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WORDS OF WISDOM FOR DAILY LIFE

by Charles Spurgeon

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WORDS OF WISDOM

FOR

DAILY LIFE.

BY

C. H. SPURGEON.

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WHAT IS PRIDE?

THERE is nothing into which the heart of man so easily falls as PRIDE, and there is no vice which is more frequently, more emphatically, and more eloquently condemned in Scripture.

Pride is a *groundless thing*. It standeth on the sands; or worse than that, it puts its foot on the billows which yield beneath its tread; or, worse still, it stands on bubbles, which soon must burst beneath its feet. Of all things pride has the worst foothold; it has no solid rock on earth whereon to place itself. We have reasons for almost everything, but we have no reasons for pride. Pride is a thing which should be unnatural to us, for we have nothing to be proud of.

Again, it is a *brainless thing* as well as a groundless thing; for it brings no profit with it. There is no wisdom in a self-exaltation. Other vices have some excuse for men seem to gain by them; avarice, pleasure, lust, have some plea; but the man who is proud sells his soul cheaply. He opens wide the flood-gates of his heart, to let men see how deep is the flood within his soul; then suddenly it floweth out, and all is gone — and all is nothing, for one puff of empty wind, one word of sweet applause — the soul is gone, and not a drop is left. In almost every other sin, we gather up the ashes when the fire is gone; but here, what is left? The covetous man hath his shining gold, but what hath the proud man? He has less than he would have had without his pride, and is no gainer whatever. Pride wins no crown; men never honor it, not even the menial slaves of earth; for all men look down on the proud man, and think him less than themselves.

Again, pride is the *maddest thing* that can exist; it feeds upon its own vitals; it will take away its own life, that with its blood it may make a purple for its shoulders; it sappeth and undermineth its own house that it may build its pinnacles a little higher, and then the whole structure tumbleth down. Nothing proves men so mad as pride.

Then pride is a *protean thing*; it changes its shape; it is all forms in the world; you may find it in any fashion you may choose; you may see it in the beggar's rags as well as in the rich man's garments. It dwells with the rich, and with the poor. The man without a shoe to his foot may be as proud as if he were riding in a chariot. Pride can be found in every rank of society —

among all classes of men. Sometimes it is an Arminian, and talks about the power of the creature; then it turns Calvinist, and boasts of its fancied security, forgetful of the Maker, who alone can keep our faith alive. Pride can profess any form of religion; it may be a Quaker, and wear no collar to its coat; it may be a Churchman, and worship God in splendid cathedrals; it may be a Dissenter, and go to the common meeting-house; it is one of the most Catholic things in the world, it attends all kinds of chapels and churches; go where you will, you will see pride. It cometh up with us to, the house of God; it goeth with us; to our houses; it is found on the mart and the exchange, in the streets, and everywhere.

Let me hint at one or two forms which it assumes. Sometimes pride takes the doctrinal shape; it teaches the doctrine of self-sufficiency; it tells us what man can do, and will not allow that we are lost, fallen, debased, and ruined creatures, as we are. It hates divine sovereignty, and rails at election. Then, if it is driven from that, it takes another form; it allows that the doctrine of free grace is true, but does not feel it. It acknowledges that salvation is of the Lord alone, but still it prompts men to seek heaven by their own works, even by the deeds of the law. And when driven from that, it will persuade men to join something with Christ in the matter of salvation; and when that is all rent up, and the poor rag of our righteousness is all burned, pride will get into the Christian's heart as well as the sinner's — it will flourish under the name of self-sufficiency, teaching the Christian that he is "rich and increased in goods, having need of nothing." It will tell him that he does not need daily grace, that past experience will do for to-morrow — that he knows enough, toils enough, prays enough. It will make him forget that he has "not yet attained:" it will not allow him to press forward to the things that are before, forgetting the things that are behind. It enters into his heart, and tempts the believer to set up an independent business for himself, and until the Lord brings about a spiritual bankruptcy, pride will keep him from going to God. Pride has ten thousand shapes; it is not always that stiff and starched gentleman that you picture; it is a vile, creeping, insinuating thing, that will twist itself like a serpent into our hearts. It will talk of humility, and prate about being dust and ashes. I have known men talk about their corruption most marvellously, pretending to be all humility, while at the same time they were the proudest wretches that could be found this side the gulf of separation. O my friends! ye cannot tell how many shapes pride will assume. Look sharp about you, or you will be deceived by it, and when

you think you are entertaining angels, you will find you have been receiving devils unawares.

The true throne of pride everywhere is the heart of man. If we desire, by God's grace, to put down pride, the only way is to begin with the heart.

Now let me tell you a parable in the form of an eastern story, which will set this truth in its proper light. A wise man in the east, called a dervish, in his wanderings, came suddenly upon a mountain, and he saw beneath his feet a smiling valley, in the midst of which there flowed a river. The sun was shining on the stream, and the water, as it reflected the sunlight, looked pure and beautiful. When he descended, he found it was muddy, and the water utterly unfit for drinking. Hard by he saw a young man, in the dress of a shepherd, who was with much diligence filtering the water for his flocks. At one moment he poured some water into a pitcher, and then allowing it to stand, after it had settled, he poured the clean fluid into a cistern. Then, in another place, he would be seen turning aside the current for a little, and letting it ripple over the sand and stones, that it might be filtered and the impurities removed. The dervish watched the young man endeavoring to fill a large cistern with clear water; and he said to him, "My son, why all this toil? — what purpose dost thou answer by it?" The young man replied. "Father, I am a shepherd; this water is so filthy that my flock will not drink it, and, therefore, I am obliged to purify it little by little, so I collect enough in this way that they may drink; but it is hard work." So saying, he wiped the sweat from his brow, for he was exhausted with his toil. "Right well hast thou labored," said the wise man, "but dost thou know thy toil is not well applied? With half the labor thou mightest attain a better end. I should conceive that the source of this stream must be impure and polluted; let us take a pilgrimage together and see." They then walked some miles, climbing their way over many a rock, until they came to a spot where the stream took its rise. When they came near to it, they saw flocks of wild fowls flying away, and wild beasts of the earth rushing into the forest; these had come to drink, and had soiled the water with their feet. They found an open well, which kept continually flowing, but by reason of these creatures, which perpetually disturbed it, the stream was always turbid and muddy. "My son," said the wise man, "set to work now to protect the fountain and guard the well, which is the source of this stream; and when thou hast done that, if thou canst keep these wild beasts and fowls away, the stream will flow of itself, all pure and clear, and thou wilt have no longer need for thy toil." The young man did it; and as he

labored, the wise man said to him, “My, son, hear the word of wisdom; if thou art wrong, seek not to correct thine outward life, but seek first to get thy heart correct, for out of it are the issues of life, and thy life shall be pure when once thy heart is so.” So if we would get rid of pride, we should not proceed to arrange our dress by adopting some special costume, or to qualify our language by using an outlandish tongue; but let us seek of God that he would purify our hearts from pride, and then assuredly, if pride is purged from the heart, our life also shall be humble. Make the tree good, and then the fruit shall be good; make the fountain pure, and the stream shall be sweet.

GOOD WORKS AND BROKEN KEYS.

AN INCIDENT AT NIAGRA.

FAITH is necessary to salvation, because we are told in Scripture that *works cannot save*. To tell a very familiar story, and even the poorest may not misunderstand what I say: a minister was one day going to preach. He climbed a hill on his road. Beneath him lay the villages, sleeping in their beauty, with the corn-fields motionless in the sunshine; but he did not look at them, for his attention was arrested by a woman standing at her door, and who, upon seeing him, came up with the greatest anxiety, and said, "O sir, have you any keys about you? I have broken the key of my drawers, and there are some things that I must get directly." Said he, "I have no keys." She was disappointed, expecting that everyone would have some keys. "But suppose," he said, "I had some keys, they might not fit your lock, and therefore you could not get the articles you want. But do not distress yourself, wait till some one else comes up. But," said he wishing to improve the occasion, "have you ever heard of the key of heaven?" "Ah, yes!" she said, "I have lived long enough, and I have gone to church long enough, to know that if we work hard, and get our bread by the sweat of our brow, and act well towards our neighbors, and behave, as the Catechism says, lowly and reverently to all our betters, and if we do our duty in that station of life in which it has pleased God to place us, and say our prayers regularly, we shall be saved." "Ah!" said he, "my good woman, that is a broken key, for you have broken the commandments, you have not fulfilled all your duties. It is a good key, but you have broken it." "Pray, sir," said she, believing that he understood the matter, and looking frightened, "what have I left out?" "Why," said he, "the all-important thing, the blood of Jesus Christ. Don't you know it is said, the key of heaven is at his girdle; he openeth, and no man shutteth; he shutteth, and no man openeth?" And explaining it more fully to her, he said, "It is Christ, and Christ alone, that can open heaven to you, and not your good works." "What, minister!" said she, "are our good works useless, then?" "No," said he, "not after faith. If you believe first, you may have as many good works

as you please; but if you believe, you will never trust in them, for if you trust in them you have spoilt them, and they are not good works any longer. Have as many good works as you please, still put your trust wholly in the Lord Jesus Christ, for if you do not, your key will never unlock heaven's gate."

So then we must have true faith, because the old key of works is so broken by us all, that we never shall enter Paradise by it. If you pretend that you have no sins, to be very plain with you, you deceive yourselves, and the truth is not in you. If you conceive that by your good works you shall enter heaven, never was there a more fell delusion, and you shall find, at the last great day, that your hopes were worthless, and that, like sere leaves from the autumn trees, your noblest doings shall be blown away, or kindled into a flame in which you yourselves must suffer for ever. Take heed of your good works; get them after faith, but remember, the way to be saved is simply to believe in Jesus Christ.

Without faith it is impossible to be saved, and to please God, because without faith there is *no union to Christ*. Now, union to Christ is indispensable to our salvation. If I come before God's throne with my prayers, I shall never get them answered, unless I bring Christ with me. The Molossians of old, when they could not get a favor from their king, adopted a singular expedient; they took the king's only son in their arms, and falling on their knees, cried, "O king, for thy son's sake, grant our request." He smiled and said: "I deny nothing to those who plead in my son's name." It is so with God. He will deny nothing to the man who comes, having Christ at his elbow; but if he comes alone he must be cast away. Union to Christ is, after all, the great point in salvation.

Let me tell you a story to illustrate this: the stupendous falls of Niagara have been spoken of *in every* part of the world; but while they are marvellous to hear of, and wonderful as a spectacle, they have been very destructive to human life, when by accident any have been carried down the cataract. Some years ago, two men, a bargeman and a collier, were in a boat, and found themselves unable to manage it, it being carried so swiftly down the current that they must both inevitably be borne down and dashed to pieces. Persons on the shore saw them, but were unable to do much for their rescue. At last, however, one man was saved by floating a rope to him, which he grasped. The same instant that the rope came into his hand a log floated by the other man. The thoughtless and confused bargeman,

instead of seizing the rope, laid hold on the log. It was a fatal mistake: they were both in imminent peril, but the one was drawn to shore because he had a connection with the people on the land, whilst the other, clinging to the log, was borne irresistibly along, and never heard of afterwards. Do you not see that here is a practical illustration? Faith is a connection with Christ. Christ is on the shore, so to speak, holding the rope of faith, and if we lay hold of it with the hand of our confidence, he pulls us to shore; but our good works having no connection with Christ, are drifted along down the gulf of fell despair. Grapple them as tightly as we may, even with hooks of steel, they cannot avail us in the least degree.

THE DOUBLE — MINDED MAN.

LORD BYRON'S STATUE.

BALAAAM said, "I have sinned;" but yet he went on with his sin afterwards. One of the strangest characters of the whole world is Balaam. I have often marvelled at that man; he seems really in another sense to have come up to the lines of Ralph Erskine —

*"To good and evil equal bent,
And both a devil and a saint."*

For he did seem to be so. At times no man could speak more eloquently and more truthfully, and at other times he exhibited the most mean and sordid covetousness that could disgrace human nature, Think you see Balaam; he stands upon the brow of the hill, and there lie the multitudes of Israel at his feet; he is bidden to curse them, and he cries, "How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed?" And God opening his eyes, he begins to tell even about the coming of Christ, and he says, "I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh." And then he winds up his oration by saying — "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" And ye will say of that man, he is a hopeful character. Wait till he has come off the brow of the hill, and ye will hear him give the most diabolical advice to the king of Moab which it was even possible for Satan himself to suggest. Said he to the king, "You cannot overthrow these people in battle, for God is with them; try and entice them from their God." And ye know how with wanton lusts they of Moab tried to entice the children of Israel from allegiance to Jehovah; so that this man seemed to have the voice of an angel at one time, and yet the very soul of a devil in his bowels. He was a terrible character; he was a man of two things, a man who went all the way with two things to a very great extent. I know the Scripture says, "No man can serve two masters." Now this is often misunderstood. Some read it, "No man can *serve two* masters." Yes he can; he can serve three or four. The way to read it is this: "No man can serve two *masters*." They cannot both be masters. He can serve two, but they cannot both be his master. A man can serve two who are not his masters, or twenty either; he may live for twenty different purposes, but he

cannot live for more than one master purpose — there can only be one master purpose in his soul. But Balaam labored to serve two; it was like the people of whom it was said, “They feared the Lord, and served other gods.” Or like Rufus, who was a loaf of the same leaven; for you know our old king Rufus painted God on one side of his shield, and the devil on the other, and had underneath, the motto: “Ready for both; catch who can.” There are many such, who are ready for both. They meet a minister, and how pious and holy they are! On the Sabbath they are the most respectable and upright people in the world, as you would think; indeed they affect a drawling in their speech, which they think to be eminently religious. But on a week day, if you want to find the greatest rogues and cheats, they are some of those men who are so sanctimonious in their piety. Now, rest assured that no confession of sin can be genuine, unless it be a whole-hearted one. It is of no use for you to say, “I have sinned,” and then keep on sinning. “I have sinned,” say you, and it is a fair, fair face you show; but alas, alas, for the sin you will go away and commit!

Some men seem to be born with two characters. I remarked when in the library at Trinity College, Cambridge, a very fine statue of Lord Byron. The librarian said to me, “Stand here, sir.” I looked, and I said, “What a fine intellectual countenance! What a grand genius he was!” “Come here,” he said, “to the other side.” “Ah, what a demon! There stands the man that could defy the Deity.” He seemed to have such a scowl and such a dreadful leer in his face; even as Milton would have painted Satan when he said — “Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven.” I turned away, and said to the librarian, “Do you think the artist designed this?” “Yes,” he said, “he wished to picture the two characters — the great, the grand, the almost superhuman genius that he possessed, and yet the enormous mass of sin that was in his soul.” There are some men of the same sort. I dare say, like Balaam, they would overthrow everything in argument with their enchantments; they could work miracles; and yet at the same time there is something about them which betrays a horrid character of sin, as great as that which would appear to be their character for righteousness. Balaam, you know, offered sacrifices to God upon the altar of Baal: that was just the type of his character. So many do; they offer sacrifices to God on the shrine of Mammon; and whilst they will give to the building of a church, and distribute to the poor, they will at the other door of their counting-house grind the poor for bread, and press the very blood out of the widow, that they may enrich themselves. Ah! it is idle and useless for you to say, “I

have sinned,” unless you mean that from your heart. That double-minded man’s confession is of no avail.

A DRAMA IN FIVE ACTS.

(1 CORINTHIANS 7:29-31.)

THE first act introduces those that have wives. It opens with a *wedding*. The bride and bridegroom advance to the altar in bridal attire. The bells are ringing; crowds are cheering at the door, white overflowing mirth is supreme within. In another scene we observe domestic happiness and prosperity, a loving husband and a happy wife. Yet, further on in the performance, rosy children are climbing the father's knee; the little prattlers are lisping their mother's name. "Now," says our companion as he gazes with rapture, "This is real and enduring, I know it is; this wilt satisfy me; I crave for nothing more than this. *Home* is a word as sweet as heaven, and a healthy, happy race of children is as fine a possession as even angels can desire. On this rock wilt I build all my hope; secure me this portion, and I cheerfully renounce the dreamy joys of religion." We whisper in his ear that all this is but a changing scene, and will by-and-by pass away; for time is short, and wife and children are dying creatures. The man laughs at us, and says, "Fanatics and enthusiasts may seek eternal joys, but these are enough for me." He believes that if there be anything permanent in the universe it is marrying and being given in marriage, educating and bringing up a family, and seeing them all comfortably settled. He is right in valuing the blessing, but wrong in making it his *all*. Will he see his error before the curtain falls? Or will he continue to found the hopes of an immortal spirit upon dying joys? See the green mounds in the cemetery, and the headstone with "Here he lies." Alas for thee, poor deluded worldling, where is thy soul now? Doth it console thee that the dust of thine offspring shalt mingle with thine ashes? Where hast thou now a home? What family hast thou now to care for? The first act is over; take breath and say, "This also is vanity."

The tenor of the drama changes, alas, how soon! Household joys are linked with household sorrows. *They that weep* are now before us in the *second act*. The cloudy and dark days have come. There are parents wringing their hands; a beloved child has died, and they are following its corpse to the tomb. Anon, the merchant has suffered a tremendous loss; he puts his hand to his aching head and mourns, for he knows not what will be the end of

his troubles. The wife is smitten by the hand of death; she lies on her bed, blanched with sickness and wan with pain; there is a weeping husband at her side, and then there is another funeral, and in the dim distance I see the black horses again and again. The woes of men are frequent, and sorrow's visits are not like those of angels, few and far between. Our man of the world, who is much moved at this second act, foreseeing his own sorrows therein, weeps, until he fairly sobs out his feelings, clutches us with earnestness, and cries, "Surely this is awfully real; you cannot call this a fleeting sorrow or a light affliction. I will wring my hands for ever; the delight of my eyes has been taken from me; I have lost all my joys now; my beloved in whom I trusted has withered like a leaf in autumn before my face; now shall I despair; I shall never look up again!" "I have lost my fortune," says the afflicted merchant, "and distress overwhelms me; this world is indeed a wilderness to me; all its flowers are withered. I would not give a snap of my finger to live now, for everything worth living for is gone!"

Sympathizing deeply with our friend, we nevertheless venture to tell him that these trials to the Christian, because they are so short and produce such lasting good, are not killing sorrows. "Ah!" says he, "you men of faith may talk in that way, but I cannot; I tell you these are real things." Like an English sailor, who, seeing a play, sprung upon the stage to help a lady in distress, believing that the whole was real, so do such men weep and sigh, as if they were to mourn for ever, because some earthly good has been removed. Oh, that they knew that the depths of sorrow were never yet explored by a mortal mourner! Oh that they would escape from those lower deeps where immortal spirits weep and wail amidst an emphasis of misery! The sorrows of time are trifles indeed when compared with the pains of everlasting punishment; and on the other hand we reckon that they are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. They are but light afflictions, which are but for a moment, a mere pin's prick to the man of faith. Happy is the man whose eyes are open to see that heirs of heaven sorrow not as those who are without hope. A real joy of heavenly origin is ever with believers, and it is but the shadow of sorrow which fails upon them. There let the curtain drop — let us enter into an eternal state, and what and where are these temporary griefs?

But the *third act* comes on, and presents us with a view of *those who rejoice*. It may be that the first-born son has come of age, and there are great festivities. They are eating and drinking in the servants' hall, and in

the master's banquet-chamber; there are high notes of joy, and many compliments, and the smiling sire is as glad as man can be. Or it is the daughter's wedding, and kind friends implore a thousand blessings on her head, and the father smiles and shares the joy. Or it is a gain in business, a fortunate speculation; or the profits of industry have come flowing in, slowly perhaps, but still surely, and the mart is full of rejoicing; he has a house, and home, and friends, and reputation, and honor, and he is, in the eyes of all who know him, happy; those who do not know him, think he has no cares, that he can have no sorrows, that his life must be one perpetual feast, and that, surely there can be no spot in his sun, no winter in his year, no ebb to follow his floods. Our friend by our side is smiling at this sunny picture. "There," says he, "is not that real? Why, there must be something in that! What more do you want? Only let me get the same, and I will leave you the joys of faith, and heaven, and immortality, to yourselves; these are the things for me; only let me laugh and make merry, and you may pray as you will fill high the bowl for me; put the roast and the viands on the table, and let me eat and drink, for to-morrow I die."

If we gently hint to our friend that all this passes away like a vision of the night, and that we have learned to look on it as though it were not, he laughs us to scorn, and accounts us mad when he is most mad himself. As for ourselves, so far from resting upon the softest couch that earth can give us, we spurn its vain delights.

