

## THE SALT OF THE EARTH.

SUCH is the Lord's own description of His earliest followers; but "salt which has lost its savour" characterizes too many present-day Christians.

The one thing Christianity has well-nigh lost is influence. It no longer has a powerful effect upon the outside world as of old. It neither rouses the hatred of man nor extorts his admiration. The philosopher makes a scientific study of it, searches for its probable origin, and speculates on its ultimate decay. The moralist admires its precepts and ignores its doctrines. The artist paints it to display his skill, and the musician performs it to gratify the world. The novelist borrows from it a title for his book, while the tragedian would have it contribute material for his play. The world has taken stock of Christianity, and consigned it to the limbo of old-fashioned and effete philosophies.

But Christianity is not to blame for the altered sentiments with which it is regarded. It is the same faith for which apostles lived and martyrs died. In spite of the march of intellect and scientific developments Christianity is unaltered and unchanged. No human wisdom can increase or human hatred detract from its intrinsic glory.

It stands alone in its unique and varied beauty as a divinely perfect provision that can meet the deepest longings of the human heart.

Such is Christianity as seen in the teaching of its divine Founder, and exemplified in the lives of its earliest confessors. Why then, we may ask, has it fallen into such discredit that the world dares to overhaul and speculate about it as it would some heathen mythology? The answer may well cause us the deepest humiliation. It is because its precepts are so little exemplified in the lives of its professors.

The world persists in taking the conduct of Christians as a proof of the teachings of Christianity, and with indiscriminate judgment puts down their every characteristic as evidence of what their convictions have made them.

Of course, we should be able to say with the apostle, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ;" but we are so obviously unlike our Lord in many ways that we are disposed to shirk our place as "an example of the believers." (1 Tim. iv. 12.)

The truth is, if Christianity has lost its hold over the Church, can we wonder that it so little influences the world? Can it be that our very familiarity with the Word is making us proof against its power?

I have no desire to dwell upon the worldliness and lack of heart for Christ which we see all

around us. There is enough evidence of Satan's tare-sowing on every hand to fill us with genuine sorrow and humiliation; but I would turn from this to consider the pathway of the individual saint of God in the midst of the failure, and in spite of it.

If I call attention to what is seen of the Christian life, it is not that I forget the hidden motives and hopes of which the visible is only the evidence, but because I wish to look at the Christian's testimony from an outside point of view, and specially in its relation to the world.

Our unconverted acquaintances, being conversant with the more prominent teachings of Scripture, expect to find us altogether different from themselves. As strangers, they think we shall be seeking little from the scenes around us; and as pilgrims, be much occupied with the place whither we are journeying. Knowing the heavenly hopes and divine blessings of which we speak, they think we shall never be cast down, never be sad, never depressed. As those following in the footsteps of Jesus, they look for no irritability, haughtiness, or impatience; and they expect that our lives will be passed in a calm, unruffled tranquility, the result of unwavering faith and undimmed hopes. Though working unnoticed and unappreciated, they suppose that, like our Lord, we shall be engaged at every opportunity in ministering to the spiritual and temporal wants of

those around us, and with unwearied care and tenderest sympathy seeking out the tempted, afflicted, and distressed. Through all, sustained by a hidden power and filled with a heavenly joy, with singleness of mind seeking only the glory of God. In a word, judging us by our own standard, the world looks to see in us whole-hearted devotedness and complete self-surrender to Christ.

Shall we endeavour to produce these heavenly graces in ourselves? By no means. These are but the fruits, and will always appear if the conditions are favourable. Let us rather seek a much more real and closer walk with Christ, in true communion with His heart, drinking in of His fulness, and living so really in the sunshine of His presence that our lives, our conduct, and our very manner will bear the impress of our heavenly intercourse. Only thus can we hope to be in any measure what our Lord would have us—the salt of the earth.

S. E. MCN.

## ALONE WITH THEE.

ALONE with Thee ! and doth my spirit quail  
 Before the weariness and steepness of the way ?  
 Alone with Thee ! and doth my courage fail  
 Before the sultriness and burden of the day ?  
 Alone with Thee ! no human prop to aid,  
 Nor dare I lean upon an arm of flesh.  
 Alone with Thee ! most glad, yet half afraid,  
 I walk to find Thy mercies ever fresh. J. J. J.