*" may we, alas! practically be! Feeling my own inferiority to these men, I earnestly desire to be more truly their fellows in the path of true discipleship,

in which how many of them excel us, and might well provoke us to a godly jealousy—"to *love* and *good works*"! For, be it marked, the measure of light vouchsafed us is that of our responsibility also, as our Lord has said, "He that is faithful in that which is *least* is faithful also in much;" and also, "To whom men have committed *much*, of him they will ask the more." These surely are seasonable words in view of our present subject.

In the first of our scriptures, we have the divine *call* of God's servant Elisha. In the first step he took he learned His grace, and he could not have cast it off if he would, so sweet was its constraint. He *could* have refused the mantle of Elijah at his call if he would, but did not; and afterward, we may surely say, *would not* if he could. The true purpose of his heart was thus disclosed,—would he take the mantle, with all its attendant sorrows, or not? And he proved, in doing so, as indeed we each may, despite all our weakness, that "He giveth *more grace*." As remarked, Elisha's character and testimony stand as representative of our Lord Jesus,—one whose whole career was marked by *grace* to men, yet where courage to stand for God was needed, it appeared in him also. *Elijah's* path of testimony was, on the contrary, closed as it began—by ministering divine *judgment*; but *Elisha's*, like that of our Saviour in His pity and grace weeping over Jerusalem, turning to look upon Peter, commending His mother to John, giving assurance to the dying malefactor, etc. In him, next to his call, we have a case of the discipline of grace, and it produces its kind in him in return. Grace took him up, meeting him where he

was, as indeed we all prove it, pressing no unwilling service from him, but drawing out his heart's affections. Thus he is led to the place of testing, through which he goes as one with whom God and His path are realities. He was not, by all he went through, driven in upon himself, like an icicle, chilled in heart; but he "showed favor" and "dispersed abroad"—was a "good steward of the manifold grace of God" right on to the end, even his bones bringing a dead man to life. Divine grace, thus, in its own proper activity, can go right down into a man's sepulchre; it cannot be wearied out by all the indifference and refusal of men's hearts, but, true to its own divine source and nature, ever abides the same.

With Elisha's faith and purpose, we now see his *testing*: he is taken to *Bethel* (the house of God); *Jericho* (fragrant), the place of nature's advantages, but with the divine curse unremoved; and *Jordan*, the river of death and judgment; starting with *Gilgal* (the rolling away of reproach). Significant memories attach to these names, hallowed in Israel; and we too, as well as they, find them, morally, in the path of true discipleship until this hour. For who of us, if we would be true to our rejected and yet exalted Master, but learns, at the very start of our path, the force of *Gilgal*—the clearing away of the reproach of Egypt—our deliverance, through the death of Christ, from the uncircumcision of our *flesh*? Next, in an order it is not difficult to see is divine, *Bethel*, we learn enjoyment of His presence, "*fellowship* with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ;" for that cross which gives us His judgment of ourselves gives us also His appreciation

of His Son, for by it we "are brought *nigh unto God.*" And further as to *Jericho*, slowly though surely has been the divine instruction as to the character of the best and brightest here below—"the *world*, which passeth away, and the lust thereof," until in *Jordan* we could truly say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the *cross* of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world." Oh, to realize it in very deed and truth!

Elisha is thus put to the proof on every hand,—the circumstances through which he goes, the want of fellowship in the sons of the prophets, and deeper still, the thrice-repeated test of his master—"Tarry here." Tested on the right hand and on the left—tried by every wind of heaven, now that he has been fully proved, he is free to ask "whatsoever he will" and receive it, for the Master's *path* and *will*—yea, and resource too—are his.

See how that links with the Saviour's words, "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Can we not learn from this an explanation for many of our *unanswered* prayers? We care for God and His interests so little that He has to keep us waiting for what He says He will give us. Elisha may pray for what he *will*, and he receives it. He asks for a double portion of his master's spirit and gets it, but it was as the reward of his fidelity of heart to him. There are two principles involved in the way his prayer was answered. His eye was upon his master as he went up, and the power of his master's spirit comes down. We see the same thing in the close of 2 Corinthians iii.—*life, right-*

ousness, and *liberty* all flowing from Christ at God's right hand, through the Spirit's ministry. "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass *the glory of the Lord*, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by *the Spirit of the Lord*." (2 Cor. iii. 18.) That is, seeing our ascended Master by faith, the transforming power of the Spirit comes down upon us to change us into His likeness, and thus we also can have the mantle of our Master. Every thing He did or wrought was "through the eternal *Spirit*." It is beautifully suggested for us in the Samaritan's beast (Luke x.), which gives us first a picture of grace to the poor dying sinner, then the Lord takes the one whom He has saved and puts him on His own beast. The power that brought the Saviour there to save him also carries the wounded man away.

"Christ through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God" (Heb. ix. 14), and "He hath given us of *His Spirit*." That is the power to carry you and me up there where He has gone. What a terrible fall we get when we get off the Samaritan's beast and try our own legs! We are sure to fall when we do so,—failure of course must be the result, for "without *Him* we can do nothing."

There is one more principle to be considered,—that is, that the first effect of Elisha looking on his master gone up is that he rends his clothes. Elisha enters into the serious reality of the moment, and seeing Elijah ascend, he cries, "My *father*, my *father*, the *chariot* of Israel, and the *horsemen* thereof." What had he and the nation of Israel not lost in the departure of the faithful *prophet* from them—at one time God's sole

representative in their midst! for *king* and *priest* had alike become idolatrous, and forsaken God and His interests.

Of the former, how often it is written, "He wrought *evil* in the sight of the Lord;" and of the latter, whose "lips should keep knowledge," "Ye are *departed* out of the way; ye have caused many to *stumble* at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi," etc.—he espoused the interests of a rival!

Elisha had lost a father, and Israel their chariot and horsemen; and surely, if thus bereaved, God would have it felt and recognized. He realizes the anguish of having parted with his master. If there is one thing that I have to confess to the Lord as failure, it is that I do not miss Him more. The Lord Jesus wants to write it on our hearts, and impress it deeply on our souls, that "*He is not here.*" He would transplant our poor hearts to the place where there is not a withered ~~leaf~~, a furrowed brow, an aching heart. What shall we be then? People confident and happy in His grace, and able to overcome every thing that comes in the way. If we have difficulties in our journey, they will but serve to draw out our latent energies. Those very cities walled up to heaven that Israel feared, only brought out the fire of the man of faith—Caleb. He is the man who can say, I will take them single-handed. He said, Give me that mountain that the whole nation of Israel could not take, and I will take it single-handed. Difficulties do not make us weak; they but *test* our faith, or manifest our weakness if it *is* lacking. Let the case of Samson teach us to be separate from the world, thus to have power *with* and *for* God. De-

lilah worms God's secret out of him, and he becomes weak as others. Let us but put our heads on the lap of this Delilah-world, and then we become weak like other men,—then the Philistines (circumstances) put our eyes out when our secret is gone. With our secret gone, we are weaker than spilt water: with it unbartered,—the long hair that betokens the “weaker vessel,” and then no power of evil can overcome us.

Next, having “*taken hold* of his own clothes, and rent them in twain,” he *took up* the mantle” of his master, and realizes that, by faith, “out of *weakness* we are made strong.” Mark his simplicity of faith as he now stands by the bank of Jordan,—“he took the mantle of Elijah and smote the waters, saying, ‘*Where is the Lord God of Elijah?*’” Happy Elisha! faith in him rises up to the source of power—in God,—as the Psalmist witnesses also, “Once have I heard this—yea, twice, that *power belongeth unto God,*” and in this, he realizes “the *victory* that overcometh the world, even our faith.” The water smitten by the mantle of the ascended master part before him, and he goes over Jordan dryshod. See him next at *Jericho*, and again he is superior to all he has to meet, whether in connection with the “sons of the prophets” or “the men of the city.” The first, though constrained to recognize and confess “The *spirit* of Elijah doth rest on Elisha,” and, on greeting him, do him homage, yet, alas! how little were their hearts as his in the sense of the master's absence, or of the present power realized by him who now followed in his path, and to whom his mantle had been bestowed! To this day, how common an occurrence that many will recognize in others more

devoted than themselves grace that they are ready to *admire*, but, alas! not so ready to *possess* in a path of like self-denial! They propose to search for the very one whose spirit they had recognized in his follower, showing how little to *their* hearts as to him was the fact of his absence realized. At once Elisha responds, "*Ye shall not send*;" and happy would it be if we, on each appeal to us as to seeking for our Master upon the "*some mountain or valley*" of "this present evil world," would give like reply. Does not the apostle in Philippians iii. give such a witness?—he knows his Master has gone up, and to him there is but "*one thing to do*"—press on to win Him, and he weeps over those who have never thus rent their clothes, but who "*mind earthly things,—enemies of the cross of Christ*"!

But "when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, 'Send.'" Well he knew the result of it; but if the *truth* has not weight with souls to convince them, then, alas! sad *experience* must. He lets them try *their own* way, having taught them *God's*; and when their fifty strong men have "spent their strength for naught and labored in vain," they return to find him patiently awaiting the result, and he then replies, "Did I not say unto you '*Go not*'?" Surely this was "wisdom from above—first *pure*, then *peaceable*, full of *mercy*," etc.—how much to be coveted and sought after by ourselves—"speaking the truth in *love*"—"speech always with *grace*, seasoned with salt"—"good to the use of edifying, that it may minister *grace* unto the hearers."

Next, "the *men of the city*" make their appeal to this faithful steward of the *manifold grace* of God," and not in vain. "Behold, I pray thee, the *situation* of this city

is pleasant, as my lord seeth; but the *water* is naught, and the *ground* is barren."

Elisha's answer is short and simple, but with great moral force, we may see if well considered by us;—"Bring me a *new* cruse, and put *salt* therein." This surely betokened, on the one side, the *judgment* of Jehovah under which Jericho lay, despite the pleasantness of its situation,—a place where iniquity had filled its cup, and the sword of the Lord had wrought its work, and where the solemn judgment pronounced upon it had been realized fully by the one who dared it (comp. Josh. vi. 26; 1 Kings xvi. 34); and on the other, the *grace* that could and would work on behalf of those who trusted in Him, be they who they may, or where, when once their case of guilt and need was fully owned and judged before Him.

In a twofold way, Jericho was type of "this present evil world"—it lay under a *curse*, and was dedicated through *blood*, its foundation and gates set up in the death of Hiel's sons, who had in infidel defiance and impiety rebuilt it. Solemn testimony it bare that "God was not mocked," but "would be justified in His sayings, and clear when he judged." But their *confession* of this judgment was the basis of all divine blessing for them, and, making their appeal upon that ground, the prophet must of necessity respond, for *God cannot deny Himself* and he who was the minister of His holy claims,—"*the truth of God*" was also of "*the riches of His grace.*" All this is duly recognized, first in *their* confession, and next in the *prophet's* significant actions—the *new cruse* and its *salt*, which *they* brought unto him; the former, betokening what God is leading all

on to in the “*new* heavens and earth;” the latter, the judgment of all that sin is now stamped upon. With what grandeur the Lord can display Himself when man, judging his pitiable pride, has taken his true place in “*repentance* to give Him glory”! and how strikingly is it shown here! “He went forth unto the spring of waters, and cast the *salt* in there, and said, ‘Thus saith the Lord: *I have healed* these waters; there shall not be from thence any more *death* or *barren land*.’” Grand and beautifully typical action and testimony! pointing, as it surely does, to that day when God shall say, “Behold, I make *all things new*,” and “*God shall be all in all*,” man’s sad tale of sin and woe past forever. “*So the waters were healed*,” etc.—God’s grace had wrought its blessed results, first, in the hearts of these *men* of Jericho, and next, in regard to their sin-blighted *city*, when its condition was realized and owned. But now our picture changes,—the prophet goes to *Bethel*, but there, alas! to find the true name and character of the place unknown, or if known, too solemnly denied. The children of this place of revered memories—to Jacob once “none other but the house of God, the gate of heaven”—now mock the prophet of God. Alas for its departed glory! for here the holy man of God is not only mocked, but in too plain terms is told that he is no more welcome than his master had been before him. Apt the reminder is of the words of the apostle, “Therefore the world knoweth *us* not, because it knew *Him* not.” “*Go up*, thou bald head; *go up*, thou bald head” was testimony, surely, that they *knew* of Elijah’s translation, and fain would be rid of the one who now bore his mantle and trod his path

among men. But the gentle grace of the saviour-prophet was not to be despised save at awful cost, and the same lips so lately uttering "I have *healed* these waters" now minister "*curses* in the name of the Lord," witnessing solemnly that grace cannot be despised at will, but must, if so, be realized in "judgment without mercy." These children (not such as could not know, both their language and the Hebrew word translated thus telling this) had spoken grievous words, telling the sad and awful choice they made; and God, who loves to *pity*, now *must judge*. *Scoffers* must receive the due reward of their deeds; for with such, it is no mere flaw or weakness of human character as pictured here, but the deep, settled, impious rebellion of the human heart. The Word of God assures us that "there shall be *mockers* in the last days, that shall say, Where is the promise of His coming?" and such, or like unto this, shall be their solemn end. Alas! that "they know not, neither *will* they understand; they walk on in darkness," and He who would be their Saviour is forced to be their *Judge*.

(To be continued.)

"PRECEPT.—The precepts which God has given us are generally grounded upon some revelation of God's character;—thus, 'Be ye holy, *for* I am holy;' 'Let us love one another, *for* love is of God;' 'Be ye merciful, *as* your Father also is merciful;' 'Forgiving one another, even *as* God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.'"

PRAY ALWAYS.

THE following incident occurred on Lake Erie nearly forty years ago.

The principle personage in the narrative was a Christian sailor, John —, employed as first mate under Capt. C—, who had command of one of the two ships which some ambitious persons in Buffalo set afloat on Lake Erie during the fierce heat of the speculation which raged like a forest-fire over the West for a few years prior to 1836.

Determined to lead the navigation of the season, the ship left Buffalo immediately after the harbor was cleared of ice, supposing, what was quite a usual occurrence, that the wind would carry the ice up the lake, break it up, and so disperse it that they would have no further trouble with it; but to their great surprise, as they neared the upper end of the lake, they found themselves moving between two immense fields of ice,—that on the right extending apparently to the Canada shore, that on the left moving before the wind, slowly, but surely, down upon them.

The ship was not prepared for an Arctic encounter like this, and how to escape from their perilous position was of course an anxious question. But two courses presented themselves, and whether either of these was practicable remained to be seen. The first was to land on the ice, and so make their way to the Canada shore. Our hero, John —, volunteered the attempt to reach the shore. It was of course fraught with fearful hazard; but he succeeded in making the exploration and in returning safely to the ship, but only to report that the

ice was entirely detached from the shore, and that escape in this direction was impossible.

The second method was to reach the open water through the channel between the ice-fields in the ship's boats; but this idea was soon abandoned, for, at the rate the ice was moving before the wind, it was very certain the two fields would meet long before the boats could reach open water, and if caught, they would be crushed like egg-shells. What was to be done? Officers, sailors, passengers looked in silence and with pallid cheeks upon the approaching foe. In front, as far as could be seen, there was nothing but that narrow channel, and no wind to carry them through to the open water.

Under these circumstances, the captain called the passengers, and as many of the crew as could be spared from the deck, into the cabin, made a plain statement of their danger, and of his entire want of power to afford them relief; and, though not a professing Christian, said, "We are in the hands of God; if He does not interpose for us, there is no help, no hope. If any of you know how to pray, I wish you would do so." There sat that despairing company, with bowed heads, in dead silence—so still, you could hear your heart beat. In that terrible moment, John ——, the pious mate, raised his head, and just in a whisper said, "Let us pray." Officers, passengers, sailors, at once quietly went down upon their knees, and naught was heard, except now and then a deep-drawn sigh or a half-suppressed sob, while the converted sailor, in simple, child-like language, told in the ears of Him who holds the winds in His fists, and the sea in the hollow of His

hand, their exposure and danger, the interest they each had in their own lives and the lives and happiness of others—fathers, mothers, wives, children, and friends; humbly confessing their sins and just exposure to pain and penalty; and then, with tearful penitence and loving trustfulness, supplicating mercy and deliverance through the crucified and exalted Redeemer.

After the prayer, the captain and mate went on deck, and who can tell what were their thoughts or feelings when they saw that, during that solemn moment of penitent prayer, the wind had changed, and now, instead of blowing the crushing ice-field upon them, it was blowing the ship slowly, but surely, through that open channel. In the presence of that strange fact, the captain and mate uncovered their heads, and John —, looking aloft at the nearly naked yards, said, "Shall I put some more canvas on her, captain?" "No," said the captain, "don't touch her; some One else is managing the ship." And so the unseen Hand did lead them to the open water, and to their desired haven in safety.

We will not stop to do battle with the speculative theories of prayer which eminent scientists have latterly thrust into the face of christendom. The incident, of the truth of which the reader can rest assured, shall be left to bear, uninterpreted, its own testimony to the truth that God hears and answers prayer. And therefore it is written that "men ought always to *pray* and *not to faint.*"

H. W. S.

SITTING AT THE FEET OF JESUS.

IF we would be teachers of others, we must be learners ourselves. If we cease to keep our place at the feet of Jesus in prayer and meditation on His blessed Word, we soon begin to think that we know something; but while sitting *there*, we find and feel our own poverty and ignorance; yet what we do learn there, we learn to profit, and are encouraged to expect, and stirred up to ask, that more and more may be unfolded to us, by the Spirit, of the truth as it is *in Jesus*: our meditations of Him become sweet to the soul, and, as we handle Him by faith, our fingers drop with sweet-smelling myrrh (Song. v. 5). This is needful, not for public teachers only, but for the present peace, the soul's health, the real happiness, the joyful liberty of the most retiring and unobserved of God's children. It is only in the measure that we are *receivers*, through the Spirit, of the fullness that is in Jesus that we shall have any thing profitable to say for Him in our private intercourse with men, whether converted or unconverted. Let not past failure discourage us. He giveth more grace. He upbraideth not. If, in our own little measure, we find it "more blessed to *give* than to *receive*," what must be the joy of His heart to let His fullness flow into the channels which His grace opens in the contrite hearts of His redeemed—His brethren (Jno. xx. 17); hearts which long to know more of *Him*—which thirst for closer, and yet closer, communion with Him in whose presence, now realized by faith, is fullness of joy (1 Jno. i. 3, 4).

"FOR YET A LITTLE WHILE."

(Heb. x. 37.)