But the *fourth act* of the drama is before us, and *they that buy* demand our attention. The merchant is neither a mourner nor a man of mirth; in the eyes of certain Mammonites he is attending to the one thing needful, the most substantial of all concerns. Here feast your eyes, ye hard, practical, earth-scrappers. There are his money-bags; hear how they thump on the table! There are the rolls of bonds, the banker's books, the title-deeds of estates, mortgages and securities, and the solid investment in his country's own consols. He has made a good thing of life, and still he adheres to business, as he should do; and, like a painstaking man, he is accumulating still, and piling up his heap, meanwhile adding field to field and estate to estate, till soon he will possess a whole county. he has just new been buying a large and very fine house, where he intends to spend the remainder of his days, for he is about to retire from business; the lawyer is busy making out the transfer; the sum of money is waiting to be paid, and the whole thing is as good as settled. "Ah! now," says our friend, who is looking on at the play, "you are not going to tell me that this is all a

shadow? It is not; there is something very solid and real here, at least, something that will perfectly satisfy me." We tell him we dare say there is something that will satisfy *him*, but *our* desires are of a larger span, and nothing but the infinite can fill them. Alas for the man who can find satisfaction in earthly things! It will be only for a time; for when he comes to lie upon his dying-bed, he will find his buyings and his sellings poor things wherewithal to stuff a dying pillow; he will find that his gainings and his acquisitions bring but little comfort to an aching heart, and no peace to a conscience exercised with the fear of the wrath to come. "Ah, ah!" he cries, and sneers sarcastically, putting us aside as only fit for Bedlam, "Let me trade and make a fortune, and that is enough for me; with that I shall be well content!" Alas, poor fool, the snow melts not sooner than the joy of wealth, and the smoke of the chimney is as solid as the comfort of riches!

But we must not miss the *fifth act*. See the rich man, our friend whom lately we saw married, whom we then saw in trouble, afterwards rejoicing and then prospering in business, has entered upon a green old age; he has retired, and *has now come to use the world*. The world says he has been a wise man and has done well, for all men will praise thee when thou doest well for thyself. Now he keeps a liberal table, a fine garden, excellent horses, and many servants; he has all the comforts in fact that: wealth can command, and as you look around his noble park, as you gaze at his avenue of fine old trees, or stay a day or two at the family mansion and notice all its luxuries, you hear your friend, saying, "Ay, there is something very real here; what do you think of this?" When we hint that the grey hairs of the owner of all these riches betoken that his time is short, and that if this be all he has, he is a very poor man, for he will soon have to leave it, and that his regrets in leaving will make his death more pitiable than that of a pauper, our friend replies, "Ah! ah! you are always talking in this way. I tell you this is not a play. I believe it is all real and substantial, and I am not, by any talking of yours, to be made to think that it is unsubstantial and will soon be gone."

O world, thou hast fine actors, to cheat men so well, or else mortal man is an easy fool, taken in thy net like the fishes of the sea. The whole matter is most palpably a show, but yet men give their souls to win it. Wherefore, O sons of men, are ye thus beside yourselves? "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not?"

THE BANQUET OF EVIL.

THE TABLE OF THE PROFLIGATE.

TAKE a warning glance at the House of Feasting which Satan hath builded; for as wisdom hath builded her house, and hewn out her seven pillars, so hath folly its temple and its tavern of feasting, into which it continually tempts the unwary. Look within the banqueting-house, and I will show you four tables and the guests that sit thereat; and as you look at those tables you shall see the courses brought in.

At the first table to which I shall invite your attention, though I beseech you never to sit down and drink thereat, sit the *profligate*. The table of the profligate is a gay table; it is covered over with a gaudy crimson, and all the vessels upon it look exceedingly bright and glistening. Many there be that sit thereat; but they know not that they are the guests of hell, and that the end of all the feast shall be in the depths of perdition. See ye now the great governor of the feast, as he comes in? He has a bland smile upon his face; his garments are not black, but he is girded with a robe of many colors; he hath a honeyed word on his lip, and a tempting witchery in the sparkle of his eye. He brings in the cup, and says, "Hey, young man, drink hereat, it sparkleth in the cup, it moveth itself aright. Do you see it? It is the wine-cup of *pleasure*." This is the first cup at the banqueting-house of Satan. The young man takes it, and sips the liquor. At first it is a cautious sip; it is but a little he will take, and then he will restrain himself. He does not intend to indulge much in lust, he means not to plunge headlong into perdition. There is a flower there on the edge of that cliff: he will reach forward a little and pluck it; but it is not his intention to dash himself from that beetling crag and destroy himself. Not he! He thinks it easy to put away the cup when he has tested its flavor! He has no design to abandon himself to its intoxication. He takes a shallow draught. But oh how sweet it is! How it makes his blood tingle within him! What a fool I was not to have tasted this before! he thinks. Was ever joy like this? Could it be thought that bodies could be capable of such ecstasy as this? He drinks again; this time he takes a deeper draught, and the wine is hot in his veins. Oh, how blest is he! What would he not say now in the praise of Bacchus, or Venus,

or whatever shape Beelzebub chooses to assume? He becomes a very orator in praise of sin! It is fair, it is pleasant; the deep damnation of lust appeareth as joyous as the transports of heaven. He drinks, he drinks, he drinks again, till his brain begins to reel with the intoxication of his sinful delight. This is the first course. Drink, O ye drunkards of Ephraim, and bind the crown of pride about your head, and call us fools because we put your cup from us. Drink with the harlot, and sup with the lustful; ye may think yourselves wise for so doing, but we know that after these things there cometh something worse; for your vine is the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah; your grapes are grapes of gall, the clusters are bitter; your wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps.

Now, with a leer upon his brow, the subtle governor of the feast riseth from his seat. His victim has had enough of the best wine. He takes away that cup, and he brings in another, not quite so sparkling. Look into the liquor; it is not beaded over with the sparkling bubbles of rapture; it is all flat, and dull, and insipid: it is called the cup of *satiety*. The man has had enough of pleasure, and like a dog he vomits, though like a dog he will return to his vomit yet again. Who hath woe? Who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine. I am now speaking figuratively of wine, as well as literally. The wine of lust bringeth the same redness of the eyes; the profligate soon discovers that all the rounds of pleasure end in satiety. "What," says he, "what more can I do? There, I have committed every wickedness that can be imagined, and I have drained every cup of pleasure. Give me something fresh! I have tried the theaters all round: there, I don't care so much as one single farthing for them all. I have gone to every kind of pleasure that I can conceive. It is all over. Gaiety itself grows flat and dull. What am I to do?" And this is the devil's second course — the course of satiety — a fitful drowsiness, the result of the previous excess. Thousands there are who are drinking of the tasteless cup of satiety every day; and some novel invention whereby they may kill time, some new discovery whereby they may give a fresh vent to their iniquity would be a wonderful thing to them; and if some man should rise up who could find out for them some new fashion of wickedness, some deeper depths in the deeps of the nethermost hell of lasciviousness, they would bless his name for having given them something fresh to excite them. That is the devil's second course. And do you see them partaking of it? There are some of you that are having a deep draught of it. You are the jaded horses of the fiend of lust, the disappointed followers of the will-o'-the-wisp of pleasure.

God knows, if you were to speak your heart out you would be obliged to say, "There! I have tried pleasure, and I do not find it pleasure; I have gone the round, and I am just like the blind horse at the mill, I have to go round again. I am spell-bound to the sin, but I cannot take delight in it now as I once did, for all the glory of it is as a fading flower, and as the hasty fruit before the summer."

Awhile the feaster remains in the putrid sea of his infatuation: but another scene is opening. The governor of the feast commandeth another liquor to be broached. This time the fiend bears a black goblet, and he presents it with eyes full of hell-fire, flashing with fierce damnation. "Drink of that, sir," says he, and the man sips it, and starts back, and shrieks, "O God, that ever I must come to this!" You must drink, sir. He that quaffs the first cup, must drink the second, and the third. Drink, though it be like fire down your throat! Drink it, though it be as the lava of Etna in your bowels! *Drink! you must drink!* He that sins must suffer; he that is a profligate in his youth must have rottenness in his bones, and disease within his loins. He who rebels against the laws of God must reap the harvest in his own body here. Oh! there are some dreadful things that I might tell you of this third course. Satan's house has a front chamber full of everything that is enticing to the eye and bewitching to the sensual taste; but there is a back chamber, and no one knoweth, no one hath seen the whole of its horrors. There is a secret chamber, where he shovels out the creatures whom he hath himself destroyed — a chamber, beneath whose floor is the blazing of hell, and above whose boards the heat of that horrible pit is felt. It may be a physician's place, rather than mine, to tell of the horrors that some have to suffer as the result of their iniquity. I leave that; but let me tell the profligate spendthrift that the poverty which he will endure is the result of his sin of extravagant spendthriftcy; let him know also that the remorse of conscience that will overtake him is not an accidental thing that drops by chance from heaven, it is the result of his own iniquity; for, depend upon it, men and brethren, sin carries an infant misery in its bowels, and sooner or later it must be delivered of its terrible child. If we sow the seed we must reap the harvest. Thus the law of hell's house stands — "first, the good wine, then afterwards, that which is worse."

The last course remains to be presented. And now, ye strong men, who mock at the warning, which I would fain deliver to you with a brother's voice and with an affectionate heart, though with rough language. Come ye here, and drink of this last cup. The sinner has at the end brought himself

to the *grave*. His hopes and joys were like gold put into a bag full of holes, and they have all vanished — vanished for ever, and now he has come to the last, his sins haunt him, his transgressions perplex him; he is taken like a bull in a net, and how shall he escape? He dies, and descends from disease to damnation. Shall mortal language attempt to tell you the horrors of that last tremendous cup of which the profligate must drink, and drink for ever? Look at it: ye cannot see its depths, but cast an eye upon its seething surface. I hear the noise of rushing to and fro, and a sound as of gnashing of teeth and the wailing of despairing souls. I look into that cup, and I hear a voice coming up from its depths — “These shall go away into everlasting punishment:” for “Tophet is prepared of old, the pile thereof is wood and much smoke, the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, shall kindle it.” And what say ye to this last course of Satan? “Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire?” Profligate, I beseech thee, in the name of God, start from this table! Oh, be not so careless at thy cups; be not so asleep, secure in the peace which thou now enjoyest! Man’s death is at the door, and at his heels is swift destruction! As for you, who as yet have been restrained by a careful father and the watchfulness of an anxious mother, I beseech you shun the house of sin and folly. Let the wise man’s words be written on thine heart, and be thou mindful of them in the hour of temptation — “Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house: for the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil: but her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell.”

THE BANQUET OF EVIL.

THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS GUESTS.

Do ye see that other table yonder, in the middle of the palace? Ah, good easy souls! Many of you had thought that you never went to the feast of hell at all; but there is a table for you too; it is covered over with a fair white cloth, and all the vessels upon the table are most clean and comely. The wine looks not like the wine of Gomorrah, it moveth aright, like the wine from the grapes of Eshcol; it seems to have no intoxication in it: it is like the ancient wine which they pressed from the grape into the cup, having in it no deadly poison. Do you see the men who sit at this table? How self-contented they are! Ask the white fiends who wait at it, and they will tell you, "This is the table of the *self-righteous*: the Pharisee sits there. You may know him; he has his phylactery between his eyes; the hem of his garment is made exceeding broad; he is one of the best of the best professors." "Ah!" saith Satan, as he draws the curtain and shuts off the table where the profligates are carousing, "be quiet; don't make too much noise, lest these sanctimonious hypocrites should guess what company they are in. These self-righteous people are my guests quite as much as you, and I have them quite as safely." So Satan, like an angel of light, brings forth a gilded goblet, looking like the chalice of the table of communion. And what wine is that? It seems to be the very wine of the sacred Eucharist; it is called the wine of *self-satisfaction*, and around the brim you may see the bubbles of pride. Look at the swelling froth upon the bowl — "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." You know that cup, my self-deceiving readers. Oh, that ye knew the deadly hemlock which is mixed therein! "Sin as other men do? Not you; not at all! You are not going to submit yourself to the righteousness of Christ; what need you? You are as good as your neighbors: if you are not saved you ought to be, you think. Don't you pay everybody twenty shillings in the pound? Did you ever rob anybody in your life? You do your neighbors a good turn; you are as good as other people."

That is the first cup the devil gives; and the good wine makes you swell with self-important dignity, as its fumes enter your heart and puff it up with

an accursed pride. Yes, I see you sitting in the room so cleanly swept and so neatly garnished, and I see the crowds of your admirers standing around the table, even many of God's own children, who say, "Oh, that I were half as good as he!" While the very humility of the righteous provides you with provender for your pride. Wait awhile, thou unctuous hypocrite, wait awhile, for there is a second course to come. Satan looks with quite as self-satisfied an air upon his guests this time as he did upon the troop of rioters. "Ah!" says he, "I cheated those gay fellows with the cup of pleasure, — I gave them afterwards the dull cup of satiety, and I have cheated you, too; you think yourselves all right, but I have deceived you twice, I have befooled you indeed." So he brings in a cup which, sometimes, he himself doth not like to serve. It is called the cup of *discontent and unquietness of mind*, and many there be that have to drink this after all their self-satisfaction. Do you not find, you who are very good in your own esteem but have no interest in Christ, that when you sit alone and begin to turn over your accounts for eternity, they do not square somehow — that you cannot strike the balance exactly to your own side after all, as you thought you could? Have you not sometimes found, that when you thought you were standing on a rock, there was a quivering beneath your feet? You heard the Christian sing boldly —

***“Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who ought to my charge shall lay?
While through thy blood absolved I am
From sin’s tremendous curse and shame.”***

And you have said, "Well, I cannot sing that. I have been as good a Churchman as ever lived, I never missed going to my church all these years, but I cannot say I have a solid confidence." You had once a hope of self-satisfaction; but now the second course has come in, and you are not quite so contented. "Well," says another, "I have been to my chapel, and I have been baptized, and made a profession of religion, though I was never brought to know the Lord in sincerity and in truth; and I once thought it was all well with me, but I want a something which I cannot find." Now comes a shaking in the heart. It is not quite so delightful as one supposed to build on one's own righteousness. Ah! that is the second course.

Wait awhile, and mayhap in this world, but certainly in the hour of death, the devil will bring in the third cup of *dismay at the discovery of your lost condition*. How many a man who has been self-righteous all his life has, at the last, discovered that the thing whereon he placed his hope had failed

him! I have heard of an army who, being defeated in battle, endeavored to make a good retreat. With all their might the soldiers fled to a certain river, where they expected to find a bridge across which they could retreat and be in safety. But when they came to the stream, there was heard a shriek of terror — “The bridge is broken, the bridge is broken!” All in vain was that cry; for the multitude hurrying on behind pressed upon those that were before, and forced them into the river, until the stream was glutted with the bodies of drowned men. Such must be the fate of the self-righteous. You thought there was a bridge of ceremonies; that baptism, confirmation, and the Lord’s Supper, made up the solid arches of a bridge of good works and duties. But when you come to die, there shall be heard the cry — “The bridge is broken, the bridge is broken!” It will be in vain for you to turn round then. Death is close behind you; he forces you onward, and you discover what it is to perish through having neglected the great salvation, and attempting to save yourself through your own good works.

This is the last course but one: and your last course of all, the worst wine, your everlasting portion must be the same as that of the profligate. Good as you thought yourself to be, inasmuch as you proudly rejected Christ, you must drink the winecup of the wrath of God, that cup which is full of trembling. The wicked of the earth shall wring out the dregs of that cup, and drink them; and you also must drink of it as deep as they. Oh, beware in time! Put away your high looks, and humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and ye shall be saved.

THE BANQUET OF EVIL.

THE WORLDLY-WISE.

YOU have, as yet, escaped the lash; but there is a third table, crowded with most honorable guests. I believe there have been more princes and Kings, mayors and aldermen, and great merchants sitting at this table, than at any other. It is called the table of *worldliness*. “Humph!” says a man, “well, I dislike the profligate. There’s my eldest son. I’ve been hard at work saving up money all my life, and there’s that young fellow, he will not stick to business: he has become a real profligate. I am very glad the minister spoke so sharp about that. As for me — there now! I don’t care about your self-righteous people a single farthing; to me it is of no account at all; I don’t care at all about religion in the slightest degree; I like to know whether the funds rise or fall, or whether there is an opportunity of making a good bargain; but that’s about all I care for.” Ah, worldling! I have read of a friend of yours, who was clothed in scarlet, and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. Do you know what became of him? You should remember it, for the same end awaits yourself. The end of his feast must be the end of yours. If your god is this world, depend upon it you shall find that your way is full of bitterness. Now, see that table of the worldly man, the mere worldling who lives for gain. Satan brings him in a flowing cup, “There,” says he, “young man, you are starting in business; you need not care about the conventionalities of honesty, or about the ordinary old-fashioned fancies of religion; get rich as quickly as ever you can. Get money, get money; honestly if you can, but if not, get it anyhow,” says the devil; and down he puts his tankard. “There,” says he, “is a foaming draught for you.” “Yes,” says the young man, “I have abundance now. My hopes are indeed realized.” Here, then, you see the first and best wine of the worldling’s feast, and many of you are tempted to envy this man. “Oh, that I had such a prospect in business!” says one. “I am not half so sharp as he is, I could not deal as he deals; my religion would not let me. But how fast he gets rich! Oh, that I could prosper as he does!”

Come, my brother, judge not before the time, there’s a second course to come — the thick and nauseous draught of care. The man has got his

money; but they that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare. Wealth ill-gotten, or ill-used, or hoarded, brings a canker with it that does not canker the gold and silver, but cankers the man's heart; and a cankered heart is one of the most awful things a man can have. Ah! see this money-lover, and mark the care which sits upon his heart. There is a poor old woman who lives near his lodge-gate. She has but a pittance a week, but she says, "Bless the Lord, I have enough!" She never asks how she is to live, or how she is to die, or how she is to be buried, but sleeps sweetly on the pillow of contentment and faith; and here is this poor fool with untold gold; but he is miserable because he happened to drop a sixpence as he walked along the streets, or because he had an extra call upon his charity, to which the presence of some friend compelled him to yield; or, perhaps, he groans because his coat wears out too soon.

After this comes *avarice*. Many have had to drink of that cup; may God save us from its fiery drops! A great American preacher has said, "Covetousness breeds misery. The sight of houses better than our own, of dress beyond our means, of jewels costlier than we may wear, of stately equipage, and rare curiosities beyond our reach, these hatch the viper brood of covetous thoughts; vexing the poor who would be rich; tormenting the rich who would be richer. The covetous man pines to see pleasure; is sad in the presence of cheerfulness; and the joy of the world is his sorrow, because all the happiness of others is not his. I do not wonder that: God *abhors* him. He inspects his heart as he would a cave full of noisome birds, or a nest of rattling reptiles, and loathes the sight of its crawling tenants. To the covetous man life is a nightmare, and God lets him wrestle with it as best he may. Mammon might build its palace on such a heart, and Pleasure bring all its revelry there. Honor all its garlands — it would be like pleasures in a sepulchre, and garlands on a tomb." When a man becomes avaricious, all he has is nothing to him; "More, more, more!" says he, like some poor creatures in a terrible fever, who cry, "Drink, drink, drink!" and you give them drink, but after they have it, their thirst increases. Like the horse-leech, they cry, "Give, give, give!" Avarice is a raving madness, which seeks to grasp the world in its arms, and yet despises the plenty it has already. This is a curse of which many have died; and some have died with the bag of gold in their hands, and with misery upon their brow, because they could not take it with them into their coffin, and could not carry it into another world.

Well, then, there comes the next course. Baxter, and those terrible old preachers, used to picture the miser, and the man who lived only to make gold, in the middle of hell; and they imagined Mammon pouring melted gold down their throat. "There," say the mocking devils, "that is what you wanted; you have got it now; drink, drink, drink!" and the molten gold is poured down. I shall not, however, indulge in any such terrible imaginations, but this much I know, he that liveth to himself here, must perish; he who sets his affections upon things on earth, hath not digged deep — he has built his house upon the sands; and when the rain descends, and the floods come, down must come his house, and great must be the fall thereof. It is the best wine first, however; it is the respectable man — respectable and respected, everybody honors him; and afterwards that which is worst, when meanness has beggared his wealth, and covetousness has maddened his brain. It is sure to come, as sure as ever you give yourself up to worldliness.

