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Our daily homily

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Our Daily Homily

Volume I: Genesis—Ruth

THE COMPLETE WORKS
OF
REV. F. B. MEYER, B.A.

For complete descriptive list of Mr. Meyer's writings, see the concluding pages of this volume. All of the books there named will be sent, post free, on receipt of price.

Our Daily Homily

Volume I: Genesis—Ruth

By the Rev.

F. B. MEYER, B.A.

AUTHOR OF

"The Shepherd Psalm," "Old Testament Heroes,"

"Christian Living," etc.

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PREFACE

THE Angels who daily spread the table in the wilderness during the desert wanderings could hardly have had more pleasure in their work than I have had in preparing a daily meal for many of God's children ; and the response has been quite remarkable.

From sick chambers, from souls in sore distress and perplexity, from discouraged servants of God, from those occupied in lonely outpost duty, from all parts of the world—testimony has come to the appropriateness and directness with which the Daily Homily has spoken to the needs of God's people. To Him be the glory, who still multiplies the five barley-loaves and two small fish.

In response to many requests, these brief meditations are now published in a permanent form ; and it is hoped that they will be largely used in the private closet and at the family altar ; especially where the holy habit prevails of reading the Word of God through, in due course, from cover to cover.

They do not profess to be comprehensive or profound. " A Homily," says an authority, " is

distinct from mere exegesis or exposition ; because the latter is addressed to the understanding, while the Homily is meant to affect the heart also, and to persuade those who hear to apply the lessons of Scripture for the reformation of their lives." This definition admirably describes my purpose. I have endeavored to build an exhortation to the heart from a careful consideration of the selected passage, often in the fresh light thrown on it from the Revised Version.

F. B. MEYER.

OUR DAILY HOMILY

The Evening and the Morning were the First Day. *Genesis i. 5.*

HOW different is God's method from man's ! The creature works from day to night, his best is first ; but darkness overshadows his fairest hopes and best-concerted schemes. The Creator's days begin with the preceding eve. He reckons the evenings and nights into the days, because out of them the day is born ; they usher in the light, and recreate body and brain for the busy hours that follow.

Art thou disappointed in Christian work ?— Remember that God wrought on through long dark ages, ere His schemes were evolved in order and beauty. *Human* schemes begin with blare of trumpet and roll of drum, but are soon plunged in darkness. The *heavenly* seed is sown in autumn shadows ; the foundation-stone of redemption was laid amid the gloom of Calvary ; the work that lasts generally begins amid disappointment, difficulty, and heart-break, but inevitably passes into the day.

Art thou passing through the bitterness of soul-trouble ?— For weeks there has been no ray of comfort, no sign of deliverance. Yet every dark hour is hastening toward the dawn. Thou shalt see thy Beloved walking toward thee in the morning light.

Art thou in despair for the world ?— The times are dark, and threaten to get darker. But if the first creation began in the dark, can it be wondered at that the second must begin there to ? But as the one emerged in daylight, so shall the other. The morning cometh ; see the star of day standing sentry ! Time is bearing us to a day that shall never go down to night, but shall mount ever toward its meridian.

The Lord God put him into the Garden.

Genesis ii. 15.

THUS God started man in an ideal home. Memories of Eden, exquisite as dreams, weave the background of human life. Fellowship with the Creator, who walked its glades; its river, trees, and fruits; its blessed companionship; its light and ennobling toils—how fair the picture!

The Garden of Eden.—That was God's ideal. When men point thee to the scars on the world's face, left by the trail of the Arab slaver, the march of the army, the decaying glory of human civilization, and ask how such things are consistent with God's love, point to that garden and say, "That is what the love of God meant for man; Satan and sin have wrought this."

The Garden of Gethsemane.—When man forfeited Paradise, the Saviour was revealed to regain it. He trod the winepress alone in the shadowed garden of the olive trees, that through its glades He might pass to His cross, and so make the wastes of sin bloom again as Eden. Is it wonderful that another Paradise is possible, when He sowed its seeds and watered the soil with His blood?

Turning wastes into gardens.—In Eden man wrought as God's fellow worker; and we are called each day to do something toward reconstructing the Lost Paradise. Find thy part in delving, sowing, watering, or tending the tender shoots! Seek that thine heart should be an Eden, kept sacred for thy King, and endeavor thy best to plant gardens where hitherto sand-wastes and thorn-thickets have prevailed. Then, "instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree; and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

Where art thou ?

Genesis iii. 9.

THE cool of the day, when the breeze steals over the fevered landscape, is an appropriate time for man to hold fellowship with God. We need to have His hand laid on our throbbing temples, stilling, tranquillizing, shedding His serenity throughout our being. What the breath of evening is in summer, fellowship with God will be for thee, my soul ; see that thou art not so absorbed with thy sins, thy love, or thy business, as to miss the tryst, when the sun is westering.

God misses His child.—That hour of fellowship was much to Adam, and it was more to God. Love, God's love, craves for fellowship. As the musician for his lute, as the hart for the brook, as the mother for the twining arms and babbling talk of her child—so does God long for the free outpourings of His child's heart in prayer ; misses them when withheld ; is jealous when they are fitful and intermittent.

God seeks His child.—He did not wait till Adam found his way back to His side. But He hastened in search of him. So through the glades He comes to seek thee, O truant one ! Where art thou, that for these many days thou hast withheld thyself from the hour of prayer ? Wilt thou not say with the psalmist, “ When thou saidst, Seek ye my face, my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek ? ”

God mourns over His child.—These words, in one version, are rendered, Alas, for thee : as though the heart of God were wrung with sorrow for our loss, as well as His. But He does not content Himself with regret. By the pang of travail, by the prick of thorns, by the necessity of labor, by sacrifice and gifts of covering for our nakedness, He brings us back to Himself.

Where is Abel thy Brother ?

Genesis iv. 9.

THE first question God puts to the soul is, "Adam, where art thou?" The next, "Where is Abel thy brother?" We are our brothers' keepers. Each within our reach, all who need our help, all related to us by the ties of the family, have a claim on us. We must not take an advantage over them; their weakness and need are strong claims on our resources of every kind; we are bound to keep them so far as we can; we may at any moment be called to give an account of their whereabouts. To dispute this is to betray the spirit of Cain, who was a murderer.

God keeps an inventory of His saints.—In His book their names are written. Their names, abode, and circumstances; their fathers, mothers, and brothers; their occupation, whether they keep the sheep or till the land: all are known to Him, because fixed by His providence. Whatever touches them is, therefore, instantly known to Him. It is as though they were part of His very being, and a stab of pain to them thrills His heart.

God calls us to help Him in keeping one another.—We are to watch for each other's souls; to consider one another to provoke to good works; to bear one another's burden; to exhort each other, to convert the wanderer from the path of the destroyer, and to wash stains from his feet. The cure of souls is the work of all the saints. But this is only possible to those who have been baptized into the Spirit of Christ. Remember that you have just as much love toward God, as you are willing to show toward the brother whom you have seen. "This commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also."

Enoch walked with God.

Genesis v. 24.

WHAT an epitaph on this ancient saint ! It is as clear-cut to-day as when first recorded here. We know nothing of Enoch but this brief record ; but it tells us everything. It was not an act or a number of acts, but a high tone of life constantly maintained. Better to walk with God every day in calm, unbroken fellowship, than to have occasional rapturous experiences, succeeded by long relapses and backslidings. The Hebrew word might be rendered, “Enoch walked, and continued to walk.”

Be sure to go God's Way.—He will not walk with thee in thy way, but thou mayest walk with Him in His. To this He calls thee. Each moment, and especially when two or three roads diverge, look up to Him, and say, “Which way art Thou taking, that I may accompany Thee ?” It will not be so hard to forsake inviting paths and engaging companions, if only the eye is kept fixed on His face, and the track of His footsteps determines thy road beyond hesitation or dispute.

Be sure to keep God's Pace.—Do not run impetuously before Him ; learn to wait His time : the minute-hand as well as the hour-hand must point the exact moment for action. Do not loiter behind in indolence or sloth. Be loyal and true to His ideals, and quick to obey His least commands.

Be sure to wear God's Livery.—He is in the light ; the light is His chosen symbol ; it ill becomes thee to wear the unfruitful works of darkness. Put them off, and put on the armor of light. Walk with Him daily in stainless robes, washed in the blood of the Lamb. Then thy fellowship shall be with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and with all holy souls everywhere.

Noah was just, . . . perfect, . . . walked with God.
Genesis vi. 9.

THE eyes of God went to and fro over the ancient world, where sin reigned unchecked, to discover one grateful spectacle. But they were doomed to disappointment, till they lighted on Noah. He found grace in the eyes of the Lord, because him only had God seen to be righteous in all his generation. Like Antipas, he dwelt where Satan's seat was, held fast the Divine name, and was God's faithful witness. Be thou loyal to God, my soul, though thou stand alone. There are three characteristics in the man who finds grace in the eyes of the Lord.

In himself he is Just.—Not faultless, as judged by the white light of eternity ; but blameless, so far as his own consciousness is concerned. He wears ever the white flower of a blameless life. His strength is as the strength of ten, because his heart is pure. He exercises himself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and man. This condition is only possible to faith, that opens the door of the heart to receive the life of God. Wouldst thou be just, welcome that Just One. Let Him live within thee.

Toward man he is Upright.—He does not keep his eyes bowing down to the ground in shame, or furtively looking around to gain a secret advantage ; he looks the whole world in the face. His eyes reflect the integrity and purity of his soul ; they beam with sincerity, unselfishness, and love.

With respect to God, he abides in Perpetual Fellowship.—This were worth our getting, though we parted with all our jewels to win it. To be tuned into one deep accord with the Divine nature ; to answer to Him with one full, responsive chord ; to be always found where God is, and never where He is not—that were life indeed.

As God had commanded.

Genesis vii. 9.

THIS is the secret of a Holy and Blessed Life. Most of our sorrows and disappointments have come on us because we have chosen our own path, and done according to our own will.

In obeying, we must sometimes walk in the dark.—When Noah began to walk with God, he knew not that it would lead him into collision with his generation, with the suggestions of common sense and experience, and with much that he held dear as life. But walking on each day, he grew strong to trust in the bare word of his Almighty Guide, and grasped it as men in the catacombs will keep their hand on a tiny string or cord, until the first streak of daylight appear. Obey absolutely the voice that speaks in thy heart; the way is dark, but it is the way.

In obeying, we must learn to wait.—For one hundred and twenty years the long-suffering of God waited, and during that weary period this true heart failed not. Then for seven days the patriarch waited within the closed doors. It is not easy to bear the long strain of endurance. To rush into the battle, to do something desperate, to strike for liberty—this is the choice of the flesh; but to live in hourly fear, to toil on without result, to see the years stealing away the bank or shoal on which our heart had erected its structures of hope—this is hardest of all, unless our hope is anchored beyond life's ebb and swell.

In obeying God others obey us.—How came it that these creeping things and flying fowls, these living creatures, clean and unclean, entered the Ark so tamely and submissively? Surely a Divine constraint was upon them. When we are under authority, we can say, "Go," "Come," "Do this." All things serve the man who serves the Divine Master, Christ.

God remembered Noah.

Genesis viii. 1.

HE cannot forget thee, though all hearts that loved thee are cold in death, and though floods of trouble surge and break around. He comes nearest when there is none else to intercept His love. The floods but bear us nearer to His heart, above the tops of the highest hills.

He could not forget because His honor was pledged.—There was a tacit understanding between Noah and Himself, that if His servant obeyed His mandate He would be responsible for the consequences that obedience might involve. There is no need to make bargains with God, as Jacob did. It is far better simply to obey, sure that whatever the highest honor may demand, God will be equal to it. He will have prepared more than we expected.

He could not forget, because He rode the waters with His child.—He said, “Come thou into the Ark,” evidently He was inside; and when it is said that God shut him in, it was from inside that the door was locked. Whatever happened to Noah was an experience for his Almighty Friend. They had walked together on the earth; they now shared together the seclusion of the Ark. God is identified in the experiences of His saints. Their pangs, and tears, and waiting-hours are His. He can no more forget, than a mother her sucking child.

He could not forget, because Noah was a type of His beloved Son.—Across the dark sea of death, the cross of Jesus has brought Him and His own: so that we now belong, not to the old world which is under the curse, but to the world of Resurrection-Life. The dark woes of Calvary were imaged there: how could God forget? Reckon on God’s faithfulness: He will not leave thy soul in Hades.

My Bow in the Cloud.

Genesis ix. 13.

A COVENANT is a promise or undertaking, resting on certain conditions, with a sign or token attached to it. The rainbow on the raincloud, the Lord's Supper, the wedding-ring, are signs and seals of the respective covenants to which they belong. Whenever we see them we should bethink ourselves of the covenant. Whenever you see a rainbow, recall the covenant into which God has entered with thee; for as He has sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so His kindness shall not depart from thee, nor the covenant of His peace be removed. Three things are needed to make a rainbow.

A cloud.—When man's sin overshadowed Paradise, the bow of promise shone; and when the thunderclouds gathered about the Saviour's path, the Divine voice assured Him that as He had glorified the Divine Name by His life, He should glorify it much more by His death. When the black clouds of conviction, bereavement, soul-anguish beset thee, look out for the bow: it is always there, though sufferers do not always perceive it.

Rain.—There are no rainbows unless there be falling drops to catch and unravel the sunbeams. It may be that all evil is worse in its anticipation than in its endurance; but this is certain, that the big drops of sorrow have to patter on our souls before we can realize all that God is prepared to be to us.

Sunshine.—It is only when God comes into our grief that we can see the treasures of Love and Grace which are stored for us in Him. We never know how great a blessing sorrow may be till we carry it into the light of the King's face. It is the dark canvas on which the artist produces his most marvellous effects.

The Isles of the Gentiles.

Genesis x. 5.

FEW realize the treasures that lie in this heap of names. This chapter is the key to ancient histories and contains many of the names that lie on our modern maps. What teeming myriads are here ! We learn three things.

The Oneness of the Human Race.—"God hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth." The slave that crouches in the African wood, the meanest outcast that creeps along in the dark, the veriest ruffian red-handed in crime—are bone of our bone, no less than the kings and saints, the prophets and martyrs.

The Wealth of our Saviour's nature.—He loved all ; He gave Himself for all ; He became the Propitiation for the sins of all ; through Him all will rise ; and He is able to satisfy all from His royal heart. "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." There is not one child of man who may not find his consummation and bliss in Jesus, the One Man. All men are but broken lights of Him ; and of all men that have ever lived He is the one flawless, sinless, perfect Man, the apex of the pyramid of humanity, the Head and Prince.

The warrant for Foreign Missions.—If the races of mankind have sprung from a common stock, the experience of one is the key to all. Each may learn from his own heart to estimate the hopes and fears, the yearnings and temptations, the weariness and sin-consciousness of the rest. The Gospel which has brought the blessing will do as much for each of those who bear, however obliterated, the print-mark of our race. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."

GOD comes down into human life. Though the world is corrupt and full of violence ; though His arch-enemy has taught man to dread and hate Him ; though attempts are on foot to resist Him in open rebellion, by making a unity apart from Him, and in exclusion of His cornerstone, yet He comes down.

He comes down to see.—He will not pronounce judgment till He has satisfied Himself by personal inspection how things stand. He comes down to our bedrooms, and overhears the words we speak, the deeds we do there ; to our home-life, and is a silent listener and observer of all its incidents ; to our shops, warehouses, and bank-parlors, auditing our accounts, casting up the columns, examining our samples, our weights and measures, our advertisements and circulars. From Him no secrets are hid.

He comes down to punish.—"Let me alone, that I may destroy." Never forget the punitive side of God's character. How easily He asserts His power ! He can disorganize the memory, breathe on the brain, touch one small nerve or muscle, and the best-concerted schemes fail. Why shouldst thou fear every day the fury of the oppressor, when God is at thy side !

He comes down to save.—If there be one Lot, He will bring him forth. What was the Incarnation, the descent to Calvary and the grave, but the coming down of the "us" of the blessed Trinity. He that ascended is the same that also first descended. He has come that He may heal our wounds, take us in His arms, and bear us with Him far beyond all principality and power. He is the way, by which we may pass from the confusion of Babel to the love of Pentecost, and the one speech of heaven.

NEVER did a corn of wheat more utterly fall into the ground to die. It seemed as though he were urgently needed in his country and among his kindred; but man's thoughts and ways are not God's. The blessing of Abraham's life could only come in the land of promise, and after he had died to the whole life of nature. To every one who is to be richly blessed and made a blessing there is the inevitable command, "Get thee out. Be willing to die."

Get thee out of the land of idols.—Beyond the flood of the Euphrates, Terah and the rest served other gods. Had Abram remained there, he might have touched the unclean thing; hence God's desire to get him beyond the reach of infection, that he and his race might remain monotheistic. Hast thou had communion with darkness, with Belial, with idols? Get thee out and be separate; touch not the unclean thing. Be clean, thou who art to bear the vessels of the Lord. Reckon thyself to have died.

Get thee out in loneliness.—"I called him alone, and increased him." If thou art unwilling to abide alone, thou must fall alone into the ground and die. God must reduce us to a minimum before He can work through us to the maximum. But there is also no loneliness to the soul who is one with God. Alone against the world, it is still in a majority.

Get thee out in faith.—"He went out, not knowing whither." It was what man calls a venture; but as he stepped out on what seemed a void, he found it rock beneath his feet. Day by day a track appeared across the desert, and all his needs were met till he reached the place of blessing. Death was the gate of life. Having died to Haran, he began to bring forth much fruit in every soil of the world.

The Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him. Genesis xiii. 14.

ABRAM'S life was one of an ever-perfecting separation. But out of these experiences sprang his rarest joys. The separate and obedient soul may reckon on :—

Fresh Revelation.—Whenever Abram dared to step out in obedience, the Lord spake freshly to him. But in Egypt we find no trace of the Divine voice. If God spake there, it would be in warning and rebuke. Has the voice of God long been silent to thee—no fresh command, no deeper insight into truth? See to it that thou art not in Egypt. Separate thyself, not only from Haran, but from Lot; not only from what is clearly wrong, but from all that is questionable; and the Lord will speak to thee things it is not possible for men to utter.

Further Vision.—Lot lifted up his eyes to espy what would make for his advantage and well-being, and beheld only the plain of Sodom, which indeed was well-watered, but the seat of exceeding sin. But when Abram lifted up his eyes, not to search out ought for himself, but to see what God had prepared, he looked northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward—words which remind us of the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of the love of Christ. The single eye is full of light; the far climber gets the widest horizon; if thou wilt do His will, thou shalt know.

Hundredfold Compensation.—Whatever Abram renounced, when he left his home, or gave Lot the right to choose, he received back in the usual measure of God, with an overflowing overplus. God gave him the entire land, including Lot's portion. We can never give up for God, without receiving in this life more than we gave.

God Most High, Maker of Heaven and Earth.

Genesis xiv. 19 (R. V. marg.).

IT was to Melchizedek, the lonely king-priest living outside the busy rush of the world, that this new name of God was given. There are some to whom God gives these direct revelations of Himself, that they may communicate them to others. These are our seers. This title for God, which Abram immediately appropriated, was the source :—

Of Humility.—To think of God as the Maker and Possessor of heaven and earth induces the profoundest humility of heaven. “They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou didst create all things.” How great God is! His greatness is unsearchable. Earth and heaven are His handiwork. Take time to think of this, but never forget that He is Love; then, with the familiarity of the child, thou wilt combine the lowly reverence of the creature.

Of Steadfastness in the hour of temptation.—When the king of Sodom desired Abram to share in the spoils of the kings, setting before him a most subtle temptation, and one which might have dragged him from the life and walk of faith, Abram fell back on the revelation of God just vouchsafed to him, and said in effect: “What need is there that I should do this thing, or receive of thy gold? All God is mine; in God all things are mine also. What I need He will assuredly give. What He withholds I will receive from no other source.” There is no need for us to get wealth wrongly; God can supply all we need.

Of Security.—God owns all; all the earth is His empire; wherever we travel we are within His dominion, breathe His air, are ministered to by His angels. We have a right to the best in all good things, since they are our Father's, and we are heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ.

Behold, a Smoking Furnace and a Flaming Torch.

Genesis xv. 17 (R. V.).

FIRE is the chosen emblem of God ; and as these fire-emblems passed slowly between the divided carcasses it was as though God accommodated Himself to the methods of human oath-taking, and solemnly bound Himself. But in all His dealings with us He is prepared to be both a furnace and a torch.

God as a Furnace.—Take up a piece of iron ore, and see how the metal is scattered amid commoner substances. How can it be disintegrated ? The chisel cannot do it, but fire will. Plunge it now into the fire ; let it fall in the heart of the glowing furnace, and presently the stream of liquid metal will issue forth, pure and beautiful. It is thus that God deals with human hearts ; the blood makes propitiation, but the fire cleanses. The love of God, the purity of God, the spirituality of God brought home to us by the Holy Ghost, search and try us to the innermost fibre of our being, and burn out of us the evils which had long held empire.

Refining Fire, go through my heart,
Illuminate my soul ;
Scatter thy life through every part,
And sanctify the whole.

God as a flaming Torch.—The torch guides the footsteps through the dark ; and God's Spirit waits to shed light on many dark and hidden things, and to *guide* us into all the truth. It is one thing to comprehend by the intellect ; it is altogether another to apprehend by the heart. There is no such teacher as God ; and the mistake of our modern religious life is to receive so much from man, instead of waiting in rapt silence until God Himself communicates His truth to us. The conditions are purity of desire, cleanness of heart, and willingness to obey.

Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands.

Genesis xvi. 9.

POOR Hagar! No wonder that she fled. Her proud Arab independence and the sense of coming motherhood made her rebel against Sarah's hard dealings. We have often meditated flight, if we have not actually fled from intolerable conditions. Of course, when God opens the door out of a dungeon we need not hesitate, as Peter did, to rise and follow. But this is very different to flight from the post of duty.

Our Cross.—For Hagar, Sarah; for Hannah, Penninah; for David, Joab; for Jesus, Judas; for Paul, Alexander the coppersmith. Life assumes hard and forbidding aspects. Sometimes the cross is not a person, but a trial—the pressure of a slow and lingering disease; the demand for grinding and persistent toil; the weight of overmastering anxiety for those dearer than life, who have no knowledge of God.

Our Demeanor.—Return and submit. We are apt to suppose that we shall get rest and peace elsewhere. It is not so, however. Nowhere else shall we find the path less rugged, or the pillow less hard. To evade the yoke will not give us heartsease. The Master's advice is that we shall take His yoke, and bear it as He did; remain where God has put us, till He shows us another place; and bear what He ordains and permits, even though it comes through the means of others.

Our Faith.—We cannot patiently submit to our lot unless we believe that what God permits is as much His will as what He appoints. Behind Sarah's hard dealings we must behold His permissive providence. Through all the discipline of life we must believe that God has a purpose of unfailing love and wisdom. Then our submission is not stoicism, but loving acquiescence in our Father's will.

Walk before Me and be thou Perfect.

Genesis xvii. 1.

GOD precedes His commands with such revelations of Himself, that obedience is rendered easily possible. Before calling Abram to perfection, He described Himself as El Shaddai, the Almighty. What may we not do if we learn to avail ourselves of the all-might of God? Oh to know the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe! Our lack is that we do not know our God, and therefore fail to perform exploits. "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me." Lie on thy face, and let God talk with thee, and tell thee the conditions on which He will make thee exceeding fruitful. First—*Walk before Me*: Second—*Be thou whole-hearted*.

There must be wholeness in our surrender.—No part of our nature barred or curtailed off from God. Every chamber must be freely placed at His disposal; every relationship placed under His direction; every power devoted to His service. All we have and are must be entirely His.

There must be wholeness in our intention.—The one aim of our Lord was to bring glory to His Father; and we should never be satisfied till we are so absolutely eager for the glory of Christ that we would seek it though at the cost of infamy to ourselves; and be as glad for another to bring it to Him, as we should be in bringing it ourselves.

There must be wholeness in our obedience.—It was clearly so with Abram. As soon as God left talking with His servant, he took Isaac and performed the rite which had just been enjoined.

And Abraham drew near.

Genesis xviii. 23.

THE patriarch's attitudes are well worthy of note: he sat (1), bowed (2), ran (7), stood by (8), went with them (16), stood before the Lord (22); here, he drew near.

He drew near with awful reverence.—"I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes." The place whereon he stood was holy ground; and if he trod or crossed it, in the intensity of his desire, he never forgot that the most intimate fellowship of man with God must be mingled with the reverence of godly fear, which remembers that He is a consuming fire.

He drew near in faith.—He had enjoyed a blessed prevision of the day of Christ. There had been revealed to Him that one perfect and sufficient Sacrifice, in virtue of which sinners are welcome to draw near to God. They have boldness to enter the holiest, and draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, who know the new and living way which Jesus has opened for us.

He drew near as intercessor.—We never get so near God as when we plead for others. At such times we enter the holiest and innermost chamber, and talk to Him with an urgency which we dare not use for ourselves. Whilst the Syrophenician pleaded for her daughter, she came to the very feet of Jesus. Wouldst thou know the inner chamber? Go thither on errands for others.

He drew near in intensity.—When Haman pleaded for his life, he fell on the Queen's couch in the anguish of his soul. Sometimes God appears to hesitate; it is only to draw us on, ever further and deeper, till we awake to find ourselves alone in His presence.

Abraham got up early to the place where he stood before the Lord, and looked. Gen. xix. 27.

THERE was not much sleep that night for this loyal heart! With the spring of day he was where, probably, Lot, years before, had looked on the face of the country, and beheld it as a garden of the Lord. But how great the contrast! The smoke of the land went up as the smoke of a furnace!

Have a place where you stand before God.—It may not always be to speak to Him, but to be spoken to, to be judged, to have the motives and intentions of the heart winnowed and sifted. Well is it to stand each day before the judgment-seat of Christ, and to receive His verdict on our innermost life. Oh that the grass of that trysting-place may be well worn through our frequent intercourse with our beloved Lord!

Follow up your prayers.—Abraham was not content with shooting arrows into the air; he followed them to see how they sped, and where they fell. We do not need to reiterate our petitions with unbelieving monotony, as though they were not safe in God's keeping; but we should remind Him by our upward look that our expectation is from Him.

View the fate of the ungodly from God's standpoint.—We are apt to consider it from that of our own pity, or commiseration, or tolerance of shortcoming. We judge lightly, because we dread too searching a judgment on ourselves. But we need sometimes to see sin as God sees it. Stand on Calvary and learn what sin is, and how much it has cost the Saviour. There, too, you will learn that God goes further than His servants' prayers. Though He may not be able to discover the ten, yet He will deliver the one righteous man. "His countenance doth behold the upright."

I also withheld thee from sinning against Me.

Genesis xx. 6.

AS we review our lives, we can see many occasions on which our feet had well-nigh gone—our steps were on the very brink of the precipice. Another inch, and we should have brought shame on Christ and lasting remorse to ourselves. To what can we attribute our escape but to the grace of God, which withheld us, even though we failed to recognize it?

He does not withhold us from temptation.—He could not do so without serious and permanent loss. The waves of ink will surge up against the white marble palace of the soul. To us, as to our Lord, fresh from under the opened heavens, the tempter will come. What the fire is in fixing the color on the porcelain vase, that temptation is in rendering permanent the lessons and impressions made by God's providence and grace.

He does not withhold us from occasions in which it would be easy to transgress.—Abimelech was not hindered from taking Sarah into his palace. The door of occasion and opportunity stood open before him; but he was withheld from the fatal act. We must never infer that occasion confers license. The fact of an opportunity being present does not warrant indulgence in wrongdoing.

If God withheld Abimelech, who did not seek His special help, how much more those that seek Him!—You are not insensible of the perils of your life; but wait earnestly and persistently on God. Are you more eager to be kept than He to keep? Did He not implant that desire? Will He not do exceeding abundantly above what we ask or think? Is not the good Shepherd strong enough to keep one poor trembling sheep? Begone, unbelief! My God whom I serve is able to deliver, and He will! (Dan. iii. 17).

And God opened her eyes, and she saw.

Genesis xxi. 19.

POOR Hagar ! There was no help for it ; and she, who a little before had thought she was giving Abraham his heir, found herself and her boy homeless wayfarers on the desert sands. Their one need was water ; they little deemed it was so near. No need to create a new fountain, but to open their eyes. We need the opened eye to see :—

The finished work of Christ.—The work of propitiation for sin is complete. We are not required to add to it one tear, or prayer, or vow. “It is finished.” To go to heaven to bring Christ down, or to the deep to bring Him up, is alike superfluous. All we need is the opened eye to see what Jesus has done, and recognize that it is all that was demanded to meet the claims of God’s holy law.

The things freely given to us of God.—God hath given us in Jesus all things that pertain to life and godliness. There is no possible gift or grace, in which we are deficient, that is not stored in Him, in whom the fullness of God abides. But we are blind ; the eyes of our heart have not been opened to see the hope of our calling, the riches of our inheritance, the greatness of God’s power. Did we know these things, surely not a moment would elapse without our availing ourselves of God’s rich provision.

The alleviations which God provides against excessive sorrow.—Hagar’s anguish, as Mary’s at the sepulchre in after years, blinded her to available comfort. So grief puts a bandage over our eyes. Life is sad, and lonely, and dark, but God is near ; and if you ask, He will show springs of consolation, of which you may drink. There is no desert without its springs ; no dying child without the angel of the Lord.

Jehovah-Jireh; In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided. *Genesis xxii. 14 (R. V.).*

ABRAHAM knew it would be. Probably he never told Sarah what God had asked of him till he and the lad were safely back in the tent. What need to trouble her? Her weak faith could not have stood the ordeal. It was with an unfaltering tone that the patriarch told his young men that they two would presently return. Even though he should actually take Isaac's life, he was sure that he would receive him again from the altar in health. It was only at the very last moment that God indicated the ram as the sufficient substitute. So God's deliverances always come; they are provided in the mount of trial and sacrifice.

When the foe seems secure of victory.—So it was with Israel. Pharaoh, with his hosts, counted on an easy victory, the precipices around, the sea in front. To the eye of sense it seemed impossible to escape: all hope died. It was just *then* that the Almighty cleft a path through the mighty deep.

"In the fourth hour of the night."—Strength was well-nigh exhausted in long battling with the waves. For hours the disciples with difficulty had kept themselves afloat. It seemed as if they must give in through physical collapse. It was *then* that the form of Jesus drew nigh unto the ship.

On the night before execution.—Thus Peter lies sleeping whilst the Church is gathered in prayer. To-morrow he will be a corpse. But the angel comes *then* to open the prison doors.

So you may have come to an end of your own strength, and wisdom, and energy. The altar, wood, and fire are ready, the knife upraised, your Isaac on the point to die: but even now God will provide. Trust Him to indicate the way of escape.

I am a Stranger and a Sojourner.

Genesis xxiii. 4.

THE minute details of this purchase are recorded to emphasize the fact that, though the whole land was Abraham's by the Divine gift, he would not enter on its possession till God's time was come. We may be sure of certain blessings—ours in God's safe keeping—though they are withheld till the moment that His wisdom sees best. It was a touching confession. The aged patriarch had for long years owned no settled dwelling-place. After years in the land of promise he was still without land enough for a grave.

Faith cannot be satisfied with the things of this world.—The sons of Heth had goods and lands, but Abraham did not envy them; he had caught a glimpse of the city which hath foundations, and this so satisfied and attracted him that he had no desire for aught that Palestine could yield.

Faith detaches us from the present.—We are content to dwell in tents, because here we have no abiding-place. The shows and vanities of the world, in comparison with the vision of eternal realities, are as the glare of the streets compared with the steady glory of the constellations of the night.

Faith prompts to confession.—It bewrayeth itself. We should be careful and orderly in our business arrangements; but, in our dealings with our fellows, in our justice, fairness, honor, the lightness of our hold on the present world, we should make it manifest that we are seeking a country not our own.

Faith cannot be ashamed.—The God who prompted it must satisfy it, else He would have reason to be ashamed of having failed the souls that trusted Him. But now He is not ashamed to be called our God, because He has prepared for us a city.

My Master Abraham.

Genesis xxiv. 12.

THIS worthy man, Eliezer, the steward of Abraham's house, was almost garrulous about his master. Count up the number of times in which he contrives to bring in the two words, "my master." We may learn from him how to speak of our Master, whenever we get the opportunity. "Rabboni, which, being interpreted, is, My Master."

We too can speak of the Lord God as our Master.—The servant did not know Jehovah directly ; it was enough that he had seen and heard Abraham pray to Him. This encouraged him to draw near for himself. So we are emboldened to draw near, because God is the God and Father of our Master Jesus. We love Him that was begotten, and are attracted to Him of whom Jesus said, "I ascend to my Father, and your Father ; to my God, and your God."

We, too, can plead for our Master's sake.—When asking for good speed to be sent to himself, he alleged as his plea that it would be showing kindness to his master Abraham. So when we ask great things from God, we can plead in the name of Jesus, and urge that in answering our petition God will be showing kindness to His Well-beloved.

We, too, should bless in our Master's name.—When the answer was given, this reverent soul gave thanks as though the favor had been shown to his master. Indeed, all through his intercourse with Bethuel and Laban he seems to have lost his identity in Abraham. He could talk of nothing else but that one scheme ; was only eager to carry his point for his master's sake ; and when the errand was done, longed only to get back to his master's side. It is a beautiful lesson for those who call Jesus Master and Lord.

And he sold his Birthright.

Genesis xxv. 33.

EVERY one is born with a birthright, which the devil tries hard to make him barter away for a mess of pottage. In that birthright are included :—

Innocence and purity.—The child of the vilest ancestry enters this world unsullied by the filthy touch of unclean habit. But how eager Satan is to induce us to part with this for his unsatisfying pleasure.

The love of our kind.—Few are the children, of all the myriads of our race, that are not loved by some fond heart. In some cases the infant life is cradled in love. But Satan is glad when he can get the soul to break away from all earthly affection, which might possibly soften and refine it, and to renounce mother, sister, wife, child, for the drunkard's cup, the wanton's kiss.

The redemption of Jesus Christ.—Every one is born into a redeemed world ; the propitiation of the blessed Lord, the blood that flowed on Calvary, the cancelment of the effects of Adam's sin, are for all. As all the world was affected by Adam's sin, so all are included in God's love in Jesus. But again Satan is eager to induce men to abjure and cast away these benefits ; he blinds the eyes of those that believe not, so that they refuse to "behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

The grace of the Spirit.—Every one may build up a strong and beautiful character by yielding to the Holy Ghost's gracious promptings. That grace knocks, like sunshine, at the windows of every soul ; but how often it is sold for a mess of pottage ! The choice between these two is constantly being presented to us. God help us always to choose the divine, the spiritual, the eternal !

Because that Abraham obeyed My Voice and kept My Charge.

Genesis xxvi. 5.

IT is awful to realize how our sins may repeat themselves in our children. Here is Isaac following in the precise steps of Abraham, who had acted in a similar manner toward Sarah when entering Egypt. In each case there was a sad lapse of faith; but it was even worse for Isaac, with Abraham's example to warn him. But a man may pass blessings on to his children, as well as the sad entail of evil habits.

He leaves the blessing of the divine covenant.—God had entered into covenant with Abraham, and was prepared to fulfill its provisions to his son. “I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee.” So a godly ancestor may be able to secure for all his seed a share in the divine grace and favor. The spirit that is put on him does not depart from his seed, or his seed's seed forever.

The blessing of his prayer.—It is impossible to over-estimate the effect of a good man's prayers; they are as streams or trees, which go on flowing and bearing fruit long after they were originated. The legacy of a good man's prayers is of priceless worth. He may have long since passed to his rest; but God remembers them, and answers them in blessings to the next generation. How often in this chapter we read that “God blessed Isaac.”

The blessing of a noble name.—We may all leave that, if we can transmit nothing else. To have had a father that knew God, walked with God, pleased God; who was on intimate terms with Him, and could speak to Him, as a man with his friend—illuminated the ordinary nature and existence of Isaac with unearthly beauty. Let us live so that our children may be ranked as nobles, because they bear our name.

Esau cried with an exceeding great and bitter Cry.
Genesis xxvii. 34.

ON this incident the writer to the Hebrews founds the impressive lesson, that the choices of the past may cast a bitter and irrevocable shadow on all our future. When he afterward desired to inherit blessing he was rejected ; for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears (Heb. xii. 16, 17, R. v.).

Beware of the cravings of appetite.—In an evil moment Esau yielded to these, and sold his birthright to secure their gratification ; he found afterward that the choice made in that hour was irrevocable. How needful that we watch and pray, lest we fall into temptation !

There are four facts which, when borne in mind, guard us against the sudden oversetting of passionate appetite.

We were once dead in sins.—Surely we do not want to go back again to the charnel-house with its corruption.

We died for sins in the person of Christ our Representative.—In Him we have met the demands of God's holy law ; but surely that must be an awful thing which cost our Saviour so dearly.

We died to sin with the Lord Jesus.—We have passed with Him on to Resurrection ground ; so that we belong to the new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

We are called on to reckon ourselves dead in sin.—The nearer we live to God, the more sensitive we shall be to the most distant suggestion of evil, closing doors and windows against its entrance, reckoning ourselves “ not at home ” to it, and yielding our members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

Behold a Ladder set up on the Earth, and the top of it reached to Heaven. *Genesis xxviii. 12.*

ALL men feel that earth and heaven touch at the horizons of the distant past and future; but we ought to feel that the present moment of time and *this* bit of the world's surface are linked with heaven. This is what the ladder meant for Jacob. The moorland waste, where he lay, and Laban's home, whither he journeyed, were as near God as his father's tent. Earth is linked with heaven:—

By God's daily providence.—His loving eye is ever upon us, His ears always open to our cry, and His angels go to and fro on our world performing ceaseless ministries.

By our Saviour's mediation.—As He intimated to Nathanael, His own nature as uniting God with man, and especially His Ascension glory as the man Christ Jesus, is the one great connecting link. “Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”

By daily fellowship and holy thought.—We should practice the sense of God's presence, often stopping ourselves amid our ordinary avocations and interests to say, aloud when possible, “God is near, God is here.” In all likelihood we are daily living amid the glories of the eternal world; but our eyes are blinded. Oh that by humility and purity we may become more sensitive, and awake to the things that are unseen and eternal! Lord, open our eyes, that we may see! (2 Kings vi. 17).

By holy yearning.—When Jesus ascended, He unrolled a path behind Him, along which we shall one day travel to meet Him. Hope treads that glorious Ascension ladder; and as she does so, again we see the heaven opened, and our destiny unfolded at Christ's right hand.