THE cold and storm and frost
 Of earth's chill wintry blast
 Will soon be past,
 And the bright dawning ray
 Of God's eternal day,
 So soft and sweet,
 Will break upon our sight
 With all its wondrous light
 And rest complete.

And we shall see His face,
 And praise the wondrous grace
 That brought us there;
 Nor think of sorrows more
 On that eternal shore
 Where all is peace;
 But with the Lamb once slain,
 Count all our loss but gain,
 Through His dear name.

Himself no more to leave,
 His love no more to grieve
 By wand'ring feet.
 Our hearts no longer cold,
 But by His love controlled
 In service meet.
 The fame we once had heard,
 Outreaching far the word,
 Our tongues repeat.

Immortal life begun,
 Immortal joys prolong,
 In blissful rest.

No night succeeds the day,
 But one eternal ray
 From His own face
 Who occupies the throne—
 The Lamb our sins hath borne—
 Jesus the Christ.

Haste! haste the coming day!
 Our longing hearts would say,
 While waiting here.
 Nor tarry longer Thou,
 But “bow the heavens now”
 While coming near,
 Thy sleeping saints to wake
 And living ones to take
 Into the air.

With Thee in glory grand,
 Upon the cloud to stand
 Arrayed in white.
 Fine linen, pure and clean,
 Such as no eye hath seen—
 No mortal sight.
 Cleansed in His “precious blood,”
 Our righteousness of God,
 Unsullied light.

C. E. H.

FOR those who seek to minister in the Church, it is not *knowledge* and *utterance* only that are needed; but also, and above all, *grace* and an *unblamable walk*. While harmless as doves in regard to carnal policy, they should be wise as serpents in respect of spiritual wisdom and prudence, so as to “cut off occasion from them which desire occasion” (2 Cor. xi. 12).

CREATION'S WITNESS.

CREATION is set forth by the apostle as the first and simplest of the subjects of faith. "Through faith *we understand* that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." *The very beginning, then, of faith is faith as to "the beginning;"* and the same apostle speaks of the heathen world as "without excuse" for their ignorance of God, because "the invisible things of Him—even His eternal power and Godhead—from the creation of the world are clearly seen, *being understood* by the things that are made." (See Heb. xi. 3 and Rom. i. 20.) The first chapter of Genesis—God's history of that which necessarily preceded man's knowledge as to the past—is, like God's history of that which is beyond human knowledge as to the future, a light that shineth in a dark place. Read, in connection with this divine narrative, those chapters of the book of Job in which the same God presents Himself in all His majesty as the Creator (xxxviii.—xli.); the effect of that revelation of the living God upon the heart of Job is enough to teach us the vast importance of knowing God as the Creator. (See chap. xlii. 2–6.)

The mystery of the divine nature is partially unfolded in it, not only in the *plural* form of the Hebrew word "*Elohim*" (God), which stands in connection with the verb in the singular form (Gen. i. 1, etc.), but in the expression "Let *us* make man in our image," taken in connection with the rejoicing of the only begotten *Son*, the daily delight of God, over the habitable parts of

the earth (Prov. viii. 22-31), and His own gracious expression that His "delights" were with the sons of men. But we are not left in any degree of doubt as to the meaning of this mystery, having the record of the beloved disciple concerning it (Jno. i. 1-3). Nor in the unity of the divine operations are we left in any doubt as to the presence of the almighty Spirit: "The *Spirit* of God moved on the face of the waters."

Thus the one eternal God—the same that was, and is, and ever shall be, Father, Son, and Spirit, to whom the believer looks as "*all his salvation and all his desire,*" formed this world, and fitted it up to be the scene of divine power, grace, and glory, and a sphere of action wherein superior intelligences should perpetually occupy themselves even from the beginning. (Job xxxviii. 4-7.)

If we turn to the stories of "the beginning" current among men ignorant of the Bible, we find them either to be monstrous fables, built wholly on human imaginations, fragments of true tradition bound up with that which is false, or philosophical notions of a first great Cause, *cold and lifeless indeed, as coming from minds unacquainted with Christ.*

It was after the lapse of ages that certain Greeks who assumed or were honored by the name of *philosophers*, as in a special degree the *lovers of wisdom*, made that grand discovery which the apostle says *every* man is inexcusable for not making—the existence of "eternal power and Godhead." Before the foundation of the world, God took counsel with the Son of His love both as to creation and redemption;* and as the first man was *the figure* (Rom. v. 14) of the Second Man,

the Lord from heaven (1 Cor. xv. 47), so the first woman was the figure of the Church, the redeemed of the Lord.† We may also say that the dominion given to Adam and Eve over every thing was a type of the future dominion over the earth to be exercised by Christ and His Church;‡ and the service of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden was a figure of their future service.§ By “a figure,” we mean something in every sense inferior to that which it sets forth; and so it is here.

As far as God, who breathed into Adam's nostrils the breath of life, is above that breath, so far is the life in Christ above the life of the human soul; for the first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam a quickening (that is, a life-giving) spirit. As far, too, as a human nature capable of suffering but incapable of sinning (Heb. iv. 15) is above a human nature that has earned suffering and death *by* sinning, so far is the Second Adam above the first. And again, as far as the blood-washed Assembly, holy and without blemish, shall be raised above the state of the first woman, subject to deception, and bringing in transgression, so far is the glorious Church beyond its type. Lastly, as far as myriads of the human race are above the lower creation, and as much as living souls are in value above fruits and flowers, so superior are the dominion and service reserved for Christ and His glorified

* See Gen. i. 25, compared with Prov. viii. 30, 31; Jno. i. 3; Eph. i. 4; Col. i. 16-18.

† Eph. v. 30, 32, compared with Gen. ii. 23.

‡ Heb. ii. 5-8, with Rom. viii. 17; 2 Tim. ii. 12; Rev. iii. 21; Dan. vii. 13, 14.

§ Isaiah xxvii. 3, with Matt. xix. 28 and Luke xix. 17, etc.; xii. 44.

Church to that which our first parents possessed in the garden of Eden.

Here, then, is something for us to connect with Eden beyond all the dreams of poets, or all the high imaginations of intellectual men,—something worthy of God, and something that shall be a full answer to all the taunts and questionings suggested by Satan as to the entrance of evil into the world.

THE LOVE OF GOD.

LOVE of God—oh, wondrous story!
 Love from ages past!
 Love—oh, never-ending glory!
 Changeless to the last.

Love—whose light to me is brighter
 Than the brightest now;
 Dimming every earth-born shadow,
 Fading things below.

Lord, Thy love resistless draws me
 As I trace it o'er,
 Wins my heart for Thee in glory—
 Leads me to adore.

ELISHA. (2)

(2 Kings ii. 25; iii.)

“AND he went up from thence to Mount *Carmel*, and from thence he returned to Samaria.”

Blessed *retreat* from “the contradiction of sinners” that he has just realized, and the scene of judgment in which he has been forced, in faithfulness to God, to play so solemn a part, it is to be where his master had realized before him the might of Jehovah’s grace—His *ear* not heavy, and His *arm* not shortened (1 Kings xviii.), and wise is he to find it there.

Beautiful *preface* too to this chapter, in which we find our prophet about his accustomed work of grace, “going about doing good, as our adorable Master long afterward, yet giving men to know that though He was the One who “blotteth out transgressions,” yet must they realize that for this another must bear the penalty, for sin could not be trifled with.

Carmel, meaning “*fruitful place*,” may readily suggest to our hearts that which our Lord has said can be alone *that* to us—“He that *abideth* in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth *much fruit*; for *without Me ye can do nothing*.” (Jno. xv. 5.) Would that we knew its meaning better than we do—better because of its *enjoyment* rather than for its lack! To this end He has called us to share His grace. “Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and *bring forth fruit*, and that your *fruit should remain*, that whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He may give it you.” (Jno. xv. 16.)

But precious though the retreat be in Carmel, yet there he may not stay; for this presents but *one* aspect of the Christian's path—"fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ," the other rightly and naturally flowing from it, not as other than it, but its happy *result*. "From Me is thy *fruit found*."—"Ye also shall *bear witness*, because ye have been *with Me* from the beginning." (Jno. xv. 27.)

"From thence he returned to *Samaria*," meaning "Watch,"—the place of the enemy's sway and Jehovah's *judgment* and finally His *grace* (chap. vi, vii.); picturing, as it does, "this present evil world," which the same apostle already quoted as to "our *fellowship*" describes in his first epistle in a *sevenfold* way, indicating our *walk*.

1. *Lustful*. "All that is in the world, the lust of the *flesh*, and the lust of the *eyes*, and the *pride of life*, is not of the Father, but is of the world." (1 Jno. ii. 16.)

2. *Transient*. "The world *passeth away*, and the lust thereof." (ii. 17.)

3. *Ignorant*. "The world *knoweth us not*, because it *knew Him not*." (iii. 1.)

4. *Hateful*. "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you." (iii. 13.)

5. *Antichristian*. "Many *false prophets* are gone out into the world. . . . Every spirit that confesseth not Jesus Christ come in the flesh is *not of God*: and this is that spirit of *antichrist*, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it *in the world*." (iv. 1-4.)

6. *Deluded*. "They are of the world; therefore speak they of the world, and the world *heareth them*."

. . . . Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of *error*." (*vv.* 5, 6.)

7. *Satanic*. "The whole world *lieth in the wicked one*." (*v.* 19, *R. V.*)

If, then, to Elisha's heart *Samaria* partook of aught of such character as here given, (and we have ample reason, in reading the divine account—*1 Kings xvi. 23-33*, etc.,—to believe it so, what need of the meaning of its name, "*Watch*"! How suggestive, too, of our Lord's words to His disciples, so much needed by ourselves, and, alas! so oft *forgotten*, "*Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always,*" etc. (*Luke xxi. 34-36.*)! Plain, then, it is that if Elisha returns to *Samaria*, it must be the place of *witness* rather than of rest,—of *toil*, not retreat; yet need he not *faint* there, as *Elijah* before him (*1 Kings xix. 1-3*), much less *compromise* the Lord's testimony, as *Obadiah* (*chap. xviii.*). Happy for us if, in well-balanced communion with God, and devotedness of heart to do His will, we learn this blessed combination of *Carmel* and *Samaria*! And as to it, may we hear the word, "What, therefore, God hath *joined* together, let not man put *asunder*." How serious, too, are our Lord's words as to the world, and our relations to Him,—"*O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee; but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me*"! And as to the Father, how blessed our connection—"I have declared unto them

Thy name, and will declare it ; that *the love* wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them" !
(Jno. xvii. 25, 26.)

May 'we thus, through His grace, realize it more fully, that, like Joseph, distinguished as the object of his father's love by his "coat of many colors," we may count it worth the while, in view of "the *Father* Himself loveth you," to "marvel not if the *world* hates us," —the true language of our hearts,—

"Master, we would no longer be
Loved by the *world* that hated Thee,
But patient in Thy footsteps go,
Thy *sorrow* as Thy joy to know."

Finally, see him linked with his brother Jehosaphat, who is off the track. It is a wonderful thing to be near enough to God to recover one who has wandered away. Many of us only put people further away by our very endeavor to "wash their feet." If we have to put our finger on the sin of any one, we must restore his soul first ; for if we cannot restore a person's confidence in God, our labor is in vain. We want to be like Nathan. We need to tell those who have sinned a little parable, and get the persons themselves to condemn the *sin*. Then they wake up to the fact that it is their own judgment they have pronounced. Elisha does not scold Jehosaphat. He knows when to "embrace and when to refrain from embracing," etc. He simply says that he wants the minstrel. What Jehosaphat does not feel, he does. The deepest rebuke I ever received was from a brother's dropping his head instead of giving me a scolding. He did not need to say any thing to me ; but by the sigh he heaved, or the silent prayer, he showed

he was where I was not. So Elisha's asking to have his minstrel showed Jehosaphat that he was off the track, that something had come in to disturb their communion. Jehosaphat, who had been already disciplined by God, when he joined affinity with Ahab to recover the cities of refuge, now enters into a *political* alliance with the grandson of Ahab. He was a man who found it hard to say *No*. The enemy betrays him three times into an unequal yoke. First, he forms an unequal yoke with Ahab to recover the cities of refuge. His object was a good one. One of these cities had fallen into the hands of the Syrians. What object could be more praiseworthy than to seek to recover them? But this diverted the servant of the Lord from the true path. He went into an unholy alliance, which brought God's judgment upon him. This shows that when the people of God join affinity with the world, however good the object may be, they are off the track. Many a man who sees that this is not right in *religion* thinks it is all right in *business*. The same man must learn that he must not join affinity with ungodly people in that way either. He (Jehosaphat) builds ships at Ezion-geber, and the "Lord brake the ships." Now this third time, he enters, not into a *religious* unequal yoke, nor a *commercial* one, but a *political* one. Here, a king of Israel in trouble wants help. The king of Edom helps him, and the king of Judah is equally friendly. Had divine principles governed the latter,—had he heeded the word of the Lord, he never would have gone with him at all. All through Scripture, when great iniquity is described, it is said to be "as the iniquity of *Ahab*," and here Jehosaphat is linked with it.

But God bars the door when we attempt to go against¹ Him. He (Jehosaphat) goes to bring the king of Moab into subjection to the king of Israel. After he had gone on this mission, he begins to feel uncomfortable, and wants divine guidance. But it is hard to get divine guidance when we are off the divine *path*. How many of us arrange matters to suit ourselves, and then we ask God to sanction what we have already planned! but, alas! what folly! Here, the king of Israel cannot understand what caused their want of success. Elisha says, You had better go to the prophets of your father and your mother. People that seek God only when in distress have no real love for Him. The prophet has no word for this wicked king. But there is one man there that can claim an answer from the prophet. What a simple, blessed truth this is, that the child of God can claim his Father's ear, even when off the track! Whenever we are, if we but *bow* to God's hand, and take our true place in self-judgment before Him, He is sure to meet us and sure to bless us.

"And Elisha said, 'As the Lord of Hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehosaphat, the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee.'" (2 Kings iii. 14.)

This seems strange at first sight. The only other instance like this in Scripture (using the minstrel) is the case of Saul. His case, however, was very different from that of Elisha. There was no evil spirit with Elisha, but he was in bad company. The people of God sometimes feel the need of a special ministration to bring them back to the right path. There are parts of the world where a ship cannot go without the needle

of the compass being affected, it will not balance truly. Why is it that the needle will not balance rightly, and that they are obliged to steer away from those places before the needle will traverse rightly? Because the land is impregnated with minerals, and they must push off from the surrounding ridge of minerals, and then it turns to the right course. So the child of God is often diverted from the true course. A proposition is made to him which seems to be a fair one, and it deceives him. I remember a child of God telling me that he had been receiving favors from a man of the world, and its sad results. There is really nothing in common between the Christian and the man of the world. Some time or other he will call on you to return the favor, if you put yourself in his power and it blinds your eyes. In the case of the Christian to whom I have just referred, election-time came on, and the man of the world said, "Now I want you to do me a favor." Now what was the Christian to do? He had put himself into the hands of the man of the world, and he felt in honor bound to return the favor done him. He learned from this the folly of subjecting himself to the power of the world.

Jehosaphat found himself in these circumstances. There was no escape for him, and he turns to the only one who can remedy matters,—the man of God. *He* gives the only true answer—calls for a minstrel, and then shows the place he was in wrong. Have you not often felt like this? Your prayers are not answered, there is no passage in the Word of God for you. You have not made a mere slip in the path, but your whole course has been wrong. If a man has gone on the

wrong road, there is no way to get right but to get off it.

Many things seem to be mere chances—mere causalities, as men would say, such as a man treading on a nail, etc. This is not such a case, but rather that of one on the wrong path altogether. This should have taught Jehosaphat where he was.

If the Word can teach us nothing, what is wrong? It may be that our feet have left the narrow path. The minstrel has to be brought,—our hearts have to be put in tune again. Now the minstrel plays before the prophet, the hand of the Lord is upon him, and he gives him his message.

There is another point to be noticed,—the *manner of restoration*. Why did not God pour down rain from heaven, as in the days of Elijah? No; if people have got into the wrong path, they must be made to feel it. God says that they shall be filled with the fruit of their own ways, etc.,—they have to *toil* for the water they get. They are compelled to fill the valley with ditches. The water came, but in a humiliating way. It is not pure sparkling water from heaven, but *ditch-water*. God will make a man drink water out of a ditch to save his life. If we persist in going on in the wrong path, even though God may answer our prayers, how often He answers them like giving us dirty water out of a ditch! True, we got the water, but in a most humiliating way. It is not the water coming down from heaven. It flows mysteriously, and we get it in *some* way, and that is all we can say. God has first to make a man feel that he is off the right path, and then compels him to make a ditch. Divine grace can meet even the case of a man off the track.

COUNSEL FOR THE DAY.

“FRET NOT THYSELF.”

“TRUST IN THE LORD.”

“DELIGHT THYSELF IN THE LORD.”

“COMMIT THY WAY UNTO THE LORD.”

“TRUST ALSO IN HIM.”

“REST IN THE LORD.”

“FRET NOT THYSELF.”

READ the opening verses of the thirty-seventh psalm—yes, read them again and again. What King David wrote from the bottom of his heart will help you in your daily life, dear young Christian.

Three times over does David say to us, “*Fret not thyself*” about other people (*vv.* 1, 7, 8). Let us begin the day with this counsel: Fret not thyself! Do not worry about any naughty person.

“*Trust in the Lord.*” He rules, orders, protects. Do not try to arrange matters; trust in the Lord. He loves to be trusted; and keep on doing good yourself, whatever any one else may say or do. This is a most healthful occupation. Be busy in doing good yourself, whatever any one else may be busy in.

“*Delight thyself also in the Lord.*” Do not be drawn off from joy in Him for whatever any one may say. Keep your heart fixed on Him, and you will rejoice; and as you set your heart upon the Lord, so will He give you the desires of your heart. He delights to bless those who delight in Him. A Christian who delights himself in folly must not expect answers to his prayers.

“Commit thy way unto the Lord.” Take your path to Him, and leave it with Him. We often take our troubles—our difficulties to the Lord, but seldom leave them there. Seek for grace to commit them to Him. He is perfect in love and in wisdom. Hand over your cares to the Lord. If you will keep your hands full of cares, be sure you have not handed them over to the Lord.

“Trust also in Him.” This will follow committing your path to Him. Confide in Him. He will undertake for you. He will arrange the various matters on your way—will bring it to pass. Do not doubt Him.

“Rest in the Lord.” Having given over your difficulties to Him, and trusting Him about them, now rest in Him. No earthly friend will do for you what your Lord God will. Wait patiently for His intervention and deliverance. You will glorify Him thus.