The fourth table is set in a very secluded corner, in a very private part of Satan's palace. There is the table set for *secret sinners*, and here the old rule is observed. At that table, in a room well darkened, I see a young man sitting, and Satan is the servitor, stepping in so noiselessly, that no one would hear him. He brings in the first cup — and oh how sweet it is! It is the cup of secret sin. "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." How sweet that morsel, eaten all alone! Was there ever one that rolled so delicately under the tongue? That is the first; after that he brings in another — the wine of an unquiet conscience. The man's eyes are opened. He says, "What have I done? What have I been doing? Ah!" cries this Achan, "the first cup you brought me, I saw sparkling in that a wedge of gold, and a goodly Babylonish garment; and I thought, 'Oh, I must have that;' but now my thought is, 'What shall I do to hide this, where shall I put it? I must dig. Ay, I must dig deep as hell before I shall hide it, for sure enough it will be discovered.'" "

The grim governor of the feast is bringing in a massive bowl, filled with a black mixture. The secret sinner drinks, and is confounded; he fears his sin will find him out. He has no peace, no happiness, he is full of uneasy fear; he is afraid that he shall be detected. He dreams at night that there is someone after him; there is a voice whispering in his ear, and telling him, "I know all about it; I will tell it." He thinks, perhaps, that the sin which he has committed in secret will break out to his friends; the father will know it, the mother will know it. Ay, it may be even the physician will tell the

tale, and blab out the wretched secret. For such a man there is no rest. He is always in dread of arrest. He is like the debtor I have read of, who, owing a great deal of money, was afraid the bailiffs were after him; and happening one day to catch his sleeve on the top of a palisade, said, "There, let me go; I'm in a hurry. I will pay you to-morrow," imagining that someone was laying hold of him. Such is the position in which the man places himself by partaking of the hidden things of dishonesty and sin. Thus he finds no rest for the sole of his foot for fear of discovery. At last the discovery comes; it is the last cup. Often it comes on earth; for, be sure your sin will find you out, and it will generally find you out here. What frightful exhibitions are to be seen at our police courts of men who are made to drink that last black draught of discovery!

The man who presided at religious meetings, the man who was honored as a saint, is at last unmasked. And what saith the judge — and what saith the world of him? He is a jest, and a reproach, and a rebuke everywhere. But, suppose he should be so crafty, that he passes through life without discovery — though I think it is almost impossible — what a cup he must drink when he stands at last before the bar of God! "Bring him forth, jailor! Dread keeper of the dungeon of hell, lead forth the prisoner." He comes! The whole world is assembled. "Stand up, sir! Did you not make a profession of religion? Did not everybody think you a saint?" He is speechless. But many there are in that vast crowd who cry, "We thought him so." The book is open, his deeds are read: transgression after transgression all laid bare. Do you hear that hiss? The righteous, moved to indignation, are lifting up their voices against the man who deceived them and dwelt among them as a wolf in sheep's clothing.

Oh, how fearful it must be to bear the scorn of the universe! The good can bear the scorn of the wicked, but for the wicked to bear the shame and everlasting contempt which righteous indignation will heap upon them, will be one of the most frightful things, next to the eternal endurance of the wrath of the Most High, which, I need not add, is the last cup of the devil's terrible feast with which the secret sinner must be filled for ever and ever.

GOING THROUGH THE FIRE.

I SEE iniquity raging on every side. Its flames are fanned by every wind of fashion; and fresh victims are being constantly drawn in. It spreads to every class. Not the palace nor the hovel is safe. Not the lofty piles that are raised for merchandise, nor the graceful edifice that is constructed for worship. Iniquity, whose contagion is fearful as fire, spreads and preys upon all things that are homely and comely; things useful and things sacred are not exempt. We must walk through the fire. We, who are God's witnesses must stand in its very midst, to pour the streams of living water upon the burning fuel, and if not able to quench it, at least we must strive to prevent its spread.

I see before my mind's eye the blackened skeletons of hundreds of fair professions. Multitudes — multitudes have perished in the valley of temptation, who once, to all human judgment, had bid fair for heaven, and made a show in the flesh. How many, too, have fallen under the attacks of Satan! This is a fire that does burn. Many a man has said, "I will be a pilgrim;" but he has met Apollyon on the road, and he has turried back. Many a man has put on the harness, but he has given up the battle soon; put his hand to the plow, and looked back. There are more pillars of salt than one. If Lot's wife were a solitary specimen, it were well; but there have been tens of thousands who, like her, have looked back to the plains of Sodom, and, like her, as they are in their spirit, have stood for ever what they were — lost souls. We ought not to look upon our dangers with contempt; they are dangers, they are trials. We ought to look upon our temptations as fires: oh, they are fires! If you think they are not fires you are mistaken. If you enter, then, in your own strength, saying, "Oh, I could bear them," you will find that they are real fires, which, with forked tongues, shall lick up your blood, and consume it in an instant, if you have not some better guard than your own creature power.

"When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." Dr. Alexander, an eminent and most admirable American commentator, says there appears to be some mistake in the translation, because he thinks the two sentences are an anti-climax. "Thou shalt not be burned;" and then follows, "neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." It strikes me, however, that in the second clause we

have the higher gradation of a climax. "Thou shalt not be burned," to the destruction of thy life; nor even scorched to give thee the most superficial injury, for "the flames shall not kindle upon thee." Just as when the three holy children came out of the fiery furnace, it is said, "Upon their bodies the fire had no power, nor was a hair of their head singed; neither were their coats changed, nor had the smell of fire passed on them." So the text seems to me to teach that the Christian church, under all its trials, has not been consumed, but more than that, it has not lost anything by its trials. The Lord's church has never been destroyed yet by her persecutors and her trials. They have thought they crushed her, but she lives still. They had imagined that they had taken away her life, but she sprang up more vigorous than before.

I suppose there is not a nation out of which Christ's church has ever been utterly driven. Even Spain, which seemed at last to have accomplished it by the most persevering barbarities, finds still a few believers to be a thorn in the side of her bigotry; and as for our own denomination, in the very country where, by the most frightful massacres, it was believed that the sect of Anabaptists had been utterly extinguished, Mr. Oncken became the means of reviving it, so that throughout all Germany, and in parts of Denmark, and Prussia, and Poland, and even Russia itself, we have sprung up into a new, vigorous, and even wonderful existence. And in Sweden, where, under Lutheran government, the most persecuting edicts had been passed against us, we have been astonished to find churches suddenly spring up, for the truth has in it a living seed which is not to be destroyed.

But the church not only does not lose her existence, she does not lose anything at all. The Church has never lost her numbers. Persecutions have winnowed her and driven away the chaff, but not one grain of wheat has been taken away from the heap. Nay, not even in visible fellowship has the church been decreased by persecution. She is like Israel in Egypt; the more they were afflicted the more they multiplied. Was a bishop put to death to-day? Ten young men came the next morning before the Roman proctor, and offered themselves to die, having that very night been baptized for the dead bishop, having made their confession of faith that they might occupy his position. "I fill up the vacancy in the church, and then die as he did." Was a woman strangled or tortured publicly? Twenty women appeared the next day, and craved to suffer as she suffered, that they might honor Christ.

Did the Church of Rome in more modern times burn one of our glorious reformers — John Huss — yet did not Martin Luther come forward as if the ashes of Huss had begotten Luther? When Wycliffe had passed away did not the very fact of Wycliffe being persecuted help to spread his doctrines? and were there not found hundreds of young men who in every market-town in England read the Lollard's Scriptures, and proclaimed the Lollard's faith? And so, depend upon it, it shall ever be. Give a dog a bad name, and you hang him; give a Christian a bad name, and you honor him. Do but give to any Christian some ill name, and before long a Christian denomination will take that name to itself, and it will become a title of honor. When George Fox was called "Quaker," it was a strange name — one to laugh at; but those men of God who followed him called themselves Quakers too, and so it lost its reproach. They called the followers of Whitefield and Wesley Methodists; they took the title of Methodists, and it became a respectful designation. When many of our Baptist forefathers, persecuted in England, went over to America to find shelter, they imagined that among the Puritans they would have a perfect rest, but Puritan liberty of conscience meant, "The right and liberty to think as they did, but no toleration to those who differed." The Puritans of New England, as soon as ever a Baptist made his appearance amongst them, persecuted him with as little compunction as the Episcopalians had the Puritans. No sooner was there a Baptist, than he was hunted up, and brought before his own Christian brethren. Mark you, he was brought up for fine, for imprisonment, confiscation and banishment, before the very men who had themselves suffered persecution. And what was the effect of this? The effect has been that in America, where we were persecuted, we are the largest body of Christians. Where the fire burnt the most furiously, there the good old Calvinistic doctrine was taught, and the Baptist became the more decidedly a Baptist than anywhere else, with the most purity and the least dross. Nor have we ever lost the firmness of our grip upon the fundamental doctrine, for which our forefathers stained the baptismal pool with blood, by all the trials and persecutions that have been laid upon us; and never shall we.

Upon the entire church, at the last, there shall not be even the smell of fire. I see her come out of the furnace. I see her advance up the hill towards her final glory with her Lord and Master, and the angels look at her garments; they are not tattered. Nay, the fangs of her enemies have not been able to make a single rent therein. They draw near to her; they look upon her

flowing ringlets, and they are not crisp with heat; they look upon her very feet, and though she has trodden the coals they are not blistered, and her eyes have not been dried up by the furiousness of the seven times heated flame. She has been made more beautiful, more fair, more glorious, by the fires, but hurt she has not been, nor can she be. Turn, then, to the individual Christian, and remember, that the promise stands alike firm and fast with each believer. Christian, if you be truly a child of God, your trials cannot destroy you; and what is better still, you can lose nothing by them. You may seem to lose for to-day, but when the account comes to be settled, you shall not be found to be a farthing the loser by all the temptations of all the world, or all the attacks of Satan which you have endured. Nay, more, you shall be wondrously the gainer. Your trials having worked patience and experience, shall make you rich. Your temptations having taught you your weakness, and shown you where your strength lieth, shall make you strong.

There is a brother who has had wave upon wave of affliction: everything goes against him. He is an upright, honest, indefatigable merchant, yet, let him do what he will, his substance wastes away like snow before the sun. It appears that for every ship of his the wind blows the wrong way, and where others win by the venture he loses all:

*“Sees every day new straits attend,
And wonders where the scene shall end.”*

When I spoke of walking through the fire, he said, “Ah! that is what I have been doing; I have been walking through it these months, to God and my own soul alone is it known how hot the furnace is.” Brother, will you take home this text? “When thou goest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned.” When your troubles are all over, you shall still be left, and what is more, “Neither shall the flame kindle upon you.” When the winding up time comes, you shall not be any the loser. While you think you have lost substance, you shall find when you read Scripture, that you only lose shadows. Your substance was always safe, being laid up in the keeping of Christ in heaven. You shall discover in the issue, that these trials of yours were the best things that could happen to you. The day will come when you will say with David, “I will sing of judgment and mercy.” “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I have kept thy word.”

Or perhaps there is some young woman — and the case I am about to paint is a very common one — alas! too common in this city. You love the

Savior, my sister, but you are very poor, and you have to earn your living by that sorriest of all means. When the sun rises in the morning he sees you with that needle in your hand,

*“Sewing at once with a double thread;
A shroud as well as a shirt.”*

and all day long you have scarcely time to rest for meals, and at eventime, when the fingers are worn and the eyes are heavy, you shall have need to refrain from sleep because the pittance is so small that you can scarcely live upon it. We know hundreds of that class who always constrain our pity, because they work so hard for so little wage. Peradventure your mother is dead, and your father does not care about you; he is a drunken sot, and you would be sorry to meet him perhaps in the street. You have no helper, no friends. You do not care to tell anybody; you would not like to take anything if charity should offer it to you; you feel it the hardest thing of all is to be tempted as you are. There seems to you to be by the path open the road to plenty, and in some degree to delight. But you have said, “No, no!” and you have loathed the temptation, and you have stood — and I have known how year after year some of you have fought with temptation, and struggled on, when sometimes you were well-nigh starved; but you would not do this great wickedness against God.

My sister, I pray you take the encouragement of Scripture to strengthen you for the future battles. You have been going through the fires. But you are not consumed yet, and I bless God, upon your garments the smell of fire has not passed. Hold on, my sister, hold on, through all the sorrow thou hast, and all the bitterness which is heavy enough to crush thy spirit; hold on, for thy Master sees thee. He will encourage and strengthen thee, and bring thee more than conqueror through it all in the end.

How cruel sometimes worldly young men are to Christian young men! Cruel — for when there are a dozen worldlings and only one Christian, they consider it to be honorable for the dozen to set upon one. Twelve big, tall fellows will sometimes think it a fine game to pass from hand to hand some little lad of fifteen, and make sport and mockery of him. There is honor, it is said, among thieves, but there seems to be no honor at all among worldlings when they get a young Christian in this way. Well, young man, you have borne with it; you have said, “I will hold my tongue and won’t say a word,” though your heart was hot within you, and while you were musing the fire burned. Remember, the anvil does not get

broken, even if you keep on striking it, but it breaks all the hammers. Do you do the same. Only hold on, and these fires shall not consume you. If the fire should burn up your piety, it would only prove that your piety was not worth having. If you cannot stand a few jokes and jeers, why, you are not builded together in that habitation of God which he hath made fire-proof. Bear up, and in the end you will find that this hard lot of yours, this severe discipline, did you a deal of good, and made you a better man than you ever would have been if you had been dandled on the lap of piety, and kept from the battle. In after years your high and eminent post of usefulness may be, perhaps, owing to the severe and harsh discipline to which you were put in your younger days. "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth."

Or, mayhap, I am speaking to some one who has met with opposition from his own ungodly relations. Remember how Jesus said, "I am come to send fire on the earth, and what will I, if it be already kindled? From henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, two against three and three against two." Perhaps your father has threatened you, or what is more bitter still, your husband has threatened to discard you. Now indeed you are walking through the fires. He rails at your godliness, makes a mock of everything you love, and does his best by cruelty to break your heart. My dear sister in Christ, you shall not be burned by the fire. If grace be in your heart, the devil can't drive it out, much less your husband. If the Lord has called you by his grace all the men on earth, and all the fiends in hell can't reverse the calling; and you shall find in the end that you have not suffered any loss; the flame has not kindled upon you. You shall go through the fire and bless God for it. From a dying bed, or at least through the gates of Paradise you shall look back upon the dark path of the way and say it was well, it was well for me that I had to carry that cross, and that now I am permitted to wear this crown.

THE EVILS OF SLOTH.

MASTER GREENHAM'S ADVICE.

A MAN cannot be idle and yet have Christ's sweet company. Christ is a quick walker, and when his people would talk with him they must travel quickly too, or else they will soon lose his company. Christ, my Master, *goes about doing good*, and if you would walk with him you must go about upon the same mission. The Almighty lover of the souls of men is not wont to keep company with idle persons. I find in Scripture that most of the great appearances that were made to eminent saints were made when they were busy. Moses kept his father's flock when he saw the burning bush; Joshua is going round about the city of Jericho when he meets the angel of the Lord; Jacob is in prayer and the angel of God appears to him; Gideon is threshing, and Elisha is plowing, when the Lord calls them; Matthew is in the receipt of custom when he is bidden to follow Jesus; and James and John are fishing. The manna which the children of Israel kept till morning bred worms and stank: idle grace would soon become active corruption.

Moreover, sloth hardens the conscience: laziness is one of the irons with which the heart is seared. Abimelech hired vain and light persons to serve his turn, and the prince of darkness does the same. O friends, it is a sad thing to rust the edge off from one's mind, and to lose keenness of moral perception; but sloth will surely do this for us. David felt the emasculating power of sloth, he was losing the force of his conscience, and was ready for anything. The worst is near at hand. He walks upon the housetop, and sees the object which excites his lust; he sends for the woman, the deed is done; it leads to another crime, he tempts Uriah; it leads to murder, Uriah is put to death; and he takes Uriah's wife. Ah, David! Ah, David! how are the mighty fallen! How is the prince of Israel fallen, and become like the lewd fellows who riot in the evening! From this day forth his sunshine turns to cloud, his peace gives place to suffering, and he goes to his grave an afflicted and troubled man, who, though he could say, "God hath made with me an everlasting covenant," yet had to precede it with that very significant sentence, "Although my house be not so with God."

Is there anyone among the Lord's people who would crucify the Lord afresh and put him to an open shame? Is there any that would wish to sell their Master, with Judas, or turn aside from Christ, with Demas? It is easy of accomplishment. Oh, you say you could not do it. *Now*, perhaps, you could not. Get slothful; do not fight the Lord's battles, and it will become not only easy for you to sin, but you will surely become its victim. Oh, how Satan delights to make God's people fall into sin! for then he doth, as it were, thrust another nail into the bloody hand of Christ; then he doth stain the fair white linen of Christ's own garment; then he vaunteth himself that he hath gotten a victory over the Lord Jesus, and hath led one of the Master's favorites captive at his will! Oh, if we would not thus make hell ring with Satanic laughter, and make the men of God weep because the cedars of Lebanon are cut down, let us watch unto prayer, and be diligent in our Master's business, "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

David *was* saved. I only speak to you who are saved, and I beg and beseech of you to take notice of David's fall, and of the sloth that was at the beginning of it, as a warning to yourselves. Some temptations come to the industrious, but *all* temptations attack the idle. Notice the invention used by country people to catch wasps. They will put a little sweet liquor into a long and narrow-necked phial. The do-nothing wasp comes by, smells the sweet liquor, plunges in, and is drowned. But the bee comes by, and if she does stop for a moment to smell, yet she enters not, because she has honey of her own to make; she is too busy in the work of the commonwealth to indulge herself with the tempting sweets.

Master Greenham, a Puritan divine, was once waited upon by a woman who was greatly tempted. Upon making enquiries into her way of life, he found she had little to do, and Greenham said, "That is the secret of your being so much tempted. Sister, if you are very busy, Satan may tempt you, but he will not easily prevail, and he will soon give up the attempt." Idle Christians are not tempted of the devil so much as they do tempt the devil to tempt them. Idleness sets the door of the heart ajar, and asks Satan to come in; but if we are occupied from morning till night, if Satan shall get in, he must break through the door. Under sovereign grace, and next to faith, there is no better shield against temptation than being "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

Let me remind those who are doing little for Christ, that once you were not so cold as this. There was a time with David when the sound of the clarion

of war would have stirred his blood, and he would have been eager for the fray. There was a day when the very sight of Israel marshalled in goodly phalanx would have made David bold as a lion. Oh, it is an ill thing to see the lion changed like this! God's hero stays at home with the women! There was a time when you would have gone over hedge and ditch to hear a sermon, and never minded standing in the aisles; but now the sermons are tedious to some of you, although you have soft cushions to sit upon. Then if there was a cottage-meeting, or a street-preaching, you were there. Ah! you say, that was wildfire. Blessed wildfire! The Lord give you the wildfire back again; for even if it be wildfire, better wildfire than no fire at all; better be called a fanatic than deserve to be called a drone in Christ's hive.

AT THE SIEGE OF COPENHAGEN.

THE QUAKERS IN IRELAND.

A NAVAL officer tells the following singular story concerning the siege of Copenhagen, under Lord Nelson. An officer in the fleet says: — “I was particularly impressed with an object which I saw three or four days after the terrific bombardment of that place. For several nights before the surrender, the darkness was ushered in with a tremendous roar of guns and mortars, accompanied by the whizzing of those destructive and burning engines of warfare, Congreve’s rockets. The dreadful effects were soon visible in the brilliant lights through the city. The blazing houses of the rich, and the burning cottages of the poor, illuminated the heavens; and the wide-spreading flames, reflecting on the water, showed a forest of ships assembled round the city for its destruction. This work of conflagration went on for several nights; but the Danes at length surrendered; and on walking, some days after, among the ruins, consisting of the cottages of the poor, houses of the rich, manufactories, lofty steeples, and humble meeting-houses, I descried, amid this barren field of desolation, a solitary house, unharmed; all around it a burnt mass, this alone untouched by the fire, a monument of mercy. Whose house is that?” I asked. ‘That,’ said the interpreter, ‘belongs to a Quaker. He would neither fight nor leave his house, but remained in prayer with his family during the whole bombardment.’ ‘Surely’, thought I, it *is* well with the righteous. God *has* been a shield to thee in battle, a wall of fire round about thee, a very present help in time of need.” It might seem to be an invention of mine, only that it happens to be as authentic a piece of history as any that can be found.

