

TEACHINGS OF NATURE

IN THE

KINGDOM OF GRACE,

BY

C. H. SPURGEON.

PREFACE.

As a preacher, as a writer, as a college lecturer, the late C. H. Spurgeon was continually illustrating the Gospel by references to Nature. By many a simile he thus made the allusions of Scripture more readily understood by the crowds who listened to him. He also read the Book of Nature in a way that proved how he looked upon the works of God with a poet's eye. As showing in what measure the sanctified genius of the great preacher was successful in this wide and charming field of observation, this volume may well be allowed to speak for itself.

A peculiar, and even a unique kind of interest attaches itself to the discourse on Harvest Time, at the end of the book. Preached at New Park Street Chapel, in August, 1854, this is the first sermon by Mr. Spurgeon that was ever printed. When cholera was desolating London, and a quite unnecessary war, for bolstering up the Turk, was raging in the Crimea, the young pastor attempted to strike a cheerful note in order to comfort Christians of that day, while others had needed warning. Readers of these later times will find that the striking utterances of more than forty years ago are not by any means out of date. On the contrary, they will be found still to be as fresh as the fields and dew on an autumn morning.

PATERNOSTER BUILDINGS, E C.

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THE ORDER OF CREATION.

OBSERVE the method of creation. I will not venture upon any dogmatic theory of geology, but there seems to be every probability that this world has been :fitted up and destroyed, re-fitted and then destroyed again, many times before the last arranging of it for the habitation of men. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth;" then came a long interval; and at length, at the appointed time, during seven days, the Lord prepared the earth for the human race. Consider, then, the state of matters when the Great Architect began His work. What was therein the beginning? Originally, nothing. When He commanded the ordering of the earth, how was; it? "The earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." There was no trace of another's plan to interfere with the Great Architect; "With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of judgment, and taught Him knowledge, and showed to Him the way of understanding?" He received no contribution of column or pillar towards the temple which He intended to build. The earth was, as the Hebrew puts it, Tohu and Bohu, disorder and con-fusion — in a word, chaos. So it is in the new creation. When the Lord new creates us; He borrows nothing from the old man, but makes all things new. He does not repair and add a new wing to the old house of our depraved nature, but He builds a new temple for His own praise. We are spiritually without form and empty, and darkness is upon the face of our heart, and His word comes to us, saying, "Light be," and there is light, and ere long life and every precious; thing.

As in the back woods of .America, before there can be tillage, the planting of cities, the arts of civilization,, and the transactions of commerce, the woodman's ax: must hack and hew: the stately trees of centuries; must fall: the roots must be. burned, the old reign of Nature disturbed. The old must go before the new can come. Even thus the Lord takes away the first, that He may establish the second. The first heaven and the first: earth must pass away, or there cannot be a new heaven and a new earth. Now, as it has been outwardly, we, ought 'to expect that it would be the same within us; and when these witherings and fadings occur in our souls, we should only say," It is the Lord, let Him do as seemeth Him good."

The withering is a withering of what? Of part of the flesh and some portion of its tendencies? Nay, observe, "All flesh is grass; and *all* the goodness thereof" — the very choice and pick of it — "is as the flower of the field," and what happens to the grass? Does any of it live? "The grass withereth," all of it. The flower, will not that abide? So fair a thing, has not that an immortality? No, it fades: it utterly falls away. So wherever the Spirit of God breathes on the soul of man, there is a withering of everything that is of the flesh, and it is seen that to be carnally minded is death. Of course, we all know and confess that where there is a work of grace, there must be a destruction of our delight in the pleasures of the flesh. When the Spirit of God breathes on us, that which was sweet becomes bitter; that which was bright becomes dim. A man cannot love sin and yet possess the life of God. If he takes pleasure in fleshly joys wherein he once delighted, he is still what he was: he minds the things of the flesh, and therefore he is after the flesh, and he shall die. The world and the lusts thereof are to the unregenerate as beautiful as the meadows in spring, when they are bedecked with flowers, but to the regenerate soul they are a wilderness, a salt land, and not inhabited. Of those very things wherein we once took delight we say, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." We cry to be delivered from the poisonous joys of earth, we loathe them, and wonder that we could once riot in them. Do you know who this kind of withering means? Have you seen the lusts or' the flesh, and the pomps and the pleasures thereof all fade away before your eyes? It: must be so, or the Spirit of God has not visited your soul.

When the withering wind of the Spirit moves over the carnal mind, it reveals the death of the flesh in all respects, especially in the matter of power towards that which is good. We then learn that word of our Lord: "Without Me ye can do nothing." When I was seeking the Lord, I not only believed that I could not pray without divine help, but I felt in my very soul that I could not. Then I could not even feel aright, or mourn as I would, or groan as I would. I longed to long more after Christ; but alas! I could not even feel that I needed Him as I ought to feel it. This heart was then as; hard as adamant, as dead as those that rot in their graves. Oh, what would I at times have given for a tear! I wanted to repent, but could not; longed to believe, but could not; I felt bound, hampered and paralyzed. This is a humbling revelation of God's Holy Spirit, but a needful one; for the faith of the flesh is not the faith of God's elect: . The faith which justifies the soul is the gift of God, and not of ourselves.