Yet one word more. As day by day passes by, and we are tried and tested by what surrounds us, “fret not thyself”! “Fret not thyself” is the frame for the picture set out at the beginning of this little paper.

(Selected.)

AVOIDING ANXIETY.—Payson, on his dying bed, said to his daughter, “You will avoid much pain and anxiety if you will learn to trust all your concerns in God’s hands. ‘Cast all your care upon Him, for He careth for you.’ But if you merely go and *say* that you cast your care upon Him, you will come away with the load on your shoulders.”

“A LEGALIST hears the command, and looks to himself for strength to obey it: an obedient believer looks at the command by faith, and to God for strength.”

MATTHEW II. 6-11.

THOU Bethlèhem, not least among the princes of Juda; for out of *thee* shall come a *Governor*," etc. Ah! in *this* we find solution of the dark mystery of human woe—"the pride of their hearts had deceived them; they trusted in their beauty," and forgot that He who was their Saviour was their God. If His sceptre was deliverance, it must be bowed to, and "they repented not to give Him glory."

"Then Herod . . called, . . . inquired, . . sent;" but all, alas! was only the activity of a heart "at enmity with God," instead of one "believing unto righteousness."

"When they had *heard* . . they *departed*," etc. (how vivid the contrast!) Touched by God, heeding His testimonies, they are not turned back by either the heartless indifference or guilty concern of those who should have led them to the King, as they thus took hold of their skirts. (Comp. Zech. viii. 23; Jno. xii. 20-22.)

How plain the lesson, that when we act upon the light we have, God gives us more! The wise men had at first only the *star*; next, the word of God by the *prophet*; and now, the *star going before* them, thus encouraging their hearts and brightening their faith, "they rejoiced with exceeding great joy." The attitude of Herod and Jerusalem was much to militate against the likely good of searching out their desired object: but they walk their own path with God; and having their hearts assured of Him, go on, and it is that of "the just, shining brighter unto the perfect

day." They tarry not when they have His *word* (little or much). *This* is guidance, and thus their faith is honored and confirmed. When we act simply in the power of the truth we have, we get further truth; and going on to enjoy this, the first is revived and brightened also, has additional features, and is renewed in blessing to us. Thus the star they had already is seen in *new* circumstances, serving still further ends,—“going before them.” Blessed certainty was theirs, as they “added to their faith *virtue*,” etc. (2 Pet. i. 5–8), consummating with its happy end—“the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

“Till it came,” etc. *TILL faith* finds its object, *hope* its anchorage, and *love* its delight, that which we first had before our souls leads us on—true for our *peace* and true for our *journey* here as well. “As ye have therefore *received* Christ Jesus the Lord, so *walk ye* in Him.” “Whom having not seen, ye *love*; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye *rejoice* with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” (1 Pet. i. 8.) The star was *His*; it, as all else, bore witness of, led to Him—the *confirmation* of God for their souls.

Blessed lessons these!—“*Jesus born* ;” the blessed One in whom all the hopes of Israel were, nations are constrained to own and bow down to as the “Lord’s Anointed.” “They see His *star*,” and, with hearts touched by God, turn instinctively to Him; then His *word* confirms, as they turn toward their object; ere it is yet reached, the star reappears for a further purpose and rejoices their hearts, comes in to meet the false testimony that the indifferent or worse state of Israel with reference to their King would give; and now they reach the goal.

“When they were come into the house, they saw the *young Child*, with Mary His mother.” Little there, doubtless, to witness of His *royal* estate, but His circumstances occupy not their hearts to divert them from *Him*—they have sought HIMSELF.

PUNCTUALITY.

WHY is it that so many Christians arrive at the various meetings *too late* for the commencement? This is a question which, I suppose, affects every gathering throughout the land. It has become so serious as to demand our prayerful and thoughtful attention.

It is most painful to find believers dropping in to a meeting five, ten, fifteen, or twenty minutes late; and one cannot help thinking that a great deal of this is brought about by the *forgetfulness* of those concerned.

They do two things: they distract and grieve those who are in their places, and they grieve the Lord Jesus (which is far worse). It is most unhappy when Satan is able to use the late arrival of a child of God to draw away the attention of those gathered from the *Object* of their worship, and rob that blessed One of the praises which are His due; as it sometimes happens that the interruption mars the communion existing between the Head and His members present, and affects the holy joy of the whole gathering.

I would ask serious attention to this fact: the blessed Lord Jesus left a promise, which has *never* been *canceled* and never *once* broken—"Where two or three are gathered together in My name, *THERE AM I* in the midst."

Do we remember this as we should? Do we think of it as we prepare for the meetings—as we journey to them—as we take our seats—as we sing—as we pray? I cannot but think that the one great cause of unpunc-

tuality is that Christians *lose sight* of the *fact* that they are going to meet the *Lord Jesus Himself!* I cannot conceive that any one knowing and *realizing* this fact would, as it were, keep *Him* waiting.

Beloved in the Lord, the Lord Jesus always keeps His appointments; and is it not a fact that a half-hour earlier rising on the Lord's day, or a little brisker movement in household affairs, would so alter matters that we should see every one in their places at the appointed time.

Dear friend, what has hindered you from being punctual? Cannot the difficulty be overcome? Ask Him earnestly to enable you to overcome every obstacle. He is worthy of a little self-denial on your part, for He denied Himself in every way, and suffered unto *death*, for you.

May the Lord stir up your heart with love to Himself, and if you have hitherto failed in this respect, may you be so exercised about it that, by the Lord's help, it may become a thing of the past, not to be repeated.

R. S. R.

[NOTE.—While urging the deep importance of this subject in its bearing upon assemblies meeting for worship on Lord's days, it is not intended, in the case of prayer-meetings, to discourage the attendance of Christians who are only able to be present for a part of such gatherings, especially when held at mid-day; for a few minutes only spent in such meetings have often proved a blessing to the individuals attending, and through them to others.]

"HE LEADETH ME."

(Psalm xxiii.)

NO want can I e'er know while following
 Thee, (v. 1.)
 My faithful, tender *Shepherd*; Thou wilt be
 At hand, supplying *all* abundantly.

Thy *shepherd*-eye ne'er sleeps, in darkest night;
 Thou ledest on by waters *still* and bright,
 Preserving me from ravening wolves' affright. (v. 4.)

"*In pastures green*;" in *sun* or *shade*, as best
 Thy wisdom chooseth; as for food and rest,
 Thy sheep, as led by Thee, are *always* blest. (v. 2.)

Though through a dying scene, Thine eye hath
 traced
 The way Thou ledest; ne'er to be effaced,
 Thy very footsteps for my feet are placed! (v. 4.)

Yes, and on path distinct,—so I can go
 In perfect peace and joy; for this I know,
 Thou ledest me, refreshing as I go. (v. 3.)

By "*quiet waters*" too,—no billow's roar! (v. 2.)
 Of peace unruffable Thou'st given a store.
 Oh! path *so* blest—so bright! what want I more?

Naught but confiding love in love like Thine!
 Naught save obedience, never to repine, (v. 6.)
 But follow on, where light doth ever shine.

(Ps. cxxxix. 12.)

Some speak of "thorns"! None such when *following Thee*.

My soul hath learned thorns may be placed by
Thee,
But then the *hedge* proves my propensity!

Such need not be. Ah, no! a lovelier path
Could not be traced below for me. He hath
So made it by His own blest company.

Above the tempest, in the vale below,
Thy voice, my Shepherd, teach me best to know
It ever calls where storms ne'er *beat*, nor tem-
pests blow.

But should'st Thou have to chide my wayward
heart,
Oh may I know the listener's blessed part,
And quickly learn what Thou wilt then impart.

Oh, tender, faithful Shepherd, as Thy sheep,
Teach me *Thy care* to know, Thy word to keep,
Thy *rod* and *staff* to trust, o'er height or steep.

'Tis only for a little while. How sweet to prove,
Hourly, yea, momentarily, Thy deep, deep love
As while we walk below, we dwell *in God* above!

The Lord *my Shepherd* is—no *want* I know;
I only need my *helplessness* to know,
Clinging to Him who *holds me fast*; and so,
With *shepherd-care*, His wisdom He will show.

M. E. Milen.

FEEDING ON THE MANNA.

 Jno. vi; 1 Cor. x. 3, 4.

FEEDING on the manna is not simply the soul's contemplation of a humbled Christ—that is, of Christ come from heaven to walk in lowliness among men; but faith in Him who came from heaven and died upon the cross, by which the life (eternal life) we have in Him exists and is sustained in the desert.

John vi. is the Lord's own unfolding of this. He feeds the multitude in the desert—a living picture of the truth, and then preaches to them the doctrine—“Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness and are dead . . . I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; *and the bread that I will give is My flesh*, which I will give for the life of the world.”

The passover is our shelter from judgment, as well as food; the manna, our sustenance in the desert, but equally through death. “Whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood.” The one is safety from judgment prominently; the other, life sustained where naturally there is no supply.

Some, offended by the thought of eating His flesh, went back, and walked no more with Him; but Peter and the rest were true believers, and possessed this life, and lived it, and followed on, though with so little apprehension or understanding that they could n't bear to hear that Christ must die.

May we eat and drink, that our souls may be fed. The desert gives no supply. In the desert, they all

ate "the same spiritual food," and all drank "the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ." Here again death comes in—the water flowed from a smitten Rock. The figures of Scripture are bold and free. They *ate*, and they also *drank*, and they drank of a *Rock*. The whole together simply means that a crucified Saviour is the soul's food. They fed on One who was to die for them: we feed on One who has died for us.

The Rock "followed them"—how full of grace! The tenderness of the Shepherd's care. How free and bold the figure, to suit the rich fullness of Scripture thought, and the blessings of God's grace for the soul, in constant attendance upon us! No wonder that the Lord makes us feel that we are in a desert, that we may realize His supply. He suffered them to hunger, only that He might feed them with manna. How much we lose if we are ensnared into making this scene our abiding-place! for then there is no hunger, and no eating and drinking—like the human system become inactive by disease,—and the soul is famished, spiritual death.

E. S. L.

"Our God is light; and though we go
Across a trackless wild,
Our Jesus' footsteps ever show
The path for every child.

"Death's bitter waters met our thirst;
Thy cross has made them sweet;
Then on our gladdened vision burst
God's shady, cool retreat.

"The manna and the springing well
Suffice for every need,
And Eshcol's grapes the story tell
Of where Thy path doth lead."

ELISHA. (3)

(2 Kings iv. 1-7.)

NOW we come to consider our prophet in a page of his history which most happily presents his character as eminently typical of his and our adorable Master, “full of grace and truth,” “going about *doing good*,” and of whom our hearts may rightly exclaim with fervor, “Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into Thy lips, therefore God hath blessed Thee forever”! So to speak, with *Elijah’s* ministry, “the way of the Lord has been prepared” in this day, as in the New-Testament one by John the Baptist, and now (typically, at least, as foreshadowing the future blessing of Israel,) the word to Elisha is, “*Comfort ye My people.*” Elijah has spoken in words of unmistakable plainness, “All flesh is as *grass*,” now Elisha must needs add, for each heart owning that, “Behold *your God!*” “He shall *feed* His flock like a shepherd: He shall *gather* the lambs with His arm, and *carry* them in His bosom, and shall *gently lead* those that are with young.” (Is. xl. 3-11.)

We have not here a case of *failure* as was Jehoshaphat’s, but of *distress* on account of the grace of God not being fully realized as meeting it—“a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets *cried* unto Elisha”—she is in distress, dire poverty and felt need—her *creditor* is coming to take her two sons to be bondmen, and she has nothing left for either him, them, or herself. Fitting attitude it surely is for her to take, “she *cried* unto Elisha, saying, ‘Thy servant

my husband is dead'”—death has thrown its dismal shade o'er all the brightness of her prospects, and now the fact that she further tells, “Thou knowest that thy servant did *fear the Lord*,” seems but to mock her misery. “Has God *forgotten* to be gracious?” has He now broken His pledge to be the Judge of the widow and the Father of the fatherless? Nay, verily, for “He *cannot lie*,” “He *fainteth not*, neither is *wearry*, and there is no searching of His *understanding*.” How wonderfully such cases are met in Scripture! We learn from 1 Timothy v. that God made provision for the widow's need; as in Israel, so in Christianity—He had His poor-house, and the Church of God cared for all her poor. In fifth verse we have the *true* widow in contrast with her “that liveth in pleasure, who is *dead* while she liveth.” There were “widows indeed,” “desolate, trusting in God,” and some that were not such, who had never felt the prop of their life taken from them, and God has to deal with them that they may learn that He is the God of the widow. So wherever there is a widow who is a true one, it is one whose cry God regards, and He meets her in her distress. The case before us, then, is a picture of a soul in distress, one with a crying need—nothing to meet the creditor—nothing to satisfy the heart. Her sons about to be taken for bondmen was the stripping from her of her last hope and joy—the tree cut down at the roots was to have its tender shoots alike removed. Shut up to God she surely is. What she does is to cry out of her distress, and that surely was the fitting thing. The soul that does so gets an answer, for “the same Lord over all is *rich* unto all that call upon Him.” They

may have but a low estimate of grace and what they may expect from it, but answer them God will, and according to *His own* heart's goodness, not that of the seeker's. Mark the wisdom with which Elisha treats this poor widow; he does not ask her of her experience in the *past*, nor of her prospects in the *future*, but of her position in the *present*. The past left out of account, and the future not brought in, he deals with her just *where she is*. Has it not often been our lot to find a soul thus in distress—it may be, one who really loved Christ, and yet knew not how His grace fully met their need, who looks upon God as One entering into judgment with them, and whither can they turn? I have heard of one thus at whose door a servant of the Lord had knocked and received no answer. Meeting her afterward on the street, he told her of his doing so. She inquired the time of it, and on being told, replied, "How sorry I am! I was in at that very time, and heard you knock, but did not like to answer it, as I thought it was the man coming for the rent, and I was not ready for him." Yes, and that, too, was the way she had treated the blessed Lord—kept the door barred in His face, because she thought He came exacting from her instead of to supply all her need. How many like that still! They have been awakened, but the way they read God's character is that of a creditor coming to make them "pay all," instead of One full of goodness to enrich them. Mark the prophet's action,—asking her not for promises or convictions, he says to her, What have you *now*? We need thus to find out where souls *are*, before we can deal with them aright, and minister to them "the *present* truth." An opposite

danger is in giving more than meets the present need of the soul. In the case of Philip and the eunuch, after "preaching unto him *Jesus*," and receiving his subjection to His name in baptism, "the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip,"—would not let him say another word beyond this—Jesus, Lord. Had we been there, how we might have desired to give him a few points of truth for *future* use! But no; God is wiser than men, and leads His people along in infinite wisdom and love. Again, let us take care that when we have gone away from people, we have left something of the truth itself on which, at least, they can rest their souls. Paul was at Thessalonica but "three Sabbath days," and yet he thanked God without ceasing, on behalf of the Christians there, and the chief cause of it was this, that they received his message, "not as the word of man, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh in those that believe." (1 Thess. ii. 13.)

May we covet thus to serve Him, that not only the precious *seed* we sow may remain "the incorruptible seed, living and abiding forever," and we *ourselves* as doing His will, and thus abiding forever too, but that in "that day" when He "giveth reward unto His servants" and "every man's *work* shall be tried," that ours may abide the day of His coming," and be to His and our praise through eternity, fruit of His own rich grace.

If the prophet, then, finds the widow with but a pot of oil, he must show her to use it. Thus God always does, taking us up exactly as He finds us, giving conviction of *our* need, and then of the sufficiency of *His* grace to meet it, when once that is realized. If He, then, has manifested Himself as a *Giver*, One rich in

exhaustless fullness to meet human need, *what* does He seek on our part but the honest confession of it before Him, and submission to the grace that delights to bless? Happy thus to be “the *broken* and *contrite* heart He will not despise”—those that “*repent* to give Him glory”!

How needful, in our ministry to souls, is this divine wisdom which Elisha displays as to this widow’s need! How often we meet with those who believe, at least, in common with us, in the Lord Jesus as the eternal Son of God, and the only way of approach to God, and yet know not the *results* of this, through grace, for those who trust Him! Do we inquire of them what they have got already, and seek to identify ourselves with *that*, recognizing their measure of faith, however feeble, as that which is “like precious” with our own, and then unfold its blessing to their souls? As we teach a child whose hand clasps the tiny acorn that therein is found the germ of the mighty oak, God’s power through death and resurrection developing it, so we should God’s people. Beautifully the bride in the Song of Solomon expresses it thus, while in the happy consciousness of her own endowments and favor,—“We have a *little sister*, . . . : what shall we do for our sister . . . ? If she be a *wall*, we will build upon her a palace of silver; and if she be a *door*, we will inclose her with boards of cedar.” (Song Sol. viii. 8, 9.) Thus we need to recognize what souls are *found in*, and what is found *in them*, the fruit of grace, to minister wisely and serviceably to them. Let us not think so much more of what *we* have got (it may be from God,) that we neglect to recognize *their* little, if it be such; for

“*what* have we that we have not received?” Here, in Elisha, we have before us a man who knew well how to deal with anxious souls. The poor widow has “nothing save a pot of oil.” She looks aghast at the dismal prospect—death and desolation stamp the whole scene with which she is connected. Now *what*? Does she need more than she has got? No; she has every thing in what she esteems as nothing, but she has to learn that she has it therein. She has all that can give a perfect answer to her *creditor*, and leave her ample, the remainder of her time, “to *live* of the rest.” So, many people have the pot of oil—have “tasted that the Lord is gracious,” but this very taste, the little faith they have, makes them doubt their acceptance with God, as they cannot feel satisfied with themselves; they know not that the “*gift*” they possess by their feeble measure of faith is to be “as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it: whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth.” (Prov. xvii. 8.) Our work with such is to get them to bring in some empty vessels—a little more room to develop the treasure of divine grace already in their possession, for all that they need is the power of reception. The prophet, wisely enough, will not occupy the widow with her distresses, but with the source of supply, which, through grace, already she possesses, though unknown in its full preciousness and value to her heart. How many people will tell you *experiences* without number. They get their eyes on what they once had, and bemoan, “Oh that I were as in days past, when the candle of God shone on me!” But the question is, *Where* are we, and *what* have we now? “What *hast* thou in the house?” as the prophet

inquires here. "Nothing save a *pot of oil*." This is plainly, not the picture of a soul being first converted, but of one already brought to God, learning the *worth* of what it has found,—“the unsearchable riches of Christ.” This is what the gospel comes to reveal to people.—“the ministry of the new testament”—“a ministration of *life* and *righteousness* and *liberty*.” This poor widow has already what witnesses life, to her an unknown treasure, the pot of oil, and now the prophet’s word is, “Go, borrow thee vessels . . . , even *empty* vessels ; borrow *not a few*.” All she needs is this : the *emptiness* that can receive out of divine fullness—human *poverty* to welcome the riches of His grace. Ah, well it is to learn it so, deeply, truly, and lastingly in our souls, that “we have no sufficiency of *ourselves*,” but “our sufficiency is of *God*,”—thus from first to last. We can readily think of some kind-hearted neighbor who will, in pity for the widow’s need, put something into the empty vessels that she sends, but only to manifest that our God needs not human aid, for His blessing is one that “waits not for man, nor tarries for the sons of men.” He will (all praise to Him for the honor !) allow us the privilege of being “workers together with Him,” but ever in such a way as to make manifest that “we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of Him, and not of us.” (2 Cor. iv. 7.) Beautifully given this is in the twice-repeated miracle of our Lord, feeding the multitude first with five, then with seven, loaves ; and taking up twelve, and again seven, baskets full. If we inquire, Will God deign to use human instruments? how *little* will He take? the rod in Moses’ hand, the

ox-goad, the jaw-bone of an ass, the sling and a stone, the widow's pot of oil, and the *five* loaves tell us, and therein man's utter weakness is fully seen and recognized. But if we ask, on the other hand, How *much* does He require? His answer (and ours too, through grace,) must ever be, "All the fullness of God"—"the exceeding riches of His grace"—the *seven* loaves expressing this instead. And as to the baskets taken up, we learn that He can take up our nothingness and make it the complete meeting of the need present, and establish by it, in the end, a perfect administration of blessing—*twelve baskets full*—out of the *five* loaves we give into His hand in the confession, "*What* are they among so many?" So "God hath chosen the *foolish* things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the *weak* things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and *base* things of the world, and things which are *despised*, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are *not*, to bring to naught things that are: that *no flesh should glory* in His presence. But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption: that, according as it is written, 'He that glorieth, let him *glory in the Lord.*'" (1 Cor. i. 27-31.) In the latter is found the *seven* loaves broken, leaving seven baskets still, when all the need is met,—God making our nothingness sufficient in His hand for all supply, that no glory may be *ours*, but displaying as well that His own fullness is the fountain of it, that all glory now and to the eternal ages may be *His* alone.