There is another story told, somewhat similar, of that Danish war. “Soon after the surrender of Copenhagen to the English, in the year 1807, detachments of soldiers were, for a time, stationed in the surrounding villages. It happened one day that three soldiers, belonging to a Highland regiment, were set to forage among the neighboring farmhouses. They

went to several, but found them stripped and deserted. At length they came to a large garden, or orchard, full of apple trees, bending under the weight of fruit. They entered by a gate, and followed a path which brought them to a neat farmhouse. Everything without bespoke quietness and security; but as they entered by the front door the mistress of the house and her children ran screaming out by the back. The interior of the house presented an appearance of order and comfort superior to what might be expected from people in that station, and from the habits of the country. A watch hung by the side of the fireplace, and a neat book-case, well filled, attracted the attention of the elder soldier. He took down a book: it was written in a language unknown to him, but the name of Jesus Christ was legible on every page. At this moment the master of the house entered by the door through which his wife and children had just fled. One of the soldiers, by threatening signs, demanded provisions: the man stood firm, and undaunted, but shook his head. The soldier who held the book approached him, and pointing to the name of Jesus Christ, laid his hand upon his heart, and looked up to heaven. Instantly the farmer grasped his hand, shook it vehemently, and then ran out of the room. He soon returned with his wife and children laden with milk, eggs, bacon, etc., which were freely tendered; and when money was offered in return it was at first refused; but as two of the soldiers were pious men, they, much to the chagrin of their companion, insisted upon paying for all they received. When taking leave the pious soldiers intimated to the farmer that it would be well for him to secrete his watch; but by the most significant signs, he gave them to understand that he feared no evil, for his trust was in God; and that though his neighbors, on the right hand and on the left, had fled from their habitations, and by foraging parties had lost what they could not remove, not a hair of his head had been injured, nor had he even lost an apple from his trees." The man knew that "He that taketh the sword shall perish by the sword;" so he just tried the non-resistant principle; and God, in whom he put implicit confidence, would not let him be injured.

It was a remarkable thing that in the massacre of the Protestants in Ireland, a long time ago, there were thousands of Quakers in the country, and only two of them were killed; and those two had no faith in their own principles; one of them ran away and hid himself in a fastness, and the other kept arms in his house; but the others, unarmed, walked amidst infuriated soldiers, both Roman Catholics and Protestants, and were never touched, because they were strong in the strength of Israel's God, and put up their sword

into its scabbard, knowing that to war against another cannot be right, since Christ has said, “Resist no evil; if any man smite thee on one cheek, turn to him the other also.” “Be kind, not only to the thankful, but to the unthankful and to the evil.” “Forgive your enemies.” “Bless them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you.” But we are ashamed to do that; we do not like it; we are afraid to trust God; and until we do it we shall not know the majesty of faith, nor prove the power of God for our protection. “My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him.”

SLEEP A GIFT OF GOD.

THE sleep of the body is the gift of God. So said Homer of old, when he described it as descending from the clouds, and resting on the tents of the warriors around old Troy. And so sang Virgil, when he spoke of Palinurus falling asleep upon the prow of the ship. Sleep is the gift of God. We think that we lay our heads upon our pillows, and compose our bodies in a peaceful posture, and that, therefore, we naturally and necessarily sleep. But it is not so. Sleep is the gift of God; and not a man would close his eyes, did not God put his fingers on his eyelids — did not the Almighty send a soft and balmy influence over his frame which lulled his thoughts into quiescence, making him enter into that blissful state of rest which we call sleep. True, there be some drugs and narcotics whereby men can poison themselves well-nigh to death, and then call it sleep; but the sleep of the healthy body is the gift of God. The Lord of love bestows it; his tenderness rocks the cradle for us every night; his kindness draws the curtain of darkness about us, and bids the sun cover his blazing lamp. Love comes and says, “Sleep sweetly, my child; I give thee sleep.” Have you not known what it is at times to lie upon your bed and strive in vain to slumber? As it is said of Darius, so might it be said of you: “The king sent for his musicians, but his sleep went from him.” You have attempted to seize sleep, but it escaped you: the more you tried to sleep the more surely were you awake. It is beyond our power to procure a healthy repose. You imagine if you fix your mind upon a certain subject until it shall engross your attention, you will then sleep; but you find yourself unable to do so. Ten thousand things drive through your brain as if the whole carth were whirled before you. You see all things you ever beheld dancing in a wild confusion before your eyes. You close your eyes, but still you see; and there be things in your ear, and head, and brain, which will not let you be quiet. Sleep has forsaken the couch whereon you court its power. It is God alone, who alike seals up the sea-boy’s eyes upon the giddy mast, and gives the monarch rest: for with all appliances and means to boot, the king could not sleep without the aid of God, but would toss to and fro, and envy his slave to whom sheer weariness became the friendly administrator of slumber. It is God who steeps the mind in Lethe, and bids us sleep, that our bodies may be refreshed, so that for to-morrow’s toil we may rise recruited and strengthened.

How thankful should we be for sleep! Sleep is the best physician that I know of. Sleep hath healed more pains of wearied heads, and hearts, and bones than the most eminent physicians upon earth. It is the best medicine; the choicest thing of all the names which are written in all the lists of pharmacy. No magic draught of the physician can match with sleep. What a mercy it is that it belongs alike to all? God does not make sleep the boon of the rich man; he does not give it merely to the noble, or the rich, so that they can monopolize it as a peculiar luxury for themselves; but he bestows it upon the poorest and most obscure. Yea, if there be a difference, the sleep of the laboring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much. He who toils hardest sleeps all the sounder for his work. While luxurious effeminacy cannot rest, tossing itself from side to side upon a bed of eiderdown, the hard-working laborer, with his strong and powerful limbs, worn out and tired, throws himself upon his hard couch and sleeps: and waking, thanks God that he has been refreshed. Ye know not how much ye owe to God, that he gives you rest at night. If ye had sleepless nights, ye would then value the blessing. If for weeks ye lay tossing on your weary beds, ye then would thank God for this favor. As sleep is the merciful appointment of God, it is a gift most precious, one that cannot be valued until it is taken away; yea, even then we cannot appreciate it as we ought.

The Psalmist says there are some men who are so foolish as to deny themselves sleep. For purposes of gain, or ambition, they rise up early and sit up late. We may have been guilty of the same thing. We have risen early in the morning that we might turn over the ponderous volume, in order to acquire knowledge; we have sat at night until our burned-out lamp has chidden us, and told us that the sun was rising; while our eyes have ached, our brain has throbbed, our heart has palpitated. We have been weary and worn out; we have risen up early, and sat up late, and have in that way come to eat the bread of sorrow by failing health and depressed spirits. Many of you business men are toiling in that fashion. We do not condemn you for it; we do not forbid rising up early and sitting up late; but we remind you of this text: "It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep."

Sleep is frequently used in a bad sense in the Word of God, to express the condition of carnal and worldly men. Some men have the sleep of carnal ease and sloth: of whom Solomon tells us, they are unwise sons that slumber in the harvest, causing shame; so that when the harvest is spent, and the summer is ended, they are not saved. Sleep often expresses a state

of sloth, of deadness, of indifference, in which all ungodly men are found, according to the words, "It is high time for us to awake out of sleep." "Let us not sleep as do others, but let us who are of the day be sober." There be many who are sleeping the sluggard's sleep, who are tossing upon the bed of indolent ease; but an awful waking awaits them, when they shall find that the time of their probation has been wasted; that the golden sands of their life have dropped unheeded from the hour-glass; and that they have come into that world where there are no acts of pardon passed, no hope, no refuge, no salvation.

In other places you find sleep used as the figure of carnal security, in which so many are found. Look at Saul, lying asleep in fleshly security. He is not like David, who said, "I will lay me down and sleep, for thou Lord only makest me to dwell in safety." Abner, the captain of Saul's host, was there, and all the troops lay around him, but Abner slept. Sleep on, Saul! Sleep on! Abishai is standing at thy pillow, and with a spear in his hand he says, "Let me smite him even to the earth at once." Still he sleeps: he knows not that he is on the brink of the sleep eternal! Such are many of you, sleeping in jeopardy of your souls; Satan is standing over you, the law is ready to smite, vengeance is prepared; even Providence seems to say, "Shall I smite him? I will smite him but this once, and he shall never wake again." Jesus, the interposer, cries, "Stay, vengeance, stay." Lo, the spear is even now quivering — "Stay! Spare the sleeper yet another year, in the hope that he may yet awake from this long sleep of sin." Like Sisera, I tell thee, sinner, thou art sleeping in the tent of the destroyer; thou mayest have eaten butter out of a lordly dish; but thou art sleeping on the doorstep of hell. Even now the enemy is lifting up the hammer and nail, to smite thee through thy temples, and fasten thee to the earth, that there thou mayest lie for ever in that death of everlasting torment, which is so much worse than common death.

There is also mentioned in Scripture a sleep of lust, like that which Samson had when he lost his locks, and such sleep as many have when they indulge in sin, and wake to find themselves stripped, lost, and ruined. There is also the sleep of negligence, such as the virgins had, when it is said, "they all slumbered and slept;" and the sleep of sorrow, which overcame Peter, James, and John, in the garden of Gethsemane. But none of these are the gifts of God. They are incident to the frailty of our nature; they come upon us because we are fallen men: they creep over us because we are the sons of a lost and ruined parent. These sleeps are not the benisons of God; nor does he bestow them on his beloved.

AN INN-KEEPER'S PRAYER.

It is said that Rowland Hill once had to put up in a village where there was no other house to put up at but a tavern; and having a pair of horses to bait, and going into the best room of the inn, he was considered to be a valuable guest for the night. So the host came in, and he said, "Glad to see you, Mr. Hill." "I am going," was the reply, "to stay with you to-night. Will you let me have family prayer to-night in this house?" "I never had such a thing as family prayer here," said the landlord, "and I don't want to have it now." "Very well; then just fetch my horses out; I can't stop in a house where they won't pray to God. Take the horses out." Now, being too good a guest to lose, the man thinks better of it, and promises to have family prayer. "Ah, but," said Hill, "I'm not in the habit of conducting prayer in other people's houses. You must conduct it yourself." The man said he could not pray. "But you must," said Rowland Hill. "Oh, but I never did pray." "Then, my dear man, you will begin to-night," was the answer. So when the time came, and the family were on their knees, "Now," said Rowland Hill, "every man prays in his own house: you must offer prayer to-night." "I can't pray, *I can't*," said the landlord. "What, man, you have had all these mercies to-day, and are you so ungrateful that you cannot thank God for them? Besides, what a wicked sinner you have been! Can't you tell God what a sinner you've been, and ask for pardon?" The man began to cry, "I can't pray, Mr. Hill, I can't, indeed I can't." "Then tell the Lord, man, you can't; tell him you can't pray," said Mr. Hill, "and ask him to help you." Down went the poor landlord on his knees. "O Lord, I can't pray: I wish I could." "Ah! you have begun to pray," said Rowland Hill, "you have begun to pray, and you will never leave off. As soon as God has set you to pray, faint though it be, you will never leave off. Now I'll pray for you." And so he did, and it was not long before the Lord was pleased, through that strange instrumentality, to break the landlord's hard heart, and to bring him to Christ. Now, I say if any of you can't pray, tell the Lord you can't. Ask him to help you to pray: ask him to show you your need to be saved; and if you can't pray, ask him to give you everything that you need. Christ will make as well as take the message. He will put his own blood upon your prayer; and the Father will send down the Holy Ghost to you to give you more faith and more trust in Christ.

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT.

THE VICARIOUS SACRIFICE.

SOME time ago an excellent lady sought an interview with me, with the object, as she said, of enlisting my sympathy upon the question of "Anti-Capital Punishment." I heard the excellent reasons she urged against hanging men who had committed murder, and though they did not convince me, I did not seek to answer them. She proposed that when a man committed murder, he should be confined for life. My remark was, that a great many men who had been confined half their lives were not a bit the better for it; and as for her belief that they would necessarily be brought to repentance, I was afraid it was but a dream. "Ah!" she said, good soul as she was, "that is because we have been all wrong about punishments. We punish people because we think they deserve to be punished. Now, we ought to show them," said she, "that we love them; that we only punish to make them better." "Indeed, madam," I said, "I have heard that theory a great many times, and I have seen much fine writing upon the matter, but I am no believer in it. The design of punishment should be amendment, but the ground of punishment lies in the positive guilt of the offender. I believe that when a man does wrong, he ought to be punished for it, and that there is a guilt in sin which justly merits punishment." "Oh, no!" she could not see that. Sin was a very wrong thing, but punishment was not a proper idea. She thought that people were treated too cruelly in prison, and that they ought to be taught that we love them. If they were treated kindly in prison, and tenderly dealt with, they would grow so much better, she was sure.

With a view of interpreting her own theory, I said, "I suppose, then, you would give criminals all sorts of indulgences in prison. Some great vagabond, who has committed burglary dozens of times — I suppose you would let him sit in an easy chair in the evening before a nice fire, and mix him a glass of spirits and water, and give him his pipe, and make him happy, to show him how much we love him." "Well, no, she would not give him the spirits, but still, all the rest would do him good." I thought that was a delightful picture, certainly. It seemed to me to be the most

prolific method of cultivating rogues which ingenuity could invent. I imagine that you could grow any number of thieves in that way; for it would be a special means of propagating all manner of roguery and wickedness. These very delightful theories, to such a simple mind as mine, were the source of much amusement; the idea of fondling villains, and treating their crimes as if they were the tumbles and falls of children, made me laugh heartily. I fancied I saw the Government resigning its functions to these excellent persons, and the grand results of their marvellously kind experiments. The sword of the magistrate transformed into a gruel-spoon, and the jail become a sweet retreat for injured reputations.

Little, however, did I think I should live to see this kind of stuff taught in pulpits; I had no idea that there would come out a divinity, which would bring down God's moral government from the solemn aspect in which Scripture reveals it, to a namby-pamby sentimentalism, which adores a Deity destitute of every masculine virtue. But we never know to-day what may occur to-morrow. We have lived to see a certain sort of men — thank God they are not Baptists, though I am sorry to say there are a great many Baptists who are beginning to follow in their trail — who seek to teach nowadays that God is a universal Father, and that our ideas of his dealing with the impenitent as a Judge, and not as a Father, are remnants of antiquated error. Sin, according to these men, is a disorder rather than an offence, an error rather than a crime. Love is the only attribute they can discern, and the full-orbed Deity they have not known. Some of these men push their way very far into the bogs and mire of falsehood, until they inform us that eternal punishment is ridiculed as a dream. In fact, books now appear which teach us that there is no such thing as the Vicarious Sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. They use the word Atonement, it is true, but in regard to its meaning they have removed the ancient landmark. They acknowledge that the Father has shown his great love to poor sinful man by sending his Son, but not that God was inflexibly just in the exhibition of his mercy, not that he punished Christ on the behalf of his people, nor that, indeed, God ever will punish anybody in his wrath, or that there is such a thing as justice apart from discipline. Even *sin* and *hell* are but old words employed henceforth in a new and altered sense. Those are old-fashioned notions, and we poor souls who go on talking about election and imputed righteousness are behind our time.

I have often thought the best answer for all these new ideas is, that the true gospel was always preached to the poor — “The poor have the gospel

preached to them.” I am sure that the poor will never learn *the gospel* of these new divines, for they cannot make head or tail of it, nor the rich either; for after you have read through one of their volumes, you have not the least idea of what the book is about, until you have read it through eight or nine times, and then you begin to think you are a very stupid being for ever having read such inflated heresy, for it sours your temper and makes you feel angry, to see the precious truths of God trodden under foot. Some of us must stand out against these attacks on truth, although we love not controversy. We rejoice in the liberty of our fellow-men, and would have them proclaim their convictions; but if they touch these precious things, they touch the apple of our eye. We can allow a thousand opinions in the world, but that which infringes upon the precious doctrine of a covenant salvation, through the imputed righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ, against that we must, and will, enter our hearty and solemn protest, as long as God spares us. Take away once from us those glorious doctrines, and where are we, brethren? We may lay us down and die, for nothing remains that is worth living for. We have come to the valley of the shadow of death, when we find these doctrines to be untrue. If these things be not the verities of Christ, if they be not true, there is no comfort left for any poor man under God’s sky, and it were better for us never to have been born. I may say what Jonathan Edwards says at the end of his book, “If any man could disprove the doctrines of the gospel, he should then sit down and weep to think they were not true, for,” says he, “it would be the most dreadful calamity that could happen to the world, to have a glimpse of such truths, and then for them to melt away in the thin air of fiction, as having no substantiality in them.” Stand up for the truth of Christ; I would not have you be bigoted, but I would have you be decided. Do not give countenance to any of this trash and error which is going abroad, but stand firm. Be not turned away from your steadfastness by any pretence of intellectuality and high philosophy, but earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, and hold fast the form of sound words which you have heard of us, and have been taught, even as ye have read in the Book, which is the way of everlasting life.

ROWLAND HILL AND LADY ERSKINE.

ONCE when Rowland Hill was preaching, Lady Ann Erskine happened to be driving by: she was in the outer ring of the circle, and she asked the coach-man, what all the people were there for. He replied, "They are going to hear Rowland Hill." Well, she had heard a great deal about this strange man, accounted to be the very wildest of preachers, and so she drew near. No sooner did Rowland Hill see her, than he said, "Come, I am going to have an auction, I am going to sell Lady Ann Erskine." She of course stopped, and she wondered how she was going to be disposed of. "Who will buy her?" Up comes the world. "What will you give for her?" "I will give her all the pomps and vanities of this present life; she shall be a happy woman here, she shall be very rich, she shall have many admirers, she shall go through this world with many joys." You shall not have her; her soul is an everlasting thing; it is a poor price you are offering; you are only giving *a little*; and what shall it profit her if she gain *the whole* world and lose her own soul?

Here comes another purchaser — here is the devil. "What will you give for her?" "Well," says he, "I will let her enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; she shall indulge in everything her heart shall set itself unto; she shall have everything to delight the eye and the ear; she shall indulge in every sin and vice that can possibly give a transient pleasure." Ah, Satan! what will you do for her for ever? You shall not have her, for I know what you are; you would give a paltry price for her, and then destroy her soul to all eternity.

But, here comes another — I know him — it is the Lord Jesus. "What will you give for her?" Says he, "It is not what I will give, it is what I have given; I have given my life, my blood for her; I have bought her with a price, and I will give her heaven for ever and ever; I will give her grace in her heart now and glory throughout eternity."

"O Lord Jesus Christ," said Rowland Hill, "thou shalt have her. Lady Ann Erskine, do you demur to the bargain?" She was fairly caught; there was no answer that could be given. "It is done," he said, "it is done; you are the Savior's; I have betrothed you unto him; never break that contract." And she never did. From that time forth, from being a gay and volatile woman

she became one of the most serious persons, one of the greatest supporters of the truth of the gospel in those times, and died in a glorious and certain hope of entering the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever is willing to have Christ, Christ is willing to have him.

GOD SPEAKING TO ALL.

EVERY man in his CALLING has a sermon preached to him. The *farmer has* a thousand sermons. He need not go an inch without hearing the songs of angels and the voice of spirits wooing him to righteousness; for all nature round about him has a tongue given to it, when man hath an ear to hear.

There are others, however, engaged in a business which allows them to see but very little of nature, and yet even there God has provided them with a lesson. There is the *baker* who provides us with our bread. He thrusts his fuel into the oven, and he causes it to glow with heat, and puts bread therein. Well may he, if he be an ungodly man, tremble as he stands at the oven's mouth, for there is a text which he may well comprehend as he stands there: "For the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud and they that do wickedly shall be as stubble; they shall be consumed. Men ingather them in bundles, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." Out of the oven's mouth comes a hot and burning warning, and the man's heart might melt like wax within him if he would but regard it.

Then see the *butcher*. How doth the beast speak to him? He sees the lamb almost lick his knife, and the bullock goes unconsciously to the slaughter. How might he think every time that he smites the unconscious animal — who knows nothing of death — of his own doom! Are we not, all of us who are without Christ, fattening for the slaughter? Are we not more foolish than the bullock, for doth not the wicked man follow his executioner, and walk after his own destroyer into the very chambers of hell? When we see a drunkard pursuing his drunkenness, or an unchaste man running in the way of licentiousness, is he not as an ox going to the slaughter, until a dart smite him through the liver? Hath not God sharpened his knife and marie ready his axe, that the fatlings of this earth may be killed, when he shall say to the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field, "Behold, I have made a feast of vengeance for you, and ye shall feast upon the blood of the slain, and make yourselves drunken with the streams thereof?" Ay, butcher, there is a lecture for you in your trade; and your business may reproach you.