But a few days, for the love he had.

Genesis xxix. 20.

THAT touch is enough! We can fill in all the rest. This old-world love was of the same quality as our own. Oh, blessed God! what a priceless inheritance this is! Time itself never tedious, but always too short; labor never hard; distance never long; sacrifice unheard of, the word almost in disuse—where Love is queen. This is how we would feel to our dear Lord: so that the missionary away from home and friends, as well as the invalid suffering for Jesus, might feel years of loneliness and pain but a few days, for love of the beloved Master. We may acquire such love thus:—

Meditate much on the love of Jesus.—Sit with the Apostle beneath his cross, and say, each time with deeper appreciation: He loved *me*, He gave Himself for *me*. Do not think of your love to Him, but of His. It is well to take the Lord's Supper frequently, as affording opportunities for remembering His dying love.

Be on the alert to detect His love in daily providence and trifles.—It is amazing how much is ever being arranged by His tender thoughtfulness to alleviate and brighten our lot. If you cannot detect it, dare still to believe it.

Ask the Holy Spirit to breathe His love into your heart.—He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit; and when the doors are open between Christ and the soul, the aroma of His love freely enters.

Show His love to every one.—Whether you like people or not, do to them as He would do; let His love flow through you to them; what we manifest to others for His sake, we shall come to feel toward Him, and them also. "This commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also."

The Lord has blessed me for thy sake.

Genesis xxx. 27.

LABAN requested the longer stay of Jacob because he felt sure that the Divine blessings had been brought by him into his home. It was a selfish, low motive for desiring the postponement of his departure ; and Laban was destined, alas ! to be terribly undeceived. He would wake up one day, to find that during his sojourn with him, and under the cloak of religion, Jacob had been ruthlessly plundering his property. It was a shameful betrayal of trust on Jacob's part ; and it conveys a searching warning to those who, because of their religious professions, are trusted by their relatives or others :—

With their property.—Always do the best possible for your employer or friend, who has entrusted his interests to you, acting toward him as the servant and steward of God. Bear in mind that God has bidden you undertake the office for Himself, and accepts your fidelity as rendered to Him : He will recompense.

With their friendship.—Be very careful here. God puts us into one another's lives, that we may be the medium through which His love and tenderness may enter them ; but there is such danger of our monopolizing for ourselves the place He would fill. Sometimes we almost unconsciously deteriorate rather than elevate our friends by the intrusion of our own personality.

With their Christian instruction and training.—Ministers of God's holy gospel must specially guard against the tendency to make name, fame, money, out of a position which they should occupy only as God's stewards. There is such subtleness in the temptation to attract men to ourselves, instead of attaching them to Christ.

Take heed to thyself that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad. Gen. xxx. 24 (R. V.).

THIS visitation of God made a deep impression on Laban. He refers to it afterward as restraining him from injuring his runaway son-in-law. Jacob, too, was struck by it. It is very wonderful to find the Holy God casting the mantle of His protection around this crafty and deceitful soul. No doubt it was due to His covenant relationship with the family and race, of which Jacob was a most unworthy member (13, 42). But if God thus interposed for Jacob, will He not much more interpose for those who desire to be His obedient children?

God will lay an arrest on your persecutors.—Israel was rebuked because the exiles in Babylon thought they would perish before a man that could die, and the son of man who was as grass, and forgot their Maker, the Lord of heaven and earth. All around you the fire may rage; but you shall walk amid it unscathed, if only you trust. No weapon formed against you shall prosper.

God will lay an arrest on trial.—His finger is always on our pulse; and the moment the pain becomes more than we can bear, He will stay it. His eye is ever upon His own.

God will lay an arrest on the power of the evil one.—We shall not be tempted beyond that we are able to bear. There is always a *thus far and no farther*. “The Lord maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters.” The Only-begotten of the Father keeps the sheep whom His Father has entrusted to Him. Not one of them can be devoured by the lion of hell. If only we believed this, we should be calmer, happier, even though circumstanced as Jacob. No need to altercation with Laban, but to look beyond him to the “Fear of Isaac.”

He touched the Hollow of his Thigh.

Genesis xxxii. 25.

OUR greatest victories are wrought out through pain, and purchased at the cost of the humbling of the flesh. Jacob learned that the secret of prevailing with God and man was not in the strength, but in the weakness and suffering of the flesh. It must ever be so. The victor Lamb bears still the scars of Calvary, and appears as one who had been slain.

Had Laban met Jacob that morning, he would have pointed to that limp as an indication of God's wrath and displeasure; but if he had looked into his face, he would have seen all its hardness and cunning gone, and would have been arrested by the unwonted tenderness in his voice.

The shrunken sinew counteracts pride.—So high a spiritual achievement as to prevail with God might have tempted Jacob to arrogance and self-esteem. But God anticipated the possible temptation by this physical infirmity, which was constantly present to Jacob's consciousness.

The shrunken sinew was the secret of victory.—Had it not been shrivelled by the angel's touch, Jacob would have continued to resist in the pride of his strength, and would never have clung convulsively to the angel, crying, "I will not let thee go." It was only in that act that he became Israel, the Prince.

The shrunken sinew makes us think little of this world and much of the next.—From this moment Jacob takes up more of the pilgrim attitude. He finds that for him, at least, the pace will have to be slower; but it is well, for he relaxes his hold on the seen to entwine more tenaciously about the unseen. "The days of the years of my pilgrimage"—such is his epitome of his life.

*I will lead on softly . . . Until I come unto my
lord unto Seir.* *Genesis xxxiii. 14.*

THIS was rather unworthy of the man who, the night before, had seen the face of God, and learned to prevail. The man who had seen God, and prevailed, was doubtful of His newly-given blessing! He did not realize that it would carry him through the difficulty that threatened him. He had not as yet learned to apply it to *every* emergency. It is a solemn lesson to those who have passed through some rapturous experience.

After blessing, often trial.—When the fair colors have been laid on, the vessel is plunged into the furnace, that they may be burned in.

The trial frequently presents itself in the home or ordinary life.—Some are led into the wilderness to be tempted; but more often it is the contact with our Esaus that furnishes us with the supreme test of the worth of what we have received.

Failure comes from not reckoning on God.—Jacob looked at Esau's four hundred armed men, and compared his own following with despair. So Peter looked at the winds and waves. At such times we must fail, if we rely on schemes or plans, instead of saying, God is.

Oh for the peace that floweth as a river,
Making life's desert places bloom and smile;
Oh for the faith to grasp Heaven's bright "forever"
And the shadow of earth's "little while."

We must act faith.—If Jacob had refused to use this subterfuge, and had spoken simply and manfully, he would have found that Esau would have acquiesced and left him. The angels who had gone forward to deal with him (Gen. xxxii. 2) had done their work effectively, and God had changed his purpose.

Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the Inhabitants of the Land. *Genesis xxxiv. 30.*

THE Bible does not hesitate to hold the mirror up to our fallen nature, or show us what we are. Here is Israel, the prince with God, who had power with man, in a very sorry plight. His children had involved him in it; but first, he had involved them.

Dinah.—Little did she realize all the evil which that visit of hers would bring on her people and on those whose guest she was. What took her there? Had her upbringing been unnecessarily strict, and did she want a little more freedom? There is an inevitable rebound with young people to the other extreme, if needless severity has been brought to bear on them in their early days.

The probability, however, is that the laxity of her father's home, and the effect of her mother's gods, had made the line of separation a very faint one, and she felt no difficulty in overstepping it.

Simeon and Levi.—"Ye have made me to stink." On his dying bed Jacob remembered this treacherous cruelty and pronounced their scattering in Israel; though Levi undid the effect of that bitter curse by his obedience and devotion. In after days it was said, "My covenant was with him of life and peace," and though scattered, he was as salt. In Simeon's case the curse was not cancelled by any subsequent manifestation of obedience and devotion, and ran out its course. There is encouragement and warning here.

Jacob.—The real mistake of it all was that Jacob bought that land, and settled too near the city (xxxiii. 18). As a pilgrim he had no right to do this. If Christian parents will settle down in fellowship with the world, they have themselves to thank for all the misery which accrues to themselves and children, and the dishonor to God.

Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there.

Genesis xxxv. 1.

GOD had set His hand to make Jacob a saint. He had given him a glimpse of His ideal at the Jabbok ford, but his nature was not then capable of taking in the Divine conception ; and, as we have seen, both in his subterfuge to Esau and his settling outside Shechem, he had fallen back into the schemer and money-maker. In this chapter God uses several methods of awakening and renewal.

The Divine summons.—"Arise, go up to Bethel." He had been in the lowlands too long : too long had he "lain among the pots." The voice of God spoke words of resurrection life into his grave, as afterward into that of Lazarus.

The power of old association.—What memories clustered around that name and place of Bethel ! It recalled his distress and fear ; the angel-ladder, and the comforting assurance which had inspired him with new hope. Directly he heard it, he seemed to have felt the incongruity of the life that was being lived in his camp, and he said to his people, "Put away the strange gods. . . Arise, let us go up to Bethel, and I will make there an altar unto God."

A fresh revelation.—God appeared to him again. For long there had been no vision of God ; but now that the idols were put away, his eyes were opened to see Him who had been beside him amid all his backslidings.

Death.—Deborah, the beloved Rachel, the old father—one after another were taken from him ; and there came the far-away look into his eyes which showed that he had imbibed the pilgrim-spirit and had become Israel the Prince. So God stripped him that he might be better able to run the race set before him.

The Kings that reigned in Edom before there reigned any King over Israel. Genesis xxxvi. 31.

APPARENTLY Esau had the best and happiest lot.

What he escaped.—For him there were no few and evil days of pilgrimage ; nor the pressure of famine ; nor the going down into Egypt ; nor the forty years of wanderings in the desert ; nor the vicissitudes of the Judges. All these he escaped—and must have congratulated himself merrily. But he had no vision of God ; no communion with Jehovah ; no contact with the messengers of heaven.

What he enjoyed.—A line of dukes ; a royal dynasty, which was old when Israel's first king ascended the throne ; a rich and fertile territory ; peace and comfort. He reminds us of the Psalmist's picture of the man of this world, whose portion is in this life, and who is filled with hid treasure. But Esau never awoke satisfied with God's likeness ; nor ever enjoyed the blessedness of the man who is "a prince with God."

How he bore himself.—His heart was generous, full of good nature, jovial, and free-handed. When the land could not bear both Jacob and himself, he went off into another, and settled down in Mount Seir. It was no hardship with him to leave the land of promise. Most would, doubtless, have preferred his society to Jacob's ; but God did not (Mal. i. 2, 3).

What made the lot of these brothers so different.—The one lived for the world ; the other was a citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem, a pilgrim to the City of God. The one was an ordinary man of the world ; the other had been selected of God as the channel of blessing to mankind. The flower and fruit which are to be propagated require the special attention of the gardener's knife. What solemn words ! (Amos iii. 2).

They took him and cast him into a pit.

Genesis xxxvii. 24.

IT is impossible to read this inimitable story without detecting in the water-mark of the paper on which it is written the name JESUS. Indeed, we lose much of the beauty and force of these early Scriptures if we fail to observe the references to the life, character, and work of the blessed Redeemer. Notice some of these precious analogies :—

Our Saviour's shepherd-heart (2).

The love of the Father before the worlds were made (3).

The dreams of empire, which are so certainly to be realized, when we shall see Him acknowledged as King of kings and Lord of lords (7).

Envied by His brethren, to whom He came, though they received Him not (11).

His alacrity to do His Father's will, and to finish His work, in which will we too have been sanctified (13).

Cast into the pit of the grave, as a seed-corn into the ground to die, that He might not abide alone, but bear much fruit (24).

The thirty pieces of silver for which He was betrayed (28).

The indifference of the Jewish people to their great Brother's fate (25).

Rejected of the Jew, and turning to the Gentile (28).

The bitter grief which His rejection has brought on the Jewish people (35).

It is as though the Holy Ghost, eager to glorify the Lord, could not wait for the slow unfolding of history, but must anticipate the story of that precious life and death which were to make the world new again.

THIS was the destined heir of the birthright of which Reuben had shown himself unworthy ; and yet this chapter is a dark story of his unbridled passion. O my soul, remember that the possibilities of all these sins are latent in thee ! Thou mightest have been as one of these men or women but for the grace of God.

There is nothing so absolutely priceless as the white flower of a pure and blameless life. The pure in heart are the children of the presence-chamber—entrusted with secrets hidden from the wise and prudent—vessels by which God does not hesitate to quench the thirst of men, because the water of the crystal river will not be diluted or contaminated by contact with their natures. Above all other gifts, covet that of a cleansed heart. You may be very conscious of temptation, and that naturally you are no better than others, and yet if you will constantly live in the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit, you will be kept absolutely pure ; and the sea of ink that is sweeping through the world will leave no stain on you.

The blood cleanseth : “ The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin ” (1 John i. 7).

The Saviour keepeth : “ The Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil ” (2 Thess. iii. 3).

The Spirit filleth : “ Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and that ye are not your own ? ” (2 Cor. vi. 19).

God can take in hand the Judahs amongst us, and so deal with them as to produce such a character as is forthshadowed in chap. xlix. 8.

How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?
Genesis xxxix. 9.

WHAT a contrast between this chapter and the former : that, like a Rembrandt background, throws up the bright colors of this. Where the older brother fell, the younger stood victoriously ; and the light of God shone on the young heart, so that even the dungeon gloom could not extinguish it. Who does not know what it is to be misunderstood, misrepresented, accused falsely, and punished wrongfully ? Yet God reigns : and in His own time “ He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.”

God allows strength to be tested.—We do not know what we are, or where we stand, till we are compelled to choose. Insensibly character is ever forming—unconsciously we are taking sides ; but the testing-hour that compels us to declare ourselves causes the solution suddenly to crystallize, and we know ourselves in our choice. The man who has chosen the pure and good once, will choose them more easily next time ; and at each choice will become stronger.

God allows virtue to be maligned.—In all Egypt there was not a purer soul, and yet Joseph lay under a terrible imputation ; but he committed his cause to God, sure that He would not leave him in Hades ; and the time came when the King’s word cleared him, and he stood forth vindicated. “ Fret not thyself. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him.”

God allows conscientiousness to be ill-repaid.—Of what avail that he had so well cared for his master’s goods ? Ah, but that dungeon was the subterranean passage to a throne ; and through those fetters iron entered into that young soul. We all need more iron in our blood !

Wherefore look ye so sadly to-day?

Genesis xl. 7.

WE may learn from Joseph the true method of bearing grief. Joseph might have become moody and sullen, absorbed in his own misfortunes, and pessimistic about the course of human life. How far removed from all this was his behavior!

He filled his time with ministry.—The captain of the guard charged him with two state-prisoners, and he ministered unto them. A new interest came into his life, and he almost forgot the heavy pressure of his own troubles amid the interest of listening to the tales of those who were more unfortunate than himself. Do not nurse your grief in lonely brooding: arise and minister to some one; do something in the world; exert yourself to alleviate the sufferings of those close by your side, who have not so clear a conscience or so bright a trust in God.

He was quick to sympathize and comfort.—Quick to notice traces of sorrow, because he had sorrowed; able to sympathize, because he had wept; adept at comforting, because he had been comforted of God. We gain comfort when we attempt to comfort. Out of such intercourse we get what Joseph got—the key which will unlock the heavy doors by which we have been shut in. Light a fire in another's heart, and your own heart will be warmed.

He kept his faith in God.—Depression, captivity, loneliness, separation from those he loved, could not quench his faith in God. Still God was near and precious to him. The stifling darkness and oppression of the prison were irksome to the free child of the camp; but God was as near as in Jacob's tent. There is no evil to them that love God; and the believer loses sight of second causes in the contemplation of the unfolding of the mystery of his Father's will.

It is not in me ; God shall give.

Genesis xli. 16.

IT is beautiful to notice Joseph's reverent references to God in his first interview with Pharaoh. When the heart is full of God, the tongue will be almost obliged to speak of Him ; and all such references will be easy and natural as flowers in May.

These words might have been uttered by the *Lord Jesus*. They are so perfectly in harmony with the tenor of His life. He loved to say that His words, and works, and plans, were not His own, but the Father's. Once, when a ruler called Him good, He reminded him that only One was good, and that all goodness was derived from God. Men knew little enough of Jesus, because He sought ever to be a reflecting mirror for His Father, and to glorify Him on the earth. But the Spirit reveals Him to those that love.

These words might have been *the Apostle Paul's*. He delighted to say that he worked, yet not he, but the grace of God in him ; that he lived, yet not he, but Christ in him ; that he knew and spake the mysteries of God, yet not he, but the Spirit of God.

Thus *we* should speak. Our light must so shine that men may turn from us to Him from whom we have derived it. Whenever the temptation arises to revert on ourselves, to attract men to ourselves, to lead them to think that we can meet their need, let us count ourselves dead to the suggestion, saying, "It is not in me ; God shall give" (Acts iii. 12). What strength and comfort come into our hearts, in view of demands which are too great for our weak nature to meet. "It is not in me ; God shall give." If our hearts were inditing a good matter, they would boil over, and we should speak more frequently of the things that touch our King.

The man spake roughly to us.

Genesis xlii. 30.

HE spake roughly, but he did not feel so.—When he had spoken in these harsh tones, he restored their money ; turned aside to weep (24) ; and did his best to alleviate the toils of travel. So sometimes God seems to deal harshly, and speak roughly ; but there is no change in the tender love of His heart. It costs Him immeasurably more than it does us. Often when some unusual severity has been evinced, if we could but see His face, it would be full of pity, pain, and pleading on our behalf. He feels yearnings over us which He restrains, and dares not betray till the work of conviction is complete.

He spake roughly to awaken conscience.—It had slept for twenty years. They had almost forgotten that scene at the pit's mouth ; but as he repeated their tones, and words, and treatment, it all came back again, and they cried, " We are verily guilty concerning our brother." There must be repentance and confession before God can take us to His heart. We must confess the wrongs done to our Brother in heaven and our brothers on earth ; and many of the roughnesses of God's Providence are intended to awaken us, and bring our sin to remembrance.

He spake roughly to test them.—How did they feel toward each other : was there rivalry, or bitterness, or angry feeling ? Beneath his biting words, Joseph would mark their behavior ! Would they disown each other, or cling to one another ? There was an opportunity for their doing one or the other ; and he was glad to notice how their love approved itself. So we are led over stony roads, that God may know what is in our hearts. He gives us opportunities of showing our real feeling toward our brothers, that He may test our love toward Himself.

Every man's money was in the mouth of his sack.

Genesis xliii. 21.

JOSEPH, who gave corn to save his own brethren and the Gentiles from starvation, is a type of Him who gives the bread of life to Jew and Greek—to all that hunger and come to Him for supplies. And in this return of the full money in the sack's mouth, we are reminded that salvation and satisfaction are all of grace. They are without money and without price. Whatever we yield to Him, He returns in full weight.

We bring Him works of merit as a price of our pardon; but they are not noticed.

We bring Him emotion, tears, anguish of soul; but He will have none of them.

We bring Him our faith as a price, instead of as a hand that accepts; and He refuses it.

How many are our mistakes and misunderstandings! Yet He does not for that reason withhold His blessed gift. We get the corn as an act of His free grace; and afterward He explains why it was that our careful dues were not accepted.

There is bread enough in God to supply every mouth of desire and hunger in your soul. You may have it for the seeking. The law is—ask, and have. What if you have no money with which to purchase, no earnestness, no merit! Nevertheless the best wheat of heaven may be yours. Our Father's love is constantly devising means of expressing itself. It puts money into our sacks; it invites us to its home, and spreads banquets before us; it inclines stewards to meet us peacefully; it washes our feet; it takes a tender interest in those we love; it wishes us grace from God; it adjusts itself to our temperaments and puts us at our ease, so that gleams of light as to the love of Jesus strike into our hearts!

And I said, Surely he is torn in pieces.

Genesis xliv. 28.

THESE are words caught from his Father's mouth by Judah ; and here repeated, in his most pathetic intercession, with the hope of softening the Governor's heart, and moving him to spare Benjamin at least. They are very sad, and, without doubt, justified by the vision of that blood-stained coat. Yet there was another interpretation to the sad and dark suggestion which it made : Joseph was alive, and they were soon to know that it was he with whom they were dealing, and that he was conducting them through these strange experiences.

We are often tempted to judge hastily, and by appearances ; by our own despondent, sorrowful hearts ; or by the reports of others. We may say that certain things are against us, when, if we would only look beyond appearances and circumstances to God, we should find that He had been working, and was working, mightily on our behalf—that all was for our lasting good.

Do not say that you have lost your Joseph ; he lives, and will yet be a comfort to you. He was taken from you for a little, to bring blessing to your whole family, but to be given back to you, more yours than ever.

Do not look on the sad, but on the bright side of God's Providence. All things are working for the best. "In all these things is the life of the spirit." Do not judge Him, or try to understand ; be still and trust. You will some day be ashamed of your little faith.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his work in vain,
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.

God did send me before you.

Genesis xlv. 5.

THERE was great delicacy in Joseph's command, "Cause every man to go out from me." He did not want to expose his brethren; yet he wanted to say words which could not be understood by the curious courtiers. Then he made himself known, and said, "Be not grieved, nor angry, for God did send me before you." This was not only a kind way of alleviating their remorse and sorrow, but was the standpoint from which *Joseph* was wont to review his life-course. It was his habit to trace the working-out of God's plan, and the interposition of His Providence amid and through the malevolence and treachery of men (l. 20).

This was also *David's* habit, who, in the cursing of Shimei and the revolt of Absalom, saw the evolution of God's permissive purposes.

Thus also *Jesus* spoke, when anticipating the coming of Judas to betray Him. "The Son of Man goeth, as it was written of Him." "The cup that My Father giveth Me to drink."

It is one of the inexplicable mysteries of Providence that bad men subserve God's purposes and unwittingly execute His plans. It is not for us to explain it, but to consider the perplexities and disaster which we suffer at the hands of evil men as being permitted by God for the furtherance of some Divine and hidden purpose. Paul's prayer that he might preach the Gospel at Rome was fulfilled through the hatred of the Jews; and he went to Rome at the Emperor's expense. We may comfort ourselves whenever the storm is high, that God is at the helm, and is making the wrath of man praise Him, whilst the remainder of it shall be restrained. Yes, Joseph, God is sending you through that pit and prison: but there is a way out into sunlight.

Fear not to go down into Egypt.

Genesis xlvii. 3.

PROBABLY the old man, remembering the experiences of Abraham, was very fearful to adventure himself into Egypt. Besides, was it not as though, in going thither, he renounced the Land of Promise? Therefore this special bidding and assurance were the more necessary.

When our heart misgives us, let us look out for one of God's fear-nots.—His eye is ever upon the righteous, and His ear open to their cry. One upward glance or tremulous prayer will make Him ride on a cherub to our side, and whisper, “Be not afraid; fear not, I am with thee.”

God's promises are fulfilled in most unexpected ways.—He had always foretold that the seed of Abraham should outnumber stars and sands; but who would have supposed that the promise would be realized amid the pressure and persecution of Egypt? Yet so it happened. “I will *there* make of thee a great nation.” We must not judge after the sight of our eyes, nor act on what is known as our common sense; faith is led by very uncommon paths. Trust and obey!

God's presence in Egypt acted as an antidote to its evil, and delivered from its tyrant's grasp.—Ah, my soul, thou mightest descend without fear into hell itself if God said, “I will go down with thee, and will surely bring thee up again.” The Divine Presence is strength to the fearful—security and consolation in life, peace in death. It was probably thus that the Father spake to the Son by the lips of the Angel in Gethsemane: “Fear not to go down into the grave: I will surely bring thee up again.” Thus He speaks to us. He is with us, and will deliver.

Thou hast saved our lives : . . . We will be Pharaoh's servants. *Genesis xlvii. 25.*

NOTHING less would have extorted such an acknowledgment from those proud Egyptians. They were willing to serve their saviour. No doubt, had there been no provision made by Joseph, the streets would have been filled by emaciated skeletons picking their way feebly amid the heaps of the dying and the dead. Gratitude brought them into the dust before him who held the keys of the granaries.

The kingdom of Christ is a matter of supreme importance to individuals and the world.—He is not ambitious of power for its own sake; but that He may be able to exercise it more fully for our benefit, and that He may finally render up the kingdom to God, even His Father, that God may be all in all. He will never, therefore, be perfectly satisfied till He has triumphantly entered all closed gates, as King.

His kingdom is given Him by the glad choice of those whom He had blessed and saved.—The song of heaven reflects this thought: "Thou art worthy, . . . for thou wast slain." His empire depends on the sacrifice by which He has saved a multitude whom no man can number. Meditate much on the love of Calvary, and you too will feel that His empire should begin with your heart, and hasten to subdue the kingdoms of the world.

When He becomes king, He still further blesses us.—The first hour of Joseph's supreme power was the beginning of Egypt's brightest days. The Egyptians could not do so well for themselves as he for them. We shall never know the real blessedness of living, its peace and joy and strength, till we have utterly surrendered to Christ's supremacy. To serve such a Master utterly is to drink of the river of perfect blessedness.

Behold, thy son Joseph cometh.

Genesis xlviii. 2.

HOW needful Joseph was to Jacob! The aged patriarch could not die without seeing him. His presence lit the dark valley. His hands closed the tired eyes of the aged pilgrim. And Joseph was as quick to come at the first intimation of his father's desire to see him. There was a perfect sympathy and reciprocity between them, just as there may be between Christ and those who owe all to Him.

Jesus is ever leading us on to new and deeper experiences.—In no true life is stagnation admissible. So the nest is constantly being stirred up, and the trumpets sounded for the striking of our tents. But there is a Divine motive in it all. Jesus cannot rest satisfied with less than the best for those He loves, as Joseph could not permit Jacob to remain in Canaan whilst Goshen with its plenty awaited him.

In all the new experiences Jesus meets us.—When his father entered Egypt, Joseph was waiting for him. When he was summoned to stand before Pharaoh, Joseph brought him. When he lay a-dying, Joseph was at his side to receive his last commissions. So, trembling soul, if Jesus presses you into the unknown, He does not leave you there, but keeps coming again, meeting you at every point of anxiety and distress. Yea, He does what Joseph could not do. He stands, not on this side only, but on the other side, of death. Here to calm with His benediction; there to receive into His glory.

Jesus is careful for body as well as soul.—The dying man was anxious about the disposal of his body, and Joseph readily undertook to see it buried in Machpelah's cave. So Jesus cares for us. He is the Saviour of the body in this life and in the resurrection.

Until Shiloh come, and unto Him shall the obedience of the peoples be. *Genesis xlix. 10 (R. V.).*

OLD experience is said to attain to something of prophetic strain; but there is more than old experience here. From these aged lips the Holy Ghost is speaking.

The mission and work of Jesus are designated.—He is Shiloh—the Maker, Giver, and Bringer of Peace. The troubled conscience, smitten with conviction, finds peace when He reveals His all sufficient sacrifice and atonement. The discordant elements within us settle into a great calm when He enters to reign, bringing every thought into captivity to His rule. Nor is His work for individuals only; it is for man, for the world, the universe. Peace was made at His cross; it is proclaimed by His Spirit; and it will be consummated when God is All in all.

The time of His advent predicted.—Not till the Romans came and annexed Palestine as one of the provinces of the empire, did the semblance of the Hebrew monarchy expire. And it was then that the Shiloh came. Surely these words must often have been quoted by the pious Jews, with whom Simeon and Anna consorted, as pointing to the near advent of the Messiah. Let us be wise to discern the symptoms of His second advent.

The inevitableness of His dominion.—Ah, Saviour, it is predicted that all peoples shall obey Thee; and we know well that it is only through obedience that men can enter into Thy peace. Teach us to obey, to do all Thy commands, to bear all Thy burdens, to wait before Thee, that thus we may know the peace that passeth all understanding.

Ponder this well, O my soul; the Peace-giver must be obeyed. Only so can He give thee peace that floweth as a river.

God meant it for good.

Genesis i. 20 (R. V.).

GOD'S deeper meanings! We are apt to see a malicious meaning; are we equally apt to detect the Divine and benevolent one? Our enemies are many, and they hate us with perfect hatred; they are ever laying their plots, and working their unholy purposes. But there is a greater and wiser than they, who, through all these plottings, is prosecuting His Divine purpose. There is another and deeper meaning than appears to the short sight of sense.

Let us believe that there is a Divine and deeper meaning in the adversities of our lives.—Joseph might be forgiven for not doing so; but with his history and that of many others before us, we have no excuse for despair in the face of crushing sorrow. Whether it comes from man or devil, all creatures are under the Divine control, holding to our lips cups which the Father's hand has mixed. He has no complicity with their evil, but they unconsciously perform His will. Even if you cannot see the Divine meaning, dare to believe that it is there.

Await the disclosures of time.—Even here we sometimes reach an eminence from which we detect the meaning of the path by which we have been conducted. It may have been rough and circuitous, but there was reason in it all. Often God rewards patient trust by allowing us to see and know.

And for the full revelation of eternity.—One day God will call us to His side in the clear light of eternity, and will explain His meanings in life's most sorrowful experiences; and we shall learn that we suffered, not for ourselves only, but for others, and, as part of His great remedial scheme, "to save much people alive."

The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied.

Exodus i. 12.

IT was a very unequal struggle on which Pharaoh had entered; for he opposed not the Hebrews, but Jehovah. It is thus that the great ones of this world have ever spoken and acted. "Let us build a tower;" "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." "Against Thy holy child Jesus, both Herod and Pontius Pilate were gathered together." In every case, He that sits in the heavens has laughed at the boast of human pride. His cause and His people's are one. *Yet times of affliction have always been on times of multiplication.*

In the history of the Church.—When has she made her greatest number of adherents? When her pulpits have been filled with eloquent preachers, and her aisles crowded with fashion and wealth? No; but when she has been driven to the dens and caves of the earth, and her sons have been proscribed outcasts. The real triumphs of the early Church were in the first centuries of opprobrium and persecution; her decline began when Constantine made Christianity the religion of the State.

In the history of each earnest soul.—It is rarely the case that we make much spiritual headway when winds and currents favor us. We do best when all is against us. We grow quickest in the dark. In times of persecution we realize the security, and comfort, and joy, which are in Christ Jesus our Lord; and as God goes the round of the world, it is in chambers of pain, sickness, and bereavement, that He beholds the multiplication of the choice graces of holy character and temper. The affliction, which is for the moment, is working out an exceeding weight of glory.

He Smote the Egyptian.

Exodus ii. 12 (R. V.).

THIS was creature-strength, wrought on by creature-passion, and ending in creature-failure. Moses stood on an eminence, and reached down to these poor brethren of his with a passing spasm of pity. He was very careful to look this way and that, so as not to invalidate his own position at court. And fear for himself carried him swiftly from the scene of his people's woes. It was a brief effort to do the Divine work of redemption in his own energy. Long years must pass, during which God would drain away drop by drop his strength, his resolution, and his very desire to be an emancipator; that when he had become nothing, God through him might effect His almighty will.

We sometimes smite the Egyptian within.—We rise up against some tyrant passion, and strike two or three vigorous blows. Our efforts to rid ourselves of its thrall originate and are prosecuted in our own resolve. At first the conflict seems easily our own; finally the dead weight of all the Egyptians within is more than a match for us.

We often smite the Egyptian without.—We make an assault on some giant evil—drink, gambling, impurity. It seems at first as though we should carry the position by our sudden and impetuous rush. But Egypt conquers in the end, and we flee.

No: we need to learn for the inward and outward conflict the lesson that forty years in Midian taught Moses, that only the Spirit of God in man can overcome the spirit of the world. By disappointment and repeated failure, by the silence of the desert, we are taught that we are nothing—then God becomes our all in all: and all things become possible to us as we believe.

I am come down.

Exodus iii. 8.

THIS is a marvellous chapter, because it is so full of God. If the previous one, in its story of human striving, reminds us of Rom. vii., this as surely recalls Rom. viii. There is little mention of the part that Moses was to play, but much is said of what God was about to do. "I am come down." "I will bring you up." "I will put forth Mine hand." O weary soul, bitter with weary bondage, groaning beneath cruel taskmasters, afflicted and tossed with tempest, the I AM has come down !

God comes down to our lowest to lift us to His highest.—This is the theme of the magnificat, and of Hannah's song. God comes down to the dust for the poor, and to the dunghill for the needy. You cannot be too lonely or broken in spirit for Him to notice and help. In proportion to your humiliation will be your exaltation.

He comes down to our saddest to lift us to His joyfullest.—How great the contrast between the cry of the Hebrews, because of their taskmasters, and the exultant note that smote on the rocks of the Red Sea ! Such shall be your experience also. If you suffer in the line of God's will and providence, you are sowing the seeds of light and gladness. Oh, anticipate the harvest !

He comes down to our helplessness to succor with His great might.—Israel could not help herself ; but the resources of I AM were sufficient for every need, and they will be for yours and mine. This is God's blank check ; fill it in ! Insert after these majestic words, wisdom, or courage, or love, or whatever you need most. And He will be all this, and more also : not for a moment, but always ; not spasmodically, but unchangeably.

I am not Eloquent.

Exodus iv. 10.

THIS is what we all say. We think more of the words than of the message; more of our eloquence or slowness of speech than of the King's seal and signature. Moses had learned many wholesome lessons through his long sojourn in Midian; but he had to learn this last one, that God does not want excellency of speech or of language in His messengers, but the unction and power which come on those who speak after direct audience with the Eternal. Aaron, who came to meet Moses, could speak well; but he was a weak man, whose alliance with Moses caused his nobler younger brother much anxiety and pain. However, God determined to send Aaron with him, to be his colleague and spokesman. Better a thousand times had it been for Moses to trust God for speech, than be thus deposed of his premiership.

Be sure to get thy message from the King.—Wait before Him in the inner shrine, till He says the word which thou shalt speak. This will give thee the real eloquence of the heart.

Look up for the right words.—The Apostle said that the Corinthians were enriched in all utterance; and he said that he spoke the Divine mysteries in words which the Holy Spirit taught. Ask for these, and you will not be disappointed.

Rely on the Divine coöperation.—There is another force at work, more subtle and penetrating than the most eloquent words of man—the power of the Holy Ghost. Seek for His Divine demonstration and co-witness. And it shall come to pass, that mysterious influences shall move over the hearts of those that listen to thy words, which shall attest the mighty fellowship and coöperation of One whom the natural man cannot detect.

Why is it that Thou hast sent me ?

Exodus v. 22.

BEFORE God can use us, He must bring us to an end of ourselves. When Paul was summoned to the greatest epistles and labors of his life, his strength was drained to utter weakness, and he despaired even of life. So in the case of Moses and Israel.

Moses, for forty years, had been undergoing the emptying process ; but perhaps when God called him to this great enterprise, there may have been a slight revival of confidence in himself, in his mission, his miracles, the eloquence of Aaron's speech. So in the rebuff he received from Pharaoh, in the bitter remonstrances of the elders of his people, in the sad consciousness that his efforts had aggravated their condition, the lesson was still further taught him—that of himself he could do absolutely nothing.

Israel also had begun to hope something from his mission. Through the brickfields the story ran of his early years, his uncompromising speech to Pharaoh, of his miracles ; and the wretched slaves cherished faith in him and Aaron as their heaven-sent deliverers. They had, however, to learn that all such hopes were vain, and to see that the brothers, at the best, were as weak as themselves. Then the way was prepared to lean only on God.

Ourselves.—By repeated failures all along our life-course God is teaching us the same lesson. We fail to justify and then to sanctify ourselves. Our efforts to serve and please Him only end in increasing perplexity. The tale of bricks is doubled ; the burdens augment ; the strength of our purpose is broken ; we are utterly discouraged ; and then, when the soul is utterly desolate, the heavenly Bridegroom draws near and says, " I will do all ; I am Alpha and Omega ; I am thy salvation."

I am Jehovah, and I Will!

Exodus vi. 6.

WHEN all human help has failed, and the soul, exhausted and despairing, has given up hope from man, God draws near, and says, I AM. It is as though He said, "All that can really help you resides in My nature as in its native home. I have weaned you from all beside, that you might seek in Me what you had been wont to seek in men and things and self-help."

Thus God with Israel. The people had come to relish the dainties of Egypt—the leeks and onions, the fleshpots and sensual delights; therefore the need for this cruel bondage to wean them, and prepare them for marriage union with Himself. Moreover, they placed great hopes in Moses, and such appeals as might be made to move Pharaoh's pity; from these too it was necessary to withdraw the people's heart, that they might look for all to their heavenly Lover, and find in Jehovah their infinite supply.

Affliction is always needful in the first stage of the Christian's deepening experience. The world, with its vainglory, pride, and envy; the delights of the flesh; the praise and good opinion of our fellows—these take the place of Christ in His disciples. We must be taught to despise these things, and feel their vanity and insufficiency to satisfy.

Failure is often necessary to teach humility and patience; so that we may have no confidence in anything we can call our own, and be prepared to find all our satisfaction and delight in Jesus only.

Revelation then becomes possible, of all that God can be and do. He draws near with His sevenfold "I will." He looks on us with infinite delight, and commences to bring us into such blessedness that we forget all else, and behold our Bridegroom only.

The Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord.

Exodus vii. 5.

IN God's dealings with His people He purposed to reveal Himself to Egypt: so that when He led forth Israel's hosts, in redemption power, from the brick-fields of slavery on to resurrection ground, there might be afforded such a display of His love, and pity, and power, as the world had never before witnessed. Egypt and all surrounding nations should know the character of God in the Exodus, as the Lover and Redeemer of His own.

So with the Church.—The Apostle tells us that redeemed men are to be the subjects of angelic contemplation and wonder. In the Church, principalities and powers shall discern the manifold wisdom and grace of God. When God has brought all the ransomed hosts up from the Egyptian bondage of the world to stand in the radiance of the eternal morning, then the universe shall ring with the ascription, "Great and marvellous are Thy works. Righteous and true are Thy ways."

So with each individual believer.—Each one of us has been formed for Jesus Himself, that we might show forth His praise. In growing purity and sweetness, in our deliverance from the clinging corruptions of the world and flesh, in our patience under tribulation, our submission and steadfast hope, in our willingness to sacrifice ourselves for others, let us be revelations of what Christ is, and of what He can make sinful men become.

Believers are the world's Bibles, by studying which men may come to know the Lord Himself. Let us see to it that we be clear in type, unmistakable in our testimony, pleasant to behold, thoughtful and helpful toward all, commending the blessed Bridegroom whom the world sees not.