Oh, to learn the distinctness of this solemn and yet

blessed witness—"Empty vessels . . . not a few"! What may already be in them has to be taken out, as it is an "empty" vessel God requires. So that all that may be put there is but a hindrance, as it needs a little extra time to turn the vessel upside down to insure the divine requirement—that it be *empty*. If we want to help people's souls, then, as here, we must teach them that from the first moment they look to the Lord Jesus Christ they are possessors, as to God's account, of all they ever will be. The feeblest faith that trusts the Son of God possesses *all*, for it possesses *Him*, and "in Him dwelleth all the *fullness* of the Godhead bodily." We then need to learn what this fullness is, and it may take us years to learn it in any way as we should, and to all eternity as we would and shall. How shall we learn it, save as here given us? One by one, place beneath the treasure of divine good that we have already in our Saviour, empty vessels of a faith that owns our need and His grace as wedded, and never shall it be in vain, for "He abideth *faithful*, and cannot deny Himself." Our first finding peace to be ours—the peace already *made*—is like putting one vessel 'neath the golden stream of grace. Then, we read, "*Set aside* that which is *full*," indicating its result,—*consecration*. The *filled* vessel is one *sacred* to the Master's use, or *set apart* as previously the empty one has been to His supply of its need expressed in "Thou shalt *shut* the door upon thee and upon thy sons." Then it is "And shalt pour out into *all* those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is *full*."

But the day after receiving peace, we realize that we have to battle with the world—to "confess Christ be-

fore men"—“work out our own salvation with fear and trembling” (the just and due sense of our own weakness and the power and subtlety of the enemy, of the holiness of God and the exceeding hatefulness of sin), and this calls for faith again. We need to “add to our faith virtue (*courage*).” Another empty vessel must be brought, and another, and another; and so it has been for years with us, and must be, as we seek to be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, adding “to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity.” (2 Pet. i. 5–8.) Never does the oil cease to flow until “there is *not a vessel more* :” our unbelief alone can limit the supply received now, for He “hath given to us *all* things that pertain to life and godliness.” After our first new-found joy, there comes the voice of praise, and happy for us if our hearts go on to learn these deeper lessons of grace, one by one, as needed by us! But, alas! with how many we “soon forget, and lightly esteem the Rock of our salvation”! Our hearts become engaged with the *blessings* received, rather than with *Him* from whom they come. When God fills our cup brimming full, how often we forget about Him! Like Jonah, if He gives us a gourd of earthly comfort, we too often lose sight of its link with Him the Giver, and so He has to put a worm at the root of it to turn our hearts back again to Himself. Thus there are thousands of blessings that we might possess, but we cannot be *trusted* with them. Not so with the case before us; she has learned the *Blessed* by the blessing

she has received at His hand, and now goes to Him in her *joy* as aforetime in her distress. She has to learn what to do now that she has the blessing, and it must be made more definitely and distinctly precious to her, as meeting her present and future need. "Go, sell the oil, and pay thy *debt*, and *live* thou and thy children of the rest." First, the meeting of all righteous obligations; then, a supply in "the rest" that will sustain her life. For us, it means that thus Christ meets by His *work* all the claims of God against us on account of "our sins," and then that we have *in Him* a never-failing treasury of grace to draw upon each day we live. How many of us, then, do not make up our accounts, to see what is for us on the *credit* side, and go from day to day like beggars (spiritually), when we should be as *princes*! What would we think of the queen's son picking things to sustain life out of a gutter? Surely, that he had forgotten that he was of noble birth—a prince. And *what* are the angels to think of us, when we are found doing even worse?—we who are the King's sons, "lifted as beggars from the dunghill, and set among princes," by His grace;—our debt, too, is paid, for we read, "*Blotting out* the handwriting of ordinances that was against us," He "took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross;" and again, "Having *forgiven* you all trespasses." And further, we too are to "*live of the rest*;" and may we know, by His grace, how much *that* means, for "He hath given us, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are *freely given* to us of God,"—the unsearchable riches of Christ. Thus our hearts, like the apostle's, will be

constrained to utter, "Thanks be unto God for His *unspeakable gift*"! May He grant it, for His name's sake.

THE BETTER INHERITANCE.

IS there no better reward for present services, even in this life, than temporal things? Oh, yes! *His favor* is better than life itself, and His countenance as a cloud of the latter rain, which often distills precious drops, which serve to soften the clods, and prepare it for the reception of the word of life. Let us glory in our *infirmities*, for these keep us from "*confidence in the flesh*;" let us glory in reproaches, for these keep us from having fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness, for he that is a friend of the world is the enemy of God. When the outward man decays, "the inward man is renewed day by day." And even *bodily pains* are intended to eject us out of this *earthly house*, that we may be admitted into our house that is from above, where the inhabitants shall no more say, "I am sick." And knowing we have such a hope, what have we to fear, seeing that our whole work is to *cleave to Christ*? How can we be poor that have got God for our portion? This is not our rest, because it is polluted; this is not our home or our dwelling-place, and we are called strangers, pilgrims, and wayfaring men. We know we have turned the corner, gained the summit, and are going down the hill; the valley of the shadow of death is at the bottom, then comes Jordan, and on the other side is the chief mountain, the fountain of life, and the everlasting hills. Set your heart on this heavenly country, where we shall see our best *Beloved*, and *enjoy each other's* company and conversation for evermore. The Lamb in the midst of the throne shall feed us to the *full*, fill us with light from His sweet face, and with love, joy, and peace from His *heart*.

W. Huntington, S. S.

SEVEN "PRECIOUS" STATEMENTS.

(1) 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.—“*The PRECIOUS BLOOD of Christ.*”

WHEN once one finds that they are not only sinners, but *lost* sinners, what is there under heaven so sweet as this message from God to such an one about “the precious blood of Christ”? for by it the lost soul is redeemed, as the text states—“redeemed with the precious blood of Christ.” Man is never brought back to God by works, by prayers, nor yet by happy feelings; man being away from God, and “without strength,” needed help from outside of himself altogether. This is where God meets him, and saves him on the ground of what His *blessed Son* has done on the cross. Now, not only is the Saviour precious to the saved one—the Redeemer precious to the redeemed, but the price He paid we can in a measure realize as “His *precious* blood.” Eternity will never exhaust the praises that will go up to God from the lips of the redeemed for “the PRECIOUS blood” that “cleanseth from all sin.”

(2) 1 Pet. ii. 7.—“*HE is precious.*”

If in the first we get the blood (the *work* of Christ), here we get Himself (the *person* of Christ). Is the person any less precious than the price He paid? Nay; if His blood is counted precious, He Himself becomes much more precious. The price being now paid for my redemption, I am thus set free by God to enjoy the preciousness of Christ Himself (my Redeemer). Which is greatest—the *gift*, or the *altar* that sanctifieth the gift? The *altar*, surely; so the blood has been given upon the *altar* for us, and now the greater and more precious is *Christ Himself*. Thus God makes Christ, His blessed Son, precious to us. When I am thus enjoying the preciousness of Christ, the world has less

charms for me ; when passing through trials, they have little effect upon me, except to bring out more of that preciousness to me in them. God makes His beloved Son so precious to my soul, that while passing through "deep waters," I fear not, for He is with me.

(3) 1 Pet. i. 7.—“ *The trial of your FAITH, being much more precious than of gold . . . though it be tried with fire,*” &c.

Now, in these trials our *faith* becomes precious. If they bring out *Christ's* preciousness to me, they also bring out the preciousness of my *faith* to God. Do we not often forget this, and look only at our side, and if we get blessing, we rejoice? but, remember, out of those very trials God gets His pleasant fruit, His heart is refreshed. We should rejoice in this, and think, when so tried, all is for *our* good and for *His* praise and glory ; and when the furnace is passed, the faithful heart that trusted Him, clung to Him, enjoyed Him, was satisfied with Him, his faith, which is now “much more *precious* than of gold” will “be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”

(4) 1 Sam. iii. 1.—“ *The WORD OF THE LORD was precious in those days.*”

Days of trial, surely, for a faithful heart ! Unfaithfulness on every hand—the priest away from God—the lamp going out—the clouds of judgment gathering, soon to burst upon them,—now, at this time, His *word is precious*. Is it not thus with us? do not those very trials bring out the preciousness of the word of God? “I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.” (Job xxiii. 12.) When thus tried by God, His word, when fed upon, strengthens and thus sustains us ; the trial increases its preciousness to us. Next, trials from without make the Word precious, whether they be from our *brethren* or from the

world. See Jer. xv. 16–20. A faithful heart, taught of God to walk in separation from all contrary to God, says, “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.” Do we, my brethren, thus enjoy the preciousness of the Word, so that it becomes our food, and hence our strength and joy? Next, Ps. cxix. 126–128. Another faithful heart, taught of God; he looks abroad and sees His word made void, and the sight leads him nearer to God, and he earnestly calls upon Him to work—“It is time for Thee, Lord, to work; for they have made *void Thy law.*” Precious lesson for us in this day of ours—an earnest care for the Word of God! Do we not much need this, in the language of to-day, to “earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints”? and again, “Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.” “*Therefore* I love Thy commandments above gold—yea, above fine gold.” The indifference, the carelessness, the opposition of the time, instead of carrying him along with it, caused him to cleave closer to *the Word.* “*Therefore* I esteem *all* Thy precepts concerning all things to be right.” So again, “*All* Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable . . . that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto *all* good works.” May God keep us in this spirit, so that we may value and rejoice in the Word as one of His precious gifts to us.

(5) 2 Pet. i. 4.—“*Whereby* are given unto us exceeding *great and* PRECIOUS PROMISES.”

When feeding upon and rejoicing in *the Word*, can we fail to see the many there are for us? I will mention but two, and pass on. To the tried saint, the last words of Jesus before He ascended up on high are very strengthening—“Lo, *I* am with you always, even to the end.” Next, to one that longs to see the blessed Saviour, His last words to His servant John, from glory,

“Behold, I come quickly.” Yes, “and My reward is with Me.” May the Lord awaken in our hearts a *deep, deep* desire to live for Him the little while; then, *O my soul*, thou shalt spend an eternal day in the presence of thy precious Lord and Saviour.

(6) Ps. cxxvi. 6.—“*He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing PRECIOUS SEED, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.*”

Or, in the language of 1 Pet. iii. 15, “Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and 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.” Who can tell the result of a few kind words spoken for the Lord Jesus in meekness? Sow the seed, scatter the seed, and pray thy Lord to give the increase; it may be, going forth with weeping often, but soon to return with the fruit—the ripe fruit, bringing the sheaves with you.

(7) Jas. v. 7, 8.—“*Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the PRECIOUS FRUIT of the earth, and hath long patience . . . Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.*”

May the Lord give us to be earnest, to try to lead some poor wanderer to the feet of Jesus, and then we will see the *precious fruit*, first, of the toil of our blessed Master, and then, of any kind word spoken or act done in and for the *precious name of Jesus*.

A. E. B.

PRECIOUS

- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| { | (1) BLOOD. |
| | (2) PERSON. |
| | (3) FAITH. |
| | (4) WORD. |
| | (5) PROMISES. |
| | (6) SEED. |
| | (7) FRUIT. |

"THE LORD IS NIGH."

"The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart." (Ps. xxxii. 18.)

DOES some crushing grief befall thee?
 Child of Mine, be not dismayed.
 Ah, perhaps 'twas to recall thee,
 From the distance thou hadst strayed.
 Love was in the needed stroke.
 Learn of Me, and bear My yoke.

Hath some loved one harshly spoken
 Words so bitter and unjust,
 And thy tender heart, nigh broken,
 Faints beneath a spirit crushed?
 Let it drive thee nearer Me:
 Thou shalt find sweet sympathy.

Hath some sudden trial shaken
 All thy hopes into despair,
 And some idol quickly taken
 Thou hadst deemed surpassing fair?
 Bow thy heart beneath the rod:
 Thou shalt worship *only* God.

I would teach thee that in weakness
 Thou art ever strong in Me:
 I would have thee learn My meekness,
 Practice My humility;
 So I to thy heart lay bare
 All unsuited to Me there.

Frankincense gives forth its sweetness
 Most when tested by the flame;
 So each trial moulds to meetness
 Every child who bears My name;

Through the heart's deep exercise,
 Though with many tears and sighs.

So, whate'er of earthly sorrow
 May be woven with thy bliss,
 Patient wait, that bright to-morrow
 Surely will reveal thee this,—
 That in love I chastened thee,
 That thou might'st be more like Me.

H. M. D.

FATHER HOLDING THE ROPE.

A BOTANIST was once standing on the edge of a precipice, and looking down, he saw a very rare flower, which he much wished to possess; but, alas! it was beyond his reach. He went in search of a boy, and taking him to the edge of the precipice, he said, "If you allow me to tie this rope round your body, and put you down there to gather that flower for me, I will give you this piece of money." The boy hesitated a moment, and then said, "If you allow me to go home for *father* to hold the rope, I will go down." On permission being granted, the boy quickly ran home, and soon returned with his father; and now, without the slightest fear, he went down, knowing that his father had a firm hold of the rope, and would never let him fall. So, dear friends, could we not, with the simple faith of this little boy, trust our heavenly Father, knowing that if we trust ourselves to Him, He will never let us fall?

ELISHA. (4)

2 Kings iv. 8-37.

WE reach now, in the consideration of Elisha's path and testimony, a new and distinct character of it—when he who has so bountifully supplied others is himself the *receiver* from one who, “taught of God,” has learned to estimate his true character, though rejected of men, as in high esteem with God. Here, as it were, we turn our former picture over, to see him, not now ministering to a widow in distress, but the *guest* of a “*great* woman,”—not giving, but *receiving*,—not opening his heart to the woe of others, but finding one open to him to which he may retreat, as Bethany, long after, to our Lord.

“It fell on a day, that Elisha passed to *Shunem*, where was a *great* woman,” etc. The meaning of the name being uncertain, and given variously, “Uneven,” “Two Resting-places,” etc., we can only turn for its thought to the few mentions of it given us beside. Joshua xix. 18, it is one of the *borders* of *Issachar*; 1 Samuel xxviii. 4, the place where the Philistines pitched at their final defeat and overthrow of King Saul, from whom God had departed; and 1 Kings i. 3, Abishag was brought from thence to cherish King David. Scant though the outline, it is yet sufficient, when linked with Genesis xlix. 14, 15, to indicate that if meaning “a *rest*,” it is with burdens still couched beneath; and next, with the triumph of the enemy: but if “*uneven*,” it is none the less the place of the love that *cherishes* and *serves* the King and Prophet of God. Here, then, we find the “*great* woman;” but not only

such in *men's* account, but in that too by which God reckons up their worth,—one “*rich in faith*” that trusts Him first, and then yields Him the glad and hearty adoration of the heart He has won, by His grace, to Himself. Such she truly is, not asking for good, but *imparting* it—one “*satisfied* with favor, and *full* with the blessing of the Lord.” She asks the prophet into her house, and “*constrains* him to eat bread;” how sweet the reminder of those who in a later day constrained Elisha’s Lord to “abide with them,” and then found who their wondrous company was, as He turned the host and they sat with Him at *His* table, instead of, as they deemed, He with them at theirs. (Luke xxiv.) But in one respect it is not altogether as with them, for she has the eyes of her understanding opened (as far as recorded) without a *rebuke* from her holy guest, and each time that he owns her welcome and counts upon the sincerity of her affection she realizes it more. “Behold, now I *perceive* that this is a holy man of God which passeth by us continually” is her witness to her husband of what her heart has found. Happy perception of faith, that always sees with God, and thus runs counter to the thoughts of men, which His Word declares are *vanity!* How notably is this given us in Peter’s confession of our Lord, when, consciously rejected by Israel, He took His place outside them, across Jordan, in the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, and proposed the question, “Whom do *men* say that I the Son of Man am?” And happily, in contrast are the answers, *fourfold* on the side of men, for *error* is confusion; but *one* on the side of His own, for *truth* is but one, as God is one. Some may speculate that He is “*John* the Baptist,”

because He too had said, "*Repent ye ;*" some, "*Elias,*" because, "testifying of the world that its works were *evil,*" He would thus turn "the disobedient to the wisdom of the Just ;" others, *Feremias,* because He was "a man of sorrows," "His visage was so marred more than any man ;" or "*one* of the prophets," as not knowing where to place Him, or what the meaning of His testimony was. But (brilliant contrast !) a *sinner's* faith can say, "We speak that we do *know,* and testify that we have *seen,*" "Thou art THE CHRIST, the *Son of the living God.*" (Matt. xvi. 13-16.)