And ye whose craft is to sit still all day, making shoes for our feet, the lapstone in your lap may reproach you, for your heart, perhaps, is as hard

as that. Have you not been smitten as often as your lapstone, and yet your heart has never been broken or melted? And what shall the Lord say to you at last, when, your stony heart being still within you, he shall condemn you and cast you away because you would have none of his rebukes, and would not turn at the voice of his exhortation?

Let the *brewer* remember that as he brews he must: drink. Let the *potter* tremble lest he be like a vessel marred upon the wheel. Let the *printer* take heed that his life be set in heavenly type, and not in the black letter of sin. *Painter*, beware! for paint will not suffice, we must have unvarnished realities.

Or you engaged in business, where you are continually using scales and measures. Might you not often put yourselves into those scales? Might you not fancy you saw the great Judge standing by' with his gospel in one scale, and you in the other, and solemnly looking down upon you, saying, "*Mene, mene, tekel* — thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting." Some of you use the measure, and when you have measured out, you cut off the portion that your customer requires. Think of your life, too; it is to be of a certain length, and every year brings the measure a little farther, and at last there come the scissors that shall clip off your life, and it is done. How knowest thou when thou art come to the last inch? What is that disease thou hast about thee but the first snip of the scissors? What that trembling in thy bones, that failing in thy eyesight, that fleeing of thy memory, that departure of thy youthful rigor, but the first rent? How soon shalt thou be rent in twain, the remnant of thy days past away, and thy years all numbered and gone, misspent and wasted for ever!

But you say you are engaged as *a servant*, and your occupations are diverse. Then diverse are the lectures God preaches to you. "A servant waits for his wages, and the hireling fulfilleth his day." There is a similitude for thee, when thou hast fulfilled thy day on earth, and shalt take thy wages at last. Who, then, is thy master? Art thou serving Satan and the lusts of the flesh, and wilt thou take out thy wages at last in the hot metal of destruction? or art thou serving the fair Prince Emmanuel, and shalt thy wages be the golden crowns of heaven? Oh, happy art thou if thou servest a good Master! for' according to thy master shall be thy reward; as is thy labor such shall the end be.

Or thou art one that *guideth the pen*, and from hour to hour wearily thou writest. Ah, man! know that thy life is a writing. When thy hand is not on

the pen, thou art a writer still; thou art always writing upon the pages of eternity; thy sins thou art writing, or else thy holy confidence in him that loved thee. Happy shall it be for thee, O writer, if thy name is written in the Lamb's book of life, and if that black writing of thine, in the history of thy pilgrimage below, shall have been blotted out with the red blood of Christ, and thou shalt have 'written upon thee the fair name of Jehovah, to stand legible for ever.

Or perhaps thou art a *physician* or a *chemist* — thou prescribest or preparest medicines for man's body. God stands there by the side of thy pestle and thy mortar, and by the table where thou writest thy prescriptions, and he says to thee, "Man, thou art sick; I can prescribe for thee. The blood and righteousness of Christ, laid hold of by faith, and applied by the Spirit, can cure thy soul. I can compound a medicine for thee that shall rid thee of thy ills, and bring thee to the place where the inhabitants shall no more say, 'I am sick.' Wilt thou take my medicine, or wilt thou reject it? Is it bitter to thee, and dost thou turn away from it? Come, drink, my child, drink, for thy life lieth here; anti how shalt thou escape if thou neglect so great salvation?" Do you cast iron, or melt lead, or fuse the hard metals of the mines? Then pray that the Lord may melt thine heart, and cast thee in the mold of the gospel? Do you make garments for men? Oh, be careful that you find a garment for yourself for ever.

Are you busy in *building* all day long, laying the stone upon its fellow, and the mortar in its crevice? Then remember thou art building for eternity too. Oh, that thou mayest thyself be built upon a good foundation! Oh, that thou mayest build thereon, not wood, hay, or stubble, but gold and silver, and precious stones, and things that will abide the fire! Take care, man, lest thou shouldest be God's scaffold, lest thou shouldest be used on earth to be a scaffolding for building his church, and when his church is built thou shouldest be cast down and burned up with fire unquenchable. Take heed that thou art built upon a rock, and not upon the sand, and that the vermilion cement of the Savior's precious blood unites thee to the foundation of the building, and to every stone thereof.

Art thou a *jeweller*, and dost thou cut thy gem and polish the diamond from day to day? Would to God thou wouldest take warning from the contrast: which thou presentest to the stone on which thou dost exercise thy craft! Thou cuttest it, and it glitters the more thou dost cut it; but though thou hast been cut and ground, though thou hast had cholera and

fever, and hast been at death's door many a day, thou art none the brighter, but the duller, for, alas! thou art no diamond. Thou art but the pebble-stone of the brook, and in that day when God makes up his jewels he shall not enclose thee in the casket of his treasures; for thou art not one of the precious sons of Zion, comparable unto fine gold.

But be thy situation what it may, be thy calling what: it may, there is a continual sermon preached to thy conscience. I would that thou wouldest now from this time forth open both eye and ear, and see and hear the things that God would teach thee.

THE SUSPECTED INN.

POOR Ananias was afraid to go to Saul; he thought it was very much like stepping into a lion's den. "If I go to his house," he thought, "the moment he sees me, he will take me to Jerusalem at once, for I am one of Christ's disciples; I dare not *go*." God says, "Behold he prayeth." "Well," says Ananias, "that is enough for me. If he is a praying man, he will not hurt me; if he is a man of real devotion, I am safe." Be sure you may always trust a praying man. I do not know how it is, but even ungodly men always pay a reverence to a sincere Christian. A master likes to have a praying servant after all; if he does not regard religion himself, he likes to have a pious servant, and he will trust him rather than any other. True, there are some of your professedly praying people that have not a bit of prayer in them; but whenever you find a really praying man, you may trust him with untold gold. If he really prays, you need not be afraid of him. He who communes with God in secret may be trusted in public. I always feel safe with a man who is a visitor to the mercy-seat.

I have heard an anecdote of two gentlemen travelling together, somewhere in Switzerland. Presently they came into the midst of the forests; and you know the gloomy tales the people were wont to tell about the inns in the lone places — how dangerous it is to lodge in them. One of them, an infidel, said to the other, who was a Christian, "I don't like stopping here at all, it is a very queer-looking house." "Well," said the other, "let us try." So they went into a house, but it looked so suspicious, that neither of them liked it: no doubt they would have greatly preferred being at home in England. Presently the landlord said, "Gentlemen, I always read and pray with my family before going to bed; will you allow me to do so to-night?" "Yes," they said, "with the greatest pleasure." When they went upstairs, the infidel said, "I am not at all afraid now." "Why?" said the Christian. "Because our host has prayed." "Oh!" said the other, "then it seems, after all, you think something of religion. Because a man prays you can go to sleep in his house without fear of being robbed or murdered." And it was marvellous how both of them did sleep. Sweet dreams they had, for they felt that where the house had been roofed by prayer, and walled with devotion, none would do them wrong. This, then, was an argument to Ananias, that he might go with safety to Saul's lodging.

Mrs. Berry used to say, "I would not be hired out of my closet for a thousand worlds." Mr. Jay said, "If the twelve apostles were living near you, and you had access to them, if this intercourse drew you from the closet, they would prove a real injury to your souls." Prayer is the ship which brings home the richest freight from the celestial shores. Prayer is the soil which yields the most abundant harvest.

Brother, when you rise in the morning, your business so presses, that with a hurried word or two, down you go into the world; and at night, jaded and tired, you give God the fag-end of the day, and the consequence is, that you have no communion with him. The reason we have not more true religion among us now, is because we have not more secret prayer. Sirs, I have no opinion of the churches of the present day that do not pray.

Say to your minister, "Sir, we must have more prayer." Urge the people to more prayer. Have a prayer-meeting, even if you have it all to yourself; and if you are asked how many were present: you can say, "Four." "Four! how so?" "Why, there was myself, and God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; and we have had a rich and real communion together." We must have an outpouring of real devotion, or else what is to become of many of our churches? Oh, may God awaken us all, and stir us up to pray, for when we pray we shall be victorious! I should like to take you, as Samson did the foxes. He the firebrands of prayer to you, and send you in among the shocks of corn, till you set the whole field on a blaze. I should like to make a conflagration by my words, and set all the churches on fire with zeal for God's glory.

SOME POPULAR ERRORS.

THERE are many who imagine that salvation cannot be accomplished except in some undefinable and mysterious way; and the minister and the priest are mixed up with it. Hear ye, then; if you had never seen a minister in your lives, if you had never heard the voice of the bishop of the church, or an elder thereof, yet if ye did call on the name of the Lord, your salvation would be quite as sure without one as with one. We are all clergy who love the Lord Jesus Christ, and you are as much fit to preach the gospel if God has given you the ability, and called you to the work by his Spirit, as any man alive. No priestly hand, no hand of presbyterian — which means priest written large — no ordination of men, is necessary; we stand upon the rights of manhood to speak what we believe, and next to that we stand upon the call of God's Spirit in the heart bidding us testify his truth. But neither Paul nor an angel from heaven, nor Apollos, nor Cephas, can help you in salvation. It is not of man, neither by men, and neither Pope, nor Archbishop, nor bishop, nor priest, nor minister, nor any one, hath any grace to give to others. We must each of us go ourselves to the fountain-head, pleading this promise — “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” If I were shut up in the mines of Siberia, where I could never hear the gospel, if I did call upon the name of Christ, the road is just as straight without the minister as with him, and the path to heaven is just as clear from the wilds of Africa, and from the dens of the prison-house and the dungeon, as it is from the sanctuary of God. Nevertheless, for edification, all Christians love the ministry, though not for salvation; though neither in priest nor preacher do they trust, yet the word of God is sweet to them, and “beautiful on the mountains are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of peace.”

Another very common error is, that a good dream is a most splendid thing in order to save people. Some of you do not know the extent to which this error prevails; I happen to know it. It is received among many persons, that if you dream that you see the Lord in the night you will be saved, and if you can see him on the cross, or if you think you see some angels, or if you dream that God says to you, “You are forgiven,” all is well; but if you do not have a very nice dream you cannot be saved. So some people think. Now, if it be so, the sooner we all begin to eat opium the better; because there is nothing that makes people dream so much as that; and the best

advice I could give would be — let every minister distribute opium very largely, and then his people would all dream themselves into heaven.

Out upon that rubbish! there is nothing in it. Dreams, the disordered fabrics of a wild imagination, the totterings often of the fair pillars of a grand conception, how can they be the means of salvation? You know Rowland Hill's good answer; I must quote it, in default of a better. When a woman pleaded that she was saved because she dreamed, he said, "Well, my good woman, it is very nice to have good dreams when you are asleep, but I want to see how you act when you are awake; for if your conduct is not consistent in religion when you are awake, I will not give a snap of the finger for your dreams." Ah! I do marvel that ever any person should go to such a depth of ignorance as to tell me the stories that I have heard myself about dreams. Poor dear creatures! when they were sound asleep they saw the gates of heaven opened, and a white angel came and washed their sins away, and then they saw that they were pardoned; and since then they have never had a doubt or a fear. It is time that you should begin to doubt, then; very good time that you should; for if that is all the hope you have, it is a poor one. Remember, it is "whosoever calls upon the name of God," not whosoever dreams about him. Dreams may do good. Sometimes people have been frightened out of their senses in them; and they were better out of their senses than they were in, for they did more mischief when they were in their senses than they did when they were out; and the dreams did good in that sense. Some people, too, have been alarmed by dreams; but to trust to them is to trust to a shadow, to build your hopes on bubbles, scarcely needing a puff of wind to burst them into nothingness. Oh, remember, you want no vision, no marvellous appearance! If you have had a vision, or a dream, you need not despise it; it may have benefited you: but do not trust to it. But if you have had none, remember it is not the mere calling upon God's name to which the promise is appended.

There are some people who think they must have some very wonderful kind of feelings, or else they cannot be saved; some most extraordinary thoughts such as they never had before, or else certainly they cannot be saved. A woman once applied to me for admission to church-membership. So I asked her whether she had ever had a change of heart. She said, "Oh yes, sir, such a change! you know," she said, "I felt it across the chest so singular, sir; and when I was a-praying one day I felt as if I did not know what was the matter with me, I felt so different. And when I went to the chapel, sir, one night, I came away and felt so different from what I felt

before; so light.” “Yes,” I said, “light-headed, my dear soul, that is what you felt, but nothing more, I am afraid.” The good woman was sincere enough; she thought it was all right with her, because something had affected her lungs, or in some way stirred her physical frame. “No,” I hear you say,” people cannot be so stupid as this.” I assure you that there are many that have no better hope of heaven than that; for I am dealing with a very popular objection just now. “I thought,” said one, addressing me one day, “I thought, when I was in the garden, sure Christ could take my sins away just as easily as he could move the clouds. Do you know, sir, in a moment or two the cloud was all gone, and the sun was shining. Thought I to myself, the Lord is blotting out my sin.” Such a ridiculous thought as that, you say, cannot occur often. I tell you it does, very frequently indeed. People get supposing that the veriest nonsense in all the earth is a manifestation of divine grace in their hearts.

Now, the only feeling I ever want to have is just this: I want to feel that I am a sinner, and that Christ is my Savior. You may keep your visions, and ecstasies, and raptures, and dancings, to yourselves; the only feeling that I desire to have is deep repentance and humble faith; and if, poor sinner, you have got that, you are saved. Why, some people believe that before they can be saved there must be a kind of electric-shock, some very wonderful thing that is to go all through them from head to foot. Now hear this, “The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart. If thou dost with thy heart believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and with thy mouth dost confess, thou shalt be saved.” What do ye want with all this nonsense of dreams and supernatural thoughts? All that is wanted is, that as a guilty sinner I should come and cast myself on Christ. That done, the soul is safe, and all the visions in the universe could not make it safer.

And now, I have one more error to try to rectify. Among very poor people — and I have visited some of them, and know what I say to be true — among the very poor and uneducated, there is a very current idea that somehow or other salvation is connected with learning to read and write. You smile, perhaps, but I know it. Often has a poor woman said, “O sir, this is no good to poor, ignorant creatures like us; there is no hope for me, sir; I cannot read. Do you know, sir, I don’t know a letter? I think if I could read a bit I might be saved; but, ignorant as I am, I do not know how I can, for I have got no understanding, sir.” I have found this in the country districts, too, among people who might learn to read if they liked. And there are none but can, unless they are lazy. And yet they sit down in cold

indifference about salvation, under the notion that the parson could be saved, for he reads a chapter so nicely; that the clerk could be saved, for he said “Amen” so well; that the squire could be saved, for he knew a great deal, and had a vast many books in his library; but that they could not be saved, for they did not know anything, and that therefore it was impossible. My poor friend, you do not want to know much to go to heaven. I would advise you to know as much as ever you can; do not be backward in trying to learn. But in regard to going to heaven, the way is so plain, that “the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein.”

PROFIT AND LOSS

SELLING THE SOUL FOR HALF-A-CROWN.

It is astonishing for how little a man will sell his soul. I remember an anecdote, I believe it is true, I had almost said I hope it is. A minister, going across some fields, met a countryman, and said to him, "Well, friend, it is a most delightful day." "Yes, sir, it is." And having spoken to him about the beauties of the scenery, and so forth, he said, "How thankful we ought to be for our mercies! I hope you never come out without praying." "Pray, sir!" said he, "why, I never pray; I have got nothing to pray for." "What a strange man!" said the minister; "don't your wife pray?" "If she likes." "Don't your children pray?" "If they like, they do." "Well, you mean to say you do not pray," said the minister (as I think, not very rightly; no doubt he saw that the man was superstitious); "now, I will give you half-a-crown if you will promise me not to pray as long as you live." "Very well," said the man, "I don't see what I have got to pray for;" and he took the half-crown. When he went home the thought struck him, "What have I done?" And something said to him, "Well, John, you will die soon, and you will want to pray then; you will have to stand before your Judge, and it will be a sad thing not to have prayed." Thoughts of this kind came over him, and he felt dreadfully miserable: and the more he thought, the more miserable he felt. His wife asked him what was the matter; he could hardly tell her for some time, and at last he confessed he had taken half-a-crown never to pray again, and that was preying on his mind. The poor ignorant soul thought it was the evil one that had appeared to him. "Ay, John," said she, "sure enough it was the devil, and you have sold your soul to him for that half-crown." The poor creature could not work for several days, and he became perfectly miserable, from the conviction that he had sold himself to the evil one. However, the minister knew what he was about, and there was a barn close by, and he was going to preach there. He guessed the man would be there to ease his terror of mind, and sure enough he was there one Sabbath evening, and he heard the same man who gave him the half-crown take for his text these words: "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" "Ay," said he, "what will it profit a man who sold his soul for half-a-crown?" Up gets the man, crying out,

“Sir, take it back! take it back!” “Why,” said the minister, “You want the half-crown, and you said you did not need to pray.” “But, sir,” he said, “I must pray; if I do not pray, I am lost;” and after some testing by parleying, the half-crown was returned, and the man was on his knees, praying to God. And it came to pass that that very circumstance was the means of saving his soul, and making him a changed man.

THE AVALANCHE AND THE LOCUSTS.

A PRESENT GOD! I cannot suggest a theme that may make you more full of courage in times of danger and trouble. You will find it exceedingly helpful and consoling if you can discover God in your *trifles*. Our life is made up of trifles, and if we had a God only for the great things, and not for the little things, we should be miserable indeed. If we had a God of the temple, and not a God of the tents of Jacob, where were we? But, blessed be our heavenly Father, he that wings an angel, guides a sparrow; he that rolls a world along, molds a tear and marks its orbit when it trickles from its source. There is a God in the motion of a grain of dust blown by the summer wind, as much as in the revolutions of the stupendous planet. There is a God in the sparkling of a fire-fly as truly as in the flaming comet. Carry home, I beseech you, to your houses the thought that God is *there*, at your table, in your bed-chamber, in your workroom, and at your counter. Recognize the doing and being of God in every little thing. Think for a moment, and you will find that there are many promises of Scripture giving the sweetest consolation in trivial matters. "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands." Why? Lest thou fall from a precipice? Lest thou dash thyself from a pinnacle? No, "*Lest thou dash thy foot against a stone!*" A little danger, but a great providence to ward us from it. And what saith the Scripture also? Doth it say, "The very days of your life are numbered"? It saith not so, though that were true; but, "the very *hairs of your head* are all numbered." And what saith the Scripture yet again? Doth it say, "The Lord knoweth the eagles, and not an eagle falleth to the ground without your Father?" No; but, "are not two *sparrows* sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father." A great God in little things. I am sure it will spare you a world of vexation if you will but remember this, for it is hence our vexations come. We often get into a bad temper about a trifle, when a great trial does not agitate us. We are angry because we have scalded ourselves with a little water, or have lost a button from our clothes, and yet the greatest calamity can scarcely disturb us. You smile, because it is true. Job himself, who said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away," might have grown angry, because of some rough

edge in his potsherd. Take care that you see God in little things, that your mind may be always calm and composed, and that you be not foolish enough to suffer a trifle to overcome a saint of God.

Our life is entirely dependent upon God. One sees strange sights in journeying, scenes which will never be erased from the memory. It was some years ago, just under a tremendous rock, I saw a vast mass of broken stones, and earth tossed about in wild confusion, and raised in huge hillocks. My driver said to me, "That is the grave of a village." Some years ago there lived upon that spot a joyful and happy people. They went forth to their daily work, they ate, they drank, as men do to this day. One time they saw a great crack in the mountain that hung overhead; they heard alarming noises; but they had heard such sounds before, and the old men said, "There might be something coming, but they did not know." On a sudden, however, without further notice, the whole side of the hill was in motion, and ere the villager could escape from his hut, the village was buried beneath the fallen rocks. And there it lies; and neither bone of man, nor piece of the habitation of man has ever been discovered in the wreck; so thoroughly was everything crushed and buried, that nothing, by the most diligent search, could ever be discovered. There are many villages standing in a like position at this day. I passed another spot, where there was a shelving mountain, with its layers slanting towards the valley. A town which had been built at the foot had been entirely covered, and a lake filled up by one tremendous slide from the top of the hill. Yet, there stand new houses still, and men venture to live among the graves of their sires. We are apt to say, "How these people ought to look up every morning and say, 'O Lord, spare this village'!" Standing there, where they might be crushed in a moment, where the slightest motion of the earth within would bring down the hill upon them, they ought to lift up their hearts to the Preserving One, and say, "Oh, thou keeper of Israel, keep us both day and night."