I will put a Division between My People and thy People.
Exodus viii. 23.

THIS division is as old as eternity.—In the council chamber of the Godhead the Father chose Jesus and all who should believe in Him unto eternal life. We cannot understand the reason of that Divine choice ; we can only affirm it, that in those ages of the unfathomed past, Christ and His seed stood out from the rest of mankind, the people of God's own possession and inheritance.

It was affected by the Cross of Jesus.—By it we are crucified to the world, and the world to us. The cross, with its outstretched arms, stands sentinel between the Church and the world which cast out her Lord. The grave, like a great gulf, yawns between those who gather round the risen Master on resurrection ground, and all men else. From the moment that Jesus ascended, the rallying centre of the Church was removed from earth to heaven, from the cross to the throne.

It is wrought out by the daily grace of the Holy Ghost.—It is right, of course, to come out and be separate in our outward walk and behavior. But, deeper than this, if only we will let the Spirit of God work unhindered, He will effect an inward division. Our tastes and desires, our hopes and aims, will become different, and we shall be aware of a growing dissimilarity between ourselves and the world.

Then to the separate soul the Bridegroom comes. He says tender and loving words. In one hour He teaches more than all human teachers could ; and sheds forth by the Holy Ghost the torrent of Divine Love. There may be darkness without, but there is light in the dwellings of Goshen : there may be plague and pestilence in the world, but there is peace, joy, and bliss, in the separated soul.

Only in Goshen, where the Children of Israel were, was there no hail. Exodus ix. 26.

THOSE who are included in the provisions of the covenant are sealed. The storm may sweep around them, but the great angel, who ascends from the east, cries with a great voice to the angels to whom it is given to hurt the earth, and the sea, and the trees, saying, Hurt them not till we have sealed the servants of God in their foreheads (Rev. vii. 3).

The only spot on which the soul is safe is within the encircling provisions of the covenant. Israel stood there, and was safe—not only from the hail, but from the destroying sword. The invulnerable walls of that sacred enclosure were the oath and promise of God to Abraham. God had bound himself by the most solemn sanctions to be a God to this people, and deliver them; it was necessary, therefore, that He should be their pavilion and canopy, catching the hailstones on His outstretched wings and securing them from hurt.

The covenant is entered, not by merit nor by works. There was neither the one nor the other in that race of slaves; but they stood there simply because of their relationship to the Friend of God. So we enter the blessed safety of the better covenant, through our relationship with the Lord Jesus, who is the Beloved of the Father, the one glorious and blessed Man. Without beauty or merit, the soul attaches itself by faith to Him, and discovers that it was loved before the worlds were made.

Ah, blessed Lover of souls, we see how the storm swept Thy heart, that it might never touch us. Thou art our hiding-place, our shield, our deliverer, our strong tower. Without dismay we can anticipate the storms of death, judgment, and eternity, sure that wherever Thou art there can be no hail.

All the Children of Israel had Light in their dwellings.

Exodus x. 23.

WITHOUT, darkness that might be felt; within, light. This should be the condition of each believing heart. The sun may have gone down, and the moon withdrawn herself in the firmament of the world; the darkness of perplexity and trouble may envelop Pharaoh and all his chosen counsellors; all things may wear the aspect of approaching dissolution: but with the Lord as our everlasting Light we walk in the light of life.

Light is purity.—The soul which is exposed to the indwelling of God, purifies itself even as He is pure; and walks as Jesus did, with white and stainless robes. He that says he has fellowship with the Holy God, and walks in the darkness of his own lusts, lies. Where God is really hidden in the heart, the beams of His lovely purity must irradiate and beautify the life.

Light is knowledge.—There is a wisdom, an insight, an understanding of the Divine mysteries, which the mere intellect could never give, but are the product of the Divine indwelling in the holy soul. All around men may be groping aimlessly after truth, trying to discover the secret of the Universe, whilst to the loving, childlike soul, in which God has taken up His abode, these things, which are hidden from the wise and prudent, are unveiled.

Light is love.—It steals so gently over the world, blessing flowers and birds, little children and invalids. Everywhere it is the symbol of the beneficent work of its Creator. His eldest daughter! Thus amid the selfishness of the world, let Jesus dwell deep in thee, that thou mayest be rooted and grounded in the love of God, which shall illumine thy dwelling, and ray out to the world.

Jewels of Silver and Jewels of Gold.

Exodus xi. 2.

THE Egyptians knew very well that they would never see their jewels again ; and the people of Israel were thus, to some extent, compensated for their unpaid toils. The Lord gave them such favor with the Egyptians that they gave them whatever they asked ; so that "they spoiled the Egyptians."

These jewels were employed afterward in the adornment and enrichment of the Sanctuary. They flashed in the breastplate of the High Priest, and shone in the sacred vessels. In this they remind us of the treasures which David gathered by his conquests from neighboring nations, and which were afterward incorporated in the Temple of Solomon. They recall also the glowing predictions of the prophet, that the kings of the earth shall bring their treasures into the New Jerusalem.

The jewels of the Church, whether they stand for her graces or her choice children, have often been obtained from the midst of Egypt. Was not Saul of Tarsus just such a jewel ? The world counted him one of her rarest sons ; but God set him as a jewel in the breastplate of Immanuel.

Let us ever seek jewels from the land of our captivity and suffering. It will not do to come away empty. It is not enough merely to bear what God permits to fall on us for our chastisement ; but to go further, and extract from all trials, jewels. Let every trial and temptation enrich you with the opposite grace. There are Egyptians in your life, which have grievously tormented you with their heavy whips, yet even these shall yield wealth—"jewels of silver and jewels of gold" ; which you shall consecrate to holy service, and which shall shine in the fabric and worship of the New Jerusalem.

THE Paschal feast is the emblem of the Christian life. The Blood is ever speaking to God for us; though we see it not, God sees it, and hears its prevalent plea. We in the meanwhile are called upon to feed in faith daily, hourly, on the flesh of the Son of Man, according to His own command. In all Christian life, even in its hours of greatest rapture, there must be a touch of the bitter herb.

We can never forget the cost of our redemption.—Even in heaven, in the full realization of its bliss, whenever we catch sight of the print of the nails in His hand, we shall remember the agony and bloody sweat, the cross and passion, and eat the feast with the flavor of the bitter herb. How much more on earth, where we are so constantly requiring the efficacy of His precious death!

There will always be the memory of our sinnership.—We cannot forget our unworthiness and sin. He has forgiven; but we cannot forget. Ah, those years of rebellion and perverseness before we yielded to Him; and those years of self-will and pride since we knew His love! They will sometimes come back to us, and give us to eat of the bitter herb.

Moreover, there must be the constant crucifixion of the self-life.—We can only properly feed on Jesus, the Lamb of God, when we are animated by the spirit of self-surrender and humiliation, of death to the world and to the will of the flesh, which were the characteristics of His cross. Deep down in our hearts, the drinking of His cup and being baptized with His baptism, will be the touch of the bitter herbs in the feast. But “the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

By strength of hand the Lord brought us out.

Exodus xiii. 14.

FOUR times over in this chapter Moses lays stress on the strong hand with which God redeemed His people from the bondage of Egypt; and we are reminded of "the exceeding greatness of His power, which is to us-ward who believe" (Eph. i. 12-20).

God's strong hand reaches down to where we are.—It would have been useless if Israel had been bidden to help itself up to a certain point, whilst God would do the rest. The people were so broken that they could only lie at the bottom of the pit, and moan. God's hand reached down to touch and grasp them at their lowest. So God's help is not conditional on our doing something, whilst He will do the rest. When we are without strength, when we have expended our all in vain, when heart and flesh fail—then God comes where we are, and becomes the strength of our heart and our portion forever.

God's strong hand is mightier than our mightiest adversaries.—Pharaoh was strong, and held the people as a child may hold a moth in its clenched fist. But a man's hand is stronger than a child's, and God's than Pharaoh's. So Satan may have held you in bondage; but do not fear him any more, look away to the strength of God's hand. What can it not do for you?

We must appropriate and reckon on God's strong hand.—It is there toward them who believe, as a locomotive may be next a line of carriages; yet there must be a coupling-iron connecting them. So you must trust God's strength, and avail yourself of it, and yield to it. Remember that His arm is not shortened, nor His hand paralyzed, except our unbelief and sin intercept and hinder the mighty working of His Power.

And Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the seashore.

Exodus xiv. 30.

WHAT a relief that morning brought from the anxieties of the previous night ! Then, as they lifted up their eyes, they saw Pharaoh and the dreaded Egyptian taskmaster in full pursuit ; now they beheld the seashore strewn with their bodies, stark and cold. They would never see them again, nor hear the crack of their whips.

So in life we are permitted to see the dreaded temptations and evils of earlier days suddenly deprived of all power to hurt us. The Egyptians are dead upon the shore ; and we see the great work of the Lord. Let us take comfort in this —

In the pressure of trial.—You are suffering keenly ; yet remember that no trial is allowed to come from any source in which there is not a Divine meaning. Nothing can enter your life, of which God is not cognizant, and which He does not permit. Though the pressure of your trial is almost unbearable, you will one day see your Egyptians dead.

Amid the temptations of the great adversary of souls.—They may seem at this moment more than you can bear ; but God is about to deliver you. He can so absolutely free you from the habits of self-indulgence which you have contracted, and from the perpetual yielding to temptation to which you have been prone, that some day you will look with amazement and thankfulness on these things, as Egyptians dead on the seashore.

So also in the presence of death.—Many believers dread, not the after-death, but the act of dying. But as the morning of eternity breaks, they will awake with songs of joy to see death and the grave and all the evils that they dreaded, like Egyptians, strewn on the shores of the sea of glass.

The waters were made Sweet.

Exodus xv. 25.

OUR joys and sorrows, like the varied products of nature, lie very close together. One moment we are singing the joyous song of victory on the shores of the Red Sea, and vow we will never again mistrust our God; and then, by a sudden transition, we find ourselves standing beside the Marah waters of pain and disappointment, inclined to murmur at our lot.

There is, however, a tree, which, when cast into the waters, makes them sweet. It is the tree of the cross. "He bare our sins in His own body on the tree." The cross means the yielding up of the will. Now, it is in proportion as we see God's will in the various events of life, and surrender ourselves either to bear or do it, that we shall find earth's bitter things becoming sweet, and its hard things easy.

We must yield our will to God.—The secret of blessedness is in saying "Yes" to the will of God, as it is shown in the circumstances of our lot or the revelations of His Word. It is the will of a Father whose love and wisdom are beyond question.

We must accept what He permits.—It may be that our pains emanate from the malevolence or negligence of others; still, if He has permitted them, they are His will for us. By the time they reach us they have become minted with His die, and we must patiently submit.

We must do all He bids.—The thread of obedience must always be running through our hands. At all costs to our choice and feeling we must not only have His commands, but keep them. Our Lord perpetually lays stress on obeying His words. This is the spirit of the Cross, and the properties of this tree sweeten earth's bitterest sorrows. "Disappointments become His appointments."

A day's Portion every day.

Exodus xvi. 4 (R. v.).

IT is said that the twenty-four hours should be divided thus: Eight hours for work, eight for rest, eight for recreation, food, etc. There should be a counterpart of this in Christian living. Each day there should be a portion for work, a portion for restful meditation and sitting before the Lord, and a portion for the gathering of God's manna.

Each day brings its own work.—God has created us for good works, and has prepared our pathway, so that we may come to them one by one. He has apportioned to each one some office to fulfill, some service to render, some function in the mystical body of our Lord. It is comforting to know that we have not to scheme for ourselves, but to look up for guidance into the Divine plan.

Each day brings its own difficulties.—God spreads them over our days, giving each day only what we can sustain. The servant girl might be startled were she told that she would have to carry the coals, which it has taken two horses and a great cart to bring to her master's door; but she will be comforted by being reminded that they will be borne upstairs only a coal-scuttle full at a time.

Each day brings its own supply.—No Israelite could point to his store of manna and congratulate himself that he was proof against any famine that might befall. The lesson of daily trust for daily bread was constantly being enforced; for as the day came the manna fell. Those who followed the cloud were always certain of their sustenance. Where the cloud brooded the manna fell. Whatever any day may bring there always will be within reach of you, lying ready prepared on the sands of the desert, just what you require. Go forth and carry it; there will be no lack.

I will stand before thee upon the rock in Horeb, and thou shalt smite the rock. Exodus xvii. 6.

HERE is a beautiful example of the coöperation between God and His servants in providing for the needs of His people. Clearly the smiting of the rock was a very small item in this incident, the main consideration was what God was doing in the heart of the earth. But the two wrought together: Moses in the eyes of the people, God in hidden depths. Similarly we are fellow workers with God.

One of the greatest revelations that can come to any Christian worker is the realization that in every act of Christian ministry there are two agents, God and man: that God does not need to be implored to help us, but wants us to help Him; that our part is the very unimportant and subsidiary one of smiting the rock, whilst His is the Divine and all important part of making the waters flow.

Did Moses go to the rock that day weighted with care, his brow furrowed with the anxiety of furnishing a river of which his people might drink? Certainly not; he had only to smite: God would do all the rest, and had pledged Himself to it. So, Christian worker, you have been worrying as though the whole weight of God's inheritance were upon you, but you are greatly mistaken; smiting is very easy work.

In every congregation and religious gathering the Holy Spirit is present, eager to glorify Christ, and to pour out rivers of living water for thirsty men; believe this. See that you are spiritually in a right condition, that He may be able to ally you with Himself. Keep reckoning on Him to do His share; and when the river is flowing, be sure not to take the praise.

“We are workers together with God.”

And God command thee so.

Exodus xviii. 23.

IT was good and sound advice that Jethro gave his son-in-law. It could hardly have been better. It is always better to set one hundred men to work than attempt to do the work of one hundred men. There is no greater art in the world than to develop the latent capacities of those around us by yoking them to useful service. But good though the advice obviously was, Jethro carefully guarded Moses against adopting it, unless the Lord had been consulted, and had commanded it.

Let us test human advice.—There are plenty of voices that advise us, and each has some nostrum for our health, some direction for our path. Some are true guides, whom God has sent to us, as Jethro to Moses. Often an on-looker can see mistakes we are making, and can suggest something better. But we are wise to get alone into the holy presence of God, and ask what He commands, what is His will.

Let us test human teachings.—So full is the world of voices, so bewildering the din of religious schools and sects! The Apostle was justified in advising us to prove all things, and to try the spirits, whether they were of God. There are four tests for truth: what glorifies Christ; what humbles the flesh; what is in accord with the Word of God; and what has stood the trial of Christian experience in the past.

There is no teacher like God, and we may always detect His voice. It is small and still; it casts down imagination, and brings our thoughts into the captivity of Jesus; it is definite and distinct. When there is an indistinct murmur of many sounds along the wire, you may be sure that you are not in communication with your Father's person. When He speaks, there is no mistaking His voice or His will.

A peculiar Treasure unto Me.

Exodus xix. 5.

OUR Saviour told of a man who, in ploughing his field, heard his ploughshare chink against buried treasure, and hastened to sell all that he had in order to buy it. In speaking thus, He pictured Himself as well as us. He found us before we found Him. The treasure is His people, to purchase whom He gave up all that He had, even to His throne (Matt. xiii. 44). "Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 Peter ii. 9, R. v.).

Where his treasure is, there is a man's heart. If it is in ships on the treacherous sea, he tosses restlessly on his bed, solicitous for its safety. If it is in fabrics, he guards against moth; if in metal, against rust and thieves. And is Christ less careful for His own? Does He not guard with equal care against all that would deteriorate our value in His esteem? Need we fear the thief? Will not the Only-begotten keep us, so that the evil one shall not touch us (Matt. vi. 19, 20)?

God's treasure is His forever. "They shall be Mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in the day that I do make, even a peculiar treasure." He will hold His own, as men cling to their treasure, binding it about their loins, in a storm at sea (Mal. iii. 17, R. v.).

Let us mind the conditions: to obey His voice, and keep His covenant; then on eagles' wings He will bring us to Himself. Compliance with these is blessed in its results. God regards us with the ecstasy of a love that rejoices over us with singing; and counts on us as a mother on her child, a miser on his gold.

The thick darkness where God was.

Exodus xx. 21.

GOD is light, and dwells in light, but it is mercifully veiled to the weak eye of man. This is why Christ spake in parables—that seeing, they might not see. As Moses veiled his face when he spake to the people, so God veils Himself in the flesh of Jesus, in which He tabernacles; and in the mysteries of His providence, beneath which He conceals a smiling face. The Sun of Righteousness in whose beams we rejoice must needs hide beneath the cloud, else we should fall at His feet as dead. It may be that His light seems to us darkness, because of its excessive brilliance; but God dwells in the thick darkness—clouds and darkness are round about Him.

The darkness of mystery.—God has still His hidden secrets, hidden from the wise and prudent. Do not fear them; be content to accept things you cannot understand; wait patiently. Presently He will reveal to you the treasures of darkness, the riches of the glory of the mystery. Mystery is only the veil on God's face.

The darkness of trial.—Do not be afraid to enter the cloud that is settling down on your life. God is in it. The other side is radiant with His glory. “Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings.”

The darkness of desertion.—When you seem loneliest and most forsaken, God is nighest. Jesus once cried “Forsaken,” and immediately after, “Father.” God is in the dark cloud. Plunge into the blackness of its darkness without flinching—under the shrouding curtain of His pavilion you will find God awaiting you.

THE Hebrew slave who meant perpetual consecration of service had to lose a little blood. It was a disagreeable and not wholly painless process, by which his vows were ratified and rendered permanent. But not otherwise could he serve forever. That awl represents the nail that affixed Christ to the cross, and we must expect it in every true act of consecration. For want of it so many seem to go through that supreme act, and shortly after go back from it, bringing discredit and shame upon the teaching they had eagerly welcomed. There are two stages in the Christian life: that in which we serve with the spirit of a slave, and that in which we freely yield ourselves to serve our Master forever. This is the service represented by the pierced ear.

The awl spiritually means the humiliation and pain with which we surrender the self-life. We are tempted to consecrate ourselves in our own energy; to resolve on the devout life in the strength of our own resolution; to say, "*I will serve Christ utterly.*" We avoid the awl which deprives us of our own energy, which is applied to us by the hand of another, and which makes us helpless and self-emptied, that God may become all in all. In your case the awl may be the daily fret of some uncongenial associate; the pressure of loss and anxiety for the sake of Jesus; the humiliation of your pride by perpetual sense of failure. Whatever it be, welcome all that binds you to His cross, because through death you live.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

He shall make Restitution.

Exodus xxii. 5.

THIS chapter is full of restitution, of which there is far too little in ordinary Christian life. We try to make amends for injury done to another by an extraordinary amount of civility; but we are reluctant in so many words to frankly confess that we have done wrong, and make proper reparation for the act or speech. We often excuse ourselves by the thought that we were fully justified in speaking or acting as we did, whereas we may behave ourselves wrongly in courses of conduct which are themselves legitimate.

*Loosing a beast into another man's field (5).—*We may through our carelessness allow another to suffer detriment. The beast ought not to have been thus allowed to stray; and, as *we* let it loose, *we* should make amends for our carelessness in respect to our brother's interests. We wrong another not only by what we do, or permit to be done, but in what we carelessly fail to do.

*Kindling a fire (6).—*The tongue is a spark that kindles a great matter. If we drop fire-brands and lighted matches in the inflammable material of a circle of gossip, we should make amends to the person whose character may have been thereby injured.

*Borrowed goods (14).—*To return a house, a book, a horse, in the state in which we received it, fair wear and tear excepted, or to make good any injury, should be a commonplace of Christian morality. Trustees are responsible for not making due inquiry into risky investments. Each is his brother's keeper. If we remember at the prayer-hour that he has aught against us, let us seek him, and confess, and restore.

An enemy unto thine enemies.

Exodus xxiii. 22.

IT is a most helpful thought that the angel of the covenant in whom is God's name, always precedes us. In our march through the wilderness we perceive His form, which is viewless to others, and realize that His strong hand prepares our path. Let us be very careful not to grieve or disobey Him, lest we lose His mighty championship. Strict obedience to His slightest whisper secures the certainty of His vindication of us from the wrongs we suffer at the hands of our foes. A little further on the same voice promises to send a hornet before the chosen host (28). He who is an angel to the saint is a hornet to his foes. A swarm of hornets is the most relentless and irresistible foe that man can face.

Have you enemies? Be sure that they hate you only for the truth's sake, and because darkness must always be in antagonism to light. "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled." But see to it that you cherish no spirit of hatred or retaliation toward them. Think of the misery of their heart, which is full of jealousy, envy, and bitterness. Pity and pray for them.

When we are right with God we shall have many new enemies. All who hate Him will hate us. But this is rather to our credit than otherwise. Those who have defamed the master of the household will be hostile to his servants. But when our cause is one with God's, and His foes ours, our foes are His, and He deals with them; He stands between us and their hate. He will not leave us in their hands; He will give us vindication and deliverance.

They beheld God, and did eat and drink.

Exodus xxiv. 11.

IT is a beautiful combination, which we should do well to emulate.

Some eat and drink, and do not behold God.—They are taken up with the delights of sense. Their one cry, as the children of this world, is, What shall we eat, what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed? But the God in whose hand their breath is and whose are all their ways, they do not glorify. Let us beware; it was of Christian professors that the Apostles said, Their god is their belly.

Some behold God, and do not eat and drink.—They look on God with such awful fear that they isolate Him from the common duties of life. They draw a strict line between the sacred and secular, between Sunday and weekday, between God's and their own. This divorce between religion and daily life is fatal to true religion, which was meant to be the bond between the commonest details of life and the service of God.

Some behold God, and eat and drink.—They turn from the commonest avocations to look up into His face. They glorify God in their body as well as in their spirit. They obey the apostle's injunction, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Oh for the grace to be able to combine the vision of God with every common incident—to live always beneath His eye in the unrestrained gladness of little children in their Father's presence!

Never a trial that He is not there,
Never a burden that He doth not bear;
Never a sorrow that He doth not share—
Moment by moment I'm under His care.

According to all that I show thee, . . . even so shall ye make it.

Exodus xxv. 9.

IT was clear that God would only be responsible for the material that was needed for *His* plan. If Moses, or the people, insisted on putting in more than was in his original plan, they would have to bear the anxiety of securing the stuff. This is our mistake. We incur responsibilities that God does not put on us; we burden our hearts with anxiety and care because we insist on introducing so many items into our daily life, which would not have been there if we had but been content with God's pattern, and acquiesced in His programme.

This injunction is repeated in four different passages, showing the importance with which God regards it. Indeed, to be on God's plan is the only place of rightness, safety, and joy.

God's plan in our character.—It is presented in the human life of Jesus. We are to walk as He walked. Having been called according to His purpose, let us never rest content with anything less than being conformed to the image of God's Son.

God's plan in our Christian service.—Not seeking to resemble some other devoted life; but endeavoring to be as God would have us, the embodiment of His thought, the expression of His conception. Then our efforts will be crowned with success, and we shall bear much fruit to the glory of God.

God's plan for every day.—He has prepared a scheme for the employment of every hour, and will show it to us by the indication of His Spirit, or by the trend of circumstances. Let us abide in Him, doing nothing that He does not teach, doing all He does. So life will become a tabernacle, in which the Shekinah will shine and sacrifices be offered.

The veil shall divide unto you.

Exodus xxvi. 33.

THAT veil was rent when Jesus died, the Holy Ghost signifying that from that moment access was free into the Holiest. All believers are now welcome to draw near and live in the perpetual presence of God, their Father, even as Jesus did in His earthly life, and as He does in the Heaven of Heavens. This is the clear teaching of Heb. x. 19-22:—"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having a High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water."

But there is a deeper significance still. The new and living way was opened through the rending of the flesh of Jesus Christ. As His flesh was rent on the Cross, the Temple veil was rent from the top to the bottom. And it is only when we have chosen the cross, with its shame and death, as the lot of our self-life, that we can enter into that immediate fellowship with God, which is described as "within the veil."

How many there are who never get beyond that dividing veil! They know the brazen altar of Atonement, the laver of daily washing, the golden altar of intercession; but they are never admitted to that blessed intimacy of communion which sees the Shekinah glory between the cherubim and blood-sprinkled mercy-seat.

O Spirit of God, apply the blood to sprinkle our consciences, and the water to cleanse the habits of our daily life; and lead us where our Forerunner and Priest awaits us.

Pure olive oil beaten for the Light.

Exodus xxvii. 20.

THE saintly McCheyne used to say, when urging his brother ministers to diligent preparation for the pulpit: "Beaten oil for the sanctuary." And he strove never to present to his people truth which had not been beaten out by careful devout meditation.

But there is yet another thought. That lamp in the Holy Place was an emblem of the testimony of the Church, that is, of believers. As the incense table was a type of their aspect toward God, as intercessors, so the seven-branched candlestick was a type of their aspect toward the world, as luminaries. In the Book of Revelation the Lord compares His churches to candlesticks: "the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches."

The oil is, of course, as always in Scripture, a type of the Holy Spirit. He in us is the only source of light-bearing. But the *beaten* oil reminds us of the chastisement and discipline through which alone our best testimony can be given. The *persecutions* of the Church have always been the times when she has given her fairest, brightest witness to the Redeemer. The *sufferings* of believers have ever led to the tenderest, strongest words for the Master, whether by the sick bed or in the hospital ward. That *brokenness* of spirit, which is the surest mark of mature work of God in the heart, is also a rare condition of light-giving. The more beaten and broken you are, in poverty of spirit, the purer will be the heavenly ray of love and light which will shine forth from your life; and it is the purpose of God that you should be "blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world" (Phil. ii. 15).

A golden bell and a pomegranate.

Exodus xxviii. 34.

THE robe of the high priest's ephod was of blue, the color of heaven, of deep lakes, of the glacier-crevasse, of the gentian and forget-me-not. On the hem of the robe were these alternate bells and pomegranates.

Those skirts may illustrate our own position.—We dare not take a high place near the head or arm; but, thank God, there is a place for each of us at the skirt, near the foot; and the holy oil will reach us there, for the Psalmist tells us that it descended even to the skirts of the high priest's robe. It is a blessed thought, that we may receive the droppings of each anointing that falls on the head of Jesus.

But the anointing of the Holy Ghost always shows itself in sweetness and fruitfulness; the sweetness of the golden bell, tinkling with every movement, and the fruitfulness of the pomegranate.

We must be sweet, as well as fruitful.—Too many Christian workers are over-tired and overwrought; they are peevish and fretful. When they come back from meetings on which they have bestowed their last energies, they are neither sweet nor gentle to the home-circle, which has been so lonesome during their absence.

We must be fruitful, as well as sweet.—True religion is not a mere sentimentality; it is strong, healthy, helpful, fruit-bearing. Some seem to think that to attend moving meetings, to be profuse in emotional tears and smiles, to make profuse use of the word *dear*, is to touch the high-water mark; let them learn that the worth of our life is measured by its influence on others, and its bearing fruit, which has in it the seed of reproduction. "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit."

Thou shalt wash them with water.

Exodus xxix. 4.

THIS chapter tells of the consecration to their high office of Aaron and his sons. The entire family is constantly joined thus together as one in God's sight. Similarly, Christ and His house—which is ourselves, who believe—are one. We too must be sprinkled by the blood on ear and thumb and toe, as those who have been redeemed. We too must be consecrated and anointed; and there must be the cleanliness of which these words speak.

This is where so many have erred; they have sought consecration, anointing, and the priestly office; but have not remembered that their bodies must first be washed with pure water.

We must be clean in our habits.—If there is anything in our daily behavior which is not quite clean, it must be put away. There seems some incongruity between the anointing of the Holy Ghost and the smell of spirits or fumes of tobacco. Any excessive indulgence of the flesh, even in legitimate directions, and all indulgence in wrong ones, are inconsistent with the life of consecration.

We must be cleansed in our thoughts.—Whenever temptation is suggested, even though it is still in the far distance, we must turn from it with loathing, and ask that the blood of Jesus may go on cleansing hour by hour. "Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love Thee."

We must be cleansed in our intentions.—The self-life recedes as it is driven from the outworks of our nature, and goes deeper into the motives and springs of action. We discover that self is the spring of so much of our religious activity. Everywhere we need the laver, the hourly washing of John xiii.

Upon the flesh of man shall it not be poured.

Exodus xxx. 32.

WHAT perpetual references to the work of the Holy Spirit, under the symbol of the Anointing Oil, meet us in these chapters. It becomes us to ask ourselves very seriously whether we lay an equal stress on it in our daily experience. Is it true of us, as of those to whom the Beloved Apostle wrote, that the anointing which we received abideth in us? It is not enough to have the Spirit *in* us for sanctification; He must be *on* us for service and ministry.

But He cannot come on the flesh of the natural man; He descends only to those who are washed, consecrated, set apart for God. Many claim the Holy Spirit's anointing, and try to reckon they have received it; but they find it fail, because they desire it for the flesh.

There must be no yielding to fleshly appetite.—When we were in the flesh, sinful passions wrought in our members. But there must be no permission given in these directions. A calm, reverent, self-disciplined nature is alone fitted to be the seat of the Holy Ghost, His nest and home.

There must be no gratification to worldly pride and ambition.—Too many are eager for the Holy Ghost, that they may be able to make a name, or gather an audience; but God is not likely to give us His river of throne-water to turn the mill-wheels of personal ambition.

There must be no fleshly striving after it.—We wrestle and struggle to win the Spirit, and miss Him. It is only when our hope of attaining this blessing by our own efforts dies down, and we are humbled and broken before God; when we cry out to Him to *give* what we cannot *win*, that He draws near and gives the best of all His donations.

I have called by name Bezaleel.

Exodus xxxi. 2.

WE lightly speak of a man's occupation as his *calling*, and fail to realize the profound significance of the phrase. One man is *called* to the ministry; another to the bar; others, like Bezaleel and Aholiab, to work in all manner of workmanship. Each should realize, therefore, that faculty, desire, circumstance, constitute a Divine call, and that there may be as distinct a vocation in the merchant's office, the tradesman's shop, or in the work of a domestic servant, as in the Church itself.

The morning bell that summons us to daily duty is the call of our Father, bidding us to engage in the toils to which He has assigned us. He, who gave Moses the plan, gave the artificers the power to work it in gold, silver, brass, and wood. Let this be your faith; and each morning, as you go to your work, however distasteful it may be, say, "God has called me to this; and He will fill me with all the strength, wisdom, and grace, that I need for its right-doing."

Abide in your calling.—Unless it is a wrong or dishonorable one, it is better to stay in it than to become restless and changeable; and if you must leave it, wait for God to open another door.

Find in God the makeweight to all the deficiencies of your life.—If you are enslaved by daily duty, remember that in Christ you are free; if free from daily toil, in Christ you are a slave. The supply of every deficiency, the rectification of every hardship, is to be found in Jesus.

Mind to do all for God.—To do all in God and for Him, remembering that He sees and accepts all, not according to the results accomplished, but to the heavenly and holy motives that prompt the worker—this is to be blessed.

Peradventure I shall make an Atonement for your sin.

Exodus xxxii. 30.

THE heart of Moses was full of that great, wonderful new word, *Atonement*. For many days God had been telling him about it, and speaking it over and over to his heart. He seemed, however, to feel that no ordinary sacrifices would avail: the blood of goats and bulls would surely be insufficient to put away the black transgression into which Israel had fallen. But there was rising in his heart a resolve, to which he gave expression when he returned to God: "Blot me, I pray thee, out of the book which Thou hast written." He did not realize that his blood would not avail, but that the blood of Christ, who should, in the fullness of times, offer Himself without spot to God, alone could put away sin.

In every heart there is a deep conviction of the necessity of an Atonement.—This is the source of the temples, altars, and sacrifices, which have marked the history of every nation under heaven. Man has felt as by a natural instinct that some reparation was necessary to the broken law.

The insufficiency of animal sacrifice.—In the Levitical system there was a remembrance of sin made year by year; but the sin itself could not be purged by such rites. The fact that the worshippers so constantly came back to offer their sacrifices shows that they were not assured. The priests always *stood*: their attitude was an emblem of an unfinished work.

The sufficiency of Christ's Atonement.—He was willing to be cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of His people; and because He died, there is no longer the "—" which in Moses' prayer speaks of uncertainty; but a blessed assurance that we are at one with God, with each other, and with all holy beings.

In a Cleft of the Rock.

Exodus xxxiii. 22.

THAT rock was Christ. In the Divine thought the position of Moses, first on the rock, and afterward in its cleft, was a moving emblem of the position in which alone we can dare to look out on the sublime progress of God's glory.

God is always passing by.—In the great movements of history which evolve His plans, and are leading to Christ's advent ; in the passage of the ages, which are His swift chariots ; in storm and catastrophe, which break up old forces and forms of evil ; in the goodness of His daily mercy ; in the revelation of His character—we are always living in the very midst of God's presence and power.

In our condition of weakness and sinfulness we need a position of stability and shelter from which to look on God.—No man can see that face of awful holiness and love and live. Sir John Herschel says that when sweeping the heavens with his telescope the brilliant Sirius suddenly burst on his view, he nearly fainted. Who then could behold God ! But in Jesus, we are stable, established in Him, accepted in the Beloved ; and in Him we are covered. The full blaze of the Divine glory is tempered to our gaze ; it comes to us through the medium of the pierced hand. We stand on the rock ; we are hidden under the covering hand.

Our Rock was cleft.—How scarred are the great Alps ! Their sides have been split by the action of tempest, avalanche, earthquake, frost, and glacier. Hence their clefts. But who shall enumerate all that has been borne by our dear Lord for us ! What storms have pelted on Him, that we might have a safe hiding. On Calvary, a niche was hollowed in which a world of sinners may take shelter !

Moses wist not.

Exodus xxxiv. 29.

UNCONSCIOUSNESS of goodness is always a main element in the highest forms of goodness: in the same way that unconsciousness is characteristic of the worst forms of depravity. "Samson *wist not* that the Lord had departed from him."

Directly people become conscious of their superiority to others, and boast of it, it is certain that they have never really seen the beauty of God's holiness, and have no clear knowledge of the condition of their own hearts. They see that they have been cleansed from their old sins; but they do not perceive that the spirit of selfishness has retreated into the springs of motive and intention.

We are all tempted to this terrible self-consciousness. We are proud of being humble, complacent for being lowly, self-congratulatory because we take back-seats. In all this we betray the vanity of our pretensions. This sort of goodness is like a thin veneer of mahogany on very common deal.

The real goodness is more conscious of the remaining evil than of the acquired good; of the lingering darkness than of the hilltops smitten with the dawn; of that which has not been attained. But we can only attain this blessed condition by intimate and prolonged fellowship with God, in solitudes where human voices and interests cease to distract. The brightness of which Moses was unconscious was caught from the Presence-chamber of the Divine Loveliness. Ah, what patterns are seen on the Mount! What cries are uttered there! What visions are seen there! What revelations are made there! What injunctions are received there! Oh for the closer access, the nearer view, the more intimate face to face intercourse, such as is open still to the friends of God!

Go work all manner of workmanship.

Exodus xxxv. 35 (R. V.).

THERE was an infinite variety in the contributions made to the Tabernacle, from the precious jewels of the rulers to the acacia wood of the poor, and the goats' hair of the women. The completed structure was a monument of the united gifts, handicrafts, and gems of the entire people. But in all there was the unity of the spirit, and plan, and devotion.

In the Church and the world there is a work for each of us to do.—It may be a very humble part in the great factory—like minding the loom, or stoking the furnace, or fetching materials for the more skilled operatives; but there is a berth for each willing worker, if only the will and way of God are diligently sought and followed.

This work is suited to our special powers.—He who prepares the work for the worker, prepares the worker for the work. Whenever God gives us a task to fulfill, it is because He sees in us faculties for its successful and happy accomplishment, in coöperation with Himself. It is a mistake then to turn back daunted by difficulty and opposition. As Caleb and Joshua said of the possessors of Canaan, "We be well able to overcome them."

We must bring our resources and powers to God.—Willing hearts were summoned to bring their offerings to the Lord. The maker of a musical instrument knows best how to develop its waiting music, and He who created and endowed us can make the most of us. Let us not work for Him; but yield ourselves to His hand, and our members as instruments of righteousness for His service. We may differ from all others in the special character of our work; but it matters not, so long as God effects through us His purpose in our creation.

Much more than enough.

Exodus xxxvi. 5.

THIS is always God's way. No words could better express the Imperial measure and standard of His dealings with His people. When He calls us out, as He did Moses, Bezaleel, and Aholiab, and entrusts us with His plan; and when we are careful to work out His specifications; He always makes more than enough provision for all our need.

The redemption in Christ Jesus.—Where sin abounded grace did much more abound. The topmost hills were covered by the waters of the deluge, and the Alpine heights of human rebellion were more than atoned for when Jesus died. Grace overtops sin.

God's ability to answer prayer.—He does exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. We ask great things, and secretly think that if God were to give only a fraction, we would be thankful. How we straiten Him! He cannot do much because of our unbelief! He yearns to do not only enough, but much more than enough for us. See His prodigality in nature: its enamelled shells, its profusion of flowers, its swarming life.

In daily provision for spirit, soul, and body.—Give, and it shall be given to you, good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over. God is not niggard. If He withholds, it is that we may cling to the Giver rather than the gift. But for the most part, He gives all things *richly* to enjoy. He opens His hand, and satisfies. Whatever thy need, God has much more than enough to meet it. He has riches of grace and of glory. Trust Him, obey Him, appropriate thy share in thy Father's rich provision. Weak and needy as thou art, there is much more than enough strength in God to perfect what concerns thee.

A mercy-seat of pure gold.

Exodus xxxvii. 6.

THIS was the Propitiatory. Beneath it lay the tables of the law, which even Moses had broken, almost as soon as they came into his hands, but which had been renewed. Concealing and covering them lay this golden lid, encrusted with the blood which successive generations of priests sprinkled there on the Great Day of Atonement.

There can be no doubt that this golden slab sets forth our Saviour's obedience unto death. God set Him forth to be "the Propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

Our Lord's obedience is priceless in the Divine esteem.—What pure gold is among metals, that is His advent to do God's will, in comparison with all other endeavors to do it. It takes the first place, and is of peerless beauty and excellence. "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered."

His obedience was to blood.—His wounds tell the story. He held nothing back; but yielded all to blood-shedding. Blood is life, and life is in the Blood: this He freely poured out to meet the claims of justice, and herein gave the sublimest token of His love.