We have thus in our Shunamite God's endowment of the Christian, and how He makes the soul competent to be His host, and to yield Him such a place as will suit His heart, coming to find His repose with us. This we have given us in John xiv. 23, where our Lord answers the inquiry, "*How* is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto *us,* and not unto the *world?*" "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." Such, then, we may enjoy as *our* high and holy privilege,—to entertain our Lord, to receive Him to our banquet, as first He, in His grace, received us to *His*. Beautiful are the marks of it here !—her own heart, by the stirrings of divine grace, given to "*perceive*" in the lonely stranger "passing by them continually," "a *holy* man of God," she would communicate her secret to others, as 1 Jno. i. 3—"That *ye also* may have fellowship with us : and truly *our* fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." Then she would not be content with a mere passing *hour* of communion, as he turned in to eat with them,

but said to her husband, "Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, . . . and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither." How suitable are her utterances to the subject in hand, and to her position in life! She owns her husband's place and authority; and though the faith is *hers* that acts, she knew her place, and does nothing without consulting him,—will not disown or act in independence of him. She seeks *fellowship* in the purpose her heart prompts her to, although he seems to have no distinct interest in it; but whether responded to or not, this must be *her* path, at least. The Scripture records no answer on his part, but alone the *purpose* and *prayer* of the great woman, and next, the chamber *prepared, furnished, ready* for its esteemed occupant—the "holy man of God."

To apply the truth of this to ourselves: We often think of buying presents for our friends, do we think of our *best* Friend,—of "a little chamber on the wall" for the Son of God, and of furniture to suit Him in it? How often we may find we are like Martha, "cumbered about *much serving*;" or else under plea of being like Mary, very unlike her, and doing little or nothing, when of her our Lord has said, "She hath done *what she could*!"

No doubt, were He to come to us, comforts might not be lacking; but would not much that we allow within and around us compel Him to say, "These things, my children, are not *suit*ed to Me"? This will apply to every thing in life—the food we eat, apparel we wear, houses we live in, and above all, *ourselves* who use them; and the great question of our daily lives should be, How will this suit my blessed Saviour? if it

is for Him we are preparing the suited place. Let us not think that our house is not large enough if it contains but two rooms; His first claim is, "Give Me thine *heart*." Will He have to say to us, as one passing by our door, "If I were hungry, I would not tell *thee*"? Have we, as Lot in Sodom, so sunk to the level of the world that were the Lord Jesus to come to us He would find us in such a state He would have to say, as then, "Nay, I will abide in the street all night"? The only reason that the angels darkened his door was to save him from judgment; and may *we* not ask, Are we so amid the smoke of Sodom that if our Lord should come to us He could not be at *home* with us? How many a time has He had to pass us by, because we have had other company that excluded Him from His rightful place in our hearts, as "*Lord* of every motion there"! Often a mother says to her children, when some guest is in her house, "I want you to be quiet now;" she wants all to suit her friend, and so our Lord Jesus wants a spot in all our hearts in which He can find *repose*. Another thing to consider is illustrated by the necessary work, at seasons of the year, of *house-cleaning*: no question of the rightfulness of such employ, but how unsuited were it to extend *all* the year round! No matter when our Lord might come to commune with us, have we to keep Him at the door to right up this or that ere we welcome Him in? or do we "open our door immediately"? Does it "put us about" that He has come, because we are always setting things straight, and yet never attaining it? or are we "found of Him in *peace*, without spot, and blameless"? Here is one who has, we may say, finished her house-

cleaning, and affords us an example that we may well imitate. She is *ready* for the man of God, as "it fell on a day" he turns in thither, has provided to suit him; and it is little, we may imagine, he finds thus in this sin-cursed, selfish world of ours. She would afford him a place of *repose* as he passes on his journey as aforetime; and how blessed that to *us* too such high and holy privilege is left, as to Him whom we own as Lord. To this day, and from this source, a current word is, "The *prophet's* chamber;" but, alas! too often little, as here, one fears, with holy regard for Him who "seeth not as man; who looketh not on the outward appearance, but upon the heart." Great and wealthy though she was, she does not make a display, but each feature tells of lessons learned by a heaven-taught soul,—first, "a *little* chamber," not the display of greatness meeting the prophet's *lowly* mind; next, "*on the wall*"—*part* of their house and yet *apart* from it, *in* it and yet *out* of it, one with and yet *distinct* from it, *theirs* and yet entirely *his*—a place hallowed by his presence, where as she but "stood in the door" she learns God's wondrous thoughts of blessing toward her, and later, crossing its threshold, can leave the burden of her heart closed in (*vv.* 15, 21). Then mark its *furnishing*,—the *bed* betokening repose (Is. lvii. 2; Luke xi. 7); the *table*, communion (Rev. iii. 20); the *stool*, discipleship (Deut. xxxiii. 3; Luke x. 39); and the *candlestick*, testimony (Ex. xxvi. 31-40; Zech. iv.; Matt. v. 15, 16; Rev. i. 13; ii. 5). All that he required is thought of, and nothing more. Happy suggestions for our hearts, that we may make all things after the *pattern* shown us here! and may they, through grace, "provoke us to

love and to good works"—to "go and do *likewise*." As before mentioned, it was a *prepared* chamber; which for us means the "purging ourselves from the vessels to dishonor, that we may be vessels unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and *prepared* unto every good work." (2 Tim. ii. 21.) Further, it was a *furnished* chamber, and this we may find in "*All Scripture* is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for *doctrine*, for *reproof*, for *correction*, for *instruction* in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly *furnished* unto all good works." (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.) Herein is the *fourfold* furnishing of the soul already prepared by "separation from evil." Lastly, it was "*ready*;" and this we also are exhorted to be—"ready to every good work." (Tit. iii. 1.) Little wonder is it that the prophet of God should on his next coming appropriate the place that this willing love has provided. "And he said to Gehazi his servant, 'Call this Shunamite.'" His heart is stirred within him as he looks upon the place prepared for him—it pleases him, and he would enrich the one, already endowed by grace, with still greater blessings. As she stood before him, he says, "Behold, thou hast been careful for us with *all this care*; what is to be done for thee? wouldest thou be spoken for to the *king*, or to the *captain* of the host?" She is at liberty to choose her blessings either in connection with the *throne* or with the *sword*; "whatsoever she *will* shall be done" unto her. Surely this is range wide enough for her, for "the *wrath* of a king is as messengers of death," and "in the *light* of the king's countenance is *life*; and his *favor* is as a cloud of the latter rain." "The king's *wrath* is as the

roaring of a lion ; but his *favor* is as dew upon the grass." (Prov. xvi. 14, 15 ; xix. 12.) Beautiful witness, too, of the estimate set upon her ! for it is " he that loveth *pureness* of heart, and hath *grace* in his lips, the king shall be his friend." (Prov. xxii. 11.) Further, as to the *captain* of the host, is not the thought given us, when Joshua inquires of the man with the drawn sword, " Art thou for *us*, or for our *adversaries* ?" his reply to both is, " *Nay* ; but as *Captain* of the host of the Lord am I now come." (Josh. v. 13-15.) He was neither *for* nor *against*, and much less *neutral*, but *LEADER* of all who owned the Lord as over them. But how significant the reply of our Shunamite ! her heart craves not from either the place of *authority* or *leadership*, for doubtless she sees, in " the place of *judgment*, that wickedness was there ; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there ;" and yet knows that "*He* that is higher than the highest *regardeth* ; and there be higher than they." (Eccles. iii. 16 ; v. 8.) " I dwell among mine own people " tells her heart's content. She says, in effect, " I have all I need or desire "—has learned, in whatsoever state she is, therewith to be *content*. (Phil. iv. 11.) She has never been a mother ; and the joy peculiar to such, and the honor in Israel, she has never known ; but yet she has no prayer to put up on that account. The prophet inquires, " What then is to be done for her ?" Gehazi suggests, " She hath *no child* ;" this joy she has not, perhaps, even dared to hope for, and, it may be, long since given up expecting. May we thus be content with God's will. She was leaving her matters entirely to Him—satisfied that her path should be just as *He* intended it. How truly God says of such,

I will make the path smooth for them—cause their lines to fall in pleasant places! Why do some of us realize this so little? Because we are in such earnest to get the *blessings* without regard to *His will* who blesses, that He, in mercy, has to deny them to us. If we could find them apart from communion with Him, what good would it do us? None whatever, but as with Israel, when “He gave them their request, but sent *leanness* into their soul.”

The prophet calls her, and promises her a son, which in due time is fulfilled. At first, her faith is scarcely up to it; but finally, she rests upon “the sure word of promise,” and realizes it made good to her.

“And when the child was *grown*,” etc. Now comes the crucial test: years have passed, in which the promised joy is realized; and now God the *Giver* lays claim to the gift which He has given, and “the *trial* of faith” is realized, as “much more *precious* than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire.” Whether or not the mother’s heart has become too much entwined around her darling boy, or whether it was to manifest further the grace already wrought in her, we are not told, and where the ever-living and all-sufficient Word is silent, it is ours to be so too. But how often is it He says to us, when He takes away His gifts, Relax your grasp, My child, and give Me what I have first given you! It may be, He has taken away a child, a wife, or others near and dear to us, and said to us, “Give them up to Me;” but, in His own best time and way, He will give them back to us, that we may never be parted again, for with Him all is done for *eternity*, and the life beyond this “valley of the shadow of death.”

The much-loved boy is brought from the field (probably sun-struck,) to his mother's knees, and dies—a flower plucked as it blooms into beauty and fragrance, but by the Master's hand, and who will deny to Him the *right*? As has been beautifully suggested by a flower lying upon the garden path, about which the gardener inquired, "*Who* plucked that flower?"—on which he had bestowed such toil. And on hearing, "*The master,*" he said no more. Well, so may we, and so did this woman of Shunem; but it is not sullen submission to a will that crushes by its power, but the quiet restful acquiescence with one we are learning to prove as the "*good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*" She shuts up her trouble in the prophet's chamber, laid upon his bed—associated with his repose, and then starts off to cast herself, with all her grief, at the feet of the man of God. Dark indeed are the surroundings of her soul, but she turns instinctively to the place "whence her help cometh:" the mother's *knees* have held their precious burden until at earth's brightest hour—noon—death cast its heavy shade; now her *hands* lay it where plainly her heart has found its resting-place; her *lips* appeal again to her husband, and she speeds on without delay, answering again and again, by the way, "Peace," or "It is well;" and finally her *heart* is outpoured without reserve to him whose *love* she trusts, if yet his *ways* she does not understand. To her, his *chamber* (presence), *bed* (resting-place), *door* (means of access and exclusion), *feet* (place of *learning* and *worship*), and *himself* (object of trust, love, and reverence) are *all and in all*. Happy Shunamhite! though sorely grieved, weighted with a

sorrow she cannot find solution nor solace for, misunderstood by her husband, who marvels at her seeking the man of God apart from "new moon or Sabbath" (stated occasions), about to be thrust away by Gehazi, and even, it would seem, not fully understood by Elisha himself, who would answer her heart's deep grief by his "*staff*" rather than his *presence*. Ah, what a lesson it reads our hearts, beloved brethren! Here is one for whom gifts and deliverances are not enough,—no, for *her* nought will suffice save this, that the *blessing* and the *blessor* be united, and if she receives again her son, that it be from *his* hands, and in nearness to him whose gift of love he was. Oh, for us to realize "like precious faith," as Moses, when God promised an angel's hand to lead into the rest of Canaan, cried, "If THY presence go not with us, carry us not up hence"! To him, what were guidance by the way, and rest at the end of it, apart from *this*? How sweet and precious are the lessons here! Surely it is the divine illumining of Phil. iv. 6, 7—"In *every thing* by *prayer*"—"Be *careful for nothing*"—"The *peace* of God . . . keeping the heart and mind through Christ Jesus;" and thus must it be if we too would go through the world saying, "*It is well.*" Only the soul that turns its back upon the trials, and face to Him who sends them, that can truly say so. It would seem, as to the prophet himself at this moment, that he was not fully in the secret of his God. He does not know about the matter, and says, "The Lord hath hid it from me, and hath not told me." And in Amos (iii. 7), one of the least of the prophets, we read, "Surely the Lord God will do *nothing*, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the

prophets." How is it, then, we may rightly inquire, that here Elisha does *not* know this secret? He is unprepared to meet the woman, though he knew "her soul was vexed within her," and yet bade Gehazi, "Let her alone," confessing that he knew not the cause of her distress, which at least betokened readiness to know and do God's will. But when we miss the secret of our God, how soon we do not know what He is doing, nor what to do for Him, and are as those that "beat the air"! He first sends Gehazi to meet her and ask her some questions, but her only answer is, "*It is well*;" then, when he apprehended the situation, sends him with his staff to raise the child; but, alas! how fruitless and all in vain! neither is the mother's heart comforted nor her boy awaked, and there she lingers at the prophet's feet until God's answer shall come in God's own way. In all this would evidently be witnessed *failure* in the man of God, for Gehazi returns but to tell that the prophet's staff is of no avail out of the prophet's *hand*. At last, we read, "*he arose and followed her*," in response to her fervent appeal, "As the Lord liveth, I will not leave thee." Thus, as often so, is the teacher taught, for her vigor of faith he now shares, thus reminding our hearts that beautifully *typical* as Elisha may be of Him whom we rightly call "Master" and "Lord," yet *personally* he too is ever in contrast—"a shadow, but not the very image,"—thus more deeply to impress the lesson that "to us there is but . . . *one Lord* Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him." (1 Cor. viii. 6.) "And when Elisha was come, . . . behold, the child was *dead*, and laid upon *his bed*." There, in the confession of the need

which God alone could meet, the prophet identifies himself thoroughly with it; on the one hand, "he went *in*," and the *closed door* and *prayer* to the Lord told *dependence*; and on the other, "he went *up*" and lay upon him—mouth, eyes, hands, and body all associated with death, telling of *obedience*. Surely with no vague testimony this speaks, as our Lord to His disciples (Matt. xvii.), "This kind goeth not out but by *prayer* and *fasting*," and again, as the apostle (2 Cor. iv.), "Always bearing about in the body the *dying* of the Lord Jesus, that the *life* also of Jesus might be made manifest. . . So then *death* worketh in us, but *life* in you." And in that day, as in our own, how plainly no sending of a staff in the hand of another, but the soul's own entering into the reality of others' need, can yield the desired fruit—"life from the dead." But we read, "He *stretched* himself," "*returned*," "*walked* to and fro," "*went up*, stretched himself" again, and lo, at last, "the child sneezed seven times, and opened his eyes." Varied and fruitful are these lessons for our hearts, which may God grant us to learn from this His Word, rather than, as here, by failure. First, Elisha's ignorance of God's *mind*; next, of His *will* in sending Gehazi; and, in contrast, the bright witness of the Shunemite; then, later, the prophet's entering into the reality of *death*; and finally, in result, his ministry of *life*, which in connection with we have now both the fellowship of *service* in Gehazi and *worship* in the Shunemite. Happy issue of the trial of faith in her! and happy renewal of it in Elisha, who once more returns to the dignity of his position (as in ver. 15), and says, "Take up thy son," resulting in, "Then she *went in*, and *fell* at his feet,

and *bowed* herself to the ground, and *took up* her son, and *went out*." So may it be as to ourselves, both with those who minister and are ministered unto; for in both "like precious faith" may be displayed, as with each the work of Christ may be carried out. Beautifully in Philippians ii. have we this witnessed: Timothy, on the one side, in his ministry to the saints, "naturally caring for their state;" and Epaphroditus, on the other, who for the work of Christ was "nigh unto death," to supply the apostle's need.

A CLEAR TITLE.

WE 'VE a clear title to build *as high* as we please; no question about *that*."

Thus spoke one to his fellow, concerning a project in which they were both evidently interested—of putting up a building where they had not and could not get as much room on the ground as they desired. For there are places in New York city where thousands of dollars could not buy a site large enough for a peanut stand. So they must build *high*, since they could not build wide. This expression started a train of thought in the mind of a poor wayfarer who chanced to overhear it. A title to build *high*? And *of* what? Brick? Stone? Wood, hay, stubble? A title to build high? And *for* what? "To buy, and sell, and get gain"? A title to build high? And *where*? In a world under judgment, and hastening on to wrath? See 2 Peter iii.—"That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of

the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour; knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, 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. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished." The world (the organized state of things that had been built up—no matter how high!) "*overflowed and perished.*" "But the heavens and the earth, *which are* NOW, by the *same* WORD [of God] are kept in store, reserved unto *fire* against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 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. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the HEAVENS shall *pass away* with a great noise, and the elements [the air, the earth, and the water,] shall *melt* with fervent heat, THE EARTH ALSO, AND THE WORKS THAT ARE THEREIN, SHALL BE BURNED UP"! What, then, about your title and your building—no matter how high? See also Revelation xx. 11—"And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them." *The earth and the heavens gone! "dissolved," "melted*

with fervent heat," "*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, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." A title to build high? Where? In this world which is under judgment, or in the NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH, "wherein dwelleth righteousness"?

A title to build high? And *when*? "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." "Other foundations can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus." Will you build here? Oh, my dear reader, will you build here,—on the sure foundation? And *how* will you build? By coming as a lost sinner to Jesus. *Your sins* are your title to Jesus, and *His blood* is your title to heaven. To build high, we must get down *low*. C. E. H.

THE HOUR OF COMFORT.

ALL IN ALL.

JESUS is *life*! when all within the heart
 Is cold and desolate and prone to die;
 Jesus is *light*! when clouds obscure the sun,
 And mists of sin and doubt hang heavily;
 Jesus is *love*! when we have none to give,
 And pity measureless to those who fall;
 Jesus is *heaven*! To the longing soul
 Jesus is "*first and last*," and "*all in all*."

Anon.

WHAT LOVE WILL DO.

*“Can a MOTHER forget her child? Yes, she may forget,
yet WILL I NOT forget thee.”*

IT was the morning of a festival. At an early hour the villagers had assembled on the green. Above them the peaks of the Alps towered in majestic grandeur. The happy children were sporting in groups, when a loud scream arrested the attention of all. A mountain eagle had swooped unperceived, and, to the horror of the by-standers, rose with a child struggling in its talons. In the terror and confusion, it was some time before it was known who it was, and a deep groan burst from the crowd when it was found that it was a beautiful child—the sole comfort of a widow.