Ah! but you and I are in the same position. Though no beetling crags overhang our homesteads, though no mountain threatens to leap upon our city, yet are there a thousand gates to death. There are other agencies besides these, which can hurry mortals to their tombs. You are sitting today as near to the jaws of death as those villagers who are dwelling there. Oh, that you felt it! One breath choked up, and you are dead. Perhaps your life is a thousand times in danger every moment. As many times as there are ebbings and flowings of the blood, as many times as there are breathings from the lungs, so many times does your life hang in

such jeopardy that it only needs your God to will it, and you fall dead in your seat, and are carried out a pale, lifeless corpse.

There are parts of the mountain passes of the Alps of such danger to the traveller, that when you traverse them in winter, the muleteers muffle the bells of their beasts, lest the faintest sound should bring down an avalanche of snow, and sweep you into the bottomless precipice beneath. *Then*, one would think, the traveller must feel that he is in God's hand. Ay, but you are in the same position now, though you see it not. Open but the eyes of your spirit, and you may see the avalanche overhanging you to-day, and the rock trembling to its fall at this very moment. Only let your soul behold the latent lightnings that God conceals within his hand, and you may soon see that to crush a gnat with your finger is not so easy for you, as for God to take away your life now, or whensoever he pleases.

As it is with our life, so is it with the *comforts of life*. What would life be without its comforts? Much more, what would it be without its necessities? And yet how absolutely dependent are we upon God for the bread which is the staff of life! I never felt more truly the dependence of man upon his God than I did at the foot of the Alpine pass of the Splügen; I saw in the distance the whole road black, as if it had been spread over with heaps of black earth. As we neared it, we discovered it: was a mass of locusts in full march — tens of thousands of myriads of them. As we drew nearer they divided as regularly as if they had been an army, and made room for the carriage. No sooner was it passed than the ranks were filled up again, and they went on in their devouring march. On we went for several miles, and there was nothing to be seen except these creatures, literally covering the ground here and there in thick layers, like a shower of black snow. Then I realized the language of the prophet: "Before them was like Eden; behind them was a desert." They had eaten up every green blade. There stood the Indian corn, with just the dry stems, but every green particle was gone. In the front of their march you saw the vines beginning to ripen, and the fields of grain hastening to perfection. There stood the poor cottager at his door; the wheat that he had planted, and the vines that he had tended, must all be eaten and devoured before his own eyes. The pastures were literally alive with these fiery creatures. When they first entered the field there was green pasture for the cows of the poor cottagers; let them stop there an hour, and you might take up the dust by handfuls. And nothing left besides. "Ah!" said my guide, "it is a sad thing for these poor people: in a month's time those creatures will be as big and

as long as my finger, and then they will eat up the trees — the mulberry trees with which the poor men feed their silkworms, and which furnish them with a little wealth; they will devour every green thing until there is nothing left but the bare dry stems.” In armies countless as the sands of the sea, and fierce to look upon, well described by the prophet Joel, in his terrible picture of them, as “a great army of the Lord.” Ah! I thought within myself, if God can thus sweep this valley and make a waste of it with these little creatures, what a mercy it is that he is a kind and gracious God, or else he might let loose the like on all the people of the earth, and then nothing would stare us in the face but famine, despair, and death!

We are not simply dependent upon God for the comforts, but for the power to enjoy the comforts. It is an evil which we have seen under the sun — a man who had wealth, and riches, and plenty, but who had not power to eat thereof. I have seen a man hungry and full of appetite, but no bread to eat; but I have seen a sight perhaps more sad — a man with food of the most luxurious kind, to whom taste seemed denied, to whom every mouthful was a thing of detestation. The Lord has but in his judgment to smite any of us with only nervousness — that nervousness at which the strong may laugh, but which makes the weak tremble, and everything will become dark before you. He has but to affect some portion of your body, and you shall see no brightness in the sun; the very fields shall lose their verdure before you; the most happy event shall only be a source of deeper gloom; you shall look on everything through a dark glass, and see nothing but darkness and despair. He has but to touch you with sickness, and motion may be misery, and even to lie upon a bed may be a repetition of tortures as you toss from side to side. Worse still, the Lord hath but to put his finger on your brain, and you become a raving lunatic, or what may seem better, but more despicable, a drivelling idiot. Oh, how little then hath he to do to overturn your all, to pull down that mighty castle of your joys, and darken the windows of your hope! You are, again, for life, for necessaries, for comforts, as absolutely in the hand of God as the clay is in the hand of the potter. Your rebellion is but the writhing of a worm. You may murmur, but your murmurs cannot affect him. You may ask your comrades to join in league with you against the Almighty God, but his purpose will stand fast, and you must submit.

HOW THE WORLD GIVES.

THE POET BURNS.

IN the first place, the world gives *scantily*. Even the world's best friends have had cause to complain of its scurvy treatment. In reading the biographies of mighty men whom the world honors, you will be soon convinced that the world is a most ungrateful friend. If you should devote your whole life to serve the world, and make it happy, think not the world would ever return you so much as a doit. Robert Burns is an instance of the world's fine gratitude.

There was the world's poet; he sang the roaring tankard's foaming; he sang the loves of women and the joys of lust; the world admires him, but what did the world do for him? He might drag along his whole life in almost poverty. When the time comes for Robert Burns to be honored (which was all too late for a buried man), how did they honor him? He had poor relatives; look to the subscription list, and see how magnificent the donations they received! They honored him with libations of whisky, which they drank themselves; that was all they would give him. The devotion of the Scotch drunkards to their poet is a devotion to their drunkenness, not to him. Doubtless there are many true-hearted men who bewail the sinner as much as they admire the genius, but the mass like him none the worse for his faults. However, if it had been ordained and decreed that every drunkard who honored Burns should go without his whisky for a week, there was not a dozen of them would have done it — not half-a-dozen. Their honor to him was an honor to themselves; it was an opportunity for drunkenness, at least in thousands of instances. As I stood by his monument some time ago, I saw around it a most dismal, dingy set-out of withered flowers, and I thought, "Ah, this is his honor! O Burns! how hast thou spent thy life to have a withered wreath for the world's payment of a life of mighty genius, and a flood of marvellous song!" Yes, when the world pays best she pays nothing, and when she pays least, she pays her flatterers with scorn; she rewards their services with neglect and poverty.

Many a statesman might I quote who has spent his life in the world's service, and at first the world said, "Go on, go on," and he was clapped

everywhere; he was doing something to serve his time; but he made a little mistake, a mistake, perhaps, which will prove not to have been a mistake at all when the books of history shall be read with a clearer eye. "Down with him!" says the world, "we will have nothing more to do with him." All he may have done before went for nothing; one mistake, one flaw in his political career — "Down with him! Cast him to the dogs, we will have nought to do with him again." Ah, the world pays scantily indeed! What will it do for those it loves the best? When it has done all it can, the last resource of the world is to give a man a title (and what is that)? And then to give him a tall pillar and set him up there to bear all weathers, to be pitilessly exposed to every storm; and there he stands for fools to gaze at one of the world's great ones paid in stone; it is true the world has paid that out of its own heart, for that is what the world's heart is made of. The world pays scantily; but did you ever hear a Christian who complained thus of his Master? "No," will he say, "when I serve Christ, I feel that my work is my wages; that labor for Christ is its own reward. He gives me joy on earth, with a fullness of bliss hereafter." Oh, Christ is a good paymaster! "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life." He that serves Christ may get but little gold and silver such as this world calls precious, but he gets a gold and a silver that shall ne'er be melted in the last refining fire, that shall glitter among the precious things of immortality throughout eternity. The world pays niggardly and scantily, but not so Christ.

If you will serve the world, and you wish to have gifts from it, the world will pay you *half-heartedly*. Now, by the world, I mean the religious world quite as much as any other part of it; I mean the whole world, religious, political, good, bad, and indifferent — the whole lot of them. If you serve the world, it will pay you half-heartedly. Let a man spend himself for his fellow-creatures' interests; what will he get for it? Some will praise him, some will abuse him. The men that escape without abuse in this world are the men who do nothing at all. He who is most valiant and useful must expect to be most reprobated and abhorred. Those men who are borne upon the waves of popular applause are not the men whose worth is true; real philanthropists must swim against the stream. The whole list of the world's benefactors is an army of martyrs. All along, the path of the good is marked with blood and fire. The world does not pay the men that serve it really, except with ingratitude. I say, to come back, even when the world does pay, it pays half-heartedly. Did you ever know a man yet concerning

whom the world's mind was one? I never heard of any. "Oh," says one, "So-and-so is one of the best men of his times!" Go down the next street, and you will hear it said, "He is the biggest vagabond living." Go to one, and you will hear him say, "I never heard a man of such genius as that is." "Oh," says another, "mere twaddle!" "There is such a newspaper," says one, "how ably it defends the rights of the people!" "Oh," says another, "mere democracy; seeking to pull down everything that is constitutional and proper!"

The world never made up its mind about any man yet. There is not a soul living concerning whom the world is unanimous. But when Christ gives anything he always gives with all his heart. He does not say to his people, "There, I give you this, but still I have half a mind to keep it back." No, Christ gives his heart to all his people. There is no double-mindedness in Jesus. If we are enabled by free grace to serve him and to love him, we may rest quite sure that in the rich reward which his grace shall give us, his whole heart shall go with every blessing. When Christ blesses the poor needy soul, he does not give with one hand, and smite with the other; but he gives him mercies with both his hands — both full; and he asks the sinner simply to receive all that he is willing to give.

Whenever the world gives anything, it gives mostly to *those who do not want it*. I remember once, when a lad, having a dog, which I very much prized, and some man in the street asked me to give him the dog; I thought it was pretty impudent, and I said as much. A gentleman, however, to whom I told it, said, "Now suppose the Duke of So-and-so," — who was a great man in the neighborhood — "asked you for the dog, would you give it him?" I said, "I think I would." He said, "Then you are just like all the world; you would give to those who do not want." Who would object to give anything to the Queen? Not a soul of us; and yet, perhaps, there is no person in the world who so little needs our gifts. We can always give to those who do not require anything; for we feel that there is some little honor conferred upon us — an honor bestowed by the reception. Now, look at Jesus. When he gives to his friends, he gets no honor from them: the honor is in his own free heart, that should lead him to give to such poor necessitous worms. Great men have gone to Christ with mere professions, and they have asked him to be good to them; but then they have, at the same time, declared that they had a righteousness of their own, and did not want much of him; and he has sent them about their business, and given them nothing. He said, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to

repentance.” But whenever poor, lost sinners have gone to Christ, he has never turned one of them away — never. He has given all they could possibly want, and infinitely more than they thought they could ever expect. Might not Jesus say to us, when we ask him for the blessings of his grace, “You are impudent in daring to ask?” But instead of that, he loves to be asked, and he freely and richly gives — “Not as the world giveth;” for he gives to those who need it most.

There is another view of the world’s gifts. The world giveth to *its friends*. Any man will help his own friends. If we help not our own relatives and friends, then are we worse than heathen men and publicans. But the world generally confines its good wishes and blessings to its class, and kith, and kin. It cannot think of giving blessings to its enemies. Did you ever hear yet of the world’s blessing an enemy? Never. It gives its benefactions to its friends, and but very scantily even to them. But Christ gives his benefactions even to his enemies. “Not as the world giveth” he may truly say. The world says, “I must see whether you deserve it; I must see that your case is a good one.” It enquires, and enquires, and enquires again; but Christ only sees that our case is a bad one, and then he gives. He wants not a good case, but a bad case. He knows our necessity; and, once discovering our necessity, not all our sin can stop the hand of his bounty. Oh, if Jesus should call to mind some of the hard speeches we have uttered about him, he would never bless us, surely, if it were not that his ways are far above our ways. Why, remember, man, it is not long ago since you cursed him, since you laughed at his people, despised his ministers, and could spit upon his Bible. Jesus has cast all that behind his back, and loved you notwithstanding. Would the world have done that? Let a man get up and rail at his fellows, will they forgive? and, after forgiving, will they begin to bless? Will they die for their enemies? Oh, no! such a thing never entered into the heart of manhood. But Christ blesses rebels, traitors, enemies to his cross. He brings them to know his love, and taste of his eternal mercies.

The world always gives with a *sparing motive*. The most of us are compelled to economy. If we give anything away to a poor man, we generally hope that he will not come again. If we give him half-a-crown, it is very often, as we say, to get rid of him. If we bestow a little charity, it is in the hope that we shall not see his face just by-and-by; for really we do not like the same men continually begging at our door when the world is so full of beggars. Did you ever hear of a man who gave a beggar something

to encourage him to keep on begging of you? I must confess I never did such a thing, and am not likely to begin. But that is just what Christ does. When he gives us a little grace, his motive is to make us ask for more; and when he gives us more grace, it is given with the very motive to make us come and ask again. He gives us silver blessings to induce us to ask for golden mercies; and when we have golden favors, those same mercies are given on purpose to lead us to pray more earnestly, and open our mouth wider, that we may receive more. What a strange giver Christ is! What a strange friend, that he gives on purpose to make us beg more! The more you ask of Christ, the more you can ask; the more you have got, the more you will want; the more you know him, the more you will desire to know him; the more grace you receive, the more grace you will pant after; and when you are full of grace, you will never be content till you get full of glory. Christ's way of giving is, "Of his fullness have we received, and grace for grace" — grace to make us pant for more grace; grace to make us long after something higher, something fuller and richer still. "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you."

HAVE COURAGE .

THE KING AND THE BISHOP.

HOW man has struggled against man! Man is the wolf of mankind. Not the elements in all their fury, nor the wild beasts of prey in all their cruelty, have ever been such terrible enemies to man as man has been to his own fellow. When you read the story of the Marian persecution in England, you are astounded that ever creatures wearing a human form could be so bloodthirsty. Call these *Catholics* who thus persecuted the Protestants? Call them Catholics? Much better call them cannibals, for they behaved more like savages than Christians, in their bloody martyrdoms and murders of the saints of God. We do not in this age feel the cruelty of man to that extent, but this is only because the custom of the land will not allow it; for there are many who dare not smite with the hand, who are very busy in laying on their tongue, and this not by exposing our errors, which they have a perfect right to do, but in many cases the children of God are misrepresented, slandered, abused, persecuted, ridiculed for truth's sake; and we know many instances where other means are resorted to — anything to drive the servants of God away from their integrity and from their simple following of their Master. Well did the Lord Jesus say, "Beware of men." "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves." Do not expect men to be the friends of your piety, or if they are, suspect the reality of that piety of which ungodly man is a friend. Thou must expect to be sometimes bullied and sometimes coerced, to be sometimes flattered, and, anon, threatened; thou must expect at one time to meet with the oily tongue which hath tinder it the drawn sword, and at another time with the drawn sword itself. Look out, and expect that men will be against you. But what are they all? Suppose every living man in the world were against you, and that you had to stand in solitude like Athanasius, you might say, as Athanasius did, "I, Athanasius, against the whole world; I know I have truth on my side, and therefore against the world I stand."

Of what use was the malice of men against Martin Luther? They thought to burn him, but he died in his bed despite them all. They thought to put an

end to him, but his little tracts went everywhere, and the words of Luther seemed to be carried on the wings of angels, until in the most distant places the Pope found an enemy suddenly springing up where he thought the good seed had all been destroyed. I do not know that it is of any very great service to have numbers with you. I question whether truth has not generally to be with the minority, and whether it is not quite as honorable to serve God with two or three as it would be with two or three millions; for if numbers could make a thing right, idolatry ought to be the right religion; and if in countries across the sea numbers made the thing right, why, those who fear the Lord would be few indeed, and idolatry and Romanism would be the right thing. Never judge according to numbers; say they are nothing but men after all; if they be good men fight on their side, but if they and the truth fall out, fall out with them. Be a friend to the truth; make your appeal to the law and to the testimony, and if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

That was grand of Latimer, when he preached before Henry VIII. He had greatly displeased his majesty by his boldness in a sermon preached before the king, and was ordered to preach again on the following Sabbath, and to make an apology for the offense he had given. After reading his text, the bishop thus began his sermon; — “Hugh Latimer, dost thou know before whom thou art this day to speak? To the high and mighty monarch, the king’s most excellent majesty, who can take away thy life if thou offendest; therefore, take heed that thou speakest not a word that may displease; but then consider well, Hugh, dost thou not know from whence thou comest; upon whose message thou art sent? Even by the great and mighty God I who is all-present, and who beholdeth all thy ways, and who is able to cast thy soul into hell! Therefore, take care that thou deliverest thy message faithfully.” He then proceeded with the same sermon he had preached the preceding Sabbath, but with considerably more energy, Such courage should all God’s children show when they have to do, with man. Thou art thyself nothing but a worm; but if God puts his truth into thee, do not play the coward, or stammer out his message, but stand up manfully for God and for his truth.

Some people are for ever crying up what they call a becoming modesty. Modesty is very becoming, but an ambassador of God must recollect there are other virtues besides modesty. If Her Majesty sent an ambassador to a country with whom we were at war, and the little man should step into the conference, and say,” I humbly hope you will excuse my being here; I wish

to be in all things complacent to your honors and lordships the plenipotentiaries: I feel I am a young man, and you are much older than I am, and therefore I cheerfully submit my judgment to your superior wisdom and experience,” and so on; why, I am sure Her Majesty would command him back again, and then command him into a long retirement. What business has he to humble himself when he is an ambassador for the Queen! He must remember he is clothed with the dignity of the power which sent him. And even so is God’s minister, and he counts it foul shame to stoop to any man; he takes for his motto, *Cedo nulli*, “I yield to none,” and preaching God’s truth in love and honesty he hopes to be able to render a fair account to his Master at last, for unto his Master only doth he stand or fall.

TALENTS GREAT AND SMALL.

“Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

HERE comes Whitefield, the man that stood before twenty thousand at a time to preach the gospel, who in England, Scotland, Ireland, and America, has testified the truth of God, and who could count his converts by thousands, even under one sermon! Here he comes, the man that endured persecution and scorn, and yet was not moved — the man of whom the world was not worthy, who lived for his fellow-men, and died at last for their cause: stand by, angels, and admire, whilst the Master takes him by the hand and says, “Well done, well done, thou good and faithful servant: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” See how free grace honors the man whom it enabled to do valiantly!

Hark! Who is this that comes there? a poor, thin-looking creature, that on earth was a consumptive; there was a hectic flush now and then upon her cheek, and she lay three long years upon her bed of sickness. Was she a prince’s daughter, for it seems heaven is making much stir about her? No, she was a poor girl, that earned her living by her needle, and she worked herself to death! — Stitch, stitch, stitch, from morning to night! and here she comes. She went prematurely to her grave, but she is coming, like a shock of corn fully ripe, into heaven, and her Master says, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” She takes her place by the side of Whitefield. Ask what she ever did, and you find out that she used to live in some back garret, down some dark alley in London; and there used to be another poor girl come to work with her, and that poor girl when she first came to work with her, was a gay and volatile creature, and this consumptive child told her about Christ; and they used, when she was well enough, to creep out of an evening to go to chapel or to church together. It was hard at first to get the other one to go, but she used to press her lovingly; and when the girl went wild a little, she never gave her up. She used to say, “O Jane, I wish you loved the Savior;” and when Jane was not there she used to pray for her, and when she was there she, prayed with her; and now and then when she was stitching away, read

a page out of the Bible to her, for poor Jane could not read. And with many tears she tried to tell her about the Savior, who loved her and gave himself for her.

At last, after many a day of hard persuasion, and many an hour of sad disappointment, and many a night of sleepless, tearful prayer, she lived to see the girl profess her love to Christ; and she left her and took sick, and there she lay till she was taken to the hospital, where she died. When she was in the hospital she used to have a few tracts, and she used to give them to those who came to see her; she would try, if she could, to get the women to come round, and she would give them a tract. When she first went into the hospital, if she could creep out of bed, she used to get by the side of one who was dying, and the nurse used to let her do it; till at last she got too ill, and then she used to ask a poor woman on the other side of the ward, who was getting better, and was going out, if she would come and read a chapter to her; not that she wanted her to read to her on her own account, but for her sake, for she thought it might strike her heart while she was reading it. At last this poor girl died, and fell asleep in Jesus; and the poor consumptive needle-woman had said to her, “Well done” — and what more could an archangel have said to her?—” she hath done what she could.”