His person and work are the medium of our approach.—In Jesus the Shekinah of God's presence awaits us. On this priceless mercy-seat the Divine Fire trembles, and we may draw near with boldness. We are beloved children; but let us never forget that we are redeemed sinners.

There is a place where Jesus sheds
The oil of gladness on our heads;
A place than all beside more sweet—
It is the blood-stained Mercy-seat.

The laver . . . of the mirrors of the serving-women.
Exodus xxxviii. 8 (R. V.).

THIS was a good use to put these mirrors to. The women were so deeply interested in the work which was afoot, that they counted no sacrifice too great. But the main suggestion for ourselves is the wisdom of renouncing self-inspection.

The mirror speaks of self-scrutiny.—We are constantly holding up the mirror to our inner life, studying its mechanism and operations. Our fingers often on our pulse; the attention of the soul turned back on itself; the study of symptoms carried to the grievous extent of inducing the diseases which we dread. Of course, where there is evident mischief at work, we do well to take heed; but we must guard against a morbid self-anatomy, a perpetual analysis of motive and intention, an inwardness which diverts our attention from the person of Christ and the performance of duty.

The evils of self-scrutiny.—If we look down into the depths of our own nature, we miss the face of Jesus. To consider self is to become involved in a maze of perplexities and disappointments. The disease cannot be cured by ceaselessly pondering its symptoms. The soul cannot lift the soul. Self can never expel the spirit of self.

Its cure.—These women became so interested in the service of the Tabernacle that they were weaned from their mirrors. The better expelled the worse; the higher cast out the lower. Go out of yourself, find some work to do for God and man; seek in the laver the removal of the strains of human sin; find your centre in God and His plans; and you will abandon the habit of morbid self-scrutiny. For every look at self, take ten at Christ: He "healeth all thy diseases."

Holy to the Lord.

Exodus xxxix. 30 (R. v.).

ZECHARIAH tells us that these words were to be written on the bells of the horses. The sacred inscription, which stood on the brow of Aaron, designating his separation to his sublime office, was to become incorporated with the business of the farm and city, where burdens were borne and heavy weights drawn with difficulty. The inscription befits all bells that ring in the home, the shop, the factory. We are to be God's priests everywhere.

The priest was separated from all impurity.—We must be in the world, but separate from its sin. When evil threatens us from a distance, we must be sensitive to its approach, and quick to put the covering presence of Christ between.

The priest was separated to holy service.—He was keenly sensitive to the honor of Jehovah, and to the demands of His service. Rather be cut down at His altar, like Zechariah the son of Berachiah, than prove a delinquent. We cannot all do the inner service of offering incense and of blessing men, but we can render every act as a sacred service to God; always treading the holy floor, and within sight of the holy presence, and within earshot of the Divine voice; eating, drinking, doing everything for the glory of God. Throughout this chapter we are reminded that all was made as the Lord commanded Moses; this should be the law of our life.

The priest bore holiness written where all could read it; so should we.—It should not be necessary for us to be labelled. For men to need telling that we are Christians, is a sign that we are far from what we should be. But so to live that the first and slightest glance at us should betray our heavenly calling, is to adorn the Gospel and please our Master.

The cloud of the Lord by day, . . . and there was fire therein by night. Exodus xl. 38 (R. V.).

THIS was the cloud of the Shekinah, in the heart of which was fire, the symbol of the presence of God. Probably this fire was always present, but only visible against the background of the surrounding darkness. In the New Testament fire is always associated with the ministry of the Holy Spirit; and in Isaiah (iv. 5) we learn that in the coming time God would give, on every dwelling-place in Mount Zion, and in all her assemblies, the same cloud of smoke by day, and flaming fire by night, as had been vouchsafed to the Tabernacle where God dwelt. What a glorious revelation is this!

The Holy Spirit brooding over each individual believer.—It is a symptom of the highest life, when God spreads His tabernacle over the soul. We should march only when He lifts up His enfolding presence, rest under His canopy, and recognize the sanctity of all life.

The Holy Spirit resting on each home.—“Every dwelling-place in Zion” must stand for the homes of God’s people. How blessed it is when the home is a temple, and each inmate of the beloved circle a priest! Such homes are rare, but they are possible. Let those who are founding a new family make this their ideal.

The Holy Spirit directing and filling each assembly and believer.—As of old the movements of the cloud determined those of the tent and people, so in the Pentecostal Church the Spirit was Guide, Director, Executor. “Separate *Me* . . . to the work to which *I* have called them.” We must rely most absolutely on Him, waiting for His initiation, His teaching, the settling down of His infinite benediction. Then there will be glory and defence.

A sweet savor unto the Lord.

Lev. i. 9, 13, 17.

HOW sweet the offering up of the Son was to the Father! "Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor" (Eph. v. 2). The burnt-offering was an imperfect type of His entire devotion to His Father's will. When Jesus saw the inability of man to keep the holy law, and volunteered to magnify it, and make it honorable; when He laid aside His glory, and stepped down from His throne, saying, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God"; when He became obedient even to the death of the cross—it was as sweet to God as the fragrance of a garden of flowers to us.

Let us never forget the Godward aspect of the cross. The sacrificial fire fed on every part of the sacrifice, on the inwards as well as the carcase; so did the Holy God delight to witness the spotless and entire devotion of the Son to the great work in which the entire Godhead was most deeply interested. The fragrant graces of Christ were made manifest on the cross, and are perpetuated in His intercession.

There is a sense also in which our consecration to God is fragrant and precious. When we see His claims, and yield to them; when we submit to His will, and commit our lives wholly to His direction; when we offer and present ourselves to Him, a living sacrifice, keeping nothing back—His heart is gladdened, and His fire of complacency feeds on our act. Always count on this; you may feel no thrill, and see no light, but reckon on God, believe that He accepts what you give, and will crown your sacrifice with the fire of Pentecost. Who to-day will surrender to God, and become an offering of a sweet savor?

Fine flour, and He shall pour oil upon it and put frankincense thereon. Lev. ii. 1.

THIS type is only true in its fullest extent of the blessed Master; but as we are to be conformed to His image, we may humbly take the ingredients of the meat offering as indicating various qualities in our personal character and behavior.

Fine flour.—There should be nothing coarse-grained or rough to the touch; but all even and tender. So that however great the pressure brought to bear on us, we should meet it with perfect grace and gentleness. Jesus reviled not again, but was led as a lamb to the slaughter. David Livingstone said that the promise of Christ was the word of a perfect gentleman. This should be our character.

Oil upon it.—We must be mingled with oil—that is the Holy Spirit must have access into the secret places of the inner life, and we must have the anointing of the Holy Ghost for service. In Christian work nothing is of any value or permanence, useful to man or pleasing to God, in which the Holy Spirit is not first.

Frankincense.—Every act of our life should emit sweet fragrance toward God. Always moving forward in Christ's triumphant procession, bearing aloft the incense—bowls of thought, action, word, filled with love and praise.

Salt.—"Let your conversation be always with grace, seasoned with salt." The words of Jesus were full of grace, and also of truth. There was a pungency and purity and uncorruptness in His speech, which have in every age arrested the progress of the world's evil. Let us give Him our lips.

No leaven—the symbol of the rising of pride and self.

No honey—that which is merely attractive and sensuous.

A sacrifice of Peace-offering.

Lev. iii. 1.

IN the burnt-offering the priest burnt *all*; but in the peace-offering a part only was burned, "the fat, kidneys, and caul." The inner parts were consumed as God's portion, whilst Aaron and his sons fed on the breast and the shoulder. In that feast God and the priests participated; and it is an emblem of our participation in the joy of God, over the person and work of Jesus.

Think of this blessed feast with God. We who were once far off in the wicked and hostile imaginings, are now made nigh; we sit at God's table as His children, and hear Him say, Let *us* make merry and be glad; this My son was dead, and is alive again.

We have Peace with God.—We are justified by faith in Jesus. In Him we stand before God, accepted and beloved. The curse is exchanged for blessing; distance for presence; the husks of the swine for the fatted calf. The past is forever under the blood; above us is the clear heaven of God's love.

We have the Peace of God.—The very peace that fills our Father's heart, undisturbed by the storms of care and strife which sweeps this lower world, is ours also. We sit in heavenly places; His peace, like a sentry, keeps our hearts and minds against molestation; the peace of God rules in us, bringing every thought into subjection to itself. We have perfect peace because our mind is stayed on Him.

We have the God of Peace.—According to the Apostle's fervent hope and prayer, He is with us. Not the gift, but the Giver; not I, but He; not the river only, but the source. We may well open our doors to admit such a guest, in having whom we received the Author and Giver of concord, unity, and unbroken rest.

If a soul shall sin through ignorance.

Lev. iv. 2.

SIN is something more than that of which our conscience convicts us. Our conscience may excuse or palliate our sins, or may fail to detect them for want of proper enlightenment, or may be misled by the practices and sentiments of those around. Therefore we may do things which are grievously wrong in God's sight without realizing their evil or bemoaning it.

All such sin must be met and atoned for ere God can admit us into His holy presence. Sin must be dealt with and put away, not only as it appears to us, but as it is in itself and in the sight of the All-Holy. So, in the types of Leviticus, provision was made for sins of ignorance; and the blood of Jesus cleanseth from *all* sin, whether known to us or not.

There is more sin in us than any of us know. If we think we have passed a day without conscious sin, we have only to wait till an intenser light is flashed on our motives and intentions—for firelight to be exchanged for electric light—and we shall see specks and flaws. If we do not actually violate known commands, there may be a grievous coming short of the infinite standard of the Divine perfection. Who shall dare to say that he has loved God with all his heart, and soul, and strength? Besides, there is always the liability to sinfulness; and this needs to be perpetually met and atoned for.

It is very needful, then, for us to be perpetually cleansed in the precious blood of Christ. We must ask to be forgiven for the many sins which we know not, as well as for those we know. The work of confession and forgiveness must therefore go on to life's end, applied to each heart and conscience by the Holy Spirit.

He shall confess that wherein he hath sinned, and bring his Guilt-offering. Lev. v. 5, 6 (R. V.).

IT is said that sometimes a soldier will come from the battle bleeding from a hidden wound which he has received without knowing it. So in the rush of life we may contract defilement by touching uncleanness, or speaking rashly, which in the sight of God will leave a foul stain upon the white robe of the soul.

The presence of unconscious sin with us is the reason why we are often unable to pray or read the Word of God at night. We are aware of a certain distance, a veil, a cloud, which has settled down between us and the beatific vision. At such times we do well to examine ourselves and the past more critically; for probably we shall be able to detect the hidden cause, which, when we know it, must be confessed and placed on the head of our guilt-offering, whilst we yield ourselves to God as a whole burnt-offering, in a new act of self-surrender.

But confession is all important. We must confess our sins, if the faithful Lord is to forgive them. Confession is taking God's side against ourselves. It is the act of judging evil in the light of the Throne. It is like the unpacking of a box, in which one begins with the lighter things at the top, and works steadily down to the heavy articles underneath. It is the repetition in the heart of Joshua's calling the roll of Israel until Achan, the son of Carmi, was taken.

When the atonement has been made as touching sin "in any of these things," there is forgiveness. Dare to believe that this is so, O penitent soul, who hast made Christ's soul an offering for thy sin. He says: "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins." Go thy way, and sin no more.

Fire shall be kept burning upon the altar continually ; it shall not go out. Lev. vi. 13 (R. v.).

THIS is an emblem of the perpetual work of God for man.

The Love of God.—There never was a time when God did not love. The bush that Moses saw gave no fuel to maintain the holy flame that trembled around it, because the love of God to Israel and to the human race demands no sustenance. Through the ages it burns and will burn ; however much indifference and neglect and rejection are heaped upon it, or poured over it, like barrels of water over Elijah's sacrifice, it never goes out. It is as fresh and vigorous to-day as ever, and waits to consume your sin and mine ; for God is a consuming fire.

The Intercession of Christ.—As the ages pass, this sacrifice retains its merit. What He did as Priest on the cross, He does as Priest on the throne. It is always "this same Jesus." What He was, He is, and will be ; and as generations of saints bring their gifts to the altar, He takes them, and lifts them up to God, as the fire bears up the substances which are submitted to it. He ever liveth to make intercession ; and the fire that burned through the long night in the Tabernacle bore witness to the undimming, unwaning virtue of our Saviour's work.

The Ministry of the Holy Ghost.—The fire that was lit on the Day of Pentecost burns still in the Church. There has been no intermission to its presence from the first day till now. Multitudes of unknown sects and persecuted saints have kept that fire burning in the world. On the perpetuity of its existence in our midst depends the constancy of our own love and purity and prayer. If the fire shall never go out in our hearts ; if the life in our spirits is indeed everlasting—it is because He lives and loves always.

Every one that is clean shall eat thereof.

Lev. vii. 19 (R. V.).

IN verse 13, it is admitted that leaven must be present in this holy feast, inasmuch as it stands for the essential principle of evil, which intrudes into our holiest worship. The self-life is an all-pervasive leaven. We may not be conscious of it; there may be no sufficient recognition of its distastefulness to the holy God: but it follows us even into the Holy place.

The worshipper was not allowed, however, to be knowingly unclean. There must be no stain on the conscience, which he might remove by confession and repentance. If there were, he must be cut off; that is, he must be debarred from all participation in holy rites, and suspended from entering the sacred enclosure of the Tabernacle.

This cutting off answers to the suspension of a believer's communion with God, because of unconfessed sin. The presence of the leaven of the self-life is no barrier to the enjoyment of the Divine fellowship, for we meet God in Jesus. But permitted sin makes such fellowship impossible, because we have not availed ourselves of the gracious arrangements made by God for the perpetual cleansing of the soul in the precious blood of Jesus Christ. For "it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul."

How many excommunicate Christians there are! You can easily see that they have been cut off; their joyless faces and powerless prayers, their inability to bear testimony for God—all tell the sad story. If you have been cut off, search your past history to discover the cause. Put away your sin, and seek the blessed cleansing of John xiii. ; then come to feast with God, in holy communion, as at a common table.

Ye shall not go out.

Lev. viii. 33.

FOR seven days Aaron and his sons, newly consecrated by the blood and oil, waited together in the Holy Place. They were prohibited from going beyond the door, but fed on the consecrated food till the eighth day summoned them to begin their priestly duties. Similarly we are shut in with our Great Aaron, the High Priest of our profession. We are in Christ in the purposes of God, for we were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. We are in Him, as Noah was in the ark, and as the child is in the home; as the member is in the body, and the branch in the vine; as the sponge in the ocean, or the jewel in the sunbeam. We are in Him as a strong enclosure, through which the malice and strength of our foes cannot break—a fortress, a strong tower, a castle keep. We are in Him, as a banqueting-hall, a Tabernacle with its shewbread, an upper room with its descending fire.

It is highly necessary that we should maintain our walk and experience on this blessed elevation. The great enemy of our souls is perpetually tempting us to leave our abiding-place, and to try issues with him in the plains beneath. What is temptation but his subtle solicitation to come out from the secret place of the Most High. Beware! the bait may be very attractive, but the end is death. Keep the charge of the Lord, and abide day and night in the company of the Great High Priest. "He shall dwell among them."

On what viands do such happy souls feast with Christ! A table is provided before them by the Lord Himself, and they feast on all that pertains to Him in blessed partnership. "Son, thou art ever with Me, and all that I have is thine."

Aaron lifted up his hand toward the people, and blessed them.
Lev. ix. 22.

THE eighth day is evidently the type of the bright millennial morning. During the present age we are hidden with Christ in God ; the world knoweth us not, as it knew Him not ; our hopes, and joys, and aims, are largely secret. But the day is not far distant when He shall be manifested, and then we shall be manifested with Him in glory. That group of priests, following the high priest out from the recesses of the Holy Place, is a picture of the Second Advent, when Christ and His own shall come forth to bless the world. When Jesus was parted in the Ascension from His disciples, He was in the act of blessing them ; and in that attitude He will return. Who can doubt that all through the intervening ages those blessed hands have still been outstretched, that heart ever going forth, in blessing.

What a Saviour is ours ! In Him are combined *meekness* that bears all insult and hatred, and *mercy* that retaliates on wrongdoing in ministries of love. He fulfills His own idea of blessing those that hate, and praying for those that despitefully use. How truly can it be said of Him, as of Archbishop Ussher, that to do him a wrong is to make him your friend forever !

Let us imitate Him in this, and let the going forth of our lives be one incessant stream of benediction to men, until they shall fall on their faces and acknowledge the overwhelming power of love. But in order to this we must be much in company with our blessed Lord ; gazing on His face we shall reflect His likeness ; the lineaments of the Divine beauty shall pass into our life, and light it up with a loveliness which is not of earth. Thus shall we bring glory to our God.

HIS heart must have been rent with paroxysms of grief, as he beheld the bodies of his beloved sons on the floor of the Tabernacle, stretched out in death. He repressed the cry, choked back the sob, stanchd the flowing tear, and continued to perform the holy duties with which he was charged. He was no stoic, and tears are not wrong for our dead ; but his relationship to God was so overmastering as to still the expressions of nature.

He saw the wrong from God's standpoint.—It was of great importance that the Divine regulations and enactments should be maintained, and that the ministering priests should always prefer God's work and service above their own ideas. Aaron was able to appreciate that position, and saw the sin of which his children were guilty. They had forgotten the voice which said, Sanctify thou Me. Obedience is the foundation of reverence, honor, and service ; and if it were relaxed with the priests, how for the people ! How careful they should be who bear the vessels of the Lord ! With what fear and trembling must they work, who work with God !

He acquiesced in the Divine dealings.—To take the yoke, and meekly bear it ; to put the hand on the mouth, and bow in the dust—this is rest and peace. In this way we drink Christ's cup and become partakers of His sufferings.

He felt that his work as priest must take precedence.—It was a solemn and awful thing to be God's anointed priest, and the office must come first, even to the denial of the dues of nature, if that were necessary : so always with us, there must be the subordination of everything to our service and work for God.

Whatsoever parteth the hoof and cheweth the cud.

Lev. xi. 3 (R. V.).

THE animals, in which these two characteristics met, were reckoned clean, and therefore fit for food. It is certain that the minute particularity of these words has some further reference than to the diet of Israel, important though that was, or to accentuate with every meal the necessity of their being a separate people. We, at least, may gather this lesson, that in our daily experience we must combine meditation and separation.

Meditation.—The cattle do not simply browse on the pastures, but they lie down to chew the cud. It is not enough to peruse our allotted Scripture portion; we must ruminate upon it, comparing spiritual things with spiritual, and scripture with scripture. The Holy Ghost will take of the things of Christ and show them unto us, and He will bring all things to our remembrance.

Separation.—"Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God." "The Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." We have not meditated to good purpose unless we have felt its keen edge. Detachment from the world must follow on true attachment to Christ. Love to Naomi will draw Ruth from Moab across the Jordan.

The two must be combined.—The swine divideth the hoof, but cheweth not the cud, and was therefore unclean. A man may profess to love his Bible, but the supreme test is his daily separation from evil. On the other hand, our daily life ought to emanate, not from without, which is Pharisaism, but from within, where we chew the cud of holy meditation.

THESE were the offerings of the poor, of those whose means did not suffice to buy a lamb. All these offerings pointed to the one great Sacrifice which was to be offered on Calvary.

The blood of Christ is within the reach of the poorest and feeblest.—None can say that it is beyond them, that they cannot afford to procure it, that they are too poor. To the poor the Gospel is preached. The Divine call is to those who have no money. Salvation is to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly. “It is nigh thee.”

The faith that apprehends but a part of the Saviour's work saves.—The pigeon may stand for the meagre apprehension of Christ that is the portion of the faltering and timid; but it saves equally with that fuller conception of His saving work, which might be compared to the bullock of the priest. The question is not as to the quantity but the object of faith. Is it fixed on Jesus? All faith directed to Him cannot but be genuine. It may but touch His garment's hem, yet it saves.

The beneficence of God's law.—What tender touches there are through this strong ancient code! There is such a one here, framed partly in anticipation of the mother of our Lord, who gladly availed herself of its provision. What a glimpse into our Master's humiliation! He owned the cattle on a thousand hills, yet He so emptied Himself that His parents were compelled to bring the poorest offering the law allowed. He stooped that we might rise; emptied Himself that we might be full; became poor that we might be made rich; was made human that we might be made Divine.

*Behold, if the leprosy have covered all his flesh,
he shall pronounce him clean. Lev. xiii. 13.*

AT first sight this seems a very extraordinary provision. When the leprosy was beginning to show itself, and whilst the marks were hardly distinguishable, the poor patient was treated as unclean; but, when it was fully developed, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, the priest pronounced the leper clean.

As long as we palliate and excuse our sins, and dream that there is much in us which is noble and lovely, we are not fit subjects for God's saving grace. But when we take our place as helpless and undone, without one plea or one redeeming trait, we are in the position in which the free grace of God can have its blessed way with us.

We must come to an end of ourselves, and fall prostrate, in the very helplessness of our despair, in the very dust at our Saviour's feet; we must confess that from the crown of our head to the sole of our foot we are full of need and sin—then we are nearest Christ, and in a fit condition to be richly blest, and made the channel of blessing to others.

Would you rise? then you must humble yourself before God. God's thrones are approached, not by steps up to them, but by steps down to them. It is the publican who beats his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me the sinner," that goes down justified to his house. It is when sin abounds, that grace much more abounds. He that humbleth himself shall be exalted. "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isa. lvii. 15).

Shall let go the living bird into the open field.

Lev. xiv. 7 (R. v.).

THAT is thou, O trembling soul. Thine iniquities have come between thee and freedom, like the bars of a cage to a bird caught from its native woods and imprisoned. See the quickly-palpitating breast, beaten against the bars, pining for the open field—is not that an apt symbol of thy deep yearning for deliverance from the tyranny and thrall of besetting sin?

We are made free from the penalty of sin through the blood of Him who died.—One of the birds was killed in an earthen vessel over running water—here is symbolized the precious death of thy Saviour, in the earthen vessel of His human nature, and in connection with the living power of the Holy Spirit, which bore forth the tidings into all the world. We have been dipped into the crimson tide and are freed—as the leper was—from the taint of our disease. He might go freely among men, and join the congregation of worshippers: and we may mingle with the saints, and enter the very presence-chamber of God.

We are made free from the power of sin through the grace of Him who rose.—He has passed into the resurrection life, and we in Him. When He rose through all the heavens to His native home, we ascended too. We are made free from the thralldom of evil by identification with the risen Lord; and the Holy Spirit, entering our hearts from our exalted Head, makes us possessors of all the privileges which are ours in the Divine purpose (Rom. viii. 3, 4). Fly away, happy soul, to thy nest in the heart of God! Seek those things which are above! It is your privilege to live in the heavenlies with Christ. *Sursum Corda!*

He that toucheth . . . shall be unclean.

Lev. xv. 7.

THERE were doubtless great sanitary reasons for many of these enactments. This book is one of the greatest sanitary codes in existence. God made religious duty enforce regulations essential to the physical health and well-being of His people. But there were deeper reasons yet. The whole of these arrangements were contrived to teach profound lessons to us all of the nature and evil of sin, and of the need of being continually cleansed in the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

The unclean soul spreads uncleanness.—Whatever the ceremonially unclean touched, used, or sat on, was polluted. Even those who came into contact with him were defiled. How wary all true Israelites must have been of their associates, lest they should contract pollution! Let us adopt similar precautions, and not voluntarily associate with the unholy or unclean. And if our business calls us into their daily company, let us seek cleansing for ourselves as we return to our homes, that any adhering germs of evil may be removed.

The urgent demand for holiness.—The ordinary processes of life are not necessarily clean because they are natural. The foul heart may vitiate the most natural functions. We must bring the thought of God into the simplest, the commonest, and the most secret acts. Nothing is outside His jurisdiction. Though hid from sight, yet He is ever near the child of God. His grace, and blood, and cleansing, are always requisite, and ever ready. Amidst and after every act, incident, and episode of life, we should be quiet before God, considering if we have aught to confess, and asking to be ever kept from staining our white robes.

Unto a solitary land.

Lev. xvi. 22 (R. V.).

THIS chapter is full of Christ in His most precious death for men. Its various aspects are set forth under these diverse sacrifices, as light reflected from the many facets of a diamond. We think now only of the *live* goat which was led away into the wilderness. We see in it:—

Christ made sin.—With both hands Aaron, in symbol, transferred all the iniquities, sins, and transgressions of the people to the head of the goat, which became so identified with them that it was accounted an unclean thing; and even he who led it away must needs wash his clothes and bathe. This is what the apostle means when he says that Jesus was made sin for us. Our sins met in Him; were assumed by Him; He stood before God as though, in some mysterious sense, they were His own.

Christ bearing sin away.—As the goat went away, the eyes of the people followed it, and they were taught to believe that sin was no longer reckoned to them. Aaron put off his linen garments and arrayed himself in festal robes, and came forth to bless the congregation. What rejoicing must have broken from the crowds! So Jesus, in His matchless grace, has borne away the sin of the world into a land of forgetfulness. “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.”

Christ's loneliness.—He was alone in His mediatorial work. None could bear Him company. Loved ones might stand beside His cross, or in after ages suffer, as He did, deaths of martyrdom; but none could do what He did as the sacrifice for sin. Ah, how lonely He was! Even the Father seemed to have forsaken Him! Before the universe, in that dread hour, the Saviour stood in awful, unapproachable solitude!

The life of the flesh is in the blood.

Lev. xvii. 11.

THERE is probably a deeper truth in these words than man has ever fathomed. The R. V. marg. translates "life," *soul*. Why that reverence for blood; that horror when it is unrighteously shed and gurgles forth; that perpetual reference of Scripture to the blood of Christ? Probably the answer to such questions would be given, if we perfectly understood the affirmation of this remarkable verse.

When Jesus gave His blood, He gave His life, the life of His holy soul.—We are accustomed often to speak about the blood of Christ, by which we mean the life of Jesus, shed forth for us substitutionally and sacrificially. The sinner takes this blood, this life, in his hands, and presents it to God as his plea. Does the broken law require satisfaction, homage, acknowledgment? Here it is in this priceless, pure, and sinless blood, never infected by pollution, never heated by passion. Let this shed life atone for thee! "God be propitious (because of the sacrifice on the altar) to me the sinner."

Five bleeding wounds He bears,
Received on Calvary;
They pour effectual prayers,
They strongly plead for me:
"Forgive him, oh, forgive," they cry,
"Nor let that ransomed sinner die."

When we are bidden drink His blood, it is of His life that we partake.—At the table of our Lord we symbolically drink of His blood; in doing this we identify ourselves with His death, and give up our self-life to the cross. Yea, we do more; we testify our desire to receive into our natures more and more of the soul and life of our Blessed Lord, so that we may dwell in Him, and He in us.

Therefore shall ye keep My charge.

Lev. xviii. 30 (R. v.).

LITERAL obedience was God's perpetual demand of His chosen people. Why should we claim to be exonerated from an equally exact obedience to the commands of Jesus? And yet how few of us do exactly as He has bidden! Let us take some tests.

The Lord's Supper is a case in point. In the present day there are many who, from year's end to year's end, never go to the Table, though Jesus said that His disciples were to do it in remembrance of Him.

Baptism is another. Christians shelter themselves under the excuse that it is not essential, and therefore may be omitted. But what do they mean by essential? It is not essential to salvation, because that has been achieved by our Lord; but it may be essential to show that we love Him, that we have a genuine faith, that we are ready to take Him as King. Surely a soldier is not freed from obeying the command of his officer because he cannot see it to be essential!

Going to law is another. If there is one thing clearer than others, it is the reiterated charge of the New Testament that we should rather suffer wrong than avenge ourselves. Yet how many professing Christians will this day issue a County Court summons against defaulters!

Forgiveness is another. "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Yet there are hundreds of Christ's professing followers who are at feud with their relatives or fellow members.

Let us remember the imperative tone of these words, and ask God to work in us to will and to do of His good pleasure.

I am the Lord your God.

Lev. xix. 3.

THIS is the refrain of the entire chapter ; count how many times it recurs. Evidently the thought of God should ring in our lives, as a perpetual chime.

Sometimes as *an inspiration to duty*. We should seek to be holy because He is holy. "Imitators of God." Or as *a remonstrance against yielding to temptation*. Lo, God is in this place ; His pure eye is upon me : how can I do this great wickedness ! Or as *an incentive to liberality*. We can afford to be generous to the poor and hireling, because we are children of so great and rich a parent. Or as *a reason for mercy and gentle kindness*. How can we act otherwise than lovingly, when His love encompasses us with its persuasive bands ?

Thus the perpetual consciousness of God becomes the source of holy and happy living. But how may it become ours ? We may make many resolutions, only to break them. We forget after our most definite purposing. There is no help but in the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to teach us all things, and bring all things to our remembrance. He is able also to help our infirmity : "for we know not how to pray as we ought ; but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

In the morning let the thought of God's presence with you in your secret closet sink well into your heart. Wait till His presence is made real to you, and you cry, Lo, God is here. Then entrust yourself to the Holy Spirit, asking Him to keep you in the current of the love and thought of God. Reckon on Him to do so. Now and then in the course of daily duty stop and remember God. Thus you will live in His fear and love all the day long.

I have separated you from the peoples, that ye should be Mine. Lev. xx. 26 (R. V.).

“SEPARATE me Barnabas and Saul,” said the Holy Ghost. And in after days Paul spoke of himself as being separated unto the Gospel of God. It is a mistake to make the act of separation our own resolve and deed. We shall inevitably drop back unless God has come into the transaction, and has set us apart for Himself. We must be separated *from* sin and sinners *unto* a holy God.

We are needed for a specific purpose.—God can bless men only through men. As once He used the Jews to be the medium of communicating His truth to men, so now He is eager to use His Church; if only she will allow Him to deliver her from the taint of sin and the world, and separate her for a peculiar possession unto Himself. Let us individually yield ourselves to the blessed influences of the Holy Spirit, that He may realize in us the purpose for which He has called us.

We are required to satisfy God's heart.—He needs love for love. Throughout the world He seeks for those who can afford Him pleasure, as His enclosed gardens, His sealed fountains, His peculiar treasure.

This separation is effected by the Holy Ghost, and is referred to in the word “sealing.” “He hath sealed us unto the day of redemption.”

What an honor is this! To be for God Himself: to do His errands, to fulfill His behests and give Him pleasure! Rejoice greatly when God says, “Thou art Mine.” We also can take up His words, and answer back, “Thou also art mine.” Let us be glad, if we know that the oil of separation has come on our heads, and let us walk worthily of our high calling, separated to the Holy Ghost, and counting it sacrilege to be used for any unholy purpose.

I the Lord, which Sanctify you.

Lev. xxi. 8, 15, 23.

THIS chapter is full of restrictions and cautions against anything that might defile the priests, the sons of Aaron. The holiness of God was set in a clear light by the care that there should be no ceremonial pollution or personal defect in those who ministered before His presence. What Aaron and his sons were in the ancient typical worship, that Jesus and His people are in the spiritual dispensation which has taken its place. "Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession."

How holy we should be "in all manner of living"! What may be innocent and natural for others would be wrong and inconsistent in us. Even the pointing of the beard after the fashion of the nations around, and for appearance' sake, was forbidden them; and contact with death in the home of domestic mourning. These, with many such like cautions, indicate that our spiritual separation for the service of God must enter into the minutest details. The clothes we wear, the books we read, the amusements we engage in, the details of the home-life—will all be affected by the thought, "I have been set apart for God; the anointing of the Spirit is on me; I am called to offer Him the bread of a holy life; I may not do as others, who have not realized the sacredness of life, as I do; and who may permit without compunction what I forego."

This is a high ideal; and it is only practicable to those who realize the thrice-made announcement of our text, that God will sanctify us: setting us apart for Himself—by the precious blood of Christ, by the anointing of the Spirit, and by the separation of our thoughts, and aims, and practices.

He shall not eat of the holy things till he be clean.
Lev. xxii. 4.

THE holy things referred to here are the offerings made by Israel to Jehovah, a part of which was presented to God in fire, and the rest partaken of by the priests and their families. None, however, might feed on them whilst ceremonially unclean. This suggests some useful precautions for ourselves, if we would fully enjoy the privileges and blessings attending the worship of the holy God.

We must be clean before we can enjoy the private reading of the Word of God.—We would wash our hands, soiled with the dust and grime of toil, before opening an exquisitely printed copy of the Scriptures; how much more should we seek cleansing at the hands of Christ before we feed on the holy things of Scripture!

We must be clean before entering the House of God.—It is a holy habit for each intended worshipper to be quiet before leaving the house on the Lord's day; or to use carefully the moment of the bent head at the commencement of the public service, in order that the soul may be made clean from any contracted stain, and resolve henceforth to abstain from all evil.

We must be clean before partaking of the Lord's Supper.—There we feed upon the bread of God; and as we wash our hands before we sit at the table of a friend, so should our hearts be cleansed ere we partake of the emblems of the body and blood of Christ. Holiness becomes God's house. Those that ascend the hill of the Lord must have clean hands and a pure heart. The reason why religious exercises do not profit you, may lie in your failure to comply with this demand. "He shall not eat of the holy things until he be clean."

Ye shall afflict your souls.

Lev. xxiii. 27, 29, 32.

WHILST Aaron was making the solemn atonement for the people, confessing their sins on the victims and sending them away, the camp was pervaded with the atmosphere of the Sabbath rest. No servile work was done on penalty of death. Probably for the most part the people abode in their tents. No sound was heard save sighs, and groans, and cries of penitence. The people afflicted themselves for their sins.

Sin is forgiven by God, but it should not be forgotten by us.—We should remember it, in order to refresh our memory of God's great grace in putting it away ; in order to deepen our sense of gratitude and to promote our self-humiliation ; in order to make us watchful and careful in our daily walk and conversation. Holding the hand of our Saviour, we need not dread to look down into the abyss from which He has redeemed us. We shall turn from it to Him with tenderer love and gratitude.

Repentance is once for all ; penitence is perennial.—We repent when we turn from the kingdom of darkness to that of God's dear Son ; it is the act of the will, the utter reversal of the course we had been pursuing. But we are penitent after we have seen the face of Jesus : it is the act of the emotions ; the sense of Christ's love and of our unworthiness together makes us weep, as the forgiven sinner did at His feet.

Penitence does not purchase forgiveness, but accompanies and follows it.—Could our tears forever flow, they could not bring God's pardon into our souls. That is secured by the offering of our Substitute on Calvary. But being forgiven, we wash His feet with our tears, we break our alabaster boxes on His head, and love much.

Before the Lord continually.

Lev. xxiv. 4-8.

THE light of the candlestick and the twelve cakes of fine flour were to be before the Lord continually, as symbols of the twofold office His people were to sustain, on the one hand to the world's darkness, on the other to God Himself.

We must shine as lights in the world.—As a candle in the hand of the housewife, who sweeps her house diligently; as a lamp in the hand of the virgin expecting the bridegroom; or as the lighthouse on a rocky coast. We must dispel the darkness, and guide wanderers through the murky night. Light is soft and still, and is thus a fitting emblem of the influence of a holy life, which burns steadily on before the Lord continually, and is unaffected by the heed or comment of man. If no one seems the better for our consistent testimony, aim to satisfy the Lord. The lamps of the pure candlestick of a holy life are not for man only, but for Him. But they can only be maintained through the constant supply of the pure oil of the Holy Ghost, ministered by Him who walks amid the seven golden candlesticks. “Ye are the light of the world.”

We must be as bread to God.—In a blessed sense we feed on God, but God also feeds on us. He finds satisfaction in beholding His people's unity and love, in receiving their sacrifices of praise, and in watching their growing conformity to His will. The two rows of six cakes foreshadow the unity and order of the Church; the fine flour, its holy, equable character; the pure frankincense, the fragrance of Christian love. There is a testimony in all these to the world; but we do not always realize the satisfaction afforded to the great God, who has made such costly sacrifices on behalf of His Church.

His kinsman that is next unto him.

Lev. xxv. 25 (R. V.).

IN the case of Naomi this was Boaz ; in our case it is Jesus Christ. Redemption, as described in this chapter, had to do with persons and lands ; and each illustrates Christ's work on behalf of believers throughout all ages.

He has redeemed our Persons.—It often happened that a Hebrew waxed poor, and was compelled to sell himself to some wealthy Gentile who sojourned in the land. He who had owned his own patrimony now wrought as a bondservant for another. But after he had sold himself he might be redeemed by his next kinsman. So we had sold ourselves for nought ; we wrought the will of the flesh ; we were enslaved to the fashions of the world ; we obeyed the promptings of the prince of the power of the air. Alas for us ! But we have been redeemed, not with corruptible things, but with the precious blood of Christ. We have been made free by right, and have only to claim and act upon the freedom with which the risen Christ has made us free.

He has redeemed our Inheritance.—What we lost in the first Adam we have more than regained in the second. For innocence, we have purity ; for external fellowship with God, His indwelling ; for the delights of an earthly paradise, the fullness of God's blessedness and joy.

He is our nearest Kinsman.—"My brother, my sister," He says of each who will do the will of His Father. He has made Himself one with us by taking on Himself our nature, and identifying Himself with our race. We know that Jesus, our *Göel* and Redeemer, liveth ; and that He will come to redeem us from the power of the grave, and receive us to Himself.

None shall make you afraid.

Lev. xxvi. 6.

BUT we are afraid, often very greatly so. How can we be secured from the dread of men and things which so easily besets us?

We must be absolutely right with God.—To walk in God's statutes, and keep His commandments, was the first condition of Israel's immunity from fear. When we know that there is no cause of controversy between us and God, we feel able to count confidently on His protection and deliverance. "Perfect love casteth out fear."

We must count on God's faithfulness.—He has put us where we are, and we dare not think He will withdraw from us, as Joab did from Uriah. We are His partners, summoned to co-operate with Him: will He allow us to incur responsibilities in His name, and then leave the burden on our unassisted resources? Fear will yield before a clear sense of God's might; but it is still more likely to yield before a deep sense of God's perfect faithfulness.

We must rely on the environment of angel keepers.—When David, during his flight before Absalom, slept in the open, he believed that the Angel of the Lord encamped around him. More are they which are for us than those that be against us. The mountain is full of horses and chariots of fire. Lord, open our eyes that we may see!

We must believe that our enemies are less formidable than they seem.—They surround us with their bluster and threatenings, they come against us in embattled array; but if we dare to go forward and do the right thing in the sight of God, they will vanish like a puff of smoke. "For, lo, the kings assembled themselves. . . . They were arrayed, they were dismayed, they hasted away."

No devoted thing . . . shall be sold or redeemed.
Lev. xxvii. 28.