“My child! my darling child!” she cried, as, wringing her hands in agony, with streaming eyes, she watched the flight of the powerful bird, while the pastor vainly tried to comfort her. Several mountaineers instantly sprang to the cliffs, and all eyes followed them as slower and slower they ascended. At length, as the eagle disappeared beyond the abrupt precipice, they were seen to pause, and all but two gave up the attempt. At last, as rocks towered above rocks, these gave up the desperate pursuit, and a groan from the beholders told that all hope was over. With her face blanched by despair, her gaze riveted upon the precipice, the mother had stood motionless until now; but when she saw the pursuers falter, with a cry of agony she sprang up the almost perpendicular ascent. Upward, still upward, she held her perilous way, until she gained the point which seemed to defy further progress, and there the cliffs rose high and bold before her; but where effort

failed in others, she, impelled by love, nerved every power, and pausing not at danger, her bare and tender feet caught upon the lichens, and upward she pressed, to the admiration and terror of the beholders. Once, and once only, she paused to glance below. When midway to the summit, what a startling, beautiful view greeted her eyes! Far down the winding valley was a dense mass of human beings. Not one was standing, not a head was covered, but sire and youth and child were kneeling in fervent supplication, while from the village the tolling bell met her ear, calling on the neighboring inhabitants to rally. At length she gained the summit, and to her speechless joy she beheld her child still alive in the nest. On rapid wing the eagle was wheeling and circling above her. To grasp the child, clasp it to her bosom, and bind it to her with her shawl was the work of a moment. Commending herself to the loving Father, she turned to descend. Fearful had been the ascent, but more fearfully perilous seemed the descent. On reaching the difficult spot, with a dizzy brain and sinking heart, she paused, clasping her child to her bosom with a shudder. At that moment, her ear caught the faint bleat of a goat, guiding its kid down another way. With unspeakable gratitude to God, she crossed over to descend by that before-unknown path, and she heard the distant shouts of joy from the villagers below. Soon, strong arms were by her side, and she was safe with her child.

Love had borne her aloft where Alpine climbers could not go, yet we are told the love divine goes far beyond. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My thoughts than your thoughts, saith the Lord." Dear suffering one, believe it, and rest on Christ your Substitute, for "He taketh pleasure in those that hope in His mercy."

"His is love beyond a mother's,
Faithful, free, and knows no end."

J. B. Pease.

THE USEFUL LIFE.

“I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day:
the night cometh, when no man can work.” (Jno. ix. 4.)

O, labor on; spend and be spent,—
Thy joy to do the Father's will;
It is the way the Master went,
Should not the servant tread it still?

Go, labor on; 'tis not for naught;
Thy earthly loss is heavenly gain:
Men heed thee, love thee, praise thee not;
The *Master* praises—what are men?

Go, labor on; enough, while here,
If *He* shall praise thee,—if He deign
Thy willing heart to mark and cheer;
No toil for Him shall be in vain.

Go, labor on, while it is *day*,
The world's dark night is hastening on;
Speed, speed thy work, cast sloth away:
It is not thus that souls are won.

Men die in darkness at thy side,
Without a hope to cheer the tomb;
Take up the torch, and wave it wide—
The torch that lights time's thickest gloom.

Toil on, faint not, keep watch, and pray;
Be wise the erring soul to win;
“Go forth” into the world's highway,
“Compel” the wanderer to come in.

Toil on, and in thy toil rejoice;
 For toil comes rest; for exile, home:
 Soon shalt thou hear the Bridegroom's voice,
 The welcome word, "*Behold, I come!*"

H. B.

"SEE YOUR CALLING, BRETHREN."

HOLY brethren, "called and chosen"
 By the sovereign voice of Might,
 See your high and holy calling
 Out of darkness, into light!
 Called according to His purpose,
 And the riches of His love;
 Won to listen by the leading
 Of the gentle heavenly Dove!

Called to suffer with our Master,
 Patiently to run His race;
 Called a blessing to inherit,
 Called to holiness and grace;
 Called to fellowship with Jesus
 By the ever-faithful One;
 Called to His eternal glory,
 To the kingdom of His own.

Whom He calleth He preserveth,
 And His glory they shall see;
 He is faithful that hath called you,—
 He will do it, fear not ye!
Therefore, holy brethren, onward!
 Thus ye make your calling sure:
 For the prize of this high calling,
 Bravely to the end endure.

ELISHA. (5)

2 Kings iv. 38-vi. 7.

NOW our subject changes. "Elisha came again to *Gilgal*." He is going over his track again, and it is truly "the path of the just, shining brighter and brighter unto the perfect day." We have seen the moral grandeur of the man following his rejected master even through "the swellings of Jordan;" in the right seasons, dispensing *mercy* and *judgment*, at the outset of his ministry at Jericho and Bethel; delivering his erring brother Jehoshaphat; his beautiful actings to the widow in distress, and the woman of Shunem, and can surely appreciate the great man's faith, yet can realize he was one like ourselves.

Here at *Gilgal*, he sees the "sons of the prophets" needing food in a time of dearth, and saith to his servant, "Set on the *great* pot and seethe pottage." None the less in this, than he realizes the extent of their *need*, does he also the exceeding abundance of divine *grace* to meet it. So with the apostle (1 Tim. i.), describing first the utter ruin of man's condition, condemned alike by law and gospel, ranking himself the "*chief* of sinners," says, "The *grace* of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. . . . For this cause I obtained *mercy*, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth *all long-suffering*, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting." But not only thus at first, but to the end. "The Lord shall *deliver* me from every evil work, and will *preserve* me unto His heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen." (2 Tim.

iv. 17, 18.) But here, a man thinks he can help things out, and puts wild gourds into the pot. How like the efforts of the flesh to help in the things of God! "One went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a *wild* vine and gathered thereof wild gourds his lapful, and came and shred them into the pot of pottage: for they *knew them not.*" How plainly one without divine commission, who thus mingles death with the food of God's people! setting out to gather herbs, it is but *gourds* he gathers; and though the supply be abundant, yet it is but a *wild* vine's fruit to which God's judgment-knife has never been struck, and no "newness of life" has been imparted. And thus it may be under cover of the greatest wisdom, as of Satan himself we read, "Thou sealest up the sum, full of *wisdom.*"—"Transformed into an *angel of light*" (Ezek. xxviii. 12; 2 Cor. xi. 14);—and well for us to remember that though "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" and Paul "brought up at the feet of Gamaliel," yet with neither was it more than the gourds of a wild vine as to supplying food for God's people. For that, one realized the isolation of Midian, and the other of Arabia. And often too where grace is really known, as with Peter (Matt. xvi.) and at Corinth, is the lapful of wild gourds still found by cleaving to "the things that be of *men*"—"carnal, walking as men." We may be quietly waiting upon God in a meeting, when some one thinks he can improve things by a hymn or chapter, which if not given by the Spirit of God, however beautiful and precious in themselves, are to the occasion but wild gourds—fruit of human instead of the divine will. We may have read or spoken previously

that which was realized very edifying, now the giving of it weighs all down, because out of the current of God's Spirit. And very widely and seriously does this go. In Corinthians, the *carnality* that said, "I am of Paul," etc.; Galatians, the return to the *law*, which, now that Christ had come, was but the "beggarly elements" that brought into bondage; and with ourselves, any thing of either in doctrine or practice that mars the food of His good providing. Surely, then, all human *regulation* in the things of God, where the Spirit's guidance should be,—all human *traditions* brought in as authority over the conscience, where the Word of Truth should be,—and all actings of the flesh that would hinder us from the recognition of either, are but the fruit of this wild vine. Let us remember, there is enough in the "great pot" of divine supply for the need of God's people without our wild gourds. May He keep us from seeking them! As to this, how great our need of having "the senses exercised to discern both good and evil." Better get but a spoonful out of God's "great pot" as ministry of His Spirit than have a whole "lapful of wild gourds;" but every where the flesh, which "cannot please God," will be active—asserting its presence, coming up as in the picture. How graphically illustrative of Heb. vi. 7, 8!—not *herbs* meet for Him by whom it is dressed, but wild fruit of nature, unsuited to Him, and but ripening for His judgment. But here, as aforetime, in the quiet dignity of faith, the prophet meets the difficulty. We would think a powerful antidote was needed: but no; his answer to their appeal, "O thou man of God, there is *death* in the pot!" was, "Then bring *meal*." Their

need, unmet by a *wild* vine, the death ensuing upon its introduction cannot be met by another of like sort, but by *meal*, which is plainly typical of Christ. In Leviticus, the basis of the "meat-offering;" Matthew xiii, the proper food of the children, into which the woman hid leaven; in itself, the product of "the corn of wheat" which *died* to bring forth much fruit by the crushing and separating which results in it. How well for us to meditate upon its meaning and application to ourselves! There is one off the track of God's will, needing food and help, and every effort of ours but puts death into the pot; what cure is there but this—the ministration of *Christ*? We cannot meet it by other efforts of nature—fruit of the same wild vine. Two blacks will not make a white. "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." A little more of the sweet "simplicity of Christ," of His own precious grace, is the only thing that can cure it; but this handful of meal put into the death-pot converts into food to sustain the soul.

"And there came a man from Baal-shalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the *first-fruits*," etc. Ah! here is supply of another character; neither the bringing in of something wrong, nor a remedy for false doctrine or wrong practice needed, but rather the question of the sufficiency of *God's* provision—of the ministry He has appointed. People often think how well they could get on if they had preaching, or other privileges, oftener; but that is not their primary need, valuable as it may be to have them. The soul learning "to live by *every* word of God" is the one who has *enough*, and realizes that "*much food* is in the tillage of

the poor," and that one "walking with God" gets on under any circumstances. Thus here, this "bread of the first-fruits," seeming to be insufficient, is found quite enough when the men sit down to take it; and we read, "And they did *eat*, and *left* thereof, *according to the word of the Lord.*" How truly it is ever so! However feeble the ministry of love rendered, however short in duration, if we are but in our true place before God, we will never go away without blessing. And if but led by it, however despicable in the eyes of men, and even Christians, to look straight *up* to GOD, how surely we will find that we get blessing straight *down from Him* in answer to it!

Next, in the beautifully suggestive history of *Naaman* the prophet is again in view; this time, dispensing the riches of divine grace to the "*stranger*"—those "afar off," called "uncircumcision," fully described in Eph. ii., and well for our hearts to remember *we* were such. The wondrous ways of its working here would be happy to trace, but for our present end must suffice with but the general features of it. As leprosy, apt type of "sin in the flesh," is in question, the *curse* it witnessed, and the *remedy* it needed, is alike as to all, for "there is *no difference*," and "the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him." One striking lesson is that Naaman's blessing is wholly received and assured by *testimony*—first, that of "the little maid," and again and again, of others. True, the message or its reception gets mixed up at first, when the king of Syria sends to that of Israel, and he went but in vain, for it is to the *wrong man* he goes; but over all this God works in grace until He reaches His appointed end—His own

display in grace, and the Syrian's blessing. Elisha hears of it and sends the message, alike simple and assuring, "Let him come now to *me*, and he shall *know* that there is a prophet in Israel." Is there not in this a lesson for our hearts? Shut in as he is by the necessity of his case, without favor in the king's court (Matt. xi. 8), yet will he witness of *grace*, whether men "hear or forbear." But when the needy Syrian is outside his door, he will not show his face, lest he divert him from looking to *God* alone, but sends out instead the message, "Wash, and be clean." How much better often would we serve souls if, thus hidden, we occupied them with the Word of God instead of ourselves! Would that we were of like spirit—more impressed with the preciousness of our *trust*, as the apostle speaks (1 Tim. i. 11, 12)! "The glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my *trust*. And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry," etc. And again, "Though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, *woe is unto me* if I preach not the gospel!" (1 Cor. ix. 16.) And, "Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great," etc. (Acts xxvi. 22.) The message too, as the messenger, "faithful and true." Among the Corinthians, he said he was determined to know nothing, save Jesus Christ, Him *crucified*. Many, then as now, doubtless would say that he should have delivered his message with a little more polish; but God's message must not have its corners taken off, nor the sword be so burnished as to rob it of its edge—it must *cut*, if it blesses. Man's

heart refuses both alike. "Paul," they said, "thou art *beside* thyself," and of his preaching, "He seemeth to be a setter forth of *strange gods*;" but "his work was with the Lord, and his judgment with his God," and here it is so also.

But now we find a serious point at issue—God says one thing, and man thinks another, and so they are at issue. "Behold, I *thought*" was the proud Syrian's reason for refusing the grace that was ready to bless him, as "he turned and went away in a rage." And how much he had thought as to the only terms *he* would condescend to receive blessing he was in such dire need of! and now the dignity of his own land and its broad, fair rivers rise up to close the sight of this completely out. But the God who has him in hand, and Elisha as His faithful messenger in one position, has others also in another, and how near at hand!—his own servants appeal to him to obey the prophet's word. May we not take a like place when that of the prophet may not be ours, and beseech needy souls to receive the Saviour's grace, and in His own way? Their testimony may have been weak, but yet it won the day, and the citadel of the Syrian's pride is taken by the very logic of the gospel; for what so *reasonable*, when all else is proved a failure, as to accept Christ upon His own terms? "If we believe the witness of men, the witness of *God* is greater."

Naaman dips in Jordan "*seven* times," indicating the complete subjection of his will to God—"repentance toward God, and *faith* toward our Lord Jesus Christ;" and now he comes up with new blood in his veins—"born again," so to speak. Again he is found at the

prophet's door—not now a *suppliant* for mercy, much less a haughty *despiser* of it, but still a *praying* man, though yet he “knows not what to pray for as he ought.” But this is little matter, if it be “coming to *God*, believing that He is the rewarder of those that diligently seek Him.” Many of our prayers were never yet answered, and it is of grace it is so. He prayed his benefactor to “*take* a blessing.” Was it not so with ourselves? We too have been found at our Saviour's door, wanting to pay Him a little back in installments for all that He has done for us. But no; those prayers were not answered, and never will be. David said, “What shall I *render* unto the Lord for all His benefits? I will *take* the cup of salvation and *call* upon His name.” In other words, he will render to Him by receiving a little more.

But next, Naaman prays aright—“Shall there not, then, I pray thee, be *given*,” etc. Here he is a *receiver* still; and this we must ever be, in one sense, for “the *less* is blessed of the better.” And now the conscience of the Syrian is astir, and he realizes that “the offense of the cross has not ceased,” and that if he is *cleansed* and a *worshiper*, he will also be *tested*—perhaps *rejected*. The prophet does not say it will be otherwise, nor rebuke him for his thought; but, it would seem, commended him to the grace he had already tasted to bless and teach him further. Do we not often hinder newborn souls by not doing likewise? Plainly, Naaman's heart is turned in the right direction—he has “*returned* to the man of God,” “came and *stood before* him,” prayed him to “*take*,” and next to “*give* ;” and surely we may say a heart now realizing that there is no dust

in all Syria suited for Jehovah's altar may be safely trusted to His grace. How like the apostle's "Finally [or, for the rest], *rejoice* in the Lord"!—*that* covers all the ground; and so, we may say, the prophet's word, "*Go in peace.*" Such is the *liberty* of grace—a liberty that (thank God!) is *ours*; and yet, withal, we are reminded, "Use not your liberty for an occasion to the flesh." How beautiful, then, this working of grace in Naaman!—he prays for an *altar* at which to meet the God whose grace he has proved; but this involves *rejection* by the world, and this is doubtless what he feels. Can we not imagine the people of Syria laughing at him as he returns with the "two mules' burden of earth"? but all the dearer to his heart will it be that it is enjoyed amid rejection. "The world *knoweth us not*, because it knew Him not." And how many cannot understand why a worldly religion is not as good as any other, if a man can but get to heaven! But it makes all the difference to an exercised conscience whether in *God's* path or not. Without having nearly seventy books of Scripture to teach him that, as we have, and without the indwelling Spirit as we, yet the instincts of his divine nature made him know that there was not a particle of earth in Syria fit for an altar to worship Jehovah. What a link is now formed between his heart and God! He wants a *meeting-place* with God. The first longing of a man after being saved is to get back to the one that saved, with *worship*. Thus, when in memory of the idol he had formerly worshiped, his conscience begins to work. If souls are but devoted to the Lord Jesus, and their hearts adoring Him, they will be anxious to "keep unspotted from the

world," and not dishonor the worthy name they bear. Naaman wonders what he shall do when he gets down where the world will press hard upon him, and surely in his heart was no desire to be unfaithful to the grace he had received. But would *we* have dared to answer him as Elisha did, or rather have bound him with some restrictions? Mark the moral beauty of the testimony of the man of God! He does not shrink from being faithful when faithfulness is needed. He had been such when Naaman in his pride first came him; now, when his heart is tender, he must deal *gently* with him. He will not hold forth the terrors of wrath. No; but commits him to the grace that saved him, and simply says, "Go in peace." That is not *legality*, and it is not *license*. He does not say, Do not go, or your blessing will be forfeited!—that would be *legality*; nor, again, Go; it makes no difference!—that would be *license*; but simply "*Go in peace.*" Apply this principle practically,—a Christian receives an invitation to some worldly amusement. His Saviour has said, "Go in *peace*;" but were he to go there, he would have to leave Him outside, and there could be no going in peace that leaves Him behind.

But how solemn is the change in our picture now! Gehazi, who has seen the "mighty works" and heard the "gracious words" of his master, now proves himself "without part or lot in the matter," as he seeks to make divine grace the occasion for personal gain, and the same lips that have just spoken words of peace now pronounce God's solemn *curse*. Solemn picture of how men take advantage of the blessed things of God to make gain of them! Elisha says, "Is it a time to

receive money, and to receive garments, . . . ? 'The leprosy, therefore, of Naaman shall cleave unto thee.' It was belying the character of "the God of all grace" to make such demands. Doubtless Elisha often sat down to scanty meals; but even if he has not a loaf in the cupboard, he will not misrepresent the character of Jehovah to a stranger, although a saved one.