See, then, the Master’s commendation, and the last reward will be equal to all men who have used their talents well. Ah! if there be degrees in glory, they will not be distributed according to our talents, but according to our faithfulness in using them. As to whether there are degrees or not. I know not; but this I know, he that doeth his Lord’s will, shall have said to him, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

THE LIGHT OF EVENING.

IF our sun do not go down ere it be noon, we may all of us expect to have an evening time of life. Either we shall be taken from this world by death, or else, if God should spare us, ere long we shall get to the evening of life. In a few more years, the sere and yellow leaf will be the fit companion of every man and every woman. Is there anything melancholy in that? I think not. The time of old age, with all its infirmities, seems to me to be a time of peculiar blessedness and privilege to the Christian. To the worldly sinner, whose zest for pleasure has been removed by the debility of his powers and the decay of his strength, old age must be a season of tedium and pain; but to the veteran soldier of the cross, old age must assuredly be a time of great joy and blessedness.

I was thinking the other evening, whilst riding in a delightful country, how like to evening time old age is. The sun of hot care has gone down; that sun which shone upon that early piety of ours, which had not much depth of root, and which scorched it so that it died — that sun which scorched our next true godliness, and often made it well-nigh wither, and would have withered it, had it not been planted by the rivers of water — that sun is now set. The good old man has no particular care now in all the world. He says to business, to the hum, and noise, and strife of the age in which he lives, “Thou art nought to me; to make my calling and election sure, to hold firmly this my confidence, and wait until my change comes, this is all my employment; with all your worldly pleasures and cares I have no connection.” The toil of his life is all done, he has no more now to be sweating and toiling, as he had in his youth and manhood; his family have grown up, and are no more dependent upon him; it may be God has blessed him, and he has sufficient for the wants of his old age, or it may be that in some rustic almshouse he breathes out the last few years of his existence. How calm and quiet! Like the laborer who, when he returns from the field at evening time, casts himself upon his couch, so does the old man rest from his labors. And at evening time we gather into families, the fire is kindled, the curtains are drawn, and we sit around the family fire, to think no more of the things of the great rumbling world; and even so in old age, the family, and not the world, is the engrossing topic.

Did you ever notice how venerable grandsires, when they write a letter, fill it full of intelligence concerning their children? "John is well," "Mary is ill," "all our family are in health." Very likely some business friend writes to say, "Stocks are down," or, "the rate of interest is raised;" but you never find *that* in any good old man's letters; he writes about his family, his lately married daughters, and all that. Just what we do at evening time; we only think of the family circle, and forget the world. That is what the grey-headed old man does. He thinks of his children, and forgets all beside. Well, then, how sweet it is to think that for such an old man there is light in the darkness! "At evening time it shall be light." Dread not thy days of weariness, dread not thine hours of decay. O soldier of the cross, new lights shall burn when the old lights are quenched; new candles shall be lit when the lamps of life are dim. Fear not! The night of thy decay may be coming on; but "at evening time it shall be light."

At evening time the Christian has many lights that he never had before; lit by the Holy Spirit and shining by his light. There is the light of a bright experience. He can look back, and he can raise his Ebenezer saying, "Hither by thy help I've come." He can look back at his old Bible, the light of his youth, and he can say, "This promise has been proved to me; this covenant has been proved true. I have thumbed my Bible many a year; I have never yet thumbed a broken promise. The promises have all been kept to me; 'not one good thing has failed.'" And then, if he has served God, he has another light to cheer him: he has the light of the remembrance of what good God has enabled him to do. Some of his spiritual children come in and talk of times when God blessed his conversation to their souls. He looks upon his children, and his children's children, rising up to call the Redeemer blessed; at evening time he has a light.

But at the last the night comes in real earnest: he has lived long enough, and he must die. The old man is on his bed; the sun is going down, and he has no more light. "Throw up the windows, let me look for the last time into the open sky," says the old man. The sun has gone down; I cannot see the mountains yonder; they are all a mass of mist; my eyes are dim, and the world is dim too. Suddenly a light shoots across his face, and he cries, "O daughter! daughter, here! I can see another sun rising. Did you not tell me that the sun went down just now? Lo, I see another; and where those hills used to be in the landscape, those hills that were lost in darkness, daughter, I can see hills that seem like burning brass; and methinks upon that summit I can see a city bright as jasper. Yes, and I see a gate opening, and spirits

coming forth. What is that they say? Oh, they sing! they sing! Is this death!" And ere he has asked the question, he hath gone where he needs not to answer it, for death is all unknown. Yes, he has passed the gates of pearl; his feet are on the streets of gold; his head is bedecked with the crown of immortality; the palm-branch of eternal victory is in his hand. God hath accepted him in the Beloved.

BEDS THAT ARE TOO SHORT.

(ISAIAH 27:20.)

WHAT LORD BYRON SAID.

AS to the present world, how many beds are there of man's own invention. One man has made himself a bedstead of *gold*; the pillars thereof are of silver, the covering thereof is of Tyrian purple, the pillows are filled with down, such as only much fine gold could buy him; the hangings he hath embroidered with threads of gold and silver, and the curtains are drawn upon rings of ivory. Lo, this man hath ransacked creation for luxuries, and invented to himself all manner of sumptuous delights. He gets unto himself broad acres and many lands; he adds house to house, and field to field; he digs, he toils, he labors, he is in hopes that he shall get enough, a sufficiency, a satisfactory inheritance. He proceeds from enterprise to enterprise, he invests his money in one sphere of labor, and then another. He attempts to multiply his gold, until it gets beyond all reckoning. He becomes a merchant prince, a millionaire, and he says unto himself, "Soul, take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry; thou hast much goods laid up for many years." Do you not envy this man his bed? Are there not some of you, whose only object in life is to get such a couch for yourselves? You say, "He has well-feathered his nest; would to God that I could do the same for myself!" Ah! but do you know that this bed is shorter than that he can stretch himself upon it? If *you* cast yourself upon it for a moment, the bed is long enough *for you*, but it is not long enough *for him*.

I have often thought that many a man's riches would be sufficient for me, but they are not sufficient *for him*. If he makes them his god, and seeks in them his happiness, you never find the man has money enough, his lands are still too narrow, and his estate too small. When he begins to stretch himself, he finds there is something wanted: if the bed could only be made a little longer, then, he thinks, he could be quiet, and have room enough. But when the bed is lengthened, he finds he has grown longer, too; and when his fortune has grown as big as the bedstead of Og, king of Bashan, even then he finds he cannot lie upon it easily. Nay, we read of one man

who stretched himself along the whole world which he had conquered; but he found there was not room, and he began to weep because there were not other worlds to conquer. One would have thought a little province would have been enough for him to rest in. Oh, no; so big is man when he stretches himself, that the whole world does not suffice him. Nay, if God should give to the avaricious all the mines of Peru, all the glittering diamonds of Golconda, all the wealth of worlds, and if he were then to transmute the stars into gold and silver, and make us emperors of an entire universe till we should talk of constellations as men talk of hundreds, yea, and talk of universes as men talk of thousands, even then the bed would not be long enough whereon we might stretch our ever-lengthening desires. The soul is wider than creation, broader than space; give it all, it would be still unsatisfied, and man would not find rest.

You say, "That is strange: if I had a little more I should be very well satisfied." You make a mistake: if you are not content with what you have, you would not be satisfied if it were doubled. "Nay," says one, "I should be." You do not know yourself. If you have fixed your affection on the things of this world, that affection is like a horse-leech; it cries, "Give! give!" It will suck, suck, suck to all eternity, and still cry, "Give! give!" and though you give it all, it has not gotten enough. The bed, in fact, "is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it."

Let us look in another direction. Other men have said, "Well, I do not care for gold and silver; thank God, I have no avarice." But they have been *ambitious*. "Oh," says one, "if I might be famous, what would I not do? Oh, if my name might be handed down to posterity, as having done something, and having been somebody, a man of note, how satisfied would I be!" And the man has so acted, that he has at last made for himself a bed of honor. He has become famous. There is scarce a newspaper which does not record his name. His name has become a household word; nations listen to his voice; thousands of trumpets proclaim his deeds. He is a man, and the world knows it, and stamps him with the adjective "great;" he is called "a great man." See how soft and downy is his bed! What would some of you give to rest upon it! He is fanned to sleep by the breath of fame, and the incense of applause smokes in his chamber. The world waits to refresh him with renewed flattery. Oh! would you not give your ears and eyes if you might have a bed like that to rest upon.

But did you ever read the history of famous men, or hear them tell their tale in secret? "Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown," even though it be the laurel coronet of honor. When the man is known, it is not enough; he asks for wider praise. There was a time when the approbation of a couple of old women was fame to him; now the approbation of ten thousand is nothing. He talks of men as if they were but flocks of wild asses, and what he looked up to once as a high pinnacle is now beneath his feet. He must go higher, and higher, and higher; though his head is reeling, though his brain is whirling, though his feet are slipping, he must go higher. He has done a great thing: he must do more. He seems to stride across the world; he must leap further yet, for the world will never believe a man famous unless he constantly outdoes himself. He must not only do a great thing to-day, but he must do a greater thing to-morrow, the next day a greater still, and pile his mountains one upon another until he mounts the very Olympus of the demigods. But, suppose he gets there, what does he say, "Oh that I could go back to my cottage, that I might be all unknown, that I might have rest with my family and be quiet. Popularity is a care which I never endured until now, a trouble that I never guessed. Let me lose it all; let me go back!" He is sick of it; for the fact is, that man never can be satisfied with anything less than the approbation of heaven; and until conscience gets that, all the applause of senates and of listening princes would be a bed shorter than a man could stretch himself upon it.

There is another bed on which man thinks he could rest. There is a witch, a painted harlot, who wears the richest gems in her ears, and a necklace of precious things about her neck. She is an old deceiver. She was old and shrivelled in the days of Bunyan; she painted herself then, she paints now, and paint she will as long as the world endureth. And she gaddeth forth, and men think her young and fair, and lovely, and desirable; her name is Madam Wanton. She keeps a house wherein she feasteth men, and maketh them drunken with the wine of *pleasure*, which is as honey to the taste, but is venom to the soul. This witch, when she can, entices men into her bed. "There," she says, "there, how daintily have I spread it!" It is a bed, the pillars whereof are pleasure; above is the purple of rapture, and beneath is the soft repose of luxurious voluptuousness. Oh, what a bed is this! Solomon once laid in it, and many since his time have sought their rest there. They have said, "Away with your gold and silver: let me spend it, that I may eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow I die. Tell me not of fame; I care not for it. I would sooner have the pleasures of life, or the joys

of Bacchus, than the laurel of fame. Let me give myself up to the intoxication of this world's delights; let me be drowned in the butt of Burgundy of this world's joys." Have you ever seen such men as that? I have seen many, and wept over them, and I know some now; they are stretching themselves on that bed, and trying to make themselves happy. Byron is just a picture of such men, though he outdid others. What a bed was that he stretched himself on! Was ever libertine more free in his vices? was ever sinner more wild in his blasphemy? was ever poet more daring in his flights of thought? was ever man more injurious to his fellows than he? And yet, what did Byron say? There is a verse which just tells you what he felt in his heart. The man had all that he wanted of sinful pleasure, but here is his confession —

*“I fly like a bird of the air,
In search of a home and a rest;
A balm for the sickness of care,
A bliss for a bosom unblest.”*

And yet he found it not. He had no rest in God. He tried pleasure till his eyes were red with it; he tried vice till his body was sick; and he descended into his grave a premature old man. If you had asked him, and he had spoken honestly, he would have said, the bed was shorter than that he could stretch himself upon it. No, young man, you may have all the vices and all the pleasure and mirth of this metropolis — and there is much to be found, of which I make no mention here — and when you have it all, you will find it does not equal your expectation, nor satisfy your desires. When the devil is bringing you one cup of spiced wine, you will be asking him next time to spice it higher; and he will flavor it to your fiery taste, but you will be dissatisfied still, until, at last, if he were to bring you a cup hot as damnation, it would fall tasteless on your palate. You would say, “Even this is tasteless to me, except in the gall, and bitter wormwood, and fire that it brings.” It is so with all worldly pleasure; there is no end to it; it is a perpetual thirst. It is like the opium-eater; he eats a little, and he dreams such strange wonders; and he wakes, and where are they? Such dreamers, when awake, look like dead men, with just animation enough to enable them to crawl along. The next time, to get to their elysium, they must take more opium, and the next time more and more, and all the while they are gradually going down an inclined plane into their graves. That is just the effect of human pleasure, and all worldly sensual delights; they only end in destruction; and even while they last, they are not wide enough for our

desire, they are not large enough for our expectations, “for the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it.”

Now think, for a moment, of the Christian, and see the picture reversed. I will suppose the Christian at his very worst state, though there is no reason why I should do so. The Christian is not necessarily poor; he may be rich. Suppose him poor. He has not a foot of land to call his own; he lives by the day, and he lives well, for his Master keeps a good cupboard for him, and furnishes him with all he requires. He has nothing in this world except the promise of God with regard to the future. The worldly man laughs at the promise, and says it is good for nothing. Now look at the Christian; he says,—

*“There’s nothing round this spacious globe,
Which suits my large desires;
To nobler joys than nature gives,
Thy servant, Lord, aspires.”*

What, poor man, are you perfectly content? “Yes,” says he, “it is my Father’s will that I should live in poverty. I am perfectly content.” “Well, but is there nothing else you wish for?” “Nothing,” says he, “I have the presence of God; I have delight in communion with Christ; ‘I know that there is laid up for me a crown of life that fadeth not away,’ and more I cannot want. I am perfectly content; my soul is at rest.”

MISTAKEN ZEAL.

THOSE who have no life nor energy may easily ruin themselves, but they are not likely to harm others; whereas a mistaken zealot is like a madman with a firebrand in his hand. Persons who are zealous, and are under a mistake, may do such a deal of mischief! What did those Scribes and Pharisees in Christ's day? They were very zealous, and under the pressure of their zeal they crucified the Lord of glory. What did Saul do in his time? He was very zealous, and under the influence of his zeal he dragged men and women to prison, and compelled them to blaspheme, and when they were put to death he gave his voice against them. I do not doubt that many who burned the martyrs were quite as sincere in their faith as those whom they burned. In fact, it must have taken an awful amount of sincerity in the case of some to have been able to believe that the cruelties which they practiced were really pleasing to God. We cannot doubt that they had such sincerity. Did not our Lord himself say, "Yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service?" Documents, written by men who stained their hands with the blood of Protestants, prove that some of them had a right heart towards God. In their mistaken zeal for God, and truth, and church unity, they believed that they were crushing out a very deadly error, and that the persons whom they sent to prison and to death were criminals that ought to be exterminated, because they were destroyers of the souls of men.

Take heed that none of you fall into a persecuting spirit through your zeal for the gospel. A good woman may be intensely zealous, and for that reason she may say, "I will not have a servant in my house who does not go to my place of worship." I have known landlords, wonderfully zealous for the faith, who have therefore turned every Dissenter out of their cottages, and have refused to let one of their farms to a Nonconformist. I do not wonder at their conduct; if they are zealous, and at the same time blind, they will naturally take to exterminating the children of God. Of course, in their zeal they feel as if they must root out error and schism. They will not have Nonconformity near them, and so they get to work, and in their zeal they hack right and left. They say strong things and bitter things, and then proceed to do cruel things — very cruel things — verily believing that, in all that they do, they are doing God service, not thinking that they are violating the crown rights of God, who alone is Lord of the

consciences of men. They would not oppose the will of God if they knew it; and yet they are doing so. They would not willingly grieve the hearts of those whom God loves, and yet they do so when they are browbeating; the humble cottager for his faith. They look upon the poor people who differ a little from them as being atrociously wrong, and they consider it to be their duty to set their faces against them, and so, under the influence of the zeal that moves them, which, in itself, is a good thing, they are led to do that which is sinful and unjust. Hence the apostle, after he had felt the weight of the stones from the hands of the Jews, prayed that they might be saved; for if they were not saved, their zeal for God would continue to make murderers of them.

Another reason why we long to see the zealous converted is this — because *they would be so useful*. The man that is desperately earnest in a wrong way, if you can but show him his wrong, and teach him what is right, will be just as earnest in the right way. Oh, what splendid Christians some would make who are now such devotees of superstition! Despite their superstition, I look upon many High Churchmen with admiration. Up in the morning early, or at night late, ready to practice all kinds of mortifications, to give their very bodies to be burned, and all their substance in alms, ready to offer prayers without number, and to be obedient to rites without end — what more could external religion demand of mortal men? Oh, if we could get these to sit at Jesus' feet, and leave the phylacteries and the broad-bordered garments, and worship God in spirit, and have no confidence in the flesh, what grand people they would make!

See what Paul himself was, when, counting all he had valued so dear to be but dung, he quitted it, and began to preach salvation by grace alone. While he flew over the world like a lightning flash, and preached the gospel as with a peal of thunder, he loved, he lived, he died for the Nazarene, whom once in his zeal he had counted to be an impostor. People should pray with all their might for zealous but mistaken persons, who have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

Once more, we are bound to make these people, the subject of specially earnest prayer because *it is so difficult to convert them*. It requires the power of God to convert anybody really; but there seems to be a double manifestation of power in the conversion of a downright bigot when his bigotry is associated with dense ignorance and gross error. "Oh," says he, "I do that which is right. I am strict in my religion. My righteousness will

save me.” You cannot get him out of that. It is easier to get a sinner out of his sin than a self-righteous man out of his self-righteousness. Conceit of our own righteousness sticks to us as the skin to the flesh. Sooner may the leopard lose his spots than the proud man his self-righteousness. Oh, that righteousness of ours! We are so fond of it. Our pride hugs it. We do so like to think that we are good, that we are upright, that we are true, that we are right in the sight of God by nature; and though we be beaten out of it with many stripes, yet our tendency is always to return to it. Self-righteousness is bound up in the heart of a man as folly in the heart of a child. Though thou bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his self-righteous folly depart from him. He will stick to it that, after all, he is a good fellow, and deserves to be saved. We must, therefore, in a very special manner pray for such, seeing that self-righteousness is a deep ditch, and it is hard to draw him out who has once fallen into it. Prejudice, of all other opponents, is one of the worst to overcome. The door is locked. You may knock as long as you like; but the man will not open it. He cannot. It is locked, and he has thrown away the key. You may tell him, “You are wrong, good friend;” but he is so comfortably assured that he is right, that all your telling will only make him the more angry at you for attempting to disturb his peace. O God! who but thou canst draw a man out of this miry clay of self-righteousness? Therefore do we cry to thee, of thy great grace, to do it. For these and many other reasons those who have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge, must have a chief place in our importunate prayers.

SELFISH EASE.

THAT is this sin about which the Spirit of God says by Moses, “Be sure your sin will find you out?” A learned divine has delivered a sermon upon the sin of murder from this text, another upon theft, another upon falsehood. Now they are very good sermons, but they have nothing to do with this text, if it be read as Moses uttered it. If you take the text as it stands, there is nothing in it about murder, or theft, or anything of the kind. In fact, it is not about what men do, but it is about *what men do not do*. The iniquity of doing nothing is a sin which is not so often spoken of as it should be. A sin of omission is clearly aimed at in this warning, — “If ye will not do so, be sure your sin will find you out.”

What, then, was this sin? Remember that it is the sin of God’s own people. It is not the sin of Egyptians and Philistines, but the sin of God’s chosen nation; and therefore this text is for you that belong to any of the tribes of Israel — you to whom God has given a portion among his beloved ones. It is to you, professed Christians and church-members, that the text comes, “Be sure your sin will find you out.” And what is that sin? Very sadly common it is among professed Christians, and needs to be dealt with: it is the sin which leads any to forget their share in the holy war which is to be carried out for God and for his church. A great many wrongs are tangled together in this crime, and we must try to separate them, and set them in order before your eyes.