THERE is a great principle involved in these words. When once a person or possession had been solemnly dedicated to God, it was not permissible to withdraw from the obligations which had been assumed. Once given, the offering was regarded as God's property, and might not be resumed by the offerer, or placed to any inferior use.

This regulation is specially applicable to our conception and practice of consecration. We are Christ's: by the gift of the Father, by the purchase of the blood of Christ, by the sealing of the Spirit; but a moment often comes in the life of the earnest believer when the Lord appears to claim a more earnest recognition of His rightful claim. Then thoughtfully and earnestly, spirit, soul, and body, are laid upon the altar, and we solemnly declare, "I am Thine, O Lord!"

When once this is done, we must reckon that God has accepted us, and that we cannot repeat the gift. We may perpetually refer to it, and acknowledge its abiding obligation, and apply its principle to all those new departments and functions which are perpetually increasing on us; but we can no more repeat it, than could the Israelite give God the firstling lamb, since it was already His (ver. 26).

If we go back from the attitude we have once taken up, we must confess our relapse with tears and deep contrition, asking to be restored, waiting to be put back again into the old place by our merciful and compassionate High Priest. We cannot undo that past; but we may ask Him to restore us to the place we occupied before we went astray. Oh that we might never withdraw from the altar of entire consecration!

They declared their pedigrees.

Num. i. 18.

IT was not enough to be a true-born Israelite, a man must be able to show his descent. The genealogical tables were kept with the greatest care; and there was a holy pride in being able to vindicate the claim of having the blood of the patriarchs in the veins.

It is a blessed thing to be sure that we have passed from death unto life, and are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. True, our eternal destiny does not hinge on it. Many will doubtless be saved at last, who have spent their lives between hope and fear. But it is very needful for our comfort and growth in grace to be able to declare our pedigree, and to know that we have been translated into the Kingdom of God's dear Son.

The Gospel of John was written that we might *believe*; the Epistle that we might *know*. But many seek this knowledge in the wrong way, and are exposed to endless questionings. They try to discover the date, place, or experience in the past, when they were incorporated into the Divine family; and because they cannot point to these, they imagine that they are still outside. Now for every one that has had a definite experience of the new birth, there are perhaps a score who entered the Divine family almost as a sailor passes the line of the Equator. Yet it is possible for you to know that you are born again, though you may not be able to tell your birthday.

If you are trusting Jesus, if the Spirit witnesses with your spirit that God is your Father, if you are full of a holy fear of grieving Him, if you are becoming like Him, if you love the brethren—you may certainly declare yourself His child.

The Children of Israel shall pitch every man by his own standard. Num. ii. 2-34 (R. V.).

OUR God is a God of order; and it was needful for the order of the camp, whether at rest or on the march, that each man should know his place, and keep to it. But though there were different standards and positions, there was one centre, the ark, and one host of redeemed men.

Each believer has an appointed place in the great army of God. It is indicated by the voice of God, and by the circumstances of our life; and it should be jealously retained. Repeatedly the Apostle bade his converts abide in the calling wherein they were called. Yours may be toward the bleak north of difficulty, or the warm south of privilege—in the home, the country parish, or the difficult foreign post. But, on the whole, you should stay where you are; unless the Captain of our salvation moves you by some unmistakable indication of His will. The apostle Paul ever lived in such dependence on the Holy Spirit for guidance, and for the unfolding of the Divine purpose, that from some apparently trivial circumstance he would “gather” the movements of the pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night. And interval there was none between his apprehension of the Divine purpose and his endeavor to strike his tent and follow wherever it might lead (Acts xvi. 6, 7).

The main point with us all is to face the ark, to which the doors of all the tents looked, so that we may ever catch the first symptom of the movement of the cloud. On the whole, we do best to pitch and fight under our own standards. There is a closer bond of brotherhood possible between those who think alike. But whilst we are positive in what we affirm for ourselves, let us not deny that other standards represent necessary aspects of the common faith.

Take the Levites instead.

Num. iii. 45.

EACH firstborn son was God's. On the day of the Exodus, as the firstborn of Egypt were stricken, so the firstborn of Israel were hallowed. God claimed the right of their service in His Temple, to serve there as priests and attendants. But instead of them, He accepted the whole tribe of Levi; and for the overplus of firstborn sons above the number of Levites, He accepted redemption money, which went to maintain Aaron and his family. Thus, each firstborn son was represented, either by a substitute, or by a money payment.

An Appeal to Parents.—Would it not be a blessed custom if, in all our churches, the first-born child was, in a special sense, regarded as God's, and trained for some branch of His holy service in the home and foreign field? What a blessing would rest on our homes if this were the custom! It would lead to very definite prayer, that the young soul might be truly converted and led to realize the parents' ideal.

An Appeal to firstborn Children.—Either go yourself into the service of God, at home or abroad, or send a substitute. Consider yourself under obligation to do some special work for Christ and His Church. And if you cannot, earn money to support your representative. This is laying up treasure in heaven.

An Appeal to Families.—Why should not each Christian family become a missionary society, sending one of its members forth in the name of the rest, who should bind themselves solemnly to "hold the ropes"; and thus obey the Master's parting commission, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"?

Every one to his service and to his burden.

Num. iv. 19.

IS this what the Apostle referred to when he said that every man should bear his own burden? There are burdens which we cannot share or depute, to bear which we need special grace, and must continually seek the aid of the Divine Spirit.

The burden of our own existence.—Each of us must give an account of himself to God. We were created for a specific purpose; and our failure to fulfill it cannot be settled on another. God will require each man's soul of himself. "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. xiv. 12). You have a charge to keep, a soul to save, and a God to glorify.

The burden of our life-work.—What makest thou in the world? The Maker of all waits for thee to enter His great workshop and become His apprentice and co-worker. To be an idler, or an absentee, will land thee in inevitable disgrace. The appointed place cannot be left vacant, and thy tools untouched, save at thy grave peril.

The burden of the souls of others.—We are our brothers' keepers, liable at any moment to be called upon to give an account of how they fare; and we cannot rid ourselves of this responsibility by annual donations or subscriptions to charitable or missionary institutions.

The burden of daily intercession.—Jesus bears the burdens of His people as He intercedes for them in heaven; and there is a sense in which we are called to bear up His hands in this holy service. We must consider the work of daily prayer for His Church, for sufferers, and for the world, as part of the burden of the Lord, allotted to us because we are members of His body.

Without the camp, . . . in the midst whereof I dwell.

Num. v. 3.

WHAT a sublime conception!—*God dwelt with His people.* The Tabernacle was His tent amongst theirs; the cloudy pillar was His ensign. To attack them was to come into collision with Him. All the expense and anxiety of the march rested on His shoulders, as the care of a family of young children on a father. How needful it was that nothing should be permitted which could grieve or offend Him!

What the camp of Israel was in those long-ago days, the Church is now. It is the host of the redeemed, the representative of God, the pilgrimage of the saints. Amongst His people God still walks, and dwells, and tabernacles. Their griefs, conflicts, and experiences, are shared by their ever-present Almighty Friend.

The presence of God in the Church is by the Holy Spirit. “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” (1 Cor. iii. 16). He is with her and in her as the Body of which the risen Lord is Head. When the one Advocate went up, the other came down; when the Second Person in the Holy Trinity ascended to His throne, the Third Person came down to perpetuate His work in the world, through the Church. “He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”

How careful should we be in the ordering of our church-life, as well as of our individual lives, so that there may be nothing to offend Him! “What will the Holy Spirit think of this?” should be always our first inquiry. We must walk in the *paracletism* of the Holy Ghost, if we would be edified and multiplied, as were the churches throughout Judæa, and Galilee, and Samaria (Acts ix. 31).

The former days shall be void.

Num. vi. 12 (R. V.).

HOW solemn is the suggestion of these words ! If the separation of the Nazarite were broken in upon by his sudden contact with death, he might start afresh ; but all the days that preceded that untoward event would go for nothing—they would not be counted.

How many days in our life have been made void ! Days in which we have learned no new lesson of God ; have had no access into His presence ; have done no kind and helpful act ; have spoken no loving, tender word. It is all-important that even our days of rest from active engagements should be days of learning deeper lessons, of vision, and of reception from the fullness of God.

Each day comes to us fresh from God, like soft metal, waiting to be stamped with our inscription ; or like a piece of yielding clay, to be moulded into some shape of beauty or use. Each morning the slate is brought for us to write on ; the canvas on which we may paint. But too often we miss our opportunity, and a blurred, marred, confused result is all we have to show.

If you would avoid this, let God plan each day ; follow the guidance of His Spirit ; do all you touch with your might and for His glory ; put away all known sin, and be separate from evil ; in everything learn to submit to His dealings, and to commit yourself to His faithful keeping. Then each day will have something to keep in charge, and resemble a chalice filled to its brim with holy service. We must ever remember that "every man's work shall be made manifest : for the Day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire ; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is" (1 Cor. iii. 13).

*Moses . . . heard the voice speaking unto him,
. . . and He spake unto him. Num. vii. 89.*

THE meaning of this verse seems to be that when Moses went into the Holy Place to speak with God he became conscious of the Divine voice, that opened out to him the thoughts and purposes of God in such a way that he was caught up on the current and borne back to God.

This is the true conception of prayer. We often go to God with *our* thoughts and desires, and having uttered them we go our way. We do not wait long enough to see the cherubim and the light of the Shekinah, or hear the Divine voice. Thus our prayers fail of their answer. We do not ask what is according to the will and mind of our Heavenly Father; and the heavens seem like brass. We have not because we ask not, or because we ask amiss. We must ask in faith, nothing wavering.

The true conception of prayer is that it originates in the purpose of God, and passes from the Father to the Son, who is also the Head and Representative of His people. From Jesus it is brought into our hearts by the blessed Spirit, who unites the Head with each member of the mystical body; and from the saints it returns to the source from which it came.

If, then, we would pray aright, we should wait before God until the Holy Spirit suggests what we should pray for, and indeed begins to plead within us for the saints. Silence, solitude, waiting before God; the return to God of His own thoughts; the being burdened with the weighty matters that lie heavily on the heart of Jesus—such is the noblest kind of prayer. It is those who wait upon the Lord that renew their strength, that mount up with wings as eagles; that run and are not weary, that walk and are not faint (Isa. xl. 31).

Aaron offered them for a wave offering.

Num. viii. 11, 13, 15, 21 (R. V.).

THIS is interesting and instructive. The Levites were substituted for the firstborn of Israel. They were first separated from the rest of the people, cleansed, sprinkled, shaven, and finally presented to the Lord by the act of Aaron, who, according to the Hebrew word, *waved* them before the Lord. This waving must, of course, have been done in symbol and figure. But it was not enough that they were thus waved, they had thereafter to go in to do their service. In other words, they were called to realize actually that which was their position and standing in the sight of God.

There is a precise analogy in all this to the work which the Lord Jesus has accomplished for us all. He said, "I consecrate Myself, that they also may be consecrated." When He offered Himself without spot to God, to do His Father's will, though it cost Him the agony of Calvary, the heavenly Aaron waved us before God to be His. We were separated by His most precious death, that we should be wholly for God. But what is ours in the great deed of Christ, must become ours by our own choice and deed. We must go in to do the service for which we have been chosen and set apart by the Holy Ghost.

This can only be through the grace of the blessed Spirit. Ask Him to realize in you the purposes of God : trust Him to keep you trusting : each morning say, "Holy Spirit, I rely on Thee to keep me in the current of the Divine purpose." Then dare to go forth to do the day's duties, believing that you may be always engaged in God's holy service ; that in everything, whether you eat, or drink, or whatsoever you do, you do all to the glory of God.

When the cloud tarried.

Num. ix. 19.

THIS was the supreme test of obedience. It was comparatively easy to strike the tents, when the fleecy folds of the cloud were slowly gathered from off the Tabernacle, and it floated majestically before the host. Change is always delightful; and there was excitement and interest in the route, the scenery, the locality of the next halting-place. But, ah, the tarrying! Sometimes the cloud tarried for two days, or a month, or a year; then, however uninviting and sultry the location, however trying to flesh and blood, however irksome to the impatient disposition, however perilously exposed to danger—there was no option but to remain encamped. The Psalmist says, “I waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry.” And what He has done for the Old Testament saints He will do for believers throughout all ages.

Still, God often keeps us waiting. Face to face with threatening foes, in the midst of alarms, encircled by perils, beneath the impending rock. May we not go? Is it not time to strike our tent? Have we not suffered to the point of utter collapse? May we not exchange the glare and heat for green pastures and still waters? There is no answer. The cloud tarries, and we must remain, though sure of manna, rock-water, shelter, and defence. God never keeps us at a post without assuring us of His presence, and sending us daily supplies.

Wait, domestic servant, before you give notice! Young man, do not be in a hurry to make a change! Minister, remain at your post! Until the cloud clearly moves, you must tarry (8th verse). Wait, then, thy Lord’s good pleasure! He will be in plenty of time!

What good soever the Lord shall do unto us, the same shall we do unto thee. Num. x. 32 (R. V.).

HOBAB was a Gentile by race, but he was invited to fellowship with Israel in all the blessings of their covenant. Moses reckoned that Israel was called to a stewardship of the manifold blessings of their lot. Whatever good was entrusted to them, they were called upon to distribute and pass on. As the Lord did them good, they would do Hobab good; making him, Gentile though he were, a fellow heir, a fellow member of the body, and a fellow partaker of the promises of God.

We get by giving.—If the river-bed were to hoard up its waters, they would become stagnant and noisome. It is only in parting with them that it receives constant supplies from the crystal fountain-head. So, if we keep God's good things to ourselves, we make it impossible to receive more. You cannot put more water into a full glass. But as we part with them we get more and better. Distribute five loaves, and you have twelve baskets of fragments.

We learn by teaching.—To stay in a class till you shall feel fully educated, is to miss one prime means of education. There is no way of discovering what we do not know, and getting grounded in what we do, like that of imparting what we have learned to others. Would you learn, teach. Would you grow in grace, tell of the grace which has saved you.

We keep what we give away.—Hoard your money, and you lose it. Give it away, and it is caught in bags that wax not old, and stored beyond the reach of moth or thief. "There is that scattereth, and increaseth yet more; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth only to want" (Prov. xi. 24). This is folly to the worldling, but sober fact to the child of the King.

Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets !
Num. xi. 29 (R. V.).

THIS one saying proves the incomparable greatness of Moses' character. Little souls are monopolists. They like to be good and gifted, because it gives them a kind of superiority to others; but they dislike to see a levelling-up process at work by which the Eldads and Medads are lifted to stand by their side.

This was the mistake of Joshua.—When he heard that Eldad and Medad prophesied in the camp, he said, " My lord Moses, forbid them ! " But he was immature, a saint in the process of manufacture, and smitten with jealousy, for the sake of his master and friend.

This was the complaint of John's disciples, when they saw the crowds ebbing away from their great teacher.

This was the quarrel of the Pharisees, that Jesus made religion so cheap and accessible to all, that even the publicans and sinners received His priceless wares.

But when a man is really great and good, he longs that all should be as he is, and better; he takes a deep delight in the spread of vital godliness; he is glad when others are endowed with greater gifts than himself, that they may make the Gospel better known than he could ever do; he is content to decrease, if Christ may only increase; he is willing that affliction should be added to his bonds, if only Christ may be magnified; he prays that the Lord would put His Spirit on all His people. This is very unnatural to any of us; but God, the Holy Spirit, waits to baptize us even into this, and to make the glory of God the object of our life. Make haste, O blessed Paraclete, and do this for me !

My servant Moses is faithful: . . . with him will I speak mouth to mouth. Num. xii. 8.

THE meekest of the men was vindicated by God Himself. He held his peace, but his Almighty Friend spoke up for him. It is thus that the meek inherit the earth and rejoice themselves in the abundance of peace. Oh, keep still, ye afflicted and tormented souls, God will not let you be trodden underfoot, if only you commit your cause to Him, and are faithful in all that He has committed to you. "That good thing *keep* which was committed to you: He is able to *keep* that which I have committed unto Him."

Notice to what faithfulness leads! The vision of God is not given to great intellectual ability or mental gift; but to those who as servants are faithful in the administration of God's Household, and the performance of such duties as are entrusted to them by the Great Householder. Such are they that enjoy the face-to-face fellowship, and the mouth-to-mouth speech.

These words about Moses are quoted in Heb. iii., as though it was pleasant to the Holy Spirit to commemorate in all ages the faithfulness of His servants: and there is this further thought added, that the Household is one, and that all dispensations are included in its precincts. "Whose house are we." It is inspiring to know that we are in the same house with Moses, and may have the same blessing. Are God's dealings with you in dark speeches, in mysterious and perplexing enigmas? Be patient and faithful in well-doing: He is but testing you, and soon He will say, I have called you not servants, but friends; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but all things I have heard of the Father I have made known unto you.

We were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight. Num. xiii. 33.

THERE is a good deal of talk in this chapter about giants and fenced cities. But the way of speaking about them was very different on the part of the ten, and on that of the two. The ten said : "The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south : and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains : and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan." But the two said : "Let us go up at once and possess it ; for we are well able to overcome it." They saw the same spectacles in their survey of the land ; but the result in the one case was *panic*, in the other *confidence and peace*. What made the difference ? It lay in this, that the ten spies compared themselves with the giants, whilst the two compared the giants with God. "The Lord is with us, fear them not."

Faith looks away from the greatness of her difficulty to the greatness of her God. "If considered in itself, it is clear that this difficulty is too great for me to combat ; but it is nothing to my God. The wall is too solid and high for me ; but before God's touch it will fall down like cardboard. These ropes are stout ; but before God they are only as tow before flame. I will not consider the man that shall die, and the son of man that shall be made as grass ; but will look away resolutely to my Maker, who made heaven and earth, and who can still the roaring of the sea."

Do you want a fearless faith, be careful not to measure the comparative forces of yourself and others ; but remember that God is working for you to will and do of His own good pleasure. If He is for you, who can be against you ? When compared with Primrose Hill, Snowdon is high ; but where is it when compared with the Himalayas ?

The Egyptians shall hear it.

Num. xiv. 13.

WHAT a noble concern for the credit of God ! Here was a great opportunity for Moses. God was testing him by the proposal, that, the entire nation of Israel being cut off as a judgment for their repeated shortcomings and transgressions, Moses should become the slip or stock of the Hebrew race : " I will disinherit them, and make of thee a nation greater and mightier than they." This was not the settled purpose of God ; but a suggestion to test His servant, who would not entertain it for a moment. All thought of the honor to be done to himself was submerged in his great eagerness for the Divine credit. " The Egyptians shall hear it : the nations which have heard the fame of Thee will speak, saying, Because the Lord was not able. . . ."

The Egyptians are always around us, watching and listening. They can only judge of God by our behavior and the course of our experience : and are only too ready to catch up anything which they may interpret to the discrediting of the Eternal. How careful we should be in all our life and conversation so that the ungodly may have, not lower, but loftier conceptions of our God.

When tempted to anything which is not perfectly noble and honorable ; when inclined to murmur and complain of God's dealings with you ; when an opportunity comes, as it did to Moses, to make gain at the expense of others ; then remember the name of God, and the urgency of need that exists, to maintain it unsullied and untarnished. We should be restrained by a double fear : first, lest we should grieve God ; second, lest the Egyptians should have a handle against Him, and should be prejudiced against religion.

A cord of blue.

Num. xv. 38 (R. V.).

THROUGHOUT their generations the Israelites were bidden to wear it. It is the symbol of depth, of love, of Heaven. The azure sky, the glacier-rift, the deep lake, the far horizon, the eye of the hopeful, buoyant, tender nature—all tell the same story of deep and constant love, which mirrors below God's heaven of love above. Therefore to wear this cord of blue was to be kept in mind of the eternal and unseen. No outward symbol is needed by *us*. The very best, after awhile, becomes tame and commonplace. We get so accustomed to it that it ceases to stir our thoughts. But if we will intrust ourselves to the Holy Spirit, He will teach us all things, and keep us always in mind. He is the blessed Remembrancer, whose mission is to bring Christ to our thought and keep Him there, the prominent object of our soul's vision.

The object of this cord of blue was to restrain the people from going about "after their own heart and their own eyes." We need to be kept from the same, that we may walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. In our resolutions, our energies, our acts of consecration, our Christian activities, we are all too apt to go at the dictates of our heart and eyes. May God forgive us! It has been the source of our perpetual failure and defeat. There is a more excellent way. Let us ask the Holy Spirit to keep the blue cord of the Christ-memory ever before our gaze, that we may become utterly absorbed in His beauty and glory, in doing His will, and in executing His commands. Let us seek to be bound to our Master, who is Love, by that same cord, that we may never for a moment forget the demands of the unseen and eternal.

The Lord will show who is holy ; and will cause him to come near unto Him. *Num. xvi. 5.*

IT was on these words that the Psalmist founded his exclamation, "Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest, and causest to approach unto Thee." This is what we all need. We often endeavor to approach unto God, but meet with many disappointments. Thomas Welsh said, on one occasion, that he had been wrestling to obtain access from six in the morning until nine ! There is something better. If you are His, you may humbly count on God to cause you to come near ; believing His promise : "Draw nigh to God, and God will draw nigh to you."

In your morning prayer, or at any other time which you set apart for devotion, let this be the cry of your soul : "My God, cause me to come near." When for long you have been dwelling afar off, and the distance threatens to become chronic or permanent, let this again be your petition : "Cause me to come near." And throughout the rush of daily life, let your dependence be on Him who alone can cause you to come near so that you may dwell in His courts.

But God cannot do this unless the soul is utterly surrendered to be His ; for "if we say we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." We must be unanchored and unbeached if the tide is to bear us on its bosom. We must be free from the touch of other hands if we are to respond to His. We must sit loosely by the things of the earth to feel the drawing of heaven. This is, in part, the meaning of holiness. "Who are His, and who is holy ?" Those who have experienced separation to God and sin. Give us this, O Lord ; then draw us near to Thyself, and we will run after Thee !

The man whom I shall choose, his rod shall bud.

Num. xvii. 5 (R. V.).

THERE was deep significance in this method of indicating the man of God's choice. Too many have taken God's election as referring exclusively to their enjoyment of God's grace and their preservation to His heavenly kingdom. Here we are taught that one of its chief results will be, and must be—buds, blossoms, and fruit. "The rod of Aaron budded and bloomed, blossomed and bare ripe almonds." It would almost seem that spring, summer, and autumn; the promise, maturity, and fruit—were simultaneously present in that marvellous rod. So should it be in those who have been chosen in Christ to be holy.

The bud of spring.—There is a perennial freshness in the true saint. He may be old in years, but his leaf is green with vernal tenderness, and there are the budding promises of richer and better things than he has yet attained. The youths faint, and are weary; but he renews his strength. The outward man decayeth, but the inward renews his youth like an eagle's.

The blossom of early summer.—There is exquisite beauty in the blossom of orchard and garden. No painter has ever yet learned God's secret of mixing His colors. Such is the beauty of the character of the believer. Men say involuntarily, "How attractive, how beautiful!"

The fruit of autumn.—That we should bear fruit is the end of Christ in our redemption and discipline. We can only do it in fellowship with Himself. He must bear it through us. "From Me is thy fruit found." "I have chosen you, that ye should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain."

I am thy Portion and thine Inheritance.

Num. xviii. 20 (R. v.).

WE are God's portion, and He is ours. The Lord's portion is His people; Israel is the lot of His inheritance; and He says to the soul, *I am thy Portion and thine Inheritance.* We, with all we have, for God; and God, with all He has, for us. "Heirs of God."

We are like settlers on the fringe of their estate.—The emigrant to the Far West has a plot of land allotted to him; but how little does he know of its contents!—There may be coal, or iron-ore, or rivers full of fish, or a rich soil; he settles on the outskirts, but every year he pushes his fences further back to take in more of the land, which is all his, but it is not yet brought into use, or under cultivation. So each year we should increase in the knowledge of what God is, and of what He is willing to be to us. Not as though we were already perfect; but we follow on to apprehend that for which we were apprehended, and to be filled full with His grace and heavenly benediction.

Our possession of God will largely depend on His possession of us.—There are some who wonder that God is so much more to others than to them. Is not the answer to be found in their withholding so much of what they might yield up to His occupation and use? If you would have all from God, you must give all to God. Your enjoyment of God will be in precise proportion to the deepening and widening consecration of your life.

Why should any of us be poor, or strengthless, or fearful, when all the Godhead is stored in Jesus, and awaits our appropriation? Go up and possess His infinite continent that flows with milk and honey; watered by the rain of heaven; and rich in treasure.

For the unclean, they shall take of the ashes.

Num. xix. 17 (R. v.).

IT was very easy to become unclean without realizing it. To touch a corpse, to be in the same room as the dead, to stumble over a grave, was enough to defile the Israelite, and excommunicate him from the Tabernacle with its holy rites. Could anything more graphically set forth the contagiousness of sin? We cannot be in contact with those who are dead in trespasses and sins, or breathe air defiled by their filthy speech, or read books which contain their thoughts, without suffering in some way by it.

This is the reason why, at the end of the day we often feel unable to pray, or hold fellowship with God: we are excluded from the Most Holy Place, because of this defilement. Indeed, there is only one way of escaping it, and that is in being covered, hermetically sealed, by the Spirit of God. "In whom ye were sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. iv. 30, R. v.).

For this reason also, we should perpetually seek fresh cleansing in the precious blood of Christ. He is represented in this heifer without spot, slain in its prime, whose ashes were mingled in running water to testify their perpetual efficacy and freshness. If the ashes of an heifer availed for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ cleanse our consciences! Ask perpetually for the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, that you may have access with confidence into the Most Holy Place. The red heifer of Numbers answers to John xiii. Let us apply the ashes and the water of purification to each other. Jesus said: "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet."

Speak ye to the rock; . . . and Moses smote the rock twice.

Num. xx. 8, 11.

WHAT a miracle of grace is here ! Nothing could have been more explicit than the Divine command that Moses should, on this occasion, simply *speak* to the rock. We cannot fathom the deep reason ; perhaps it was because the Spiritual Rock of our salvation could not be smitten by the soldier's spear twice. " Christ was *once* offered to bear the sins of many." Moreover, we are taught to wait on God each time we perform duties which appear similar, for the ways in which they should be performed may vary widely. It is clear, whatever the reason, that Moses was to speak, not smite.

However, he grievously disobeyed ; largely, probably, because he could not believe that mere speech would suffice for the miracle. He thought that he must do something to aid God, not realizing how slight a part man's is in the Divine esteem. No flesh may glory in His presence. God must be all in all. We must believe that a word is enough ; and that God will do the rest.

But, in spite of his irritation, disobedience, and unbelief, the water gushed out. The sin of the servant did not annul the love and faithfulness of God. " If we believe not, He remaineth faithful." It is a sweet lesson. We are worthless and unprofitable servants ; we fail to believe and obey. But God's grace flows over the bank, and inundates the wilderness with crystal streams. The Psalmist says the waters did not trickle, they *gushed* out. Oh, miracle of Divine faithfulness ! But Moses himself had to pay the penalty in later years. Disobedience in God's servants cannot be condoned. In proportion to the saintliness of their character is the rigor of their punishment.

Spring up, O well!

Num. xxi. 17.

THIS was a sweet song. It must have been a stirring scene, when Israel, in its thousands, sang forth this command to the waters that were under the earth, to show themselves, with the musical accompaniment of the gushing rill.

Spring up, O well, in our hearts.—Too long has the soil been arid and bare. A great drought has smitten it, and devoured every green thing. The flowers wither, the fruit falls. But Jesus promised to open in believing hearts a well, the waters of which should spring up unto eternal life. Not a stagnant pool, but a spring. Not a failing Cherith, but a perennial Siloam. Let that promise be realized in us here, and now; and if we have permitted rubbish to accumulate, or the weeds to grow rank, may we have grace to put them away, that there may be a clear course for the living water to flow through us and refresh the lives of all with whom we come in contact.

Spring up, O well, in the Church of God.—This is a petition with which we may enter the place of worship where we meet God's people. Spring up, O well, to-day! With this petition, we may plead for distant mission stations, and for the entire Church. Jesus dug the well with the staff of His cross; but we wish that the Spirit, who is as a fountain of living water, fed from eternity and returning to its source, may spring up within it with greater volume and force.

Spring up, O well, in the world.—It is weary with sorrow and sin. Too far and long have the desert sands swept their devastations. Hasten the millennial day, when springs shall break out in the desert, and wildernesses shall blossom as the rose!

*The Angel of the Lord: . . . for an adversary
against him.* *Num. xxii. 22.*

THE Angel of Jehovah is often referred to as a very present help, and as encamping round about those that fear God ; but here, as an adversary with a drawn sword. When we serve God His sword is for us, as for Joshua at Jericho ; but when we turn as here from His way to our crooked paths, it is drawn against us. That which seems to be full of menace is, when we look deeper, an angel force seeking to stay our further progress toward destruction.

Look for the Angel with his drawn sword in every pain of body, anxiety of circumstance, or suffering of mind. You were intent on pursuing your own way, and obtaining the rewards of unrighteousness, when suddenly you were stayed in your course. Another step would have brought you to the edge of the precipice ; but you were suddenly arrested by that which forbade advance. Do not curse the hindering obstacle. Beneath it is God's gentlest angel, endeavoring to turn you from your evil purpose ; and though his sword may be drawn against you, yet he is but keeping you from taking that step which might result in lifelong regret.

Too often our eyes are holden. We fret and chafe against God's kindest providence. Our anger is kindled at the ass which sees the angel, and thrusts herself against the wall. Let this day be one of humble searching of heart. Try to learn the reason why God has frustrated your plans, and blocked your progress. Ask for the opened eyes. Be sure that there is mercy in every broken plan. He sees the end from the beginning. Bow your head, and acquiesce in His appointments. Fall on your face, and bless Him whose kindest angels sometimes assume the roughest disguise.

He hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it.

Num. xxiii. 20.

BALAAM would have reversed the blessing into a curse, had he been able. Large rewards were depending on his doing so. But he was restrained. The current of blessing was running too strong for him to stem: the music was too overpowering for him to alter the air. Is not this also the despair of Satan? God hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, and he cannot reverse them.

The blessing of adoption.—When the soul believes in Jesus, it is adopted into the family of God; the new life begins to throb within; it is constituted an heir of God, a joint-heir with Christ (John i. 12). This position is irreversible. We may be tempted and overthrown, we may go for a season into the far country, we may even bring the family-name into contempt; but Satan cannot untie the knot with which God has bound us to Himself.

The blessing of acceptance in the Beloved.—We are in Him, chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, risen and ascended and seated in Him in the heavenlies; and as our God views us in Jesus, He cannot behold iniquity or see perverseness in Him, and He accepts and blesses us as His well-beloved. This, too, is irreversible by the arts and machinations of the great Accuser.

The blessing of the covenant.—God has taken us to be a people for His own possession. His name is named on us, His character is implicated in our ultimate deliverance from evil, and glorification. If we could be cast away, He would suffer irreparable dishonor. Therefore, though Satan do his utmost to discredit us, as he did the patriarch Job, he cannot reverse the covenant in which God and we are forever and indissolubly joined.

The Spirit of God came upon him.

Num. xxiv. 2.

THIS is a solemn warning for us all. Balaam saw truly, but he perished miserably. He heard the words of God, and saw the vision of the Almighty; but because he loved the wages of unrighteousness, and taught Balak to cast the stumbling-block of licentiousness before the children of Israel, he was slain in battle by the people whom he had blessed. He wished to die the death of the righteous, but was overtaken in that of the apostate. How near we may come to the gates of salvation, and yet perish miserably without!

Distinguish between unction and union.—Hooper, the greatest of English divines, says: "We are not to confuse the grace of *union* with the grace of *unction*." It is possible to be united to the Lord Jesus in regeneration, without receiving the enduement of the Holy Spirit for service; and it is possible, like Saul, to be anointed for high office, without being truly regenerate. Official position may be worthily filled, and yet the heart be all awry.

Distinguish between gift and grace.—We may be able to speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have the gift of prayer, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and yet be without love. The most gifted souls are by no means the most gracious. Desire earnestly the greater gifts, if you will; but be very sure that your heart is established with grace.

Distinguish between vision and realization.—To see the fair land from afar, as Balaam did, is not enough; we must place our foot down on its soil, and go into it to possess. It is not enough to have an intellectual appreciation of the blessed life and the way to enter it; not enough to extol or proclaim it. We must make it ours by humility and faith.

Israel joined himself unto Baal-Peor.

Num. xxv. 3.

THE margin of the Revised Version gives the alternative, *yoked*. The people were attracted by the charms of the women of Moab ; but what they entered for pleasure, became clasped on them as a yoke. "Every one that committeth sin is the bond-servant of sin" (John viii. 34, R. v.).

Sin is slavery.—The drunkard loathes his chains, vows not to yield again ; but sinks deeper into the mire with every ineffectual struggle. The libertine is bound with passions, his heart is a dungeon, his conscience a scourge. We are promised pleasure and gratification ; but when once the syrens have prevailed and got us in their power, they cast off their disguise, and work their horrid will.

The only deliverance is through the anointed priest.—Phinehas interposed, and he was Aaron's grandson, on whom the anointing oil rested. And this illustrates a remarkable expression in Isaiah x. 27, "The yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing." Is not that the anointing of the Holy Ghost ? It is only through the Holy Spirit that we can be made free with the freedom of the Son of God. Where He is there is liberty. "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh."

We must die to the sin that enchained us.—There could be no half-measures. Phinehas took a spear. Whatever the cursed thing is which has crept in to enslave, it must be slain before the Lord. Is there some secret evil in your soul, eating out its strength ? Ask the Faithful High Priest to deal with it, that your soul may cast off its bondage, and rise into the liberty of the sons of God.

There was not left a man of them.

Num. xxvi. 65.

TWICE Moses numbered the people: on the first occasion Aaron was his colleague, at the beginning of the forty years; on the second occasion Eleazar, and this was at the end of the wanderings, on the threshold of Canaan. But only two had survived, Joshua and Caleb, because only they followed the Lord. God deals with a nation by dealing with individuals. He misses no one.

His love misses none.—The little sick child put her hand outside the coverlet before falling asleep, in the hope that the Good Shepherd would notice it, and not miss her, as He passed down the hospital ward. But there is no need to fear His missing us, whose eyes are like a flame of fire, bringing the light with which they see. He tasted death for every man; He seeks each missing sheep, each lost coin. “He loved me, and gave Himself for me.”

His Spirit misses none.—If thou hast faith as a grain of mustard seed, it will attract His notice. If thou yieldest thyself to His Spirit, though thy lung be weak and diseased, He will fill it. If thou desirest to be endued with the gift of Pentecost, it will fall upon thy head, though thou art as obscure as the shepherd-psalmist of old.

Death and judgment miss none.—On each of these unbelieving men the Divine sentence was executed. One or two might linger, as autumn leaves on the topmost boughs of stripped trees; but ultimately they shared the fate of their companions. Unless Christ come first, our turn will come. In Adam all die. We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. Each was born alone, must die alone, and alone give an account to the King. Prepare, my soul, to meet Him!

At His word shall they go out, and at His word they shall come in.

Num. xxvii. 21.

THE emphasis is on the word *His*. Moses had asked God to indicate a successor to lead out and bring in the people. But Jehovah drew a distinction. Joshua was to receive the Divine direction from Eleazar, the priest, who should enquire of the Lord; and at His word, *i. e.*, God's word through Eleazar, the people were to go out and come in.

Our goings-out should be determined by the Word of God.—We never waste time when we *stand* before the true Priest, who has the Urim of Divine direction, especially when we are considering some call to duty. Very often we have gone out at the instigation of pride, or emulation, or fussy activity; we have gone out because others have done so, and we were eager not to be left behind. Under these circumstances the outgoings of our mornings have not been made to rejoice; we have encountered disappointment and defeat. When we go forth at God's bidding, He becomes absolutely responsible; otherwise we pierce ourselves through with many sorrows, and bring discredit on the cause we would fain serve.

Our comings-in must be determined by the Word of God.—When we should come in to rest, to pray, to fill again our souls with His Spirit, to suffer in secret, or to die, must be left to the determination of His will. It is easier to go out than to come in. Activity is pleasanter than passivity; the stir and rush of the world preferable to lying still to suffer. But our times are in His hand, and as soon as we recognize the decisions of the Urim in the appointments of Divine Providence, the speedier shall we be at peace. If we are fully surrendered to God, both our going-out and our coming-in shall be ordered aright by His Spirit.

My food.

Num. xxviii. 2 (R. V.).

GOD speaks as though He fed, through the sacrificial flame, on the offerings of His people. There can be no doubt that the obedience of the blessed Lord to the death of the cross was very satisfying to the hunger of the Father's heart (Eph. v. 2); and there is a sense in which our prayers and praises, the offering of ourselves in consecration, the gifts we lay before Him, are, when laid upon the altar of Christ, very pleasing to God. They are His food (Heb. xiii. 15, 16).

We often speak of ourselves as hungering for God. Do we sufficiently realize that He hungers for our love, our whole-hearted devotion, our fellowship with Him? May it not sometimes act as an incentive to prayer to reflect that we may be passing from our chamber in the morning leaving God's desire unsatisfied? He was longing for the uplifting of our soul in devotion and praise which was not forthcoming. Still, as of old, in the morning the hungry Lord comes to seek fruit on His trees. Too often there is nothing but leaves. Too seldom does He have the opportunity of saying: "I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey."

If we really loved Jesus, we should be eager to give Him food in our prayers, and yearnings, and activities; and we should long with intense desire for Him to be satisfied, though we were not primarily concerned in spreading His banqueting table. It were enough for us to know that His hunger was feeding on the love of saints, or on the joy of new converts, though we were not the medium of the one or the other. Oh for this unselfish love for Jesus, which looks at things from His standpoint, altogether irrespective of ourselves!

Ye shall do no servile work.

Num. xxix. 1, 7, 12, 35.

THERE was a good deal of work to be done, but it was not *servile* work. Throughout the seventh month, the work centered around the Tabernacle and the service of God, rather than around the tents and occupations of Israel as at other times. The same distinction is clearly made by the Apostle; our faith and salvation are not of works, lest any man should boast; but we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works (Eph. ii. 9, 10).

Do not work up to the Cross, but down from it.—We must come empty-handed to the Cross, and *receive* forgiveness and eternal life; but these will immediately begin to vindicate their presence in the fruits of righteousness. None work like those who have been saved by the grace of God—but their work is not servile work; not that of slaves, but of sons. Many confuse these, trying to work *for* salvation, instead of receiving it first and then working.