You see, then, the universality of this withering work within us, but I beg you also to notice the *completeness of it*. The grass, what does it do? Droop, nay, wither. The 'flower of the field: what of that? Does it hang its head a little? No, according to Isaiah it fades; and according to Peter it falleth away. There is no reviving it with showers, it has come to its end. Even thus are the awakened led to see that in their flesh there dwelleth no good thing. What dying and withering work :some of God's servants have had in their souls! Look at John Bunyan, as he describes himself in his "Grace Abounding!" For how many months and even years was the Spirit engaged in writing death upon all that was the old Bunyan, in order that he might become by grace a new man fitted to track the pilgrims along their heavenly way. We have not all endured the ordeal so long, but in every child of God there must be a death to sin, to the law, and to self, which must be fully accomplished ere he is perfected in Christ and! taken to heaven.. Corruption cannot inherit incorruption; it is through the Spirit that we mortify the deeds of the body, and therefore live. But cannot the fleshly mind. be improved? By no means; for "the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Cannot you improve the old nature? No; "ye must be born again." Can it not be taught heavenly things? No. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he. know them, because they are spiritually discerned." :[here is; nothing to be done with the old nature but to let it be laid in the grave; it must be dead, and buried, and when :it is so, then the incorruptible seed that liveth and abideth for ever will develop gloriously, the fruit of the new birth will come to maturity, and grace shall be exalted in glory. The old nature never does improve, it is as earthly, and sensual, and devilish in the saint of eighty years of age as it was when first he came to Christ; it is unimproved and unimprovable; towards God it is enmity itself: every imagination of the thoughts of the heart is evil, and that continually. The old nature called "*the* flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other," neither can there be peace between them.

THE GARDEN OF PARADISE.

THERE have been many very famous kings' gardens, such as those hanging gardens in Nineveh, wherein Sardanapalus delighted himself, and that remarkable garden of Cyrus, in which he took such great interest, because, as he said, every tree and every plant in it had been both planted and tended by his own royal hand. Imagination might bid you wander among the beauties; of the celebrated villas and gardens of the Roman emperors, or make you linger amid the roses and lilies of the voluptuous gardens of the Persian caliphs, but we have nobler work in hand. I call you to come with me to the orchard of pomegranates, to beds of spices, camphire with spikenard, calamus and cinnamon, myrrh and aloes, with trees of frankincense. I am not about to speak of the gardens of any earthly monarch, for we can find far fairer flowers; and rarer fruits in the gardens of the King of kings, the resorts of His Son, the Prince Immanuel.

The first king's garden was THE GARDEN OF PARADISE, which was situated in the midst of Eden.

You will read of it: in the Book of Genesis. It was doubtless a fairer place than we have ever seen, and much more marvelous for beauty than we can imagine. It was full of all manner of delights, a fruitful spot wherein the man who was set to keep it would have no need to toil, but would find it a happy and refreshing exercise to train the luxurious plants. No sweat was ever seen upon his happy brow, for he cultivated a virgin soil. Abundance of luscious fruits ministered to his necessities. He could stretch himself upon soft couches of moss, and no inclemencies of weather disturbed his repose. No winter wind scattered the leaves of Eden, no summer heat burned up its flowers. There were sweet alternations of day and night, but the day brought no sorrow, and the night no danger. The beasts were there; yet not as beasts of prey, but as the obedient servants of that happy man whom God had made to have dominion over all the works of His hands. In the midst of the garden grew that mysterious Tree of Life, of which we know so little literally, but of which, I trust, we know so much in its spiritual meaning, for we have fed upon its fruits, and have been healed by its leaves. Hard by it stood the tree of knowledge of good and evil, placed there as the test of obedience. Adam's mind was equally balanced, it had no bias to evil, and God left him to the freedom of his will, giving this

as the test of his; loyalty, that, if obedient, he would never touch the: fruit of that one tree. Why need he? There were tens of thousands of trees, all of which bowed down their branches with abundant fruit for his hunger or his luxury. Why need he desire that solitary tree which God had fenced and hedged about? But, in an evil hour, at the serpent's base suggestion, we know not how soon after his creation, he: put forth his; hand and plucked from the forbidden tree! The meter plucking of the fruit seems little to the thoughtless, but the breaking of the Maker's law was a great offense to heaven, for it was man throwing down the gage of battle against his Creator, and breaking his allegiance to his Lord and Master; this was great, great in. itself and in its mischievous effects, for Adam fell that day, and out of Eden he was driven to till the thankless, thorn-bearing soil, and you and I fell in him, and were banished with him. 'We were in his loins.. He was the "father of us all," and on us he has brought the curse of toil, and in us all he has sown the seeds of iniquity. Let it never be forgotten, in connection with the Garden of Eden, that we are not now a pure and sinless race, and cannot be by nature, however civilized we may become. Men are born no longer with balanced minds, but a heavy weight of original sin in the scale. We are averse to that which is good. The bias of the mind of man, when he is born into the world, is towards that which is evil, and we as naturally go astray as the serpent naturally learns to hiss, or the wolf to tear and to devour.