First, it was *the sin of idleness and of self-indulgence*. “We have cattle: here is a land that yields much pasture: let us have this for our cattle, and we will build folds for our sheep with the abundant stones that lie about, and we will repair these cities of the Amorites, and we will dwell in them. They are nearly ready for us, and there shall our little ones dwell in comfort. We do not care about fighting: we have seen enough of it already in the wars with Sihon and Og. Reuben would rather abide by the sheepfolds. Gad has more delight in the bleating of the sheep and in the folding of the lambs in his bosom than in going forth to battle.” Alas, the tribe of Reuben is not dead, and the tribe of Gad has not passed away! Many who are of the household of faith are equally indisposed to exertion, equally fond of ease. Hear them say, “Thank God we are safe! We have passed from death unto life. We have named the name of Christ; we are

washed in his precious blood, and therefore we are secure.” Then, with a strange inconsistency, they, permit the evil of the flesh to crave carnal ease, and they cry, “Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.” Spiritual self-indulgence is a monstrous evil; yet we see it all around. On Sunday these loafers must be well fed. They look out for such sermons as will feed their souls. The thought does not occur to these people that there is something else to be done besides feeding. Soul-saving is pushed into the background. The crowds are perishing at their gates; the multitudes with their sins defile the air; the age is getting worse and worse, and man, by a process of evolution, is evolving a devil; and yet these people want pleasant things preached to them. They eat the fat and drink the sweet, and they crowd to the feast of fat things full of marrow, and of wines on the lees well refined — spiritual festivals are their delight: sermons, conference, Bible-readings, and so forth, are sought after, but regular service in ordinary ways is neglected. Not a hand’s turn will they do. They gird on no armor, they grasp no sword, they wield no sling, they throw no stone. No, they have gotten their possession; they know they have, and they sit down in carnal security, satisfied to do nothing. They neither work for life, nor from life: they are arrant sluggards, as lazy as they are long. Nowhere are they at home except where they can enjoy themselves, and take things easy. They love their beds, but the Lord’s fields they will neither plow nor reap. This is the sin pointed out in the text — “If ye do not go forth to the battles of the Lord, and contend for the Lord God and for his people, ye do sin against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out.” The sin of doing nothing is about the biggest of all sins, for it involves most of the others. The sin of sitting still while your brethren go forth to war breaks both tables of the law, and has in it a huge idolatry of self, which neither allows love to God or man. Horrible idleness! God save us from it!

“BE SOBER.”

BE sober.” And does not that mean, first, moderation in all things? Do not be so excited with joy as to become childish. Do not grow intoxicated and delirious with worldly gain or honor. On the other hand, do not be too much depressed with passing troubles. There are some who are so far from sobriety that, if a little goes wrong with them, they are ready to cry, “Let me die.” No, no.

“Be sober.” Keep the middle way: hold to the golden mean. There are many persons to whom this exhortation is most needful. Are there not men around us who blow hot to-day and cold tomorrow? — their heat is torrid, their cold arctic. You would think they were angels from the way they talk one day, but you might think them angels of another sort from the manner in which they act at other times. They are so high up, or so low down, that in each case they are extreme To-day they are carried away with this, and the next carried away with that. I knew a Christian man right well to whom I was accustomed to use one salutation whenever I saw him. He was a good man, but changeable. I said to him, “Good morning, friend? what are you now?” He was once a valiant Arminian, setting young people right as to the errors of my Calvinistic teaching. A short time after, he became exceedingly Calvinistic himself, and wanted to screw me up several degrees; but I declined to yield. Anon he became a Baptist, and agreed with me on all points, so far as I know. This was not good enough, and therefore he became a Plymouth Brother; and after that he went to the Church from which he originally set out. When I next met him I said, “Good morning, brother, what are you now?” He replied, “That is too bad, Mr. Spurgeon, you asked me the same question last time.” I replied, “Did I? But what are you now? Will the same answer do?” I knew it would not. I would earnestly say to all such brethren, “Be sober. Be sober.” It cannot be wise to stagger all over the road in this fashion. Make sure of your footing when you stand; make doubly sure of it before you shift.

To be sober means to have a calm, clear head, to judge things after the rule of right, and not according to the rule of mob. Be not influenced by those who cry loudest in the street, or by those who beat the biggest drum. Judge for yourselves as men of understanding. Judge as in the sight of God with calm deliberation.

“Be sober,” that is, be clear-headed. The man who drinks, and thus destroys the sobriety of his body is befogged, and muddled, and has lost his way. Ceasing to be sober, he makes a fool of himself. Do not commit this sin spiritually. Be specially clear-headed and calm as to the things of God. Ask that the grace of God may so rule in your heart that you may be peaceful and serene, and not troubled with idle fear on one side or with foolish hope on the other.

“Be sober,” says the apostle. You know the word translated “be sober” sometimes means “be watchful;” and indeed there is a great kinship between the two things. Live with your eyes open; do not go about the world half asleep. Many Christians are asleep. Whole congregations are asleep. The minister snores theology, and the people in the pews nod in chorus. Much sacred work is done in a sleepy style. You can have a Sunday School, and teachers and children can be asleep. You can have a tract-distributing society, with visitors going round to the doors all asleep; you can do everything in a dreamy way if so it pleases you. But says the apostle, — be watchful, be alive; brethren, look alive; be so awakened up by these grand arguments with which we have plied you already, that you shall brace yourselves up, and throw your whole strength into the service of your Lord and Master.

Finally, let us “*hope to the end.*” Never despair; never even doubt. Hope when things look hopeless. A sick and suffering brother rebuked me the other day for being cast down. He said to me, “We ought never to show the white feather; but I think you do sometimes.” I asked him what he meant, and he replied, “You sometimes seem to grow desponding and low. Now I am near to die, but I have no clouds and no fears.” I rejoiced to see him so joyous and I answered, “That is right, my brother, blame me as much as you please for my unbelief, I richly deserve it.” “Why,” he said, “you are the father of many of us. Did you not bring me and my friend over yonder to Christ? If you get low in spirit after so much blessing, you ought to be ashamed of yourself.” I could say no other than, “I am ashamed of myself, and I desire to be more confident in the future.” Brethren, we must hope, and not fear. Be strong in holy confidence in God’s word, and be sure that his cause will live and prosper. Hope, says the apostle; hope to the end; go right through with it; if the worst comes to the worst, hope still. Hope as much as ever a man can hope; for when your hope is in God you cannot hope too much.

“THROUGH FLOODS AND FLAMES.”

THERE are many dear children, both boys and girls, who have not been ashamed in their early days to come forward and confess the Lord Jesus Christ. God bless the dear children! I rejoice in them. I am sure that the church will never have to be ashamed of having admitted them. They, at least, show no cowardice: they take a solemn delight in being numbered with the people of God, and count it an honor to be associated with Christ and his church. Shame on you older ones who still hold back! What ails you, that babes and sucklings are braver than you? By the love you bear to Christ, I charge you — come forth and confess his name among this evil and perverse generation.

Is it true? Then *joyfully accept the trial which comes of it*. Shrink not from the flames. Settle it in your minds that, by divine grace, no loss, nor cross, nor shame, nor suffering, shall make you play the coward. Say, like the holy children, “We are not careful to answer thee in this matter.” They did not cringe before the king, and cry, “We beseech thee, do not throw us into the fiery furnace. Let us have a consultation with thee, O king, that we may arrange terms. There may be some method by which we can please thee, and yet keep our religion.” “No;” they said, “We are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.” Dear friends, let us be ready to suffer for Christ’s sake. Some will say, “Do not be imprudent.” It is always prudent to do your duty. We have not enough nowadays of the virtue nicknamed imprudence. I would like to see a display of old-fashioned imprudence in these cold, calculating, selfish days. Oh for the days of zeal, the days when men counted not their lives dear to them that they might win Christ! Men sit down and reckon up what it will cost them to do right, and weigh their conduct as a matter of profit and loss, and then they call such wicked calculations prudence. It is sheer selfishness. Do right, if it cost you your life. Where would England have been if the men who won our liberties in former ages had chaffered with the world for gain? If they had saved their skins they would have lost their

souls, and ruined the cause of God in England. He loves not Christ who does not love him more than all things. Oh for men of principle, who know no loss but loss of faith, and desire no gain save the glory of God! Be this your cry—

*“Through floods or flames, if Jesus lead,
I’ll follow where he goes.”*

You may lose a great deal *for* Christ, but you will never lose anything *by* Christ. You may lose for time, but you will gain for eternity: the loss is transient, but the gain is everlasting. You will be a gainer by Christ, even if you have to go to heaven by the way of persecution, poverty, and slander. Never mind the way: the end will make full amends. The treasures of Egypt are mere dross compared with the riches of endless bliss.

If it be true that you are willing thus to follow Christ, *reckon upon deliverance*. Nebuchadnezzar may put you into the fire, but he cannot keep you there, nor can he make the fire burn you. The enemy casts you in bound, but the fire will loosen your bonds, and you will walk at liberty amid the glowing coals. You shall gain by your losses, you shall rise by your down-castings. Many prosperous men owe their present position to the fact that they were faithful when they were in humble employments. They were honest, and for the moment they displeased their employers, and in the end earned their esteem. When Adam Clarke was put out apprentice, and his master showed him how to stretch the cloth when it was a little short, Adam could not find in his heart to do it. Such a fool of a boy must be sent home to his mother; and his godly mother was glad that her boy was such a fool that he could not stoop to a dishonest trick. You know what he became. He might have missed his way in life if he had not been true to his principles in his youth. Your first loss may be a lifelong gain. Dear young fellow, you may be turned out of your situation, but the Lord will turn the curse into a blessing. If all should go softly with you, you might decline in character, and by doing a little wrong learn to do yet more and more, and so lose your integrity, and with it all hope of ever lifting your nose from the grindstone. Do right for Christ’s sake, without considering any consequences, and the consequences will be right enough.

TO SHOW YOUR COLORS.

THE fact is, that our Lord requires an open confession as well as a secret faith; and if you will not render it, there is no promise of salvation for you, but a threat of being denied at the last. The apostle puts it, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." It is stated in another place upon this wise, — "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" — that is Christ's way of making the confession of him. If there be a true faith, there must be a declaration of it. If you are candles, and God has lit you, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Soldiers of Christ must, like her Majesty's soldiers, wear their regimentals; and if they are ashamed of their regimentals, they ought to be drummed out of the regiment. They are not honest soldiers who refuse to march in rank with their comrades. The very least thing that the Lord Jesus Christ can expect of us is that we do confess him to the best of our power. If you are nailed up to a cross, I will not invite you to be baptized. If you are fastened up to a tree to die, I will not ask you to go into a pulpit and declare your faith, for you cannot. But you are required to do what you can do, namely, to make as distinct and open an avowal of the Lord Jesus Christ as may be suitable in your present condition.

I believe that many Christian people get into a deal of trouble through not being honest in their convictions. For instance, if a man goes into a workshop, or a soldier into a barrack-room, and if he does not fly his flag from the first, it will be very difficult for him to run it up afterwards. But if he immediately and boldly lets them know, "I am a Christian man, and there are certain things that I cannot do to please you, and certain other things that I cannot help doing, though they displease you" — when that is clearly understood, after a while the singularity of the thing will be gone, and the man will be let alone; but if he is a little sneaky, and thinks that he is going to please the world and please Christ too, he is in for a rough time, let him depend upon it. His life will be that of a toad under a harrow, or a fox in a dog-kennel, if he tries the way of compromise. That will never do. Come out. Show your colors. Let it be known who you are, and what you are; and although your course will not be smooth, it will certainly be not

half so rough as if you tried to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds — a very difficult piece of business that.

The man on the cross came out, then and there, and made as open an avowal of his faith in Christ as was possible.

The next thing he did was to rebuke his fellow-sinner. He spoke to him in answer to the ribaldry with which he had assailed our Lord. I do not know what the unconverted convict had been blasphemously saying, but his converted comrade spoke very honestly to him. “Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man hath done nothing amiss.” It is more than ever needful in these days that believers in Christ should not allow sin to go unrebuked; and yet a great many of them do so. Do you not know that a person who is silent when a wrong thing is said or done may become a participator in the sin? If you do not rebuke sin — I mean, of course, on all fit occasions, and in a proper spirit — your silence will give consent to the sin, and you will be an aider and abettor in it. A man who saw a robbery, and who did not cry, “Stop thief!” would be thought to be in league with the thief; and the man who can hear swearing, or see impurity, and never utter a word of protest may well question whether he is right himself. Our “other men’s sins” make up a great item in our personal guilt unless we in anywise rebuke them. This our Lord expects us to do. The dying thief did it, and did it with all his heart; and therein far exceeded large numbers of those who hold their heads high in the church.

KEEP YOUR OWN GARDEN.

IT is well for a man to see to his cattle, and look well to his flocks and to his herds; but let him not forget to cultivate that little patch of ground that lies in the center of his being. Let him educate his head, and intermeddle with all knowledge; but let him not forget that there is another plot of ground called the heart, the character, which is more important still. Right principles are spiritual gold, and he that hath them, and is ruled by them, is the man who truly lives. He hath not life, whatever else he hath, who hath not his heart cultivated, and made right and pure. Have you ever thought about your heart yet? Oh, I do not mean whether you have palpitations! I am no doctor. I am speaking now about the heart in its moral and spiritual aspect. What is your character, and do you seek to cultivate it? Do you ever use the hoe upon those weeds which are so plentiful in us all? Do you water those tiny plants of goodness which have begun to grow? Do you watch them to keep away the little foxes which would destroy them? Are you hopeful that yet there may be a harvest in your character which God may look upon with approval? I pray that we may all look to our hearts. "Keep your heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." Pray daily, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me;" for if not, you will go up and down in the world, and do a great deal, and when it comes to the end you will have neglected your noblest nature, and your poor starved soul will die that second death, which is the more dreadful because it is everlasting death. How terrible for a soul to die of neglect! How can we escape who neglect this great salvation? If we pay every attention to our bodies, but none to our immortal souls, how shall we justify our folly? God save us from suicide by neglect! May we not have to moan out eternally, "They made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept!"

Now, pass over that point, and think of another vineyard. Are not some people neglecting *their families*? Next to our hearts, our households are the vineyards which we are most bound to cultivate. I shall never forget a man whom I knew in my youth, who used to accompany me at times in my walks to the villages to preach. He was always willing to go with me any evening; but I did not need to ask him, for he asked himself, until I purposely put him off from it. He liked also to preach himself much better than others liked to hear him; but he was a man who was sure to be

somewhere to the front if he could. Even if you snuffed him out, he had a way of lighting himself up again. He was good-natured and irrepressible. He was, I believe, sincerely earnest in doing good. But two boys of his were well known to me, and they would swear horribly. They were ready for every vice, and were under no restraint. One of them drank himself into a dying state with brandy, though he was a mere boy. I do not believe his father had ever spoken to him about the habit of intoxication, though he certainly was sober and virtuous himself. I had no fault to find with him except this grave fault — that he was seldom at home, was not master of the house, and could not control his children. Neither husband nor wife occupied any place of influence in the household; they were simply the slaves of their children: their children made themselves vile, and they restrained them not! This brother would pray for his children at the prayer-meeting, but I do not think he ever practiced family prayer. It is shocking to find men and women speaking fluently about religion, and yet their houses are a disgrace to Christianity. I suppose that none of you are as bad as that; but, if it be so, please spell this text over: “They made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept.” The most careful and prayerful father cannot be held accountable for having wicked sons, if he has done his best to instruct them. The most anxious and tearful mother cannot be blamed if her daughter dishonors the family, provided her mother has done her best to train her up in the right way. But if the parents cannot say that they have done their best, and their children go astray, then they are blameworthy. If any have boys and girls — they do not know where, let them go quickly, and look them up. If any readers exercise no parental discipline, nor seek to bring their children to Christ, I do implore them to give up every kind of public work till they have first done their work at home. Has anybody made you a minister, and you are not trying to save your own children? I tell you, sir, I do not believe that God made you a minister; for if he had, he would have begun with making you a minister to your own family. “They made me the keeper of the vineyards.” “They” ought to have known better, and you ought to have known better than to accept the call. How can you be a steward in the great household of the Lord when you cannot even rule your own house? A Sunday-school teacher, teaching other people’s children, and never praying with her own! Is not this a sad business? A teacher of a large class of youths who never has taken a class of his own sons and daughters! Why, what will he do when he lives to see his children plunged into vice and sin, and remembers that he has utterly neglected them? I know not where this knife may cut;

but if it wounds, I pray you do not blunt its edge. Do you say that this is ‘very personal?’ It is meant to be personal; and if anybody is offended by it, let him be offended with himself, and mend his ways. No longer let it be true of any of us, “They made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept.”

A TALK ABOUT DEATH

IT is the part of a brave man, and especially of a believing man, neither to dread death nor to sigh for it; neither to fear it nor to court it. In patience possessing his soul, he should not despair of life when hardly pressed; and he should be always more eager to run his race well than to reach its end. It is no work of men of faith to predict their own deaths. These things are with God. How long we shall live on earth we know not, and need not wish to know. We have not the choosing of short or long life; and if we had such choice, it would be wise to refer it back to our God. "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," is an admirable prayer for living as well as for dying saints. To wish to pry between the folded leaves of the book of destiny is to desire a questionable privilege: doubtless we live the better because we cannot foresee the moment when this life shall reach its *finis*.

Job made a mistake as to the date of his death, but he made no mistake as to the fact itself. He spake truly when he said: "I know that thou wilt bring me to death." Some day or other the Lord will call us from our home above ground to the house appointed for all living. I invite you this morning to consider this unquestioned truth. Do you start back? Why do you do so? Is it not greatly wise to talk with our last hours? "We want a cheerful theme." Do you? Is not this a cheerful theme to you? It is solemn, but it ought also to be welcome to you. You say that you cannot abide the thought of death. Then you greatly need it. Your shrinking from it proves that you are not in a right state of mind, or else you would take it into due consideration without reluctance. That is a poor happiness which overlooks the most important of facts. I would not endure a peace which could only be maintained by thoughtlessness. You have something yet to learn if you are a Christian, and yet are not prepared to die. You need to reach a higher state of grace, and attain to a firmer and more forceful faith. That you are as yet a babe in grace is clear from your admission that to depart and be with Christ does not seem to be a better thing for you than to abide in the flesh.

Should it not be the business of this life to prepare for the next life, and, in that respect, to prepare to die? But how can a man be prepared for that which he never thinks of? Do you mean to take a leap in the dark? If so,

you are in an unhappy condition, and I beseech you as you love your own soul to escape from such peril by the help of God's Holy Spirit.

"Oh," saith one, "but I do not feel called upon to think of it." Why, the very autumn of the year calls you to it. Each fading leaf admonishes you. You will most surely have to die; why not think upon the inevitable? It is said that the ostrich buries its head in the sand, and fancies itself secure when it can no longer see the hunter. I can hardly fancy that even a bird can be quite so foolish, and I beseech you do not enact such madness. If I do not think of death, yet death will think of me. If I will not go to death by meditation and consideration, death will come to me. Let me, then, meet it like a man, and to that end let me look it in the face. Death comes into our houses, and steals away our beloved ones. Seldom do I enter the pulpit without missing some accustomed face from its place. Never a week passes over the church without some of our happy fellowship being caught away to the still happier fellowship above. Whether we will hear him or not, death is preaching to us each time we assemble in public. Does he come so often with God's message, and shall we refuse to hear? Nay, let us lend a willing ear and heart, and hear what God the Lord would say to us at all times.

Oh! you that are youngest, you that are fullest of health and strength, I lovingly invite you not to put away this subject from you. Remember, the youngest may be taken away. Early in the life of my boys I took them to the old churchyard of Wimbledon and bade them measure some of the little graves within that enclosure, and they found several green hillocks which were shorter than themselves. I tried thus to impress upon their young minds the uncertainty of life. I would have every child remember that he is not too young to die. Let others know that they are not too strong to die. The stoutest trees of the forest are often the first to fall beneath the destroyer's axe. Paracelsus, the renowned physician of old time, prepared a medicine of which he said that if a man took it regularly he could never die, except it were of extreme old age; yet Paracelsus himself died a young man. Those who think they have found the secret of immortality will yet learn that they are under a strong delusion. None of us can discover a spot where we are out of bow-shot of the last enemy, and therefore it would be idiotic to refuse to think of it. A certain vainglorious French Duke forbade his attendants ever to mention death in his hearing; and when his secretary read to him the words, "The late King of Spain," he turned upon him with contemptuous indignation, and asked him what he meant by it. The poor secretary could only stammer out, "It is a title which they take." Yes,

indeed, it is a title we shall all take, and it will be well to note how it will benefit us. The King of terrors comes to kings, nor does he disdain to strip the pauper of his scanty flesh: to you, to me, to all he comes; let us all make ready for his sure approach.

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