Next, we have the prophet among the people of *God* again; but his path is an onward and upward one, varied though it be. The sons of the prophets say, "The place where we dwell with thee is too *strait* for us." Their purpose is, to build another by Jordan, and they desire the presence of the man of God with them. Whether or not it was of the Lord, we are not told; but this would seem intimated in it for our hearts: the work is not taken up in direct dependence upon Him, nor according to His mind. First, they pray that *they* may go; and the answer is, "Go ye:" next, that *he* will go with them; and it is, "I will go"—which is worthy of consideration. Is it not a reminder of our own actions oftentimes?—do we not often figure out a plan for God, and then ask Him to set His name to it—His indorsal of it, so to speak, as with Jacob long ago? But "He is very pitiful, and full of tender mercy"—patient and gracious with us, teaching us by the folly of our own projects, and, even where the work is truly His own, by our forgetfulness of the fact that *without Him* we can do nothing. For a time, how well all may seem to prosper, as with Jonah *finding* the ship going to Tarshish (chap. i. 3), and "the south wind blowing *softly*" (Acts xxvii.); but sooner or later all is made manifest, and the folly of any way but God's apparent.

Here, their plan is well laid : twice have they prayed and received favorable answers, having the company of the prophet of God ; and already they have come to Jordan and cut down wood, when his grace is drawn upon in an unlooked-for way. "As one was felling a beam, the ax-head fell into the water : and he cried, and said, 'Alas, master ! for it was *borrowed*.'" How often so with ourselves !—we plan something, ask the Lord to be with us in it, set about it, and very soon God lets things like this happen—our ax drops of its head. It may be in *ministry*,—we may have preached what we have heard before with blessing, thinking souls are sure to be converted if it is presented again. But no ; all in dismay, and we have to own up to the Lord that the ax was a *borrowed* one. Let us not trust our ready wits, acute intellects, or retentive memories, if thus endowed ; but wholly *in the Lord*, that we may work *with* as well as *for* Him. "Ye also shall bear witness, because ye have *been with Me*," are His words to His own. Let us, then, seek out what He has for *us* in His Word, and get it from *Himself* (albeit others may be the instruments), and then we will not be found working with borrowed axes. How happily have we this presented in Prov. xxii. 17-21—"Bow down thine *ear*, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine *heart* unto My knowledge. For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them *within thee* ; they shall withal be fitted in thy *lips*," etc. Blessed to realize our folly in this respect, and learn "in *His* light to see light," that we may both "*know* the certainty of and *answer* the words of truth to them that send unto us." Again, we may have learned certain truths by reading the Word, which

have never been made *practically* our own—that never cost us much ; and the Lord says, “ *Buy* the truth, and sell it not.” We need too to keep a good keen edge upon our tool ; “ for if the iron be blunt, and we do not whet the edge, then must we put to more strength : but wisdom is profitable to direct.” Thus God teaches us to get the truth from *Himself*—to make it our own *practically*, and to hold it in *communion* with Himself, else it will be as here—learning by bitter experience—cutting beams with borrowed axes. But if we have thus to learn our own folly, we have only to confess it right there, and the Lord is ready to help and bless us ; but how often the pride of our hearts will not let us do so, as the truths we speak of are not realized at all !

The man tells his loss, confesses his blame, and appeals to the prophet of God ; and how simply the prophet deals with the matter ! “ Where fell it ? ” he inquires ; and on learning, he cast in a stick, and the iron swam. This stick cut down reminds our hearts of “ the rod out of the stem of Jesse,” cut down while yet in its greenness, God’s sole remedy for all evil,—Christ. That alone can bring *restoration*, as once salvation. When we see our conduct in the light of the sufferings of Jesus, then are we restored, and our means of serving Him once more in our hands, and we can use them for Him. “ Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, *then* will I teach,” etc. (Ps. li.)

Let us, then, see that we have *our own* ax, be warned against *borrowed* ones, and that it is well whetted with the stone of communion with God—has a good keen edge,—and then it will do its work well ; for one not tested and proved will not serve us when most needed,

and we are "to study to show ourselves approved unto God, workmen that need not to be ashamed."

* * * * *

THE blessed Spirit of Truth, patient and condescending Teacher that He is, has been ministering most sweetly to my heart of late, going over old ground and new with me, and refreshing me for the daily life that is before me. I want you to taste of the joy, and so let me tell the story of *abounding* grace. First, I saw and felt as never before what the cross of Christ has *accomplished* for us. The whole question of sin was settled, *then* and *there*, eighteen centuries ago. Sins committed, and the evil nature that does the deeds, all *considered* and *disposed of*, then and there. Sins forgiven, and 'sin in the flesh' condemned. The 'end of all flesh,' in God's sight, came at that moment. The first man Adam, with the entire race, *was set aside*, and the Second Adam rose from the dead, the Head of a *new* creation. When we, one by one, are *born* of God, we are made 'partakers of the divine nature.' The new life in us is the risen life of Christ, and it 'cannot sin' (1 Jno. iii. 9). But although possessed of this new life, which is *eternal* life, we still carry about in our bodies the old condemned nature—the 'flesh,' which cannot be eradicated, and 'cannot please God.' God only knows *what* tortures we go through until we come to see what *He* has done with it for us *at the cross*, and what He expects us to do with it while we continue in these mortal bodies.

"First, 'our old man is crucified with Him.'

“Second, ‘Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin.’ ‘Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.’ For example, when some one injures me, the flesh would like to *resent* it; but I am to count myself *dead as to sinning*, and dead persons do not express resentment. Then, as we consent to let ‘death work in us,’ life—the ‘life of Jesus’ is manifest to beholders. Paul says, ‘I beseech you . . . to present your bodies a living sacrifice.’ What meaning in this! I saw myself distinctly separated. First, there was the *body* I live in—and it is written, ‘The body is for the Lord.’ It had formerly been used by the flesh to express itself, but now *God* owns it, must not be allowed the use of it any more in this way. Secondly, there was *the flesh* still in my body, but *pronounced worthless* and *set aside* by the cross of Christ.

“Thirdly, there was the *new life*, which by the grace of God is mine. There was no trouble in seeing how Jesus prayed, ‘I in them and Thou in Me,’ and ‘Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me.’ We are identified *with Him*. Oh, marvel of marvels! To be sure, this sets aside S—— E. M——, and such a relief to see that it does.

“Fourthly, there is one more occupant of this body, now so honored by *belonging to the Lord*,—the *Holy Spirit*. ‘Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?’ *He* is the power to live by, and walk in, and endure by. The new life is a *dependent* life, cannot cope with the flesh, is not expected to fight, for it will be beaten every time

in such a warfare. We are simply to keep our enemy the flesh in *the place* assigned it—of death, to refuse to let it speak and act. Can any power make us to accomplish *God's will* under such circumstances? Yes. The power that *raised Christ* from the dead, and set Him at God's right hand in the heavenly places, and us with Him. This is the power permitted us. Our bodies are 'earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.' "

S. E. M.

"GOD will put up with many things in His children. He will bear with their mistakes, and even their waywardness; but there is one thing He will not put up with, and that is, *a second place*: He must be *first*. How vain, then, must be the efforts of those who would fain please Him, while they give Him only a second place. The Lord does not want us to do great deeds—bold exploits that make everybody wonder. He just wants to reign in our hearts, and then all the rest will come right. The question with us, then, comes to be simply this: Are we willing that the Lord should take the helm? Are we agreeable that He should be *first*? '*God is not in the divided heart.*' Let us remember this. Our God is a jealous God, and will not have a rival in our hearts."

"PHIL. iv. 11.—Where did Paul learn his lesson of contentment? Not at the feet Gamaliel, but at the feet of Christ. Have we learnt this lesson? Are *we* content with our circumstances?"

MATTHEW II. 12.

“AND being *warned* of God, . . . they departed into their own country *another way*.” Happy mark of all Wisdom’s children! they are not only led of God, step by step, to reach the object of their heart’s search, and bow in adoration at His feet; but now it affects their *path*, and they receive divine warning as to Herod—beautiful re-enacting of Deut. xxxii. 10–12, and fulfillment of Ps. xxxii. 8!

“*When they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph,*” etc. Now the Lord, who has cared for the welfare of those whom He has blessed, secures the *blessing* also. All is duly ordered, and with the wisdom of the divine will, and to the fulfillment of Scripture, “which cannot be broken.” There is no leaving of the matter until the wrath of Herod has found vent, and then, in the midst of danger, miraculously preserving “the child Jesus.” Thus Joseph’s heart would have been deprived of a happy, though painful, service in obedience to God’s word, as the *steward* of a holy trust in which it is “required that one be found faithful,” and the Lord Jesus, on His part, have missed one part of His people’s path in which, as elsewhere, He must “*go before them*”—refuge in Egypt, and deliverance out of it. What mingled scenes for each! One day, the homage of the wise men—princes of the east; another, the hatred and enmity of the usurper of God’s throne in the land—“*Immanuel’s land*.” Joseph is to take the young child and His mother, and “flee into *Egypt*,” for there our Lord, though “the King,” and “God with us,” must com-

mence His lowly path, because of Israel's rejection. All has been thus far the witness of His perfect royal claim to Israel's throne.—

| | | | | |
|--------|---|-------------|--|-----------------------|
| SON OF | { | David. | | JESUS—the Saviour. |
| | | Abraham. | | CHRIST—the Anointed. |
| | | the virgin. | | IMMANUEL—God with us. |

The KING of the Jews.

Then God's confirmation of it, viz.,—

| | | | | |
|-----------------|---|----------|---|----------------|
| The wise men of | { | the east | { | —Jerusalem. |
| The star in | | | | —The prophets. |

Thus the "*nations*" afar off (Ps. lxxii. 11); *creation*, the work of His hands (Ps. xix; cxlvii. 4); Jerusalem, the place in which the Lord had set His name (2 Chron. vi. 6); and the prophets—"light shining in a dark place" (2 Pet. i. 19)—all with one accord bear Him witness; but Israel, fallen and apostate, "received Him not," "refused the waters of Shiloah flowing softly," and their usurper-king seeks His life to destroy it. This became the occasion for sorrow typical of the time of "Jacob's trouble" in the last days, when not alone Bethlehem and its coasts, but "*all the land shall mourn*" (Zech. xii.), and becomes thus the pledge-fulfillment of Scripture. Here, in most marvelous precision, we find the various relations of the quotations given, bearing more or less directly on the subject in hand; and it is to our profit to note them, and thus hold in due esteem the holy Scriptures, of which *every* word is *pure*. (1) In chap. i. 22, "*in order* that it might be fulfilled" gives the *object* of the prophecy. (2) Chap. ii. 23, *So* "*that* it might be fulfilled;" not simply *its* object, but an event which was within the scope and intent of the prophecy. (3) Chap. ii. 17, "Then was fulfilled"—merely a *case in point*, where what happened was an *illustration* of what was said in the prophecy." (New Trans. note.)

“CAREFUL AND TROUBLED.”

“CAREFUL and *troubled*,”
 Is that true of thee?
 “Careful and troubled,”
 Why should'st thou be!
 Faith in His wisdom
 Thy Saviour desires;
 Trust in His guidance
 He always requires.

“Careful and troubled,”
 But that is not “*trust* ;”
 “Trust” means to leave it all,
 Happen what must.
 “Trust” means to live free
 From worrying care,
 Casting on Jesus
 Thy burden to bear.

“Careful and troubled,”
 Dishonors His *love* ;
 Do not His *past* dealings
 All faithful prove?
 “Careful and troubled,”
 Dishonors His *power* ;
 Will not His strength hold out
 Hour after hour.

“Careful and troubled,”
 Just means “unbelief ;”
 Thou wilt not trust Him,
 And that gives Him grief.
 “Careful and troubled,”
 Just means “disobey ;”
 “Bring here thy burden !”
 “I will not,” you say.

And yet "He careth,
 He careth for *you*;"
 Have you not tried it,
 And found it is true?
 Have you known *one* of
 His promises fail?
 Have you not proved that
 His strength does prevail?

Alter thy motto;
 Then, "trouble" no more;
 Go to the old Book
 Of heavenly lore.
 "Careful for *nothing*,"
 There written I see.
 Saviour, I thank Thee;
 Make that true of me.

S. M.

THE SWEETEST STRAIN.

THEY speak to me of music rare,
 Of anthems soft and low,
 Of harps, and viols, and angel-choirs,—
 All these I could forego;

BUT,

The music of the Shepherd's voice,
 Which won my wayward heart,
 Is the only strain I ever heard
 With which I cannot part.

H. McD.

Dry Brook, N. Y.

ELISHA. (6)

2 Kings vi. 8-viii. 15; ix. 1-3; xiii. 14-21.

THE lessons to be learned from these incidents are various; but yet all, lessons our souls need, if we, as Elisha, would “stand *perfect and complete* in all the will of God,” “men of God *thoroughly furnished* unto all good works.”

What a witness is found therein of the necessity of “*rightly dividing* the word of truth,” if we would be thus “workmen that need not to be ashamed.” As to this, the apostle exhorts Timothy, his son in the faith, bidding him, first, “*Be strong* in the grace that is in Christ Jesus;” then, “*Endure hardness*, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”—“*Consider* what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things;” and finally, “*Study* to show thyself approved unto God” (2 Tim. ii.), resulting in what we have already quoted, which may it be ours to realize!

First, we have the prophet in connection with the king of *Syria*, whose purposes of evil he discloses to the king of Israel, who, thus forewarned, escapes them. To the one, (Israel,) what a witness of the Lord’s grace—“very pitiful, and full of tender mercy;” and to the other, (Syria,) of the long-suffering goodness that would “lead to repentance,” and ever warns ere it smites, if at last forced to do so. But the king of Syria, learning that it is Elisha who reveals the secrets of his heart, searches for him, and sends to Dothan “horses and chariots and a great host” to take him. Seeing them compassing the city, the servant of the man of

God cries out for fear, "Alas! my master, *how* shall we do?" But this only becomes the occasion for a fresh display of grace on the prophet's part, as he bids him "Fear not; for they that be with us are *more* than they that be with them." He does not underrate or lose sight of the difficulties to be met, but looks to God above them, and witnesses of Him, assured that "*greater* is He that is for us than all that can be against us." How happy this simple faith that thus puts God and His resources as against all the power of the enemy, and thus rests in peace, then seeking to minister to and increase "like precious faith" in others! Thus Elisha knew the fulfillment of the *promise*, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee," and also heeds the *command*, "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not." (Is. xxvi. 3; xxxv. 3, 4.) Oh for more of this rest of heart in God, and heaven-taught wisdom to meet the difficulties, doubts, and fears with which precious souls are so often beset! Elisha does not reproach his servant for his weakness, but ministers encouragement from "the God of all encouragement," and prays on his behalf. And thus must it be if we would serve the need of such souls aright. They can neither be frightened nor laughed out of such a condition, for very real it is to them; and there is but one divine remedy—that they be "*built up* in their most holy faith"—"*nourished up* in the words of faith," and thus they may soon be set free. Just as in the skillful treatment of many physical ailments it is not the treatment of pains here or there that effects a cure, but the

building up of the whole system, thus bringing relief to all. May we covet this divine skill of Him who morning by morning was awakened to "hear as the *learner*," that thus He might have "the tongue of the *learned*." (Is. l. 4, *R. V.*)

Next, the prophet's *answer* to those who sought him we must consider, as those who are enemies to the truth have stamped it as deception. But the prophet, be it remembered, was under no obligation to surrender himself into the hands of his enemies who sought his hurt; and hence, as to God's will in the matter, he could justly say, "This is not the *way*, neither is this the *city*: follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek." Already smitten with blindness, by the same hand that had opened the eyes of the one whose case was one of *weakness*, not enmity of heart, they are thus helpless in his hands. But this his trust is sacred, and he does not violate it; they have confided in him, and shall learn it is not in vain; only he must give them to realize that their controversy is with *God*, not His servant. Leading them to Samaria, Elisha next prays the Lord to "*open* their eyes," as before to close them; but it is not as with his servant at first—to realize God *for* them, but that they are striving against Him, and that they are *captives*, not captors. They see their helplessness, and realize, doubtless, that they must be "debtors to *mercy* alone," as we each must, thus proving God's compassion to those in open rebellion against Him, in staying the hand of judgment, the "great provision" prepared for them, and sending them away in *peace*. But little is the heart of Israel's king in harmony with ways and thoughts like these, as he eagerly inquires,

“Shall I *smite* them?” Yet he owns God’s authority vested in the prophet as His representative, and bows to it, when, in reply to his question, he is in turn asked, “Wouldest thou smite those whom *thou* hast taken captive?” then surely not these brought to his hands by another. “So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel” we read; and it would seem that for the time, with each, divine lessons had been learned. But soon, how solemn to read further, “Benhadad . . . *besieged* Samaria, and there was a great *famine*!”—solemn for him as thus “fighting against God,” and for Israel as needing the divine scourge, “the sword of the enemy being the hand of the Lord” upon them. Their distress is now realized to be like unto their sin—*exceeding great*; but, alas! though smitten by God’s hand, to turn their hearts back again, they only “revolt more and more.” Women with the tenderness of a mother’s heart conspire to eat their own offspring, so low can we be brought if “departing from the living God.” The king, hearing their distress, “rends his clothes” and exposes the fact of having “sackcloth within upon his flesh” (professed *humiliation*); but, alas! rebellion and murder are in his heart, and he vows the prophet’s doom. But there, calm and unmoved, because in the path in which God has set him, and bearing testimony for Him, Elisha realizes that “He is *good*, a *stronghold* in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him.” (Nah. i. 7.)

The king has given sentence to execute him, and yet there, with but the thickness of a panel between him and death, we read, he “*sat* in his house;” and “ere the messenger came to him,” he knows and reveals it

all. Truly, "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him;" and if by grace the heart can truly say, "The Lord is the *strength* of my life," then may it add, "When mine enemies came upon me to eat up my flesh, they *stumbled* and *fell*." (Ps. xxvii. 1, 2.)

But how will Elisha *answer* this manifestation of unthankfulness and hatred from one whose life he had saved, and whose best interests he has served? Will he call on the arm of the law for defense, or for "fire from heaven" as Elijah had? No; for this, though right in Elijah, would not be, for him whom God called to witness "*grace* triumphant," "the *mercy* that rejoiceth against judgment." Thus we read, "THEN Elisha said, 'Hear ye the word of the Lord,'" etc., and there, barring the king and his executioner from their murderous purpose, he proclaims his message of grace, "*long-suffering*" that is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

But to another, "a lord on whose hand the king leaned," he must speak a different word, though there would be plenty in the gate of Samaria (available to all), "Behold, thou shalt *see* it with thine eyes, but shalt *not eat* thereof." For *need*, he has compassion, "enduring the contradiction of sinners against himself," rising, in the energy of grace that superabounds where sin abounded, above it; but where all is spent in vain, the heart closed in unbelief against it, then must he witness of "judgment without mercy."

Blessed display in all this of the power of grace to cause us "always to triumph through Christ," making the heart superior to its circumstances—to manifest itself in kindness toward its enemies, and finally, in

solemn warning of those who despise its message to their own hapless loss!