Do not work up to union with Christ, but from it.—We cannot unite ourselves to the true Vine by any activity of ours; our only resort is to lay ourselves at the feet of the great Husbandman, that He may graft us into living union with Jesus. When once that union is consummated, through our yielded nature, the Root begins to pour His mighty energy. Fruit-bearing is not servile work; but easy, natural, blessed.

Do not work up to Pentecost, but out from it.—We cannot win the gift of the blessed Paraclete. No tears, prayers, agonies of soul, can purchase it. It must be received by a single act of faith. But when once He is in us in His fullness, then tears, and prayers, and strivings for the salvation of men flow out without effort. But there is no servility, no strain, no restraint, save that of love.

The Lord shall forgive her.

Num. xxx. 5, 8, 12.

IF the father or husband disallowed the vow a woman made, it would not stand, nor would she be held responsible for its fulfillment. God would not keep her to a promise which was hindered from execution by causes over which she had no control. This is a profound principle.

You may feel that a certain step is required of you by Christ ; that indeed you are bound by your allegiance to Him to take it ; nay, you have already promised Him that you will take it ; but, suddenly and most unexpectedly, you are prevented from taking it. The express prohibition of those who have a right to determine your action, or the verdict of the physician, or the evident call of duty in another direction, makes it needful for you to relinquish your project. What then : is God grieved and angry ? Not so ; He understands the whole of the case perfectly, and accepts your will for the deed, and bids you go in peace. This, however, does not affect matters in which conscience is clear in demanding or prohibiting a certain line of conduct.

Sometimes God's silence is consent. You made your solemn dedication in His holy presence : there was no answering voice, or rush of emotion, or witnessing seal ; He held His peace from day to day. But in that silence He established all your vows, all your bonds.

If parents capriciously forbid their children carrying out solemn resolutions and vows, the burden of blame must rest on their shoulders. They must render their account to God, and give answer for their action. It will go hard with those who put needless hindrances and obstacles in their brothers' pathway.

Everything that may abide the fire, ye shall make to go through the fire. Num. xxxi. 23.

THE great aim of this enactment was to render these articles ceremonially clean. They had been in the use of the Midianites, and required cleansing, before they could be appropriated by Israel. But the cleansing processes were to be determined by their texture. Fire for what would stand fire; water for what could not stand fire.

We must be thoroughly cleansed.—If a man will *purge* himself, he shall be a vessel unto honor, meet for the Master's use. Not cleverness, but cleanliness, is the prime condition of service. Jesus will not put throne-water into impure and polluted receptacles. What fellowship hath Christ with Belial?

We shall not be passed through fire, unless we can stand it.—Our faith is too precious to God to be exposed to risk. He will not let us be tempted beyond what we are able, lest we be discouraged, and make shipwreck. If, then, you are called at this time to pass through an unusually searching ordeal, be sure that your Heavenly Father knows that you can endure it. "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried by fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

We must go through water, if not through fire.—The law provided also that "all that abideth not the fire, ye shall make go through the water." The one is negative, the other positive; the first appertains to John the Baptist, the second to the Holy Spirit. The latter is the best; but be thankful, if you cannot endure it, that there is a discipline more tempered and gentle, which will yet render you meet for the handling of the Holy Saviour.

Be sure your sin will find you out.

Num. xxxii. 23.

SIN is like the boomerang of the savage, it comes back on the hand that has launched it forth. The brethren accused Joseph of being a spy, and cast him into the pit; and on the same charge they were cast into prison. King David committed adultery and murder; so Absalom requited him. The Jews crucified the blessed Lord; and they were impaled around Jerusalem till room and wood for their crosses failed.

There is a Divine order in society. God has so constituted the world, that as man deals with his neighbor, so he is dealt with. The consequence does not always follow immediately. There is often a long interval between the lightning flash and the thunder-peal. The sentence against an evil work is not executed suddenly. But though God's mills grind slowly, they do grind, and to powder. It is impossible to deceive God; for it is His immutable law, "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. vi. 7, 8).

When sin comes to find you out, like a sleuth-hound on the track of the criminal, be sure that it finds you in Jesus. "That I may be found in Him." Nothing will avail to intercept the awful execution of sin's vengeance, except the blood and righteousness of Jesus. Put Him between you and your sins, between you and your past, between you and the penalty of a broken law. Be sure that only when the blood of Jesus speaks for you through earth and heaven, there can be a cutting off of sin's terrible entail.

They journeyed from Marah, and came unto Elim : and in Elim . . . Num. xxxiii. 9 (R. V.).

IN his enumeration of the halting places of Israel, Moses mentions Marah and Elim. In the case of the former, he does not dwell on the murmuring of the people over the bitter stream : but in the case of Elim, he loves to dilate on the twelve springs of water, and the three-score and ten palm trees, under which they pitched. Years of weary travel had not obliterated the memory of the refreshment afforded by those seventy palms.

We should remember the blessings of the past.—God has so made us that we soon forget pain ; but memory is willing to keep the fresco-pictures of sunny scenes unobliterated upon the walls of her galleries. Thus we may encourage our faith and comfort our hearts, by musing on the hand of the Lord which has been upon us for good. You have had many hard tracks of desert sand to traverse ; but never forget those three-score and ten palm trees. Let their gracious shade and fruit still refresh you. And remember that God will restore them, whenever needed. If not, you can always find your palm trees and wells in Himself.

God does not remember the sins of the past.—There is no word of their murmurings, either at Marah or Rephidim. It is thus that God deals with us. “I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.” When God forgives, He forgets. He erases the record from His book, and deals with us as though no sin had been committed. When we get to heaven and study the way-book, we shall find all the deeds of love and self-denial carefully recorded, though we have forgotten them ; and all the sins blotted out, though we remember them.

This is the land which ye shall inherit.

Num. xxxiv. 13.

IT is important that we should know the limits and possibilities of our lives. We must beat the bounds, first to know how far we may go; and secondly where we must stop, in our inheritance.

How far we may go.—It is our privilege to know God and the hope of His calling, and the riches of the glory of His indwelling in our hearts, and the power of the Resurrection throbbing within us, lifting us to share the risen life of Jesus. Day by day we may be kept from yielding to known sin; day by day, though keenly conscious of temptation, we may be more than conquerors; day by day, the Holy Spirit may work in us perfect love toward God and man, to the limit of our light; day by day the Lord Jesus may be more perfectly formed within us.

Where we must stop.—We may expect to be blameless, but not faultless, till He present us to Himself: to be delivered from temptation, but not freed from its assaults: to be kept in perfect peace, but not secured from the pressure of adversity: to be dead to sin and self, but not daring to say that either is dead within us: to be delivered from this present evil world, as to spirit and temper, though still called to inhabit it as its salt and light. Take possession of every inch of God-given territory in Jesus, but beware of going beyond it.

It is a solemn question to all who have been appointed leaders in God's hosts, whether they are rightly dividing their heritage. We must hold back nothing that is profitable: nor must we shun to declare the whole counsel of God. Let our preaching and teaching include all God's provision for His children.

The Death of the High Priest.

Num. xxxv. 25, 28, 32.

ONE after another they passed away. They were not able to continue by reason of death. Their offices, and garments, and ministry, passed from each in turn, as from Aaron, whom Moses stripped with his own hands on Nebo. But their death only brings into greater prominence the encouraging contrast in the case of our blessed Lord, who ever liveth, and hath, therefore, an unchangeable priesthood.

Christ ever lives : what an encouragement to the penitent !—All that He ever was, He is ; all that He ever did for others, He is willing to do for thee. The records of His earthly life, with His tenderness for those who were out of the way, are leaves and specimen pages of the diary of His life. Therefore, there need be no hesitation in applying to Him.

Christ ever lives : what a blessing to the saint !—"I am He that liveth." He bent over His fainting apostle, and said in effect, You remember what I was when you leaned on My bosom, followed Me to the shore on which I had prepared your repast, and assured you of My never-altering affection. I am all that still ; through death I have come to a life which can never decay ; because I live, ye shall live also. Let us rest our souls on this sweet word—from His heart there will ever stream to us rivers of incorruptible life. Let us keep all the channels of our being open toward the fountain of eternal life, that there may be no stint or restraint to our reception.

Christ ever lives : what a warning to the Church !—There is no need, therefore, of the human priest to transact matters between man and God. The Son is Priest and King in His own house, in the power of an endless life ; and human mediators are no more necessary than flickering night-lights at noon.

The inheritance of Zelophehad unto his daughters.

Num. xxxvi. 2.

FROM the earliest, the germ-principle of the emancipation of woman, and her right to stand on an equality with man, is recognized in Scripture. These women were heiresses in their own right, and might marry as they thought best. Christianity in this respect, as in so many others, is the fulfillment of the Divine thought in the older dispensation. Ruth was the prototype of Mary of Bethany; Rahab of the Syrophenician woman; Hagar of Lydia.

The inheritance of woman in the nature of Christ.—There are certain qualities in the Son of Man peculiarly adapted for the heart of woman. Tenderness for her many tears—"Woman, why weepest thou?" Sympathy in her quest for a love that will not fail—"Mary." An answer to her many questions—"Woman, believe Me." Strength for her clinging weakness—"Forbid her not." Hope for her despair—"If thou couldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God." O woman, remember Him who is the counterpart of thy need, and offers thee Himself. "The same is my sister."

The inheritance of woman in the work of Christ.—She is called to enrich men by bringing to them her inheritance. So the daughters of Zelophehad brought their land to their husbands, and the women bore the tidings of the risen Lord to the disciples. Thus women, receiving much from fellowship with Christ, come to men, steeped in materialism and sense, telling of a purer, fairer life, and summoning them to inherit it. Well is it for the home where this principle is recognized, and where the wife and mother is ever feeding her soul with noble ideals, to correct the false estimates that too much contact with men of the world are apt to induce in those she loves!

The Lord thy God bare thee.

Deut. i. 31.

A SAFE carriage was that ! In His love and in His pity God redeemed them, and bare them, and carried them all the days of old. When the little lad was tired and complained of his head, his father bade a servant carry him to his mother ; but God does not hand over His children to His servants, He carries them Himself. When we realize that His everlasting arms are underneath, it is safer riding than any the ingenuity of man can devise ; and here we need fear no ill.

“ *In all the way.* ”—There are great varieties in the way—sometimes the sleepers are badly laid, and the carriage rocks and jolts ; sometimes the gradient is steep, and the progress tedious ; sometimes the pilgrim has to go afoot, climbing with difficulty from ridge to ridge ; sometimes the route lies through a territory infested with enemies, and haunted by miasma ; but we can each rejoice in the fact that the Lord “ knoweth the way that I take,” and that all the way, those gentle and unwearied arms bear us up and on.

“ *All the days.* ”—Never a day without its cross, its lesson, its discipline, its peril ; but never a day that God does not bear us up in His hands, as some mighty river bears up the boat of the missionary explorer. Through wilds, past villages of infuriated savages, over reefs and rocks, the patient river bears the voyager and his goods. Thus does God carry us. The Good Shepherd carries the lambs in His bosom. Why, then, should we dread the future, or quail before the faces of our foes ? “ The eternal God is thy refuge ; and underneath are the everlasting arms.” So strong : so tender ! Let yourself go, and trust.

Wheresoever the Lord our God forbade us.

Deut. ii. 37 (R. V.).

THIS chapter is full of restrictions and prohibitions. There were territories which Israel was forbidden to enter at that time; though afterward, in the days of David, Solomon, and Hezekiah, they were all included in the possessions of the chosen people.

There are temporary limitations in all lives. Paul was forbidden to preach the Word in Asia, when first he came on its frontiers; though two or three years after he so filled it with his teaching that the trade of the silversmiths, who made shrines for Diana, was affected.

Limitations in our Usefulness.—Provinces of holy endeavor seem shut against you, as the Gentile world from the public ministry of Jesus. Nevertheless, do your best in what is open, as He did for the Jews, and the rest will be unbarred; but if not, in God's good time, the field will be cultivated by hands specially instructed and prepared.

Limitations in Knowledge.—There are mysteries which, in the earlier stages of their experience, are not made known to the saints; but which we come to know, as we follow on to know the Lord. And while there may be much in God's providence that is difficult to understand, yet our knowledge of Himself may increase as the years go by, until we glory in this, that we understand and know Him (Jer. ix. 23).

Limitations in Experience.—Not to every one is it given to feel Christ's love as Rutherford did. Some are excluded from the sunny realms, as Cowper was. Such is the choice of God for them, and it must be best; but they shall all attain one day to the stature of the perfect man, and possess the blessedness from which they are now restrained.

Speak no more unto Me of this matter.

Deut. iii. 26.

WE are to pray without ceasing ; always praying, never fainting ; asking, seeking, knocking. But there are some subjects concerning which God says, "Speak no more unto Me of this." In some cases these topics have to do with others, but more often with ourselves, as in the case of the Apostle Paul (2 Cor. xii. 9).

It is an awful thing when God says of certain individuals, Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone ; and when the conviction is wrought within us that the sin unto death is being committed, concerning which even the Apostle John said, "I do not say that he should pray for it." Such times come comparatively rarely ; and so long as you feel able to pray for another, so long as no negative has been spoken, you may be sure that God waits to be entreated, and that your prayer will assuredly be answered.

But have you not realized at times that God has said about some earthly boon you were craving?—"Child, do not ask Me more, leave it with Me. I know what you want, and what is best for you. Seek first My kingdom, and all these things, literally or in their equivalent, shall be added." It is well when we have been praying eagerly, to allow God's winnowing-fan to pass over our petitions, to winnow away all that is not in His mind to give ; so that only those desires may remain which His Spirit has indicted, and which He is therefore pledged to bestow. If He does not give the exact thing you ask, He will give the Pisgah view and more grace. He will say to you, as to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee : for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

The Lord hath taken you to be unto Him a people of inheritance.
Deut. iv. 20.

THE Apostle prays that we may know the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in His saints. God is our inheritance, and we are His. We are called to possess Him; He desires to possess us. His nature will yield crops of holy helpfulness to those who diligently seek Him; and He demands crops of holy love and devotion from ours.

What Sovereign Grace is here!—There was nothing in us to distinguish us from others. We were but part of the great moorland waste, when He fenced us in, and placed us under His tillage and husbandry. It is by the grace of God that we are what we are. "To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved: in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."

What responsibility!—Three times over in this chapter we are bidden to take heed to ourselves. It is no small thing to have been the subjects of God's special workmanship; because He is a jealous God, very quick to mark the least symptom of declension, and very searching in His dealing and discipline. As we learn here, our God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

What Hope!—We cannot derive much from ourselves, however we toil and strive. Self cannot discipline self to any advantage. The field is worked out. The Divine Husbandman must put into us what He would take out of us; He needs therefore to have almost infinite resources. But these are God's, and if we yield ourselves to Him, He can make all grace abound toward us, that we, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound unto every good work.

That it might be well with them.

Deut. v. 29.

HERE is a sigh from the Divine heart. It recalls the tears of the Lord Jesus over Jerusalem. The people insisted on their willingness to do all that was required of them, but they were destined to learn and teach that the will may be present, without the power; just as a sick man may have the will to walk across his bedroom, and will fall to the floor because he has no strength.

God's Commandments are for our Welfare.—We find men shrinking from consecration to complete obedience because they fear that it will mean loss and pain. There may be loss and pain; but only in the excision of things which they would be the first to put away, if they understood their nature and outworking as God does. Those who obey God most literally find the most blessedness in life, whether now or hereafter.

We approve them with our Will.—More than once the people insisted that they would do as God commanded. We are not so destitute of moral perception as not to see the beauty of a life wholly yielded to God; but let us not rest content with this, or we may have yet to cry with the Apostle, The law is holy, just, and good; but I am carnal, sold under sin.

God wants the Heart.—He will not trust Himself to us, so long as the heart is a stranger to the indwelling of the Divine Spirit. “Oh, that there were such a *heart* in them!” We need to cry to Him to create in us a clean heart, to ask that He would exchange the heart of stone for one of flesh, to entreat that His love may be shed abroad in our heart, that we may perfectly love Him. “My son, give Me thy heart!”

“LOVEST thou Me?”

“Who art Thou, Lord, that I should love Thee?”

“I am He that liveth, but I died; I loved thee, and gave Myself for thee; I have made thee mine forever in a bond that even death cannot break; I have loved thee with an everlasting love; I shall never be at rest till thou art with Me where I am.”

“Indeed I would love Thee; but how?”

“Thou shalt love Me with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”

“This were impossible unless Thou give me the love Thou requirest.”

“This I will do for thee, since love is of God. Only obey these simple directions:

“1. Abstain from all wrath, anger, malice, evil speaking, and all else that would grieve my Holy Spirit.

“2. Yield thyself to the Spirit, that He may produce in thee His choice fruit—Love. ‘The fruit of the Spirit is love.’ ‘He sheds love abroad in the heart.’

“3. Consider my love to thee, especially that I died for thee when thou wert yet in thy sins. Meditate much upon the sacrifice I made for thee, that thou mightest have thy sins blotted out, and enjoy the peace which passeth all understanding.

“4. Believing that thou hast received the love of the Spirit, begin to let it work through thy life to all around thee.

“5. If thy heart is unwilling to love any, put thy will on My side, and confidently believe that I am able to work in thee to will and to do of My own good pleasure.”

They will turn away thy son from following Me.

Deut. vii. 4.

THE question of marriage is repeatedly considered in these chapters, and never once is it supposed that the Israelites might bring a heathen partner to the faith of God's elect; but it is always insisted that the heathen husband or wife will subvert the faith of the child of Abraham. "Thou shalt not make marriages with them; for they will turn away thy son from following Me, that they may serve other gods. . . . For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God."

The same law holds still. You may suppose that by marrying the ungodly and irreligious you will be able to convert them to your way of thinking; but you must remember that regeneration is the work of the Holy Ghost, and He is not likely to lend His aid in regeneration whilst you are acting in defiance of His distinct prohibitions. The command of Christ is so clear and positive against His followers entering into an unequal yoke with unbelievers, that it simply leaves no option for the obedient. With the child of God, marriage must be "only in the Lord."

In order to make these marriages impossible, Israel was bidden to destroy the nations of Canaan. Separation from their society and practices was thus enforced. The slaughter seemed ruthless; but there was no other way of preserving intact the chosen race, as a peculiar people unto the Lord. Our separation also must be strict even to the extreme. If we would keep our young people from worldly alliances, we must begin with their amusements and companionships. There should be every endeavor to promote their happiness and interests; but we must very carefully guard the young plants from the blight of worldliness.

He suffered thee to hunger.

Deut. viii. 3.

THERE was a Divine intention, then, in the hunger and thirst and weariness of the desert march. God suffered these hardships to come to the chosen people, in order to teach them dependence on Himself. The daily gift of manna was a perpetual evidence of His loving thought and care for the pilgrim host ; they came to learn that sin and backsliding could not alienate His compassions ; they found that the Word of God was life. But none of these lessons could have been acquired if the supplies of food had been as regular and plentiful as in Egypt. They were suffered to hunger that God might make them know.

You are suffered to hunger for human love, that you may know what the love of Jesus can be to His own. Open your heart to it, until it flood you as the sunshine does the south windows of a house.

You are suffered to hunger for recognition and gratitude, that you may know what the "Well done !" of Jesus is, and to lead you to look for that only. What do the words of men amount to unless He smile ?

You are suffered to hunger for easier circumstances, for money, that you may know the tender provision which Jesus can make for those who are wholly dependent on Him. In the absence of all human help, you will learn the sweet taste of His manna.

Glory to God, to God, he saith,
Knowledge by suffering entereth,
And life is perfected in death.

These seasons of hunger are necessary for the discipline of life. But, thank God, He is able to satisfy us ; and out of His riches in glory in Christ Jesus He can and will fulfill every need of ours (Phil. iv. 19, R. v.).

IT is well to be reminded that we have no claim on God. All He does for us and gives us is of His own free grace. By grace have we been saved, through faith, and that not of ourselves—it is the gift of God. There certainly was nothing in us to merit eternal life, before our conversion; and it is equally sure that there has been nothing since to merit the continuance of His favor. Indeed, as we remember and review the past, to us belong shame and confusion of face for our repeated acts of disobedience. Oh the depth of the riches of His grace!

If we were not saved for our goodness, we shall not be lost for the lack of it.—When we have been betrayed into sin, in the keenness of our remorse, the fear is suggested lest God should put us utterly away. And there would be ground for the fear if we had been chosen because of our righteousness.

But since our original acceptance with God did not depend on works of righteousness which we had done, but on His mercy in Jesus Christ, it will not be undone by our failures. This thought does not lead to carelessness and indifference, but to a holy fear of sinning.

If our justification was apart from our merit, our sanctification will be.—The one was a gift, so must the other be; the hand of faith must receive each from Christ, and her voice must render thanks for each, as the unmerited gift of Divine Love. Where is boasting, then? It is shut out. We can claim nothing but emptiness and need. Handfuls of withered leaves! The Lord Jesus is our only hope, pleading for us in heaven, and living within our hearts. Of ourselves we are nothing: only in Him are we complete.

*He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless
and widow.* Deut. x. 18.

IN the gate of the Eastern town, at early morn,
the judge sits, and any suppliant has a right to
appeal to him. The word *Porte*, or *Gate*, as ap-
plied to the Turkish Government, alludes to this.
So to the thought of the inspired writers, behind
the flimsy vail of sense, God sat within the shadow,
“keeping watch upon His own,” waiting to an-
swer every plea, and to avenge the innocent and
oppressed against high-handed wrong.

Individuals may appeal to that tribunal.—
David, Jeremiah, and other sufferers, lodged their
complaints there. Their cry was not for revenge,
but for avengement. There is a great difference
between the two. The one is vindictive and re-
taliatory; the other is magisterial and passion-
less.

Whenever an affront or wrong is inflicted on
thee, avoid vindicating, or answering for thyself.
Be still toward man, unless it be to induce thy
brother to repent; but turn instantly to thy right-
eous Judge, asking Him to right the wrong and
vindicate the right. He shall bring forth thy
righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as
the noonday. When Christians go to law, and
seek to maintain their cause against wrongdoing,
they miss this. The weaker you are, the more
certainly will the Lord judge for you.

The Church may appeal.—Our Lord depicted
her as a widow pleading to be avenged of her
adversary. Her martyrs cry from under the altar,
“How long, O Master, holy and true? Dost
Thou not judge and avenge our blood?” To
us the delay is long; but we know that He has
no complicity with evil, and that He is faithful.
Give us the white robe, that we may wait!

If ye shall keep all this Commandment, then will the Lord drive out. Deut. xi. 22, 23 (R. V.).

WE wonder why the Lord does not drive out and subdue our besetting sins. We do not possess them, but they us. The explanation is to be found in our lack of consecration. We do not keep all His commandments, or walk in all His ways.

God cannot deliver us from besetting sin unless we yield ourselves to Him entirely.—It is only when He is Judge, Lawgiver, and King, that He can save us. The great surgeon will not undertake a case unless he have its entire management. The general cannot protect a town until it has passed over its government entirely into his hands. If you would give yourself utterly and unreservedly to God, you would find how strong He is for those whose heart is perfect toward Him.

Unless we obey all His commandments; because they contain His precise direction as to what we should, or should not do. If you want your medical man to heal you, you must abstain from things he forbids, and do those he prescribes. You cannot expect God to save you unless you utterly and reverently obey *all* His commandments; that, for instance of not having fellowship with the world and its ways.

Unless we cleave unto Him.—There must be the daily walk with God, the abiding in Him, the holy and unbroken communion. “He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth His word, in him truly is the love of God perfected.” “He that abideth in Him sinneth not.” The anointing of the Holy Spirit will teach us this sacred habit (1 John ii. 27). But entire consecration must precede entire deliverance.

Thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God.

Deut. xii. 7, 12, 18.

THE presence of God is an incentive to true joy. We rejoice *before* Him. There is some mistake in our religious life when it is not a joy to us to stand in the presence of God. He that feareth, and rejoiceth not, is not made perfect in love. Note the elements of true joy.

First. *The putting away of all known evil.*—"Ye shall surely destroy." The permission of evil habits, books, companionships, and unlawful methods of obtaining money, are destructive of peace and joy. The prodigal son went away for merriment; but he only found real joy when he had given up his evil ways and returned to his father, a true penitent, and resolving upon a better life.

Second. *The sense of acceptance with God through Jesus Christ.*—"Unto the place which the Lord shall choose shall ye come." This refers, of course, to the brazen altar and the altar of incense. We have a better heritage in the finished work of Jesus, whose blood is more precious than that of bulls and goats and lambs, and in whom we are accepted and beloved.

Third. *Feeding on Christ.*—"Ye shall eat and rejoice." A part of the meal-offerings and other sacrifices was reserved for the worshippers. We have an altar of which we, too, eat. His flesh is meat indeed; His blood drink indeed.

Fourth. *Entrance on the rest of our Inheritance.*—We which believe do enter into rest; not the rest of heaven, but the heavenly places which those enjoy who have learned to cast every load of anxious care on the great Burden-bearer. "There remaineth a Sabbath rest for the people of God. . . . Let us give diligence to enter into that rest" (Heb. iv. 9, 11, R. V.).

The Lord your God proveth you.

Deut. xiii. 3.

HOW much happens to us for this reason! God proves us—not that He may learn aught of us which He did not know before, but that He may reveal us to ourselves. We need to know ourselves, that we may be prompted to know and use His infinite resources, and that, in the great consciousness of our frailty and weakness, we may be led to avail ourselves of His grace.

God proves us by opportunities of Christian service.—We think we are fitted for some great sphere, and chafe because it is withheld: but the reason is not far to seek. We have been tested in some very little service, as a class in the Sunday-school, and have been found careless and unpunctual; is it likely that we shall be entrusted with the greater?

God proves us by the money with which He entrusts us.—Money resembles the counters with which children play. It greatly tests us. It is described as the unrighteous mammon, and as not being our true riches; but it is entrusted to us that we may be proved, before God entrusts us with the real treasures of His Kingdom. Be wary how you use money; on this may turn the responsibilities of the eternal world of which we now know nothing.

God proves us by our actions with regard to doubtful things.—Not in the things which are clearly right or wrong, but in those which lie in the debatable ground of the twilight, is our true character tested. What you are in matters which must be viewed in relation to others is all-important, as the true gauge of character. By currents of opinion, by winds of doctrine, and by the many voices that are speaking in the world, the Lord your God proveth you.

If the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it.

Deut. xiv. 24.

GOD'S pitifulness is very manifest here. If the pious Jew found it impossible to transport all his tithes in kind, he might change them into money, and bind it in his hand. It was far from God's thought that His service should become irksome, or the soul faint in performing it. An alleviation was suggested, of which the worshipper might take advantage, if he would. This principle may be applied in several directions. We are not to make God's service a toil, but esteem it a delight. "Thou shalt rejoice, and thine household."

The Lord's Day should be the gladdest of the week; full of love and joy and holy song. We should carefully guard against anything approaching to slavish observance: and be very careful that our children and servants should look forward to it with delight.

Christian work should not be carried to the point of exhaustion. There is a mistake somewhere if it so breaks down the health and spirits that the worker is not able to carry it. At such a time, we need to avail ourselves of any assistance or alleviation that may be possible.

Acts of devotion, also, should be for our enjoyment and refreshment. It seems sometimes as though God's children relied more on length than strength, in their prayers. They are not at ease or natural in the Father's presence. The forms of their devotion are so numerous and prolonged, that they are not able to carry them. By all means maintain the salutary form, but not for form's sake. Let the joy of the Lord, taking pleasure in His presence and in communion with Him, be always the first thought.

Thy bondman forever.

Deut. xv. 17 (R. v., marg.).

THIS is what we desire to be to Christ. We have forfeited our own natural inheritance, and have taken refuge in His house. For six years we have enjoyed all that Jesus could do to make us happy ; has not the time come when we should say to Him, " We do not want to go out from Thee again, but to remain with Thee forever " ? Paul delighted to call himself " a bond-servant of Jesus Christ " (Rom. i. 1 ; Gal. i. 10 ; Phil. i. 1, R. v. ; etc.).

There are two stages, so to speak, in our dealings with Him. First, we come driven by fear ; the produce of our own efforts has failed ; we have no other resort. Like the bird fleeing from the hawk, we have made for His breast ; like the sailor driven by the tempest, we have taken the first harbor that offered. But when we have tested the blessed Master, and found Him so sweet and strong, we elect to remain with Him, not for His gifts or even His salvation, but for Himself. We do not wish to go out free ; we love Him so dearly that we would rather go anywhere with Him than remain without Him.

This resolve of ours is ratified by Him. He nails our ear to His cross. Through the blood of self-sacrifice, and self-surrender ; through our deeper appreciation of the meaning of His cross, as separating us from the old selfish life ; through our identification with Him in death and resurrection ; through our sacrifice of all that would hinder us—we come into deeper and closer oneness with Himself. As the Father bored through His ear, in accepting His glad delight to do His will, so does Jesus make real and permanent the consecration we lay at His feet (See Psa. xl. 6, 7).

Thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman.

Deut. xvi. 12.

THIS gave the touch of gentle tenderness to Israel's treatment of the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. They knew what loneliness and desperate suffering were ; and from their own experience could speak to the heart. Without tenderness and sympathy, what are our gifts to the poor worth ? It is as important to give graciously and kindly as to give at all. None are so sensitive as sufferers, whether in mind, body, or circumstance ; they are quick to notice the slightest roughness or harshness in our manner of bestowing relief ; they would prefer a pittance given with tender sympathy to a larger gift flung at them grudgingly. But what can give this thoughtful sympathetic manner like the memory of our own sufferings, when we were bondmen in Egypt !

It may be that God is passing thee through some fiery ordeal, to teach thee and fit thee to be His almoner, touching and soothing as His outstretched hand of pity. Soon thy present sorrow shall be but a memory ; but thou wilt be called to minister to the fatherless, the widow, the stranger. Always say in thine heart, God is passing me through this sorrow, and comforting me, and delivering me, that I may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble with the very accent, caress, and tender word which He hath spoken to me. " Blessed be the God of all comfort ; who comforteth us in all our affliction, that we may be able to comfort them that are in any affliction through the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

In heaven itself we shall never quite forget that we were bondmen once, but were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. This will give a new meaning to the song of adoring gladness.

That his heart be not lifted up.

Deut. xvii. 20.

BEWARE of pride! By that sin fell the angels. If *they* fell by it, how much more may we! When a man is raised from some lowly sphere to a position of commanding influence, he is greatly tempted to arrogance and pride. The adulation which he receives on every hand makes it all the harder to live humbly and unassumingly. But when once pride enters, it seems to close the heart to God. The proud man multiplies to himself chariots and horses, with the intention of making his position more secure; but he shuts out the help of the Most High. How necessary, therefore, that our hearts should not be lifted up!

The corrective suggested here is meditation on the Word of God. The king was to write out a copy with his own hand, and meditate on it all the days of his life; this would keep him in the lowlands of humility. The Bible is so true in its analysis of the heart; like a mirror it reveals a man to himself. It gives such exalted views of the greatness and holiness of God, compared with which the greatest human state is like the royalties of an ant-heap. It assures us that we must receive everything as the gift of God's grace. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law—of works?" No, but by the grace of God which bringeth salvation, apart from merit.

May God make us humble, with a transparent humility, which is not conscious that it is humble, like the utter unconsciousness of the little child, who does not bend back on herself. Still and quiet your soul, dear child of God, as a child weaned from its mother; and be sure to feed humility on the sincere milk of the Word.

With all the desire of his soul.

Deut. xviii. 6 (R. V.).

HERE is the inspiration of a noble purpose taking a man out from his quiet life in some distant village, far removed from the great sacred city, and plunging him suddenly into the very midst of its holy engagements and services. Other men were happy there. What more did they want than the quiet routine of buying and selling cattle, tending vines, and cultivating their fields? But for this man these could not suffice. There was a light that excelled beckoning him on; a voice, which only he could hear, calling to him. He was not asked to come; his name did not appear on the rota of the Temple servitors; the great Temple might seem perfectly able to dispense with him; yet because with all the desire of his soul he longed to be one of the Temple Levites, he might minister in the name of the Lord, as the others did; and be supported, as they, from the Temple funds.

It is a blessed thing to feel an impulse like this. It may prompt to home or foreign missions, to some enterprise of self-denying ministry to the helpless and sad, to service for God or man. It may come on you like a strong current, fresh from the ocean, sweeping up into some quiet river or harbor basin, and lifting the ponderous barges. But when it comes, be true to it, nurse it, reverence it, thank God for it, trust and follow it where it leads. You will find a niche awaiting you, and the portions by which life will be nourished and maintained; and the Holy Spirit will not fail to be your Guide and Teacher, leading you into all the truth. Until it come, wait upon God in prayer; commune with Him in the Holy of Holies; and spend much time in reading and meditating upon His Holy Word.

Then shall ye do unto him as he had thought to do to his brother.

Deut. xix. 19.

THERE is a Nemesis in wrongdoing ; evil comes home to roost ; what we meditate against others returns on ourselves. They that take the sword shall perish with the sword. The publican who sells drink to debauch sons and fathers, lives to see the drink curse his own family. The man who is treacherous to women lives to see his own sons fall beneath their wiles. Haman erects a gallows for Mordecai, but is hanged upon it himself. Adoni-bezek cut off the toes and thumbs of captive princes, and confessed the rightness of the fate which overtook himself. England imposes opium on China, but presently discovers that it is eating out the heart of her own subjects in India and Burmah. "Whoso causeth the upright to go astray in an evil way, he shall fall himself into his own pit."

And why is all this? Because God sits behind the slight curtain of the present, judging the acts of men. It is not necessary to wait for the conclusion of the present age to see the sentence inflicted. Now the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, and before Him the nations are gathered. Nineveh, Babylon, Capernaum, Tyre, Pompeii, the power of Spain, the Empire of Napoleon, have already been condemned to Hades. Now the judgment is set, now the books are opened, now the "Come, ye blessed," and "Depart, ye cursed," are being uttered. God has so made the moral world that the seed of punishment lies hid in each unkind word, each unchristian act ; and it is only necessary to give time enough to show that the man who has sown to his neighbor's hurt will reap that hurt in his own life. To every man will be rendered according to his deeds, even in this life.

When ye draw nigh unto the battle, the priest shall approach.

Deut. xx. 2.

WHEN Abraham returned from the slaughter of the kings, the priest of the Most High appeared to welcome him, and to prepare him for the still more subtle encounter which awaited him with the king of Sodom. As Abraham drew nigh to that battle the priest approached.

Whenever a battle is imminent, look out for the Priest.—Do not go to the war at your own charges, you cannot stand against the mighty power of your arch-adversary. Look around, and see the Priest stand. What Priest? The Apostle and High Priest of your confession. He will offer prayer for you, and anoint your shield with the precious oil, and put His hand upon your hand as you feebly draw the bow.

“What makes you so bold, my lad?” the captain asked of a stripling as he went into the fight. And the answer came quickly, “My mother put her hands on my head and blessed me ere I left our home.”

Whenever the Priest has been near, anticipate a battle.—The best hours come to prepare us for the worst. The dove descends that we may be able to stand for forty days against the devil. Do not be surprised at this. And whenever some experience of unusual radiance and helpfulness has visited you, say to yourself, “This is God’s sweet way of preparing me against coming trial. Let me walk warily, for danger is near. The Priest has been with me; I am drawing nigh to the battle. I know not what lies before me: but He is acquainted with the difficulties I have to face and the fierceness of the adversary I have to encounter. He alone can equip me for the fight.”

He that is hanged is accursed of God.

Deut. xxi. 23 (R. V.).

THIS law on the Jewish statute-book hastened the awful tragedy of Calvary. No body must be left to rot on the cross on which it had been impaled. The corpse of the malefactor must be taken down at nightfall. But how little did the Pharisees and Scribes realize that the remainder of this verse had so pertinent a reference, and was having so remarkable a fulfillment. The Apostle quotes this verse as giving the inner *rationale* or meaning of the death of the blessed Lord (Gal. iii. 13). "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." On Jesus fell the reduplicated curses, that were deserved by the race, and by each.

The curse of the broken law.—"Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the Book of the Law." None had kept, all had broken that law. None was righteous, no, not one. Man's lot was cast under Mount Ebal. The race was guilty and silent before the bar of infinite justice. But Jesus, by virtue of His relationship with the entire human family, was able to stand before God charged with that sin, bearing that curse, and put them away forever. There is no barrier, therefore, now to the outflow of God's free grace.

The curse due to individual transgression.—The whole race had broken away from God, and was under the curse; so that each of us shared in the solemn accountability to God, for the whole and for our part. But He became sin for us; cursed, that we might be blessed; cast out, that we might be forever welcomed; naked, that we might be clothed; hungry, that we might feed on His flesh; poor, that we might be enriched; dying, that we might live beyond the range of the curse forevermore.

Thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof.

Deut. xxii. 8.

THE householder was not to be content with what would be safe for himself; he must see to it that the undefended roof of his house should not be a source of danger to little children, the weak, or the careless. He might be able to walk on the roof of his house with so sure a foot as not to need the parapet or trellis-work, warning him from the edge; but what he could do might be impossible for feet less sure than his. Hence the need of the battlement! Each new house must have its battlement around the margin of its roof.

This should be the law for each new home.—Wherever a household is constituted, battlements should be built to protect, as far as possible, the weak and tempted. The pace of the household should be that of the feeblest of its members. You are careful to have the balustrade and the little swing gate, not that the grown-up require them, but for the protection and safety of young and feeble life. Similarly build the battlement of total abstinence, of the discountenance of worldly amusement, of the habit of family worship. Guard against exposure to needless temptation, and occasions for falling.

This should be the law in older households.—It becomes the master of the home sometimes to go around his household, to study his own character, to inspect the condition of the battlements. Is there laxity, inconsistency, need of precaution? Let us search our hearts and lives, our habits, and the ordering of our homes, that the battlements may be strengthened where they are weak, or erected where they are wanting. "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

The Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp to deliver thee.
Deut. xxiii. 14.

AT all times Israel needed to keep from evil, but especially when her embattled hosts went forth to war; for in the conception of her prophets and saints her battles were not to be fought or won by herself. The Lord God of hosts was there. It was a joint campaign. This was specially revealed to Joshua, when he beheld the captain of the Lord's host, with a drawn sword, beside him. So, Christian soul, remember, in thy war against the evil of the world, and the solicitations of thine own wicked heart, that the battle is not yours, but God's. He is in the midst of thee; thou needest not be moved! He has sworn to deliver thee by His own right hand, and by His holy arm, and to give up thine enemies before thee.