Thus herein may we learn a needful lesson for our hearts, that not in our *weakness* nor our *circumstances* lies the cause of our being overcome of the enemy, but of our lack of estimating them aright, in true dependence upon God. As with Samson and Delilah, who pictures this siren world; when once he gave up his secret to her, he becomes "weak as another man, and wist not that the Lord had departed from him." While not so, he still remained a Nazarite—separated one, and with his hair long, marking him as a woman, the "weaker vessel," betokening *dependence*, nothing could overcome him. But foolish and inglorious, he laid his head upon the harlot's lap, and thus became the easy prey of the "Philistines lying in wait," solemnly witnessing the truth, "Behold, his soul which is *lifted up* is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his *faith*." (Hab. ii. 4.)

Next, we have Elisha speaking to "the woman whose son he had restored to life;" and this time, it is not the gospel for the sinner, but words of comfort and encouragement for the child of God, suited for the "cloudy and dark day." He bids her, "Arise, and go; sojourn wheresoever thou canst;" and, in prompt, unquestioning obedience, she departs, and "sojourns in the land of the Philistines *seven* years." How solemn the occasion for it—"the Lord *hath called for a famine*!" how oft repeated in that history of Israel! and how significant its lessons! When walking with God, theirs was "a good land, wherein they ate bread *without scarceness*, and did not lack any thing" in it. When other-

wise, "their heaven over their heads became as brass," and the Lord "shut it up, that it rained not, and the land yielded not her fruit." The reason for it, being found in this: it was "a land which the Lord their God *cared for*;" His eyes were "always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the *end* of the year." (Comp. Deut. viii. 7-9; xi. 10-17.)

But we further read, "It came to pass, at the seven years' end, that the woman *returned*." To her, the land of the stranger has been but the place of exile—the path of a *sojourner*, not the place of her heart; and as soon as the time of release has come, gladly she avails herself of it. On returning to seek once more "the lot of her inheritance," the king is asking Gehazi, "Tell me, I pray thee, all the *great* things that Elisha hath done;" and thus she is identified, and receives her possessions, manifesting how God can make even evil turn to account, as the "wrath of man to praise Him." "He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou?"

But if for the woman God's care and grace is thus manifest, for the king and his courtier, Gehazi, how solemn that they content themselves with the recital of Elisha's "*great* things," while their hearts seem but little under the power of that grace which wrought them! How often still repeated by those who are the mere *admirers* of a power that manifests itself in another, while yet without heart for that which underlies it in the true knowledge of God!

"And Elisha came to *Damascus*." Here, Benhadad, previously spared by divine mercy, and warned

as to "fighting against God," now seeks to inquire of Him as to his recovery from sickness. Verily, even as to those "afar off," God "had not left Himself without witness" to lead them to Himself. Hazael, the king's servant, comes to meet Elisha, bearing his message, with a present of all the good of Damascus, saying, "Thy son, Ben-hadad, hath sent me to thee," etc. Beautifully interesting in view of that day when God will "give to the King His judgments," and His *enemies* shall lick the dust; *kings* shall bring presents and fall down before Him; and all *nations* shall serve Him and call Him blessed. (Ps. lxxii.) But painfully our history reminds that that day is "*not yet*"—deceit and violence still are found with those to whom God manifests His grace, but "whose consciences are seared as with a hot iron." What a blending of testimonies the prophet here bears!—first, of *appeal* to Hazael's conscience as he presents himself, though the messenger of a king, in the words, "Yea, he *may* certainly recover: howbeit the Lord hath showed me that he *shall* surely die," indicating Hazael's purpose; next, of *entreaty*, as "he settled his countenance steadfastly, until he was ashamed: and the man of God *wept*;" then, of solemn *warning*, as he is professedly subdued in Elisha's presence, and inquires, "Why weepeth my lord?" and the prophet lets the wicked man into the mind of God as to himself, saying, "Because I *know* the evil *thou* wilt do," etc.; and finally, as he assumes indignation at such suspicion of his character, charging his guilt upon him,—“Thou art the man,” in the words “The Lord hath showed me that *thou* shalt be king over Syria.” It was a serious thing to be in the pres-

ence of Elisha, who knew the unreality and evil of his heart, and whose words were as arrows of conviction ; but, alas ! we may be cut to the heart ” and refuse the testimony of God, as well as “*pricked in the heart* ” and receive it in true contrition. Thus is it here—all is lost upon him ; and though feigning, he could hardly bear the thought of what the prophet foretold, he yet goes out to deceive his master and commit the foul deed ; yet in it all the purposes of God were being carried out. (See 1 Kings xix. 15.)

Thus, as Elisha, may our hearts learn, of Him who was “the faithful and true Witness,” how to serve the need of souls aright ; remembering that though He “brake not the bruised reed ”—did not discourage the feeblest heart that truly sought Him, yet “bore witness to the world that its deeds were evil,” and let in the light of God upon men’s dark ways of sin.

But now yet another has to be anointed, in relation to *Israel*, as God had also spoken to Elijah, and Elisha takes up the mind of God with regard to it. Why *Elijah* had not carried out the commission, we are not told, nor that Hazael was *anointed* at all, nor further, why Elisha sends *another* to anoint Jehu ; but yet in it may be gleaned valuable lessons for our souls. “The Scripture cannot be broken,” no matter who may or may not fail ; and if our adorable Lord said, “I thirst ” when in the hour of His utter weakness, knowing well the answer at men’s hands would be mockery, “that thus the Scripture might be *fulfilled*,” how plainly should it be *valued* by us. In this, also, have we not valuable suggestions as to the nature of our Lord’s COMMANDMENTS, which in the New Testament, though

often mentioned, are never *defined*; for, to the heart that knows His will,—His *Word* the measure of it, His *Spirit* the power to know and do it,—it is not needed. With “a *single eye*”—the right state in us, “the whole body is *full of light*,” and His Word and Spirit both have their rightful place, as with the apostles (Acts xiii. 47): “So hath the Lord *commanded us*, saying, ‘I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, and that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.’” To one not in the secret of God’s mind, how little likely to see in it “The Lord *commanded us*”! and to how many vainly seeking, it may be longing, to know *their* work, and *how* and *where* to do it, how striking an appeal! If with God, whatever little we *can* do will be done, humbly trusting Him, and without pretension, because it is *for Him*, as we read, “The household of Stephanas addicted [literally, *ordained*] themselves to the ministry of the saints”—*i. e.*, saw the need, and “willingly offered themselves” to meet it. (Compare Judges v. 9.)

But in the cases of Hazael and Jehu, how solemn the lessons! One commits murder to obtain the throne that God had pledged to give him; the other, in professed zeal for the Lord, and to fulfill His word, “drives furiously,” displays great zeal in all he does, all have to stand out of his way, he wields a sword it is in vain to resist, cuts off this evil and that, and yet in the end himself “took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord,” etc. How solemn! And if *we* act like him—go through the world as though we were the administrators of divine judgment, our fate must be as his; for God has said, “With what *judgment* ye judge, ye shall be judged;

and with what measure we mete, it shall be measured to you again." (Matt. vii. 1.) How often, alas! we who are debtors to *mercy* alone" exemplify but little of it toward others, and even in the rightful excision of evil forget that He who commands it counts it His "*strange* work," and is withal "very pitiful and full of tender mercy"! How serious to think of the crooked acts, and even worse, wrought in His name against His own—the Church He loved and gave Himself for! and how truly He is often thus "wounded in the house of His *friends*"!

A further lesson we have in the final testimony of the Lord's servant in the place of man's shame and humiliation, as we read, "Now Elisha was fallen *sick* of his sickness whereof he *died*." How this should speak a lesson to our hearts as God's people!—no circumstances can we be in, of His will, but that "His grace is sufficient for us," and He is "able to make all grace abound toward us; that we, having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." How blessed this assurance! Elisha can no more go out on his missions, but the king of Israel came to see him; and as he is beside him weeping, and taking the very words of the dying prophet (at the translation of Elijah) upon his lips, he bids him "take bow and arrows." The depth and reality of his contrition must be tested, and he bids him "Put thine hand upon the bow," "open the window eastward," "shoot," and he does so. The divine significance of all this he explains, saying, "The *arrow* of the Lord's *deliverance*," etc. But now he intends to prove the heart of the king by the *way* he uses it; and again he is bidden, "'Take the arrows.' . . .

‘Smite upon the ground.’ And he smote *thrice*, and stayed. And the man of God was *wroth* with him,” etc. What a trivial circumstance may reveal a man’s moral character! as in the case of Gideon’s men, tested by the drink of water; those who drank their fill giving evidence that they had not the Lord’s interests nearest at heart. So here; this man, to be the representative of God in Israel when the prophet is gone, and will he be faithful to the trust? will he “fulfill all His will”—execute the judgment written? Alas! *no*. He has little or no zeal for God’s house, little heart to carry out His purposes in the judgment of evil and deliverance of His people from it. How like ourselves! In many matters, entirely questions of each other’s consciences before God, how strenuous we often are! and again, when questions touching our Lord’s person or work are involved, often how little truly felt by us! On the one hand, may we learn truly to respect each other’s consciences, having “faith to ourselves before God;” and on the other, to regard with abhorrence all that touches Christ, and stand for God at all costs! The *number* of times the king smote manifested the condition of his soul, and rouses the prophet of God: with Jehu, it was “zeal, but not according to knowledge;” now here it is the lack of it, not realizing that “it is good to be *zealously* affected always in a good thing.”

But we reach the close—“Elisha *died*, and they *buried* him” (unlike his master, translated to heaven without it), and we know that no circumstance is more humiliating than *death*—there the fairest form has lost its beauty. The strong man, valiant for his God, is bowed, his glory gone, “the silver cord loosed, the golden

bowl broken, the pitcher broken at the fountain, the wheel broken at the cistern, the dust returned to the earth as it was, and the spirit unto God who gave it." But *does* it end there? Ah, *no!* for in the place of the enemy's triumph God declares Himself supreme, and out of the very sepulchre of Elisha, as the enemy seems to have the whole sway, there springs "*life* from the dead." "The bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year," and in terror of them they hastily cast a man for burial "into the sepulchre of Elisha; and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he *revived*, and *stood* up on his feet." Intimations surely these of the power of *that death* out of which comes all *life* for all His own, as He Himself has assured us—"EXCEPT a corn of wheat fall into the ground and *die*, it *abideth alone*; but *if it die*, it bringeth forth *much fruit*." And further, as to *our* side of it, "EXCEPT ye *eat* the flesh of the Son of Man, and *drink* His blood, ye have *no life in you*." (Jno. xii. 24; vi. 53.) Thus we have from His lips "who spake as never man spake," "who cannot lie," both the *basis* or foundation of all blessing for all who are His (past, present, or future dispensations),—"His *seed*," "fruit of the travail of His soul" (Ps. xxii; Is. liii.); and also the *means* of it, "eating His flesh and drinking His blood"—partaking of the benefits of His death by *faith*, the results of which flow out to all His people wherever or whenever it may be. All praise be His!

And finally, have we not, beside the new *life and standing* of one thus cast into the place of death, in this closing picture, an intimation also of God's future

dealings with His people *Israel*, who say, "Our bones are dried, our hope is lost : we are cut off for our parts;" but whose "*dead* body shall arise," and the "*many sleeping* in the dust of the earth shall awake"? (Comp. Ezek. xxxvii; Isaiah xxvi; Dan. xii.) And further still, a reminder, at least, of that day "when the last enemy (*death*) shall be destroyed," and "the Son shall give up the kingdom unto God, even the Father, and *God shall be all in all.*" Lord, haste that day! May our hearts truly say, Amen, as meanwhile He "directs our hearts into the *love* of God and the *patience* of Christ." B. C. G.

ARE WE NAPHTALIS?

GOD is pleased at times to teach us very sweet lessons in His Word from the characters of men, and one such as Naphtali comes home to us with such force and fullness that should make our hearts rejoice, and long to be much more like what is said of him. Genesis xxx. 8 gives what is first said of him—his *birth*, "Rachel said, 'With great *wrestlings* [wrestlings of God] have I wrestled with my sister, and have prevailed:' and she called his name '*Naphtali*,' " which means "My wrestling." We may forget things, but our *names* we never do; so his name would always keep fresh in his memory the *wrestling* through which he received it. Do we, in our souls, beloved, ever forget the "great wrestlings" of our adorable Lord on the cross—the deep travail of His soul in the day He took our place in death, that we might sing together, "Happy day when Jesus washed my sins away"? His wrest-

lings are pictured in Hebrews v. 7 : "Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him [out of] death." (*R. V.*)

Next, Genesis xlix. 21, "Naphtali is a *hind let loose* : he giveth *goodly words*." And Hab. iii. 19, A hind walketh upon "*high places*." Beloved, if we have been born of God (from above), our walk should be "as our *native clime*—above the fading things of time," "*heavenly*," on high places. A high *standing* calls for a high *state*. First, then, our *birth* is heavenly (Jno. iii. 7); our *inheritance* heavenly (1 Pet. i. 3, 4); our *blessings* are heavenly (Eph. i. 3); and also "our *conversation* [or citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. iii. 20). Thus our new birth, and His Spirit given to us, is to us a setting free, "a hind let loose"—free, not to serve self, but free to live and speak for Christ. "A word spoken in due season, behold, how good it is"! And "Naphtali giveth *goodly words*," and we are exhorted to "hold forth the *word of life*."

Beloved, this is what is said of Naphtali—can it be said of us? are we daily walking on those high places before the world, before our brethren, in our families and workshops? And while walking on "high places," we are "let loose," *free* from bondage, shackles, and all of the flesh—free to serve, obey, and speak "goodly words" until our pilgrimage is over; then to be with Himself forever.

Lastly, Deut. xxxiii. 23, "O Naphtali, *satisfied* with favor, and *full* with the blessing of the Lord." "Satisfied," not with self, but *grace*, or favor,—how much

here for our meditation! A Paul might wish a thorn in the flesh to be removed, but the Lord, who is wiser than man, answered, "My *grace* is sufficient for thee." Yes, that honored servant learned, like Naphtali, to be satisfied with *favor*. (2 Cor. xii. 9, 10.)

Next, (Phil. iv. 12, 13) "Full with the blessing of the Lord." We need much to appear before Him empty, walk on high places, speak goodly words, learn that His grace is sufficient for us, become satisfied with favor; then, out of all its fullness, thou wilt be filled, O my soul, with the *blessing of the Lord*. (Ps. xvi. 11; xxiii. 5.)

A. E. B.

[Beautiful it is to find, in a dark day of Israel's history (Judges v.), that Naphtali was "a people that *jeoparded* their lives unto the death in the high places of the field. . . . They took *no gain* of money. They fought *from heaven*." How plainly suggestive of the devotedness of soul which becomes those whose life they owe to the "great wrestlings" of Another! "We thus judge," says the apostle, "that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but *unto Him* which *died* for them, and *rose again*." (2 Cor. v. 14, 15.)—ED.]

LORD Jesus, make THYSELF to me
A LIVING, BRIGHT REALITY ;
More precious to faith's vision keen
Than any outward object seen ;
More dear, more intimately nigh,
Than e'en the sweetest earthly tie.

C. E

MATTHEW II. 16-23.

ALL is seen working out under His hand, who maketh even "the wrath of man to praise Him." Rejected from the start, our Lord, by this, but manifests further His perfect title to be Israel's *Saviour* as their King, going all the way which they had failed in—*Egypt*, the *wilderness*, and *Canaan*—glorifying God in each. Thus God "*called* His Son out of *Egypt*," *proved* Him in the wilderness, and *approved* Him in the land,—the One on whom He had laid help for His people, "mighty to save."

Herod, earnest in diabolical hatred of Him, "diligently inquired," and, "exceeding wroth," slew the children in all the coasts to make *sure* his purpose, as representing the power of the "*dragon* (Rev. xii.), standing to devour the manchild as soon as it was born." But "no weapon formed against Thee shall prosper" had been *promised*, and is here *fulfilled*, and Israel who sorrow not on His account are made to upon their own.

Joseph again receives divine instruction for his path, the limits of their sojourn being set by God, as with Israel previously (430 years) and in the future (1260 days); the very *days* of His care over them being numbered.

At the word of the Lord, "Arise, and go," Joseph arose: but prompt and unquestioning though his obedience, his *faith* fails; and as "he heard that Archelaus reigned," he was *afraid*. How often some unforeseen circumstance comes into our path, and we fear to follow on, though God, who has called us into it, well knows it all. But He shows *mercy* to His servant, meeting his fears and instructing him in a dream so that he "turned aside into the parts of Galilee." Thus even the weakness of His people He can turn to account to accomplish His will.

"Came and dwelt in *Nazareth*," which here in Matthew is not mentioned before, thus marking it their

abode as the fruit of Joseph's fears, yet withal fulfilling Scripture.

It is interesting to note that in each gospel a different city has special prominence in connection with our Lord's path, as intimating, or at least in keeping with, its character.

Matthew—BETHLEHEM, the city of His *royalty*.
(Chap. ii. 1, 5, 6, 16.)

Mark—CAPERNAUM, the city of His *power*.
(Chap. i. 21; ii. 1, etc.)

Luke—NAZARETH, the city of His *reproach*.
(Chap. i. 26; ii. 4, 39, 51; iv. 16.)

John—CANA, first place of His *manifested glory*.
(Chap. ii. 1-11; iv. 46-54.)

Thus, in Matthew, first, we start with "Thou, *Bethlehem* of Judea, out of thee shall come the *Governor*," etc.; and then come to Nazareth, (the place of His reproach,) as though by a mere accident of circumstances.

In Mark, His first place is *Capernaum*, (the place of His mighty works,—comp. Matt. xi. 23,) because of His character there as the "*faithful Witness*."

In Luke, they go up from and return to "his own city *Nazareth* ; and if seen at Bethlehem, it is as *their* city to be taxed in, not His, for there He is Son of *man*."

In John, we commence with *Cana*, and the first rays of a glory that "cannot be hid" though "His own received Him not ;" but afterward, His path is often in *Ferusalem*, as though expressing His heart's deep yearnings, "How shall I give thee up?"

Thus, marvel of marvels ! He whose name was called "*Fesus*," because Jehovah, the *Saviour* of His people ; "*Emmanuel*," because God with us ; "*The Christ*," because with fully established title to Israël's throne, finds a refuge in Egypt and Galilee—" *fleeing* " for His life to the one, and "*turning aside* " to dwell in Nazareth, a place of ill répute among men. All this "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the *prophets*," who give their concurrent testimony to the lowly and despised circumstances of their Messiah.