There was one condition, however, on which the presence of God amongst His people was possible—the camp must be holy. No unclean thing might be seen in any of its borders. The vail of mother-earth must cover all impurity. Thus, as God went up and down the long avenues of the tents, He would see nothing to offend His gaze and make Him turn away. How deep a lesson! God is ever patrolling the avenues of our life. The most secret processes of our daily existence, our innermost relationships, the thoughts and intents of our heart, are all manifest to Him. There must be nothing to make Him turn away in holy abhorrence, else we cannot count on Him to deliver us, to give up our enemies before us.

“Search me, O God, and know my heart:
Try me, and know my thoughts:
And see if there be any wicked way in me,
And lead me in the way everlasting.”

The man to whom thou dost lend shall bring forth the pledge without unto thee. Deut. xxiv. 11 (R. V.).

WHAT courtesy and respect for the feelings of another prompted this injunction! The poor man needs a loan, and for this purpose goes to his rich neighbor. It would be possible for the latter, in the pride of his purse and position, to go ruthlessly across the threshold of the poor man's house, look contemptuously around its penury, and lay his hand with indelicate haste on the treasures of the poor man's family life. This, which had been dear to his father! That, associated with happier, better days! Such conduct might not be, said the divine precept. If the poor man asked a loan, he must choose his own pledge, and fetch it from his house with his own hand; it must be his act.

God respects the nature with which He has endowed us.—He will not force an entrance on any man. Though He made us, He waits for us to give Him right of entrance. He stands at the door and knocks. He asks for our consecration, that we should give Him our whole being in pledge, and in return for the loan of infinite grace; but He will not take till we give, or count on aught belonging to us as His property, until we have surrendered spirit, soul, and body, at His invitation.

God expects us to respect the nature of others.—Let us reverence that wonderful soul-life which is the perquisite of each individual. We have no right to break in with the mailed foot of the politician, or the furtive tread of the priest. The father-confessor has no right to stand within the sacred precincts of conscience. No man has a claim on his brother save that which love supplies. If we have partaken of the grace of God, we must be gracious to our fellows.

Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn.

Deut. xxv. 4.

“GOD taketh care of oxen,” is Paul’s comment on this text; and so God did. These pages are filled with tokens of His thought—for the ass that might not be overtaxed by being set to plough with an ox; for the ass or ox which were to be helped up if they had sunk on the road overpowered with their burdens; or for the bird sitting on her nest. Here the ox, as it went around the monotonous tread of the mill, was to be allowed to take a chance mouthful of corn.

The care for dumb creatures is part of our religious duty. It is one of the elements of religion to think for the dumb creatures, who are not able to speak for themselves, but suffer so patiently the accumulated wrongs heaped on them by man. “A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.” Oh, when will the travail of creation cease! Man’s sin has indeed worked woe for the lower orders of creation.

The Apostle used this injunction to remind his converts of the necessity of caring for their spiritual teachers. Some are called to plough, others to thresh; but “he that plougheth should plough in hope; and he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope” (1 Cor. ix. 10). They that serve the altar should live by the altar; and those who proclaim the Gospel should live of the Gospel.

But there is sweet encouragement here for those who are anxious about their daily bread. God takes care for oxen; will He not for you? Shall the oxen browse on the wolds and pasture-lands, and be nourished to fatness, and will He leave to starve the soul that really trusts and serves Him?

Thou shalt rejoice in all the good the Lord thy God hath given unto thee. Deut. xxvi. 11 (R. V.).

DO not be afraid of joy ! There are some who only sip of the sweet draughts which God puts to their lips, afraid of drinking long and deeply. When good things come into their lives, they are always thinking of some bitter make-weight, possibly some impending trouble. This is a mistake. We must be prepared to learn the lessons of dark hours when God sends them ; but we need not hesitate to learn those of bright and happy ones, when they, too, are meted out to us. As we give ourselves up to sorrow, we should give ourselves up to joy ! As the soul descends into the grave, it should have great joy in its resurrection and ascension ! If the soul-planet must travel to a wintry distance, let us hail those halcyon hours when it returns to stand in the summer spheres of joy ! In the life of consecration our joy is considerably enhanced by sharing it with our Lord. Just as our burden of care is lightened by rolling it upon Him, in the same proportion our joy will be increased when He is permitted to partake of it.

We cannot always be on the strain. It is not possible to live on one side of our nature without impairing the health of all. David must bring his harp, and play in the presence of the soul, when its fits of depression return. There is necessity that we should cultivate tracks of our soul that lie toward a southern aspect, filling them with flowers, and fruits, and beehives, and things that children love.

Open your heart to joy, when it comes in the morning with jocund voice ; by the back-door weeping will steal away. She only came to sojourn for a night.

Thou shalt build the altar of the Lord thy God of unhewn stones.
Deut. xxvii. 6.

THE obvious intention of this precept was to prevent idolatry, lest the people should think more of the altar than of Jehovah who was worshipped there. Beware of anything that would divert men's thoughts from God.

Build your Addresses of unhewn stones.—When speaking to men, Paul determined to erect structures of unhewn stones, eschewing worldly wisdom, that the power of God might burn more conspicuously on the altar of his words. He knew that his speech and his preaching could never be in persuasive words of human wisdom, and it was his fixed determination to know nothing among men but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. If you spend too much time in cutting the stones of your address, your hearers will probably be more occupied with their artistic grace than with the Divine fire that should burn upon them.

Build your Prayers of unhewn stones.—The expressions of some men in prayer are so exquisitely chiselled that you keep wondering what they will say next, and how. Their prayers stand as beautiful altars on which there is no fire. Oh for the strong cryings and tears of a Spirit-taught man, expressing the real need of his nature, rather than the exquisite beauty of an oration to God !

Build your Inner Life of unhewn stones.—Do not keep looking to see how you are performing the acts of consecration, confession, devotion. The least you think of these the better, that your entire thought may be concentrated on the great God and His Presence. There must be sincerity in our acts of consecration. One inch of rising flame is better than yards of chiselled stone !

Because thou servedest not the Lord with joyfulness and with gladness. Deut. xxviii. 47, 48.

WE must serve. It is our nature. Our Lord never suggested a third course as an alternative to the service of God or mammon, as though it were possible to escape all service whatsoever. We either yield ourselves servants of righteousness unto holiness, or of iniquity unto iniquity; and to whom we yield ourselves servants to obey, his we are.

It is a solemn thought: if we are not serving God with joyfulness and gladness of heart, we are serving things which are our worst enemies. A man has no worse foe than himself when he lives to serve his own whims and desires. These habits, and appetites, and fashions, are luxurious and pleasant just now; but their silken cords will become iron bands.

On the other hand, if we would be secure from the service which hurts us, let us give ourselves to the Lord to serve Him with joyfulness and gladness. Do you ask the source of these? Remember, He will put gladness into thy heart; joy is the fruit of His Spirit. When thou art in a healthy state, joyfulness and gladness rise spontaneously in the soul, as music from song-birds. When the sacrifice begins, then will the song of the Lord begin.

The heart finds the well-spring of perennial blessedness when it has yielded itself absolutely and unconditionally to the Lord Jesus Christ. If He is Alpha and Omega; if our faith, however feebly, looks up to Him; if we press on to know Him, the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings; if we count all things but loss for the excellency of His knowledge—we may possess ourselves in peace amid the mysteries of life, and we shall have learned the blessed secret of serving the Lord “with joyfulness and with gladness of heart.”

I shall have peace, though I walk in the stubbornness of mine heart. Deut. xxix. 19 (R. V., marg.).

SO man's foolish heart reasons. He hears the curse pronounced against sin; he knows that the man who turns from God is threatened with gall and wormwood, and yet he persists in his evil ways, secretly blessing himself, and laying the flattering unction to his heart that he at least will come off scot free. Such an one is an abomination to the Lord, and shall not escape: "The Lord will not pardon him, but His anger shall smoke against him." It is still true of the wicked, "that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually."

The only way to peace is by abjuring the stubbornness which sets up its own will and way against God's. Is not this the secret of the unrest of your soul—that you have never perfectly yielded to God? You know that if others did as you do, and cherished the dispositions that you permit, you would instantly condemn them, and assure them of the incompatibility of soul-rest and such things as these; but you bless yourself, and say, "I shall have peace, though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart."

Ask God to take the stubbornness out of you, to rid you of your hard heart, to bring you into loving, gentle subordination to Himself; to fulfill His promise in your experience, "I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh." Return and submit. Take His yoke and learn of Him. Bow down at His feet. Let every step of your daily walk be taken in the track of His holy will. So shall you find rest unto your soul; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus" (Phil. iv. 7, R. V.).

The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, to love the Lord thy God. Deut. xxx. 6.

CIRCUMCISION is the sign of separation. It was enjoined on Abraham and his children that they might be God's peculiar people, chosen from all the nations of the earth. Similarly, the circumcision of Christ, which is made without hands, of which the Apostle speaks, is a putting off, a separation from the sins of the flesh, a participation in the grave and burial of Christ (Col. ii. 12).

We must be separated from the spirit and temper of the world. Between us and its sins, ambitions, methods, there must be not only an outward, but a heart severance. We were separated in the purpose of God when Jesus was cast without the camp to die. But we must be separate in our personal behavior. Wouldst thou have this? Then claim that this promise should be fulfilled, and ask that God would circumcise thine heart—the seat of thine affections, the hearth of thy soul-life.

Then thou wilt love the Lord with all thine heart. This is why we love God so little. The force of our love is spread over too wide a surface—it is like the river Orinoco, which is lost in swamps as it approaches the sea. If only we were really separated from all that is alien to God, and given up to Him wholly, we should find all the capacity of our hearts becoming filled with His love. We should love all things and people with a tenderness and glow which were steeped in colors obtained from His.

You will never succeed in overthrowing the strongholds of Satan, Christian worker, till God has taken away your self-reliance, and has brought you down into the dust of death: then, when the sentence of death is in yourself you will begin to experience the energy of the Divine life, the glory of the Divine victory.

Thou shalt cause them to inherit it.

Deut. xxxi. 7.

JOSHUA is ever the type of our blessed Jesus. Joshua not only won Canaan for his people by his faith in the gift of God, coupled with his strenuous efforts, but he caused them to inherit it. Jesus not only won the wealth of the heavens for His Church by His death and resurrection, but He waits to cause us to inherit it through the Holy Spirit which He gives.

How great is our heritage ! Heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ ! All things that pertain to life and godliness await our appropriation ! All spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus ! There is no conceivable grace or virtue, no fabric of the Divine looms for the soul's dress, no ornament of heavenly jewellery for the soul's adorning, no weapon of celestial temper for the soul's equipment, no salve or balm of Divine comfort for the soul's healing, which is not ours in Jesus. The Father has given Him to have life in Himself that He might give us life more abundantly. He is full of grace and truth, that out of His fullness we all may receive. He received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, that He might pour Him forth in Pentecostal fullness. But we do not possess our possessions. We are like people who have sent all their valuables to the strong-room of a bank, and never by any chance make use of them.

This is a lack which Jesus can also supply. He can cause us to inherit : first, by His Spirit He reveals the lavishness of the Divine possession ; next He excites an appetite of desire ; next, He begets the expectant faith that claims ; and, lastly, He becomes to us each one of these things, so that we are enriched in Him, and possessing Him, find that all things are really ours.

As an eagle stirreth up her nest, that fluttereth over her young.

Deut. xxxii. 11.

THREE references are made to the eagle in this passage.

She stirs up her nest.—When her fledglings are old enough to fly, but linger around the few bits of stick, dignified as a nest, the mother-bird breaks it up, and scatters them. How much better this, than that they should miss the luxury of flight on outspread pinions in the blue vault, and of basking in the eye of the sun. So when the Father sees His children clinging to earth's bare rocks, captured and held by the poor sticks they have gathered, and missing the ascension-glory, He breaks up the nest. The fortune is dispersed, the home broken up, the aspect of the life changed. We are then able to enjoy the bliss of life in the heavenlies with Christ Jesus.

She flutters over her young.—They stand scared and wretched on the edge of the rock, but she careers gently above them, now edging around, now mounting, then dropping far below to rise again. So would she allure them to follow her example. Here again we have an emblem of God's efforts to make us imitators of Himself, to teach us the possibilities that await us in Jesus.

She spreads forth her wings and takes them.—Incited by the mother's endeavors, the eaglet may venture on the untried air, and lo! the unaccustomed wings fail beneath its weight. It falls, but not far, for the mother swoops beneath, and bears it up and away. Trembling soul, God is beneath thee. If thy faith fails, and thou art falling, like another Peter, into a bottomless abyss, He will catch thee, and bear thee up, and teach thee the mystery of the more abundant life.

Thy Thummim and thy Urim are with Him whom thou lovest. Deut. xxxiii. 8 (R. v., marg.).

WHAT a contrast between the blessings of Jacob and of Moses ! In Jacob's farewell charge, we find the ominous words, "Cursed be Levi" ; and he foretells that this tribe should be divided and scattered in Israel. But here the curse is turned into a blessing ; and the scattering is transformed into a holy ministry for the whole of Israel, "They shall teach Jacob thy judgments and Israel thy law." See to what a place of privilege they are exalted ! "They shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt-offering upon thine altar."

If ever there was an illustration of the power we have to turn a curse into a blessing, it is here. Step by step the results of that awful sin, for which Jacob cursed his sons, are changed into benedictions. Where sin abounded, grace has much more abounded ; indeed, it has reigned, it has broken out into radiant and royal glory. Do not sit down hopeless, because of the consequences of an early sin that threaten to follow thee to thy grave. Thou mayest yet get honey out of the lion's carcase.

The way to this was by entire devotion to the call of God. After the sin of the golden calf, Levi said of his father and of his mother, I have not seen them ; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor know his children. The cause of God, which Aaron had so ruthlessly betrayed, was dearer to him than the tenderest ties of blood. So he came into God's secret counsels of love, and knew the Urim and Thummim answers of the One whom he loved. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." It is only to those with whom He dwells that He can communicate His blessed will and purposes. Oh, may such bliss be mine !

His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.

Deut. xxxiv. 7.

THIS was true of Moses as a man. He had seen plenty of sorrow and toil ; but such was the simple power of his faith, in casting his burden on the Lord, that they had not worn him out in premature decay. There had been no undue strain on his energy. All that he wrought on earth was the outcome of the secret abiding of his soul in God. God was his home, his help, his stay. He was nothing : God was all. Therefore his youth was renewed.

But there is a deeper thought than this. Moses stood for the law. It came by him, and was incarnated in his stern, grave aspect. He brought the people to the frontier of the land, but would not bring them over it : and so the Law of God, even when honored and obeyed, cannot bring us into the Land of Promise. We stand on the Pisgah-height of effort, and view it afar in all its fair expanse ; but if we have never got further than "Thou shalt do this and live," we can never pass into the blessed life of rest and victory symbolized by Canaan.

But though the law fails, it is through no intrinsic feebleness. It is always holy, just, and good. Though the ages vanish, and heaven and earth pass away, its jots and tittles remain in unimpaired majesty. It must be fulfilled, first by the Son, then by His Spirit in our hearts. Let us ever remember the searching eye of that holy Law detecting evil, and its mighty force avenging wrong. Its eye will never wax dim, nor its natural force abate. Let us, therefore, shelter in Him, who, as our Representative, magnified the law and met its claims, and made it honorable.

Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon.
Josh. i. 3.

ALL the land was given, but every inch of it had to be claimed. Israel had to put her foot down upon the land, whether wilderness or Lebanon, plain or hill, and say, "This is mine by the gift of God." And as the right was asserted, God made it good. The land had been covenanted to them through Abraham, but it awaited conquest and appropriation by the Israelites. No man was able to stand with them in the lot of their inheritance.

The settler who has purchased a plot of land in the Far West claims it to its furthest borders; and, if needs be, invokes the aid of the Government to make good his purchase. So with our possessions in Christ. All spiritual gifts are ours in the Risen Saviour. From the wilderness of the earth even to the river that makes glad the city of God, and unto the glassy sea on which the sun never goes down, is our border. But we must put the foot of faith down and say, "All things are ours; we have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ. He hath given us all things that pertain to life and godliness."

Let this be the beginning of a new life for thee. Reckon that thou art on the resurrection side of death. Do not look at temptation or difficulty, but claim by steadfast faith whatever God has taught thee to feel the need of. Dost thou ask how that strong courage may be thine? The answer is at hand. Meditate on the Word of God day and night, and depart not from it to the right or left. The strength of the inner life finds nourishment in the Word of God. Only in this way can we behold the broad expanse to territory that is ours by right, and obtain strength to go up and possess it.

This line of scarlet thread.

Josh. ii. 18.

IT speaks of the precious blood of Christ. Scarlet is the color of Calvary. Twine it round the window through which thou lookest out on thy foes, and away to the river of death. Nothing can hurt the soul which has put the precious blood of Christ between it and condemnation or alarm. Let every outlook to the future be associated with a remembrance that His blood was shed for thee, and be thou thankful.

Rahab is the type of Gentile sinners who are permitted to share in the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to sit with Him in the heavenlies. That scarlet thread had been the means of salvation to the spies. By it they had been let down to the ground and saved from death. It must have been strong. So the blood of Christ avails, not only for us, but for all who shelter with us in the household of faith, and for others who find it the means of life as they receive it from our hands.

Let us see to it that, like Rahab, we gather father and mother, brethren and friends, to share with us the shelter and safeguard of the precious blood.

But, after all, it was not the cord that saved—that was only the emblem and type. Behind it on the one hand was God's oath, spoken through the spies, and on the other was Rahab's faith. The true safety of that house on the wall stood in the moral attitude of one woman in it. Rahab believed God who had dried up the water of the Red Sea, and who was God in heaven above and in earth beneath. This faith raised her afterward from her life of shame to become the ancestress of Christ. Such wonders does the blood of Christ work in outcasts from the commonwealth of Israel, bringing them nigh.

*When the soles of the feet of the priests . . .
shall rest in the Jordan.* *Josh. iii. 13 (R. V.).*

THE floods of the Jordan were high : so may be the floods of trial and sorrow that sometimes overflow their banks ; so the floods of conviction of sin ; and so, to some at least, the waters of death. Possibly this overflowing is needed for the time of harvest ; the width of golden grain in the Jordan valley was no doubt to a large extent dependent on the far-spreading of those waters. How the heart trembles, as we hear the gurgling and rushing of the floods. Hark, how they lift up their voice !

But when the priest's foot touches them, they shrink away. Jesus has stepped down into these floods as our High Priest. In Gethsemane their overflowing tide washed around Him. At Calvary the water-spouts went over His head. In the grave He seemed momentarily to have succumbed. But since then they have been cut off. Through the ages He has stood, bearing the ark of propitiation, and arresting the tumultuous floods. "Thus far, and no further."

Sinful soul, deeply convicted, "Look for the Priest," on whose person the storm broke, and by whom it has been checked and stayed ! Tried believer, be sure that the water-floods cannot pass Jesus, to reach or drown thee ! His promise to thee is : "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee ; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee : when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned ; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" (Isa. xlii. 2). And when death approaches thee, O fearful and trembling one, thou wilt find Jesus standing between thee and its might, making a path by which thou shalt pass over dry-shod.

Those twelve stones did Joshua set up in Gilgal.

Josh. iv. 20 (R. V.).

NOT content with pitching a cairn of stones on the river's bank, Joshua, at God's command, set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests that bare the Ark of the Covenant stood. And often, as he came hack to Gilgal, he must have gone out by himself to walk and muse beside the river, turning the outward and the inner gaze to the spot where beneath the flow of the current those stones lay hidden. They were a perpetual memorial of where the people had been, of the grace which had brought them forth, and of the position to which God had conducted them. Children in after days would gather round those mighty boulders and be instructed, and it is a great matter that the deliverances of God should be graven as with a pen of iron on the soft and yielding surface of the child's heart; thus the coming generation shall revere and love the name of Jehovah.

The story of these stones is told again by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians ii. We were dead in trespasses and sins, and lay hopelessly in the grave, like stones in the heart of the river of death. But we were brought forth by God's mighty hand and outstretched arm. We were raised up together with Christ. The resurrection of Jesus is the memorial stone of our position in the sight of God; from this we should never recede. How those old stones would have cried out, if Israel had gone back over the Jordan! And does not Christ's empty grave protest against our living amid the pleasures and cares of the world from which He has gone, and going, has taken us also? This is not our rest; let us make good our standing in the risen Christ.

Behold, there stood a Man.

Josh. v. 13.

WHEN Jericho, its fortifications looming dark through the night, must be assailed, then the Divine Man may be looked for. Only let circumcision do its keen work of separation, so that there be nothing of the flesh with its energy and pride to vaunt itself before God ; then, as we stand face to face with some imminent peril, God will be revealed as our very present help. Not weeks before our need, not before the Jordan has been crossed in faith, not before circumcision has been performed ; but when all God's demands have been met, and to-morrow calls for action, then behold there will stand the Man Christ Jesus, not by Himself, but as Captain of the Lord's host, awaiting with mighty legions on the wing for His least word.

It is sometimes thought that the Divine Warrior had come to supersede Joshua ; this is not so. He was Prince of another host than Israel. His host was the celestial armies, which were going forth to war against Canaan. As long as Israel was true to God, these were its allies. Look up, Christian soul ! Thou thinkest thyself alone ; or countest sorrowfully thy poor array ; but in very deed the Man of Calvary and of the throne is beside thee. All heaven owns His authority, and will supplement thine efforts. Be reverent, obedient, full of faith and prayer. Keep step with the goings forth of God. Thou shalt have light work to do. Before the impact of His might, thy Jericho shall fall. The battle is not to the strong, nor the race to the swift ; but each to those who are living lives separate from the world, and dedicated to God. The vessels which are meet for the Master's use are pure ones. Cleanliness, rather than cleverness, is the prime condition of successful service.

Every man straight before him.

Josh. vi. 20.

GOD required of the Israelites only to wait, obey, and trust, whilst the Divine Captain led His celestial hosts to the assault, and achieved the victory. "And the Lord said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valor. And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days." We must be sure that our way lies through and beyond Jericho, and that God has called us to take it. When that is ascertained, we may be perfectly certain that the frowning walls of difficulty, which rise between us and the further land of promise, will fall down flat.

There must be times of *Waiting*. Israel waited a whole week. We may have to wait still longer. Let patience have her perfect work. There is no such teacher as she is; her pupils become perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

There must be times of *Obedience*. The people could not understand the meaning of these repeated marchings around the walls. They were not, however, asked to understand, but simply to obey. First the priests and ark, then the warriors. We must subordinate our armed activities to the slow and reverent pace of faith, hope, and love.

There must be times of *exultant Faith*. There was no quaver or hesitation in that cry. The Word of God, as communicated by Joshua, hushed every doubt and misgiving. In confident assurance the people shouted, and according to their faith, so it was to them. "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down." There are no walls of superstition and sin strong enough to resist Faith's shout, when God says that her shouting time is come.

The Lord said unto Joshua, Get thee up.

Josh. vii. 10.

THERE was something very beautiful and impressive in that prostrate form. And as the awed people gathered around in silence to contemplate their leader thus prone upon his face, it must have greatly touched them.

There was cause for soul-anguish. Joshua had counted on unbroken victory through the might of his covenant-keeping God; but here it appeared, either that God had deserted His people, or that He could not cope with the gods on which the Canaanites depended. In either case, Israel was in awful peril; obviously she had not strength sufficient to cope with the seven nations of Canaan. If left to herself, she must inevitably be cut off. But even this prospect alarmed Joshua less than the discredit that would attach to the name of Jehovah.

There are hours in our life when we are called from the exercises of devotion, good and God-honoring though they may be, to deal with the sin of our people, or to cut out some source of failure and defeat. Our place then is no longer before the ark; but arraiguing the people by their tribes, casting lots for the offender, or consigning the accursed thing to fire. Child of God, do not be content with weeping and praying before God; diligently ascertain and put away the accursed thing which has hidden His face from you. When defeat befalls you at the hands of Satan, you may always be sure that there is some flaw in your consecration. You have taken some of the devoted thing back from God. The course of the Christian warrior should be as the sun when he goeth forth in his strength, and in regular gradients drives his chariot from the eastern wane up the steep of heaven.

He wrote a copy of the law of Moses.

Josh. viii. 32.

IF we view this act typically, it is very significant. These things happened to Israel as a type and foreshadowing of great spiritual realities. Canaan is an emblem of the heavenlies, that blessed condition of joy and peace and spiritual power which is ours in Jesus, and becomes ours to enjoy, when we receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. It might have been supposed that in the land of promise there would have been no need for the holy law of God, as given at Sinai, and repeated in Deuteronomy. But it was not so. So, even in the heavenlies, the law must be written again.

Jesus said, I came not to destroy, but to fulfill (Matt. v. 17).—Not to abrogate, or set aside, or supersede the holy law, but to reënact it after a more spiritual sort, and to secure, not an outward, but an inward compliance with its precepts. Our Lord complied, not only with the moral, but with the ceremonial law; and His great aim and purpose was to honor and magnify it in the hearts of His people.

The Apostle Paul says that the ordinance of the law will be fulfilled by those who walk after the Spirit (Rom. viii. 4).—It is holy, just, and good; and they who are carnal and sold under sin cannot by their own resolutions and efforts comply with its demands; but when the soul is yielded to the Holy Spirit, He works in us the will and the power.

The Epistle to the Hebrews says that it will be written on our hearts (Heb. viii. 10).—This is the provision of the new covenant; God's law written, not on stone, whence it might be obliterated; not on metal, whence it might be melted; not on the memory, whence it might fade: but on the tablets of the heart, where we shall love it.

They asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord.

Josh. ix. 14.

WHAT an ominous sound there is in those words! They portend disaster—and it befell. Up to this moment the initiative had always been taken by the Lord. Now for the first time it is taken by Joshua and the people. It was a bad business! Certainly the Gibeonites did their work with guile, and were more than a match for the chosen race. Probably they would not have dared to attempt such a piece of imposition on men of their own sort; but the Israelites seemed a likely prey. They had so recently come into the land, that they might be supposed to be unfamiliar with the guile of Canaan. Yet how astute they fancied themselves!

So the children of God are imposed upon still! Women get married to unconverted husbands, supposing all the while that they are converted. Ministers of churches admit ravening wolves into their midst, deceived by the device of the sheepskin. Young converts get seduced from the simplicity and purity of the faith by lying spirits, that seem as lovely as God's angels. This is due to their relying on their own judgment, and not asking counsel of God. We must try the spirits, whether they be of God, for many false spirits are gone out into the world.

Yet God held Israel to the covenant that their leaders had struck, and in after years their breach of this promise was awfully avenged (2 Sam. xxi. 1, 2). When we have taken a false step we may be forgiven, but we shall be held to its results. O souls, be sure to call in the Priest, with the Urim and Thummim, that He may give you counsel. Seek the purged eye and the pure heart, to be able to see people and things as they really are.

There was no day like that after it.

Josh. x. 14.

THE sun seemed to stay its course in mid-heaven, and hasted not to go down; but there has been no day like that, and there will be none. You may bid the westering sun of another's life stay its downward track toward the western sea, but in vain. It may be some revered minister, some sainted parent, some life dearer to you than your own; but it obeys not your bidding. Surely and inevitably the little daughter of Jairus fades like a flower plucked from its stalk; and Lazarus sinks into his death-sleep, despite the eager message of the sisters to the Life-giver.

So with the sun of your own life. Slowly and steadily it descends. Work while it is called to-day; for the night cometh, in which no man can work. Finish the work that your Father has given you to do; there is only just time enough for it to be done within the span of your days. Our one anxiety should be that nothing divert us from His path, or intercept the communication of His grace.

But there is one Sun that goes not down. "Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw herself; for the Lord shall be to thee an everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." Ah, precious Sun of Righteousness, when once Thou hast risen upon the soul, Thou shalt know no setting, ever higher and higher shalt Thou rise until the perfect day; no twilight or night can come where Thou art; no darkness draw its vail across the sky! Neither life nor death, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which has broken upon our hearts, through the wall of cloud.

So Joshua took the whole land, . . . and Joshua gave it. . . .
Josh. xi. 23.

THIS is almost an exact parallel of the words addressed by Peter to the crowds on the day of Pentecost: "Having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth *this*." In His representative capacity, as the Head of His Church, and the Forerunner of the great host of the redeemed, it was necessary that Jesus should first receive from God the Father all that spiritual inheritance which He was to communicate to those who should afterward believe in His name: and having received, He is prepared to give. "Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you."

The whole land of spiritual blessing is now in the hand of Jesus. The prince of this world is cast out. The power of the Anakim is broken. The seven nations of Canaan and all the power of the enemy is under His feet. His are the rivers of the fullness of the Holy Ghost, and His the mountains of fellowship; His the slopes where the vines of Eshcol ripen and the corn of Canaan goldens; His the green pastures and the still waters of communion, as well as the rocky defile of death. Whatever, then, you desire, you must seek at His hand, in whom it is vested for thee, and me, and every believer: and He will give it.

The land had rest from war. Cease, then, from strife. You will not win by sore wrestling. The lame *take* the prey. Learn to take; let Him cause you to inherit; let Him give according to the division allotted you in the providence and determination of God. "It shall be given to those for whom it is prepared." "They that receive the abundance of grace shall reign."

Moses, the servant of the Lord, gave it.

Josh. xii. 6.

WE must not press a type, or analogy, unduly, though we may employ it to illustrate a doctrine well established from other parts of Scripture. Such an illustration is here. It is remarkable that the two tribes and a half which Moses settled beyond the Jordan took little part in the national life, and were soon wiped out of their inheritance. They were apparently absorbed by the nations whom they were supposed to have superseded.

This was partly due to the devotion of the people to their material prosperity. In the words of Deborah, Reuben preferred to sit among the sheepfolds, to hear the piping of the flocks, rather than to take part in the emancipation of Canaan from Midian. But, looked at typically, may we not say that whatever Moses gives will ultimately evade our grasp and slip from our possession? Like the tables of stone, it will fall from our hand and be broken in pieces. All that you try to be or do in the power of your own resolution and energy will inevitably fail and deceive you. The land looks fair and the tenure seems good, but you will not be able to retain it.

The deepest blessings of the spiritual life cannot be won or held in the strength of our own purpose, even though it be a holy and earnest one. These things can be ours only in so far as we abide in Christ, in whom our inheritance is vested, and from whom we receive it as we need, by faith. We can hold nothing apart from abiding fellowship with Jesus. And this is our privilege. Let us lift our hearts to the blessed Spirit, asking that He would reveal to us that which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, but which God hath prepared for those that love Him.

There remaineth yet very much land to be possessed.
Josh. xiii. 1.

THIS is true in many directions :—

Of the Bible.—How many pages of our Bibles are unpossessed ! We have not underlined any verses in them, or put any marks in the margin to indicate that God has spoken through them to our souls. They are as clean as when they came from the printers. It is well sometimes to consider this, and to resolve to master some unfamiliar portions of God's Word, believing that no word of God is devoid of power. To many believers the Bible, which God intended for their possession, is yet an unexplored continent.

Of Doctrinal Truth.—Doctrine groups texts, and compares them. Doctrine is to isolated texts what natural laws are to particular facts. We should know the doctrines of the Bible. We should understand what is meant by Predestination ; the unction of the Holy Ghost ; and the Second Advent. How much unoccupied land there is here, which, if brought under cultivation, would yield grapes, and corn, and other produce for the refreshment and strength of the soul !

Of Spiritual Experience.—Talk with some deeply-taught saint, and you will see how little you have traversed of the good land beyond the Jordan, or know of its blessed extent. To know the length, and breadth, and depth, and height, of the love of Christ seems given to but few ; but it need not be. There is no favoritism in the Kingdom which excludes some poor souls from the richer portions, and shuts them up to barrenness and a northern aspect. Rise, go through the land in the length and breadth of it ; it is all yours ; the gift of God in Jesus Christ ; claim and possess it.

As my strength was then, even so is my strength now.

Josh. xiv. 11.

MEN sometimes lose heart as they grow old. They say: My intellect will become impaired, my physical strength will abate, my power for service will wane. Yes: but if the outward man decays, the inward man shall be renewed day by day.

Those that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength: whether to war, to go out for service, or to come in for fellowship and rest. Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart. He shall satisfy thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth shall be renewed as the eagle's. God's angels are always young. The drain of the years is amply met by the inflow of His all-sufficient grace. There is no reason why we should decline in usefulness and fruit-bearing with the increase of years; but the reverse. The last sheaves that fall beneath thy sickle shall be the heaviest; and the width of thy swathe shall be greatest as the angel of death touches thee and bids thee home. The secret lies in wholly following the Lord.

But Caleb did not rely on his strength to win Hebron. Very modestly and humbly he said, "It may be that the Lord will be with me." Not that he for a moment doubted it. Could it be for one moment supposed that the God whom he had wholly followed for eighty years would desert him in the supreme crisis of his life? But he put it thus in the sweet lowliness of his soul, because he counted not himself worthy. The strongest men are they who count that they are helpless as worms; and who put their weakness at the disposal of God's might. To each of us comes the promise of God: "My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

He gave her the upper springs, and the nether springs.
Josh. xv. 19.

CALEB had conquered his giants, and so he was able to give his daughter an inheritance of land and springs of water. It was when Jesus had overcome the sharpness of death that He opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers ; it was as He trampled under His victorious feet the principalities and powers of darkness that He gave to His Church the upper and the nether springs.

There are two departments in our life, which are closely related and yet one. We occupy the one in our contact with men and our work in the world ; the other, in our holy moments of meditation and prayer. Christ's sheep go out to their manifold activities, and come in to feed on the green pastures beside waters of rest. In each of these we stand in daily need of the springs that are fed from the River which proceeds from the Throne of God, and which is an emblem of the Holy Ghost.

On the Lord's Day, in the House of God, or in private prayer, we climb the hills and stand on the margin of the upper springs that rise there ; in the solemn hush we hear the murmur of their waters. On Monday we descend into the valley amid the clang of the battle and the cries of human need ; but, thank God ! plentiful springs are there also. Upper springs from the Mount of Transfiguration ; nether springs for the Valley of Humiliation. Upper springs for the days of health and abounding activity ; nether springs for days of depression, and pain, and death. Upper springs in praise, adoration, and rapture ; nether springs for taking the yoke, bearing the burden, and drinking of His cup. Let us partake freely of the refreshing water which flows from the River of God.

And the children of Joseph took their inheritance.

Josh. xvi. 4.

WHAT a wonderful wealth of blessing these children of Joseph came into ! There were the precious things of heaven, the dew, and the deep that couched beneath ; the precious fruits of the sun and of the growth of the moons ; the metals of the ancient mountains and the everlasting hills ; the precious things of the earth, and the fullness thereof ; and, above all, the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush (Deut. xxxiii. 13-16). Surely they were blessed with all manner of blessings—more than they had asked or thought ! The rich gifts of God's grace ! An inheritance which could not have been won by their prowess or arms, but was the free gift of God's love—to be taken and enjoyed !

These things happened to them as types ; the spiritual counterparts of all are ours in Christ. He is precious—nay, priceless : His promises are exceeding great and precious. The blood by which we were redeemed is precious, has meanings not yet explored ; the very trial of our faith is precious as the gold taken from the everlasting hills. How much preciousness there is for us who believe ! (1 Pet. ii. 7, R. v.). But we are poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked, because we have not taken our inheritance.

We need to do more than ask for it. He that asketh should not rest satisfied till he receiveth. We must take by a faith which claims, appropriates, employs. Open your heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, that He may cause you to receive and enjoy all His precious gifts. In Christ all things are yours : go in and possess ; take your inheritance ; believe that you do receive ; thank Him, and go on your way rejoicing.

The hill country shall be thine.

Josh. xvii. 18 (R. V.).

THE hills were steep, irregular, covered with forest. "These shall be yours," said Joshua to the children of Joseph; "you are a great people, and have great power; cut down the forest, terrace the slopes, turn their bare declivities into cornfields and vineyards; fill these vast untenanted spaces with life and song."

There is always room higher up.—When the valleys are full of Canaanites, whose iron chariots withstand your progress, get up into the hills, occupy the upper spaces. If you can no longer work for God, pray for those who can. If you cannot move earth by your speech, you may move Heaven. If the development of life on the lower slopes is impossible, through limitations of service, the necessity of maintaining others, and such-like restrictions, let it break out toward the unseen, the eternal, the divine.

Faith can fell forests.—Even if the tribes had realized what treasures lay above them, they would hardly have dared to suppose it possible to rid the hills of their dense forest-growth. But as God indicated their task, He reminded them that they had power enough. The visions of things that seem impossible are presented to us, like these forest-covered steeps; not to mock us, but to incite us to spiritual exploits which would be impossible unless God had stored within us the great strength of His own indwelling. Difficulty is sent to reveal to us what God can do in answer to the faith that prays and works. Are you straitened in the valleys? Get away to the hills, live there; get honey out of the rock, and wealth out of the terraced slopes now hidden by forest.

Joshua charged them that went to describe the land.
Josh. xviii. 8.

IN every age of the Church's story, God has sent forth men to walk through and describe the land of our spiritual inheritance. They have become dissatisfied with the low attainments of their brethren, and with great desire have followed the Divine suggestions which pointed to a wider knowledge and enjoyment of the possibilities of Christian living. In the first ages, this was the work of men like Chrysostom and Augustine; the later ones, of the Reformers; in later ones still, of men whose names are still fresh in the memory of the Church.

But there is a sense in which all the experiences of life, all our walkings through the land of promise, all our discoveries of springs and valleys and far-stretching campaigns of territory, are not intended for ourselves alone, but for others. We are led by a certain path, that we may know how to direct a poor wanderer on his way. We are comforted, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble. Our Father has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ, that we may communicate those blessings to our fellows. We are shown the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, that we may be able to unfold their joy and helpfulness to others. We are saved that we may become workers together with God.

The books which come to us from holy men who have traversed the land are of priceless value, like this Domesday book which Joshua prepared. But we who cannot write books should yet *describe* the land. "Come and hear, all ye that fear God; and I will declare what He hath done for my soul." There is a Divine warrant for experience meetings of the right sort, where the form is subordinate to the fresh and living Spirit.

In the midst of them.

Josh. xix. 49 (R. v.).

SINCE Joshua prefigures the Lord Jesus, we are led to think of his inheritance in the midst of his brethren.

In the midst on the Cross.—"They crucified Him, and with Him two others, on either side one, and Jesus *in the midst*." Forasmuch as we partook of flesh and blood, He shared the same; and since we were under the curse of a broken law, He also bowed beneath its weight, and was made a curse for us. He took the mid-current of pain; where the pressure was heaviest, there the Lamb of God bore the sin of the world. On Him God made to meet the iniquities of us all; alike of those who refuse, as did the one thief, and of those who accept, as did the other.

In the midst, in the gatherings of His People.—"Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I *in the midst of them*." He is the centre of unity. We come from different quarters with our peculiar prepossessions and preconceptions, with no special affinity to each other; but touching Him, we become one with all who touch Him also. See that, not the sermon, nor the supper, nor the form of worship, is the centre of fellowship; but Christ always and in all. Then let Him be the centre of thy home life and thy business life under all circumstances.

In the midst in Heaven.—"In the midst of the throne, and *in the midst* of the elders, a Lamb standing." All the circles of the redeemed, of angels, and of all other beings, revolve around Jesus, as their common centre. They thus become concentric. Jesus is the Heart of Heaven; the Sun of Paradise; the Essence of its bliss; the Centre of its love; the innermost Soul of its life.

And for the stranger that sojourneth among them.

Josh. xx. 9.

IT is interesting to note this provision, made in the Land of Promise, for the passing over of sins which were not sins of presumption. In this verse there is that great word "Whosoever." These cities of refuge were not for Hebrews only, but for *whosoever* had killed any person, without malice or forethought, but quite unintentionally, and had fled thither. Some poor Gentile might be sojourning among the chosen people, and suddenly find himself liable to the pursuit of the avenger of blood; but the gates of the refuge city were open to him, and the elders of the city were bound to give him a place that he might dwell among them (4), not only safely, but in rest and peace.

Herein there was a foreshadowing of the days when God should open the door of faith unto the Gentiles. "For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, since the same Lord is Lord of all, and is rich unto all them that call upon Him."

There were two mysteries made known to the Apostle Paul: one he unfolds in the Epistle to the Ephesians, the other in the Epistle to the Colossians. First, he teaches us that the Gentiles may be fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise of Christ through the Gospel. Next, he expatiates on the riches of the glory of this mystery, among the Gentiles, that the living Saviour is prepared to dwell in their hearts also, as the Hope of Glory. It is a serious question, how far we are participating in our inheritance. The gates of the promises made to Abraham and his seed are open for us to enter in and dwell there; but there is too much backwardness and hesitancy in us all. "*Whosoever will, let him take.*"

There failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord had spoken. *Josh. xxi. 45.*

SUCH will be the summary of our lives, as we review them from the land of the sunset. We shall see plenty of our own failures, shortcomings, and sins, and sadly acknowledge them. We shall see that our unbelief and disobedience have deprived us of the enjoyment of much that God intended for us. We shall see that whatever was lacking was in no wise due to Him, but to ourselves. The land of our inheritance had been all given us in Jesus; but we suffered the lack of much, because of our failure to enter in.

There may be long delays in the fulfillment of promise.—But delays are not denials; and it is better to let the fruit ripen before you pluck it. Wait till God drops it into your hand; it will be ever so much sweeter.

There may be enemies and obstacles.—But they will give back, before the will of God, as the gates of night roll back before the touch of the dawn. Do not scheme, or fret, or be impatient; God is doing all to make thy life full of favor and blessing. Wait on Him, and keep His way; He will exalt thee to inherit the earth. Thou art as safe as if the gate of pearl were behind thee; thy joy cannot rust or be stolen; every wind is a south wind; every shore thy native land; every circumstance a rough packing-case containing the gifts of thy Father's love.

There may be ignorance and weakness.—But God can deal with this also. Take to Him thine imperfect apprehension, thy faltering faith, He can make right what is wrong, and adjust thee to receive all He waits to give. Heaven will be full of wonder at the way in which God has kept His word, and done all that He had promised, and more.

THE two tribes and a half made the mistake which all Christendom has made since. They endeavored to erect an outward symbol of unity in this altar. They hoped that it would secure them from excision from the rest of Israel. They sought to *make* a unity, instead of accepting this as a fact, and endeavoring to *manifest* it by three pilgrimages a year to God's altar at Shiloh.

Similarly, some Christians set up a church, a system, a creed, and mode of worship, and maintain that the Divine unity can only be realized in connection with one or other of these. You must be a votary at their altar of Ed, or you run the risk of their accusing you of the sin of schism. They substitute an outward for an inward unity, and a mechanical for a vital spiritual fellowship.

If we belong to Christ, we belong to one another. The Church, with all its members, is one vine, one body, one family; and therefore we have to manifest, rather than to make the unity, concerning which our Lord thought so much in His intercessory prayer. "That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be One in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me."

We are one in the thought of the Father, one in the redemption of the Son, one in the possession of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Let us be one in our relation to others, pitying, loving, aiding each other, forgiving and restoring, avoiding unkind comparisons and criticisms, remembering that the failure or success of one is that of all, and endeavoring to hasten the hour when the manifested oneness of the Church shall compel the world to believe that the Father sent the Son.

Take good heed unto yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God.
Josh. xxiii. 11.

LOVE is the crown of human nature ; its regal chaplet of flowers ; the bond by which the sentient universe is made one ; the trait in which we most nearly resemble God—for God is love. We may love God from four parts of our nature (Luke x. 27). From the *heart*, the seat of the emotions ; from the *soul*, the seat of individuality or will ; in the *strength* of our activities ; and in the *mind*, the organ of thought and intelligence. Some natures are more prone to one, and others to another. Each is a gate into the metropolis of Love, or by which the love of God may enter us. And it is of small consequence which gate you use, so long as you use one, and in this way enter the city.

Many people are accustomed to impute love to the heart only, instead of associating it also with other departments of the inner life. Because you have no emotion of love, you therefore conclude that you do not love. But there may be the love of soul, wherein the will crowns Christ as King ; or the love of the strength, wherein all the energy of life revolves around Jesus ; or the love of the mind, in which all thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Choose which you will.

But we must take heed to ourselves. The love of God will come naturally and easily in us as the fruit of the Spirit, unless we do anything to mar or hinder it. Love begets love ; think then how much He loved you, when He gave Himself for you. Take heed to your speech, acts, intentions, volitions, affections ; watch as well as pray ; keep yourselves in the love of God ; love one another and so abide in His love ; and in you also the love of God will be perfected.

IT seemed as though Joshua sought to damp down the enthusiasm of the people. They were all on fire to serve, but he repressed their ardor, crying, "Back, back! This is no place for you." We are reminded of a precise analogy in the Gospels, where our Saviour said to Peter and the rest, "Ye cannot follow Me now" (John xiii. 31-38). *Why this Divine reluctance?*

The answer is clear, when we consider the sequel in each case. In the one, we have only to turn a page in our Bibles, to come on all the disobedience, anarchy, and backsliding of the Book of Judges; in the other we see that Peter denied and the rest forsook Him. How obviously it was shown that there was a moral incompatibility between their self-confident assertions and the service of the Holy God. But this incompatibility was present to the Spirit's discernment when these strong asseverations were made, first by the Israelites, and secondly by the Apostles.

So it becomes us to speak very reverently and leniently of our ability to obey. We are probably overestimating our powers. Created might wanes and fails beneath the searching demands of the Holy One. Perpetual failure has weakened us; for when once a door has been broken through a wall, that spot is always weaker. A fallen ancestry has predisposed us to fail. To will is present with us, but how to perform that which is good we find not. No one can look thoughtfully into the workings of his own nature without realizing the terrible paralysis which has befallen it. We need then that God should counteract our fickleness by upholding us with His steadfast, or constant, Spirit (Psa. li. 10).

The Canaanites would dwell in that land.

Judges i. 27.

HOW persistent evil habits are ! They have dwelt in our lives so long that they dislike being dislodged. Why should they quit their dwelling-place and go out into the void ? Sometimes, at the beginning of our Christian life, we make a feeble effort against them, and hope to cast them out ; but they stubbornly resist. Whenever a remonstrance is addressed to us, we are apt to reply, " Do not find fault ; we couldn't help it. These Canaanites are self-willed and persistent, they *would* dwell in the land."

But the one point that Israel should have borne in mind was that they had no right there. The land was not theirs, it had become Israel's. And, moreover, God was prepared to drive them out ; so that His people would have no fighting to do, but only to chase a flying foe. One man was to chase a thousand (Josh. xxiii. 10).

So these evil habits have no right to persist in the believer's life. The whole soil of his heart has been made over to the Son of God, and there should be no part left to weeds. " Sin shall not have dominion over you," said the Apostle. Nor is this all. The Holy Spirit is prepared to lust against the flesh, that we may not fulfill it in the lusts thereof, or do the things we otherwise *would*. The hasty temper may be *natural* to you : but seeing that your position in Christ is *supernatural*, this Canaanite must be conquered. There is a complete deliverance possible to all who will open their hearts to the might of the Spirit of God. Talk no more of these Canaanites who *would* stay in the land ; but say of the blessed Spirit, " *He* is well able to drive them out."

The Lord raised them up judges.

Judges ii. 18.

THIS was better than nothing. It was better to have even the fitful gleam of deliverance than to settle down under a monotony of servitude; but how much better it would have been if their national history had been a steady progression from one degree of prosperity to another, like the sun rising toward the perfect day! It was of God's kindness and grace that the judges created these temporary respites; it was the fault of their own infidelity and sin that they were not always delivered.

This fitful life is too often the experience of the believer. We have our Gideons, and Baraks, and Samsons; times of revival, times of deep and blessed experience, followed by backsliding and relapse; times when the flood-tide of grace rises high in our soul, to be succeeded by the ebb, with long stretches of desert sand. Thank God for the judges; but be on the alert for the reign of the kings, for David and Solomon, Josiah and Hezekiah—for *the reign of the King*.

The days of the judges were those in which there was no king over Israel. The fitfulness of our experience is often attributable to our failure to recognize the kingship of Jesus. We worship other gods—the gods of the nations around; the idols of the market-place, the studio, the camp, and the bar. The aims and practices of the worldly and ungodly too much engross our thoughts, and sway our behavior. Alas for us! Is it strange that God leaves us to reap much bitterness, recalling us when He can, but longing to be able to do some permanent work of salvation and edification? Oh, let us gladly accord Him what is His right, to “sit and rule upon His throne.”

I have a message from God unto thee.

Judges iii. 20.

GOD'S Messages are often secret.—When Eglon was assured that Ehud had brought a Divine message, which could only be delivered in secret, “a secret errand” (19), he fearlessly bade all his retinue go forth from the audience chamber. And in utter loneliness the one passed to the other the message of death. So there are crises in our lives when God’s messengers bring us the secret message, in which none can intrude or interfere.

God's Messages must be received with reverence.—When Ehud said, “I have a message for thee,” Eglon rose out of his seat. This was a mark of respect, the attitude of attention. It is with similar awe that we should ever wait for the revelation of the Divine will. “What saith my Lord unto His servant?”

God's Messages leap out from unexpected quarters.—Ehud was left-handed; his sword was therefore on his right side, and he appeared unarmed. No one dreamed of looking for his sword, except on his left side; he was therefore allowed to pass unchallenged into the presence of the king. So Nathan strode into David’s presence, who thought his sin was undiscovered, and said, “Thou art the man.” Cultivate this surprise with sinners.

God's Messages are sharp as a two-edged sword, and cause death.—A scimitar is sharp at the edge, and blunt at the back to strike; whilst a two-edged sword is made to pierce. God’s Word pierces as a two-edged sword to the dividing of soul and spirit in the recesses of the being, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. When the Eglon of self has received its death-wound, the glad trumpet of freedom is blown on the hills.

*The journey that thou takest shall not be for
thine honor.*

Judges iv. 9.

BARAK preferred the inspiration of Deborah's presence to the invisible but certain help of Almighty God. It was Jehovah who had commanded him to draw his forces toward the River Kishon, and had promised to deliver Sisera into his hand. But he seemed unable to rise to the splendor of the situation. If only he could have Deborah beside him he would go, but otherwise not. He is mentioned in Heb. xi. as one of the heroes of faith; but his faith lay rather in Deborah's influence with God than in his own. Thus he missed the crown of that great day of victory.

It is the mark of the carnal Christian that he has no direct dealings with God for himself, but must needs deal with Him through the medium of another's prayers, and words, and leadership. Barak must have Deborah. It is faith, though greatly attenuated and reduced by the opaqueness of the medium through which it passes. Such do not attain "unto the first three." God cannot honor them as He does those who have absolutely no help or hope save in Himself. "Them that honor Me I will honor; and those that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed."

If God tells you to go alone to a work, be sure and obey. Go, at whatever cost. Dare to stand by yourself if God is with you. In such hours we realize what Jesus meant when He said, "Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou taken up and cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that what he saith cometh to pass, he shall have it." Yet if you are unbelieving, your unbelief cannot make God's faith of none effect. He abideth faithful. He cannot deny Himself. He will still deliver Israel.

Let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might. *Judges v. 31.*

SO sang Deborah ; and we may take up her strain, making it our prayer for all that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

We desire it for His sake.—It cannot be for His glory that His followers should be weak-kneed and decrepit, waning and flickering, back-sliding and inconstant. Men will judge Him by them, and will count His light a vanishing luminary if He cannot maintain the glow and fire in those that follow Him. Besides, how great the anguish of His heart must be when those on whom He has expended pains and care deceive and fail Him !

We desire it for their sakes.—Think of the beneficent ministry of the sun—awakening bird and blossom ; painting the rich colors of natural beauty ; ripening fruits ; gladdening children and grandsires ; carrying everywhere healing with his beams. If he were conscious of the good he imparts, what blessedness would be his ! Would he grudge the expenditure of his vitalizing forces, when from millions of upturned lips he heard himself blessed ? Such may the bliss of the Christian worker be if, without diminution of light and heat, his life grows to the perfect day. Blessed are they who bless. If it is happy to receive, it is far happier to impart. “ Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

We desire it for the sake of others.—The world is sunless enough ! Many are perishing for a bath of sunshine ! Darkness broods chill and deathly. Let no clouds dim your pathway, or, if they do, transmute them to gold. Shine forth, ye righteous, in the kingdom of your Father, satellites of the greater central Sun of Righteousness !

And the Lord looked upon him and said, Go in this thy might.
Judges vi. 14.

THE strength-giving power of a look from the eyes of Christ! Gideon was weak enough. He said, quite naturally, "My family is the poorest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house" (ver. 15, R. v.). But from the moment of that look, accompanied by that summons, he arose in a strength that never afterward faltered. How truly "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty."

It was a look of expectation.—Gideon felt that the angel expected him to save Israel. It is a great matter to excite hope in a man. Tell him that you are anticipating some noble deed from him, and you may light a spark that will set his whole soul aglow. It is of immense importance to stir the timid and retiring with fresh conceptions of the possibilities of their lives.

It was a look of encouragement.—Those gentle, loving eyes said, as though they spoke, "I will be with thee; do not hesitate to look for Me in every hour of need." Such looks Christ still gives us across the battlefields of life; and if our eyes are fixed upon Him, we shall surely hear Him saying to us, "My grace is sufficient for thee: go in this thy might!"

It was a look of strength-giving might.—It carried help with it. On its beam new spiritual force sped from the speaker to the listener; from captain to cadet. So from the excellent glory one look from Jesus will bring reinforcement. As He looks on us He imparts His strength to us, and says, Go in this thy might. "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might."

A cake of barley bread.

Judges vii. 13.

LIKE most dreams, incoherent and grotesque ! Whoever heard of a cake of barley bread upsetting a tent ! To the dreamer and his comrade, there was no sense in it. But how much it meant to the two Hebrews, who had crept up to the other side of the curtain, in the thick darkness, and were drinking in each word !

The dream was very humbling.—It brought Gideon back to the simplicity and helplessness of his own resources. In the gathering of these crowds of warriors, in the notoriety he had achieved, in the loyalty of the three hundred, there was much to inflate his pride. Therefore God brought him face to face with himself. He was only a cake of barley bread at the best. Before God can uplift, use, and anoint us, He must show us what we are, humbling and emptying us, bringing us into the dust of death. Before God can use thee to work a great deliverance, He must convince thee of being only a cake of barley bread. “Five *barley* loaves, and two *small* fishes.”

It was full of hope.—A cake of barley bread might be a worthless thing ; but if God were behind it, it would upset a tent ! So when the weakest life is placed at the disposal of the Almighty, and taken in hand by Him, it becomes mighty to the pulling down of strongholds.

It is full of teaching.—How much has to be learned by us on these lines ! We are too strong for God. We vaunt our might, we count our warriors, we magnify our generalship. This may not be ! So God brings us down to the brook and tests us there ; and reduces our force to three hundred men, and ourselves to barley-cakes, and there gets the victory with His right hand, and His holy arm.

As thou art, so were they ; each one resembled the children of a king.

Judges viii. 18.

IT was a magnificent tribute to the royal bearing of this illustrious family. All the children had the stamp of kingliness on them, which had impressed even these barbaric princes. Would that a similar confession could be extorted from those who behold the members of the royal house of Jesus !

The children of a king ! It is within the reach of any who aspire to it. By the second birth we become the children of God, joint-heirs with Christ, and the Spirit witnesses to our sonship, teaching us to cry, Abba, Father. As children of the great King we should bear the sign of our high lineage in our bearing and walk.

Royalty of Demeanor.—There is an aristocratic bearing in the scions of noble houses among men. The head is lifted high, the mien is proud, the manner distant and reserved. But in the family of God, meekness and lowliness, humility and contriteness, are marks of family likeness. We walk as Jesus walked, of whom the Baptist said, “ Behold the Lamb of God ! ”

Royalty of Dress.—The king is marked by the brilliant orders glittering on his breast. Purple and ermine become those who date their descent from a line of kings. But the emblem of our family is the cross ; our color is scarlet ; our insignia is the towel and basin that speak of lowly service.

Royalty of Occupation.—The earthly king does nothing servile. He is waited on with lowly obeisance. But they who are of the same family as Jesus are found performing the lowliest acts of service, in jails, hospitals, and slums. In this they follow closely on the steps of Him who went about doing good.

Their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech ; for they said, He is our brother. Judges ix. 3.

IS not this the reason why God has set us in families? Had He so chosen, each of us might have been created alone as Adam was, and sent out with no special connection with others of our race. But instead, we are closely connected. It is very rarely that a man is so utterly bereaved as to be destitute of some relative.

Between a man and his brother there is a special tie. It may be truly said, in the case of brothers, that a doorway has been made through the walls which ordinarily part men, which may be bricked up or filled with debris ; but the wall there will always be thinner than anywhere else, and some day the doorway may be opened for the passage of the messenger of peace. Men are always more inclined to follow the man of whom they can say, "He is our brother." Brotherhood, sisterhood, relationship of any kind, is therefore a very precious talent ; and it becomes us solemnly to ask ourselves whether it has been put to use. Have you ever spoken or written to your brother or sister about Christ?

As soon as Andrew had found Jesus, he started off to find his own brother Simon ; and Simon was glad to follow him because he was his brother. Had another tried, it is as likely as not that he would have repelled him. But what could he say to the man who had shared his childhood's sports, and had helped him haul in a net of fish many a time after a night of hard work?

This is the reason that Jesus has so strong a hold on human hearts. He is our brother, bone of our bone ; not ashamed to call us brethren ; and this constitutes a moving argument why we should be inclined to follow Him.

His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.

Judges x. 16.

THIS is a very strong way of stating the pitifulness of God. It is applying to Him terms borrowed from our own experiences as men ; and in no other way could we realize the tender love and compassion of our Heavenly Father. Israel's miseries were due to the sins with which their history was marked ; but God's love brooded over them, longing to deliver.

This is the explanation of God's first words to Adam.—One of the versions substitutes for "Where art thou?" the words "Alas for thee!" as though God were treading the glades of Eden with a broken heart, grieved for the misery of His children.

This was the lament of God's Spirit throughout the Old Testament.—"How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? Mine heart is turned within Me; My compassions are kindled together." "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself!"

This led to the Incarnation and Passion of our Lord.—He looked, and there was no man ; He wondered that there was none to help, therefore His own arm brought salvation.

This characterized our Lord's earthly life.—When He beheld the city, and foresaw all the evil that would accrue to it, He could not hold back His tears. "His soul was grieved." In all likelihood, you, my reader, may be suffering keenly the result of your own mistakes and sins in earlier life. The troubles that hem you in are the direct outcome of your having forsaken God. He could, and would, have saved you ; but you made it impossible, because you withdrew yourself from His care. And now He grieves over you. If only you would forsake your sins and turn to Him, He would assuredly raise up a Jephthah for your help.

And Jephthah sent messengers unto the king of the children of Ammon.

Judges xi. 12.

JEPHTHAH'S procedure was admirable in his quiet expostulation, before resorting to force in the defence of home and country against the aggression of Amalek. It was quite clear that Ammon had no right to the lands of which Israel, at God's command, had dispossessed the Amorites. "Thou doest me wrong to war against me." But before repelling the invasion, Jephthah did his best to show the unreasonableness of Ammon's pretext.

Thus our Lord expostulated with the servant that smote Him. "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou Me?"

It is in this way that we are to act still. "If thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between thee and him alone: if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother."

In the Master's judgment, the wrongdoer injured himself much more than any one else; and therefore earnest words of expostulation were desirable to stay him from his own destruction.

How admirable it would be if we would act in such a spirit of meek conciliation! Then our cause might fairly be submitted to the Judge of all (27); and we should be strong in after-times to stand for the sacred rights of others.

There is no need to bribe God's help, as Jephthah did, by his rash promise. He will give gladly and freely out of His own heart of love the help and deliverance we need, if only our cause is rightly ordered before Him. "Who delivered, . . . and doth deliver; . . . He will yet deliver" (2 Cor. i. 10). When we are right with our fellow men, we can confidently count on God's almighty helpfulness.

And he said, Sibboleth.

Judges xii. 6.

IT was only the omission of "h," but it meant the death of the man who missed it. One little letter, and the whole wonder and beauty of a human life was forfeited. It is only recently that the peace of an empire was in jeopardy, because a full-stop was misplaced. This scene has become proverbial of those who exact compliance with some arbitrary test, before admitting their fellows into their sect or church. But how thankful we should be, that our admission to the privilege of the Kingdom of God does not depend upon our pronunciation; that the reality of the new-birth is not tested by the accuracy with which we utter the creed; that we shall not be excluded from the gates of the New Jerusalem because we fail in the utterance of an "h"!

Our acceptance with God does not depend on how much we believe. The woman who was healed had very inadequate notions of faith and Christ. She thought that His garment would communicate blessing, yet she was cured. The dying thief had but a glimmering ray of knowledge of the majesty and power of Jesus, but he entered Paradise in His company. The prime necessity with us, is not faith in the sense of *creed*, but as standing for TRUST. It is not our belief about Christ, but our trust in Him; not our ability to answer the questions of the Catechism, but our coming to Him, and finding rest to our souls—this only is necessary to pass us across the fords of Jordan. "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. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. x. 10).

If the Lord were pleased to kill us, He would not have received an offering. *Judges xiii. 23.*

MANOAH was a pessimist, given to dark foreboding, fond of anticipating misfortune. So soon as he realized that he had seen the face of God, he made sure that his wife and he would die. His wife, on the contrary, was prone to look on the bright side of things, and she must have been an admirable help-meet. How much some of us owe to the temperament of those with whom we live! Many a time would Christian sit down to die, and succumb in the dark waters of the river, if it were not for Hopeful, who pierces the gloom, and beholds the light shining beyond the cloud.

Often enough Foreboding whispers, "We shall surely die." It is the voice of conscience, dreading the result of sin. It is the voice of mistrust, which fails to look beyond the hills for its help. It is the voice of human frailty. At such times let us look back and recount the blessings of the past. Did not God receive our burnt-offering? Did He not conspicuously answer our prayers? Did He not give His only begotten Son? Has He not led us by His right hand and holy arm? Has He not delivered us in seven troubles? Besides, has He not pledged Himself for the future? Has He not showed us "all these things"? It is impossible to believe that He will allow us to be overwhelmed.

His love in time past forbids me to think,
He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink.

Trust Him, O suffering saints, doing His will in the teeth of opposition and hate! Fear not the faces of men; be not dismayed before their threats—He is with you to deliver you. They may fight against you, but they shall not prevail; their proudest threats shall fail of their fulfillment.

Out of the eater came forth meat.

Judges xiv. 14.

YOUNG lions roar at the saints. The lion of hell gives them no little trouble. Though he may not come upon the path of holiness—for no lion shall be there—yet he comes very near it. “He goeth about like a roaring line.” Temptation may well be compared to the attack on Samson by the young lion of Timnath.

The lion’s carcass, lying where Samson had rent and cast it, became the home of honey-bees. And as the hero went back to look at it in after-days, he obtained meat and sweetness.

How apt the parable ! Every conquered temptation yields these two things—strength and sweetness. We are more than conquerors, not only vanquishing the foe, but dividing the spoils of victory.

It yields strength.—Each time we overcome sin, the strength of the temptation passes into our hearts ; as the Indian warrior supposes that the might of each warrior whom he levels to the dust, enters into himself. To resist impatience, makes us more patient in proportion to the strength of the temptation we resist. “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation : for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.”

It gives sweetness.—There is a new gentleness to those who have been tempted ; a humility, a modesty, a consciousness of the presence of God, through whom the victory has been secured ; a new zest for the Word of God. How sweet are thy words to my taste ! sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. The life that is hid with Christ in God is full of sweetness and gentleness. “The fruit of the Spirit is gentleness.”

And now shall I die for thirst?

Judges xv. 18.

IT had been a great victory. With the jaw-bone of an ass Samson had smitten a thousand men. But he knew where to attribute the glory. It was not he, but the Spirit of the Lord which had come mightily upon him. This is distinctly recognized when he called unto God, and said, "Thou hast given this great deliverance by my hand." It was because he had been expending his strength for God, had been, so to speak, burned up by the Divine fire, that he was able to claim God's interposition for his thirst.

This is the great law of prayer. We have no right to count on God in the agony of a crisis, unless we have been walking in fellowship with Him previously, or are exhausted in fighting His battles. There is nothing that we may not claim of Him when we are living in the current of His life, or when we are exhausted in His service. "Thou hast given this great deliverance by the hand of thy servant; and now shall I die for thirst?"

God's springs burst out in unlikely spots. He is never at a loss. If there is no natural spring, He can create one. If all around the mighty rocks reflect the sultry heat, and our spirit seems on the point of exhaustion, then in the wilderness He will cause streams to break out. Be of good courage, fainting warrior! The God who made thee, and has used thee, knows thy frame, and what thou needest before thou askest. Hereafter the place shall be known as "the spring of him that called!" He can cause the refreshing stream to pour forth from the flinty rock; He can turn the bitter water sweet for thee to drink thereof; He quenches thy soul-thirst with the water of life.

He wist not that the Lord was departed from him.
Judges xvi. 20.

BEWARE of unconscious deterioration ! Grey hairs may be here and there upon us without our knowing it. The Lord may be gone out on feet so noiseless, that we are not aware that His Spirit has glided along the corridor, and through the doorway, whispering, Let us depart.

Deterioration is unconscious because it is so *gradual*. The rot that sets in on autumn fruit is very gradual. The damp that silences the violin or piano does its work almost imperceptibly. Satan is too knowing to plunge us into some outrageous sin at a bound. He has sappers and miners engaged long before the explosion, in hollowing subterranean passages through the soul, and filling them with explosives.

Spiritual declension *blunts our sensibility*. The first act of the burglar is to gag the voice that might alarm, and poison the watch-dog. So, sin blinds our eyes, and dulls our keen alertness to the presence of evil. Thus, the stages of our relapse are obvious to all eyes but our own. We are drugged as we are being carried off captives.

The progress of evil within us is a matter of unconsciousness, largely because we are *quick to discover reasons to justify our decadence*. We glaze over the real state of affairs. We call sins by other names. We insist on considerations which in our eyes appear to justify our conduct. We still attend to our religious duties, and try to persuade ourselves that it is with us as in times past. To avoid deterioration we must ever watch and pray, and realize that we are the temple of the Holy Ghost. Then shall the peace of God as a sentry guard our hearts and our thoughts in Christ Jesus.

Dwell with me, and be unto me a priest.
Judges xvii. 10.

MEN crave for a priest. In every age of the world's history, where there has been a tent indicating the presence of human life, there has been an altar indicating man's consciousness of God, and a priest suggesting his consciousness of unworthiness to enter into the Divine presence. Man has perpetually taken one of his fellows whose character seemed less blemished than that of others, and after setting him apart with special rites from the ordinary engagements of life, has promised him maintenance and honor, if only he will act as priest. Be my priest; say for me to God what I cannot say. The sacrifices offered by thy hands are more likely to avail with Him than those rendered by mine.

(1) *Let us beware of the religion which ignores man's craving for a priest.*—The world abounds with attempts at religious systems, from which the conception of the priest is eliminated. These reduce the worship of God to a system of high-thinking, but fail to deal with man's consciousness of sin, and his yearning for a settled basis of peace.

(2) *Let us remember that all human priests must ultimately fail.*—God has put them all aside, setting up the priesthood of the blessed Lord. "We have such a High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man." Stars are needless when the sun has arisen. The human priesthood is rendered unnecessary since the Son of God has passed into the heavens to be a priest after the order of Melchizedek. No one has a right to pose as priest to others, except in the sense that all Christians are such.

Ye have taken away my gods, and the priest.

Judges xviii. 24.

WHATEVER can be taken from us has the mark and signature of man upon it. Since the Jewish priests were not permitted to continue, by reason of death, it was evident that they were men at the best; and nothing that man makes is adequate to supply the immortal cravings of the soul which, having come from God, craves for God.

Change cannot take away our High Priest.—All around us is in a state of flux. No two days in the most brilliant summer are quite the same. The hues are deepening toward autumnal decay. But He continueth ever, and hath an unchangeable priesthood. All that He was years ago, He is still, and will be. What to our forefathers, that to us—"the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever."

The concerns of other souls cannot take Him away.—It is not difficult to conceive of the attention of a human priest being diverted from those who once claimed all his help, to fresh interests and younger generations. But, however many they be who flock as doves to the windows of Christ's mercy, they will never be able to divert an atom of His love and sympathy from us.

Sins and failure cannot rob us of Him.—Indeed, they make Him nearer, dearer, more absolutely necessary. The bands of Danites left Micah wailing: when he wanted the comfort of his priest most, lo, he was gone; but neither principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, can separate us from Him who ever liveth to make intercession. "Having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith."

And it came to pass in those days when there was no king in Israel.

Judges xix. 1.

IT will be sufficient to ponder these words, which occur four times in this book, without reading further in this terrible chapter, which shows the depths of depravity to which man may sink apart from the grace of God. Where Christ is not enthroned as King, drunkenness, impurity, cruelty, selfishness, are supreme, and pursue their ravages unchecked. How different where He reigns in righteousness, and where His will is done as it is done in heaven !

The Book of Judges depicts the state of the heart which has not admitted the Kingship of our Saviour. Where there is no recognition of this, and a man does as he likes, then the heart breeds all manner of uncleanness ; and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death.

In connection with the present marvellous movement afoot in our colleges, five hundred Japanese students met recently under the motto, " Make Jesus King." Oh that this might be our life-motto ! We must crown Him lord of all.

Let young men and women, who may read these words, specially ponder this suggestion. Perpetual failure in life indicates failure in consecration. If you are continually broken in upon by raids of evil, it is certain that you have never enthroned the Son of God. He is never Saviour in the fullness of His power till He is acknowledged King. Directly the coronation has taken place, He assumes the responsibility of putting down all rule, authority, and power ; overcoming the evils that had held sway ; and bringing every thought into captivity. Such are the warnings and appeals of this chapter and the next. " Make Jesus King."

And put away evil from Israel.

Judges xx. 13.

THE earnestness and promptness with which Israel dealt with and put away this evil thing were very commendable. They had gathered from all the land, even from Gilead beyond the Jordan. They were knit together in a perfect unity of feeling and action. They resolved to subordinate all things beside to the excision of this evil.

So must it be in the Church. The Lord Himself took Ananias and Sapphira out of the infant Church; and the Apostle very earnestly besought and commanded the Corinthians to put away from among them the wicked person, who had committed a sin that would not be named among the Gentiles. "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. v. 7, 8).

At the close of this age God will send forth His angels, to sever the wicked from among the just, and to cast them into the furnace of fire.

In our own life it is impossible altogether to avoid contact with such people. Indeed, to do so, as the Apostle says truly, we must go out of the world. But we can abstain from their friendship and company. It is an altogether different thing to have dealings with a worldly man in business, and to admit him into bosom fellowship and comradeship in our leisure hours. The first is permissible, but not the second; else our companions will seduce us from our loyalty to God. Beware of taking on the color of the ground on which you lie. "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil."

AMID the gross evils of this time, the people of Israel were very tenacious of their vows, which had been ratified in the presence of God, and under the solemn sanctions of the Tabernacle. Because they had sworn not to give their daughters in marriage to Benjamin, they had to devise an expedient to obtain wives for the six hundred who had escaped massacre, that the tribe should not become extinct.

The same spirit was manifested by Jephthah, when he said, "I have opened my mouth to the Lord; I cannot go back." No doubt there was the implied conviction that God would avenge the violation of an oath solemnly taken in His name.

What new emphasis is added by this conception to the words of the Epistle to the Hebrews: "God, willing to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath." Since He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself, that He would bless and multiply Abraham and his seed. If then you are of the faith of faithful Abraham, you have the right to claim the fulfillment of God's promise in this double aspect: He will *bless* and *multiply*. And it is impossible for Him to alter or fail in the word He hath spoken.

The Psalmist said that God's statutes, *i. e.*, the things which He established, were His songs. Surely we have every reason to sing, who know that the covenant of God's love is as steadfast as His throne. Let us turn His statutes into songs. He has given us exceeding great and precious promises; and we can rejoice that "All the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." "The word of the Lord endureth forever."

Call me not Naomi, call me Mara.

Ruth i. 20.

SO she spoke, as many have spoken since, not knowing that God's ways are ways of pleasantness and *all* His paths peace, when they are not isolated from the plan of our life, but considered as parts of the whole. We cannot pronounce on any part of God's dealing with us until the entire plan has been allowed to work itself out. How grieved God's Spirit must be, who is lovingly doing His best, when He hears these words of murmuring and complaint ! Let us lift the vail, and notice the pleasant things in Naomi's life.

True, her husband and sons were dead ; but their deaths in a foreign land had left her free to come back to her people and her God ; to nestle again under the wings of Jehovah ; and to share the advantages of the Tabernacle.

True, Orpah had gone back. Mahlon and Chilion were both buried in Moab ; but she had Ruth, who was better to her than seven sons.

True, she had no male child to perpetuate her name ; but the little Obed would, within a few months, be nestling in her aged arms, and laughing into her withered face.

True, she was very poor ; but it was through her poverty that Ruth was brought first into contact with that good man, Boaz ; and, beside, there was yet a little patrimony which pertained to her.

Yes, Naomi, like thousands more, thou must take back thy words. Thou didst deal bitterly with thine own happiness in leaving the Land of Promise for Moab ; but God dealt pleasantly with thee in thy return and latter end. " Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy."

Under whose wings thou art come to trust.

Ruth ii. 12.

IN after-days this was a favorite image with David in his wanderings and escapes among those same hills. Perhaps he had received it as a fragrant legacy from the life of his good ancestor, Boaz. At least on one occasion Jesus employed it in saying that He had wished to gather Jerusalem as a hen her chicks.

How warm, cosy, and safe, the chickens are when they have gathered under the wings of the brooding hen! It must be a very heaven for them. The storm may roll through the sky, the heavy raindrops fall, the hawk may hover above, poising itself on its wings; but the body of the parent-bird is interposed between them and all that threatens. What wonder that the Psalmist said that he would hide under the shadow of God's wings till all his calamities were overpast!

Are you sheltering there? Have you come out of the storm and tempest to hide there? Can you say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust"? If so, remain in happy confidence. God is between you and all evil or alarm. Be still; yea, be still.

If you have not come to trust under the outspread wings of the Cherubim, do as Ruth did. Leave the land of your nativity, the far country of Moab; leave your people and your gods; tear yourself away even from some twin-soul, dear as Orpah; come across the border-line, and glean in the fields of the Gospel. There you will meet with the true Boaz, who will show kindness unto you, and you will become affianced to Him, and live at home forevermore in the house of bread, where you will be blessed indeed.

The man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day.

Ruth iii. 18.

BOAZ had many good traits—his religious demeanor and speech, his courtesy in greeting his servants, his refusal to take advantage of Ruth's trust; but none are more satisfactory as an index of a noble character than this well-known and acknowledged promptness of action, when he had once taken in hand the cause of the needy. From of old, Naomi had recognized this quality in her kinsman, and knew that he was a man of his word, who would assiduously complete what he had undertaken to perform.

It is a characteristic that we should do well to cultivate. Let us not arouse hopes, and finally disappoint them; let us not make promises to forget them. Our words should be yea, yea. Those who commit their cause to us should feel perfectly at rest about our executing what we have promised.

How true this is of Jesus! If we have put our matters into His hands, we have no further need of worry or fear, but may sit still in assured trust. For Zion's sake He does not hold His peace, and for Jerusalem's sake He will not rest. He has undertaken the cause of the Church, albeit that it is so largely composed of Gentiles, and He will not be in rest until the marriage-feast is celebrated. He has made Himself responsible for thee and me; and He will not rest until He has played the part of a Gōel to the furthest limit, and accomplished our redemption. When we have fully yielded ourselves to Him, and have tasted the joys of complete rest, we may assuredly say with the Apostle, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

Ruth have I purchased to be my wife.

Ruth iv. 10.

SO this exquisite idyll, which began with three deaths and famine, ends with marriage rejoicings. Shall not all God's idylls end thus? Shall it be left to the dream of the novelist only to make happy forever after? God has eternity at His disposal, as well as time. Only trust Him; "thy darkest night shall end in brightest day."

It is impossible not to read between these lines and see the foreshadowing of another marriage, when the purchase of the Church shall issue in her everlasting union with the Son, in the presence of God the Father. Let us, however, apply these words to ourselves as individuals.

The Lord Jesus has purchased us to be His own, not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with His precious blood.

He has also won back our patrimony; this earth is His; and shall be yet rid of all intruding evil, to shine as the brightest jewel in His crown.

He has received the shoe, the symbol of dominion and authority. He is not only our lover, but our Lord.

He waits to take us to Himself, in a love that shall not cease, and compared to which all the love we have ever known is as moonlight compared with sunshine.

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