Beware of thinking too little of the fall. Slight thoughts upon the fall are at the root of false theologies; the mischief that has been wrought in us is not a trifling matter, but a thing to be trembled at. Only the Divine Hand can reclaim us. The house of manhood has been ;shaken to its foundations; each timber is decayed; the leprosy is in the tottering wall. Man must be made new by the same creating hand that first: made him, or he can never be a dwelling place fit for God. Let those who boast of their natural goodness look to the Garden of Eden and be ashamed of their pride, and then examine their own actions by the glass of God's most holy law, and be confounded that they should dream of purity. How can he be pure that is born of woman? "Who can 'bring a clean thing out of an unclean tiling? Not one." As our mothers were sinful, such are we, and such will our children be; as long as men are brought into the world by natural generation, we shall be ';' born in sin and shapen in iniquity;" and, if we are to be accepted by God, we must be born again, and made new creatures in Christ Jesus.

Alas! then, alas! for that first king's garden! The flowers are gone; the birds have ceased to sing! The winter winds howl through it, and the summer sun scorches it! The beasts of prey are there. Perhaps the very site of it, which is now unknown, may be a den of dragons, a habitation for the pelican of the wilderness, and the bittern of desolation! Fit image, if it be: so, of our natural estate, for we were altogether given up to desolation and destruction, unless One mighty' to save had espoused our cause.

THE GARDEN OF EDEN.

THE LORD GOD IN THE GARDEN

“THE Lord God called unto Adam and said, Where art thou?” Man had sinned against God. Mark the *alienation of heart* which sin causes in the sinner. Adam ought to have sought out his Maker. He should have gone through the garden crying for his God, “My God, my God, I have sinned against Thee. Where art *Thou*? Low at Thy feet Thy creature falls and asks mercy at Thy hands. My Father, Thou hast placed me in this lovely Paradise; I have wickedly and willfully eaten of the fruit of which Thou saidst that I should not eat of it, since in the day I ate thereof I should surely die. Behold, my Father, I submit to the penalty. I confess Thy justice and beseech Thy mercy, if mercy can be shown to such an one as I am.” But instead thereof, Adam flies from God. The sinner comes not to God; God comes to him. It is not “My God, where art Thou?” but the first cry is; the voice of grace, “Sinner, where art *Thou*?” God comes to man; man seeks not his God. Despite all the doctrines which proud free-will has manufactured, there has never been found from Adam's day until now a single instance in which the sinner first sought his God. God must first seek him. The sheep strays of itself, but it never returns to its fold unless sought by the great Shepherd. It is human to err, it is divine to repent. Man *can* commit iniquity, but even to know that it is iniquity so as to feel the guilt of it, is the gift of the grace of God. We have and are nothing but what is vile. Everything which is God-like, everything which aspires towards righteousness and true holiness, cometh from the Most High.

Sin made man a fool. He was once in God's image, wise; now, since the trail of the serpent has passed over his nature, he has become an arrant fool, for is not he a fool who would cover the nakedness of sin with fig leaves? Is not he indeed mad who would hide from the omniscient Jehovah beneath the spreading boughs of trees? Did not Adam know that God filleth all space, and dwelleth everywhere, that from the highest heaven to the deepest hell there is nothing that is hid from His understanding? And yet so ignorant and stupid is he that he hopes to escape from God, and make the trees of the garden a covert from the fiery eyes of divine wrath.

Ah! how foolish we are! How we repeat the folly of our first parent every day when we seek to hide sin from conscience, and then think it is hidden from God, when we are more afraid of the gaze of man than of the searchings of the Eternal One; when because the sin is secret, and has not entrenched upon the laws and customs of society, we make no conscience of it, but go to our beds with the black mark still upon us, being satisfied because man does not see it, that therefore God doth not perceive it. O sin, thou hast made man ask the question, “Whither shall I flee from Thy presence?” and thou hast made him forget that, if he ascend to heaven God is there; if he make his bed in hell, God is there; and if he say, “Surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about him.

But now, the Lord Himself comes forth to Adam, and note how He comes. He comes *walking*. He was in no haste to smite the offender, not flying upon wings of wind, not hurrying with His fiery sword unsheathed, but *walking* in the garden. “*In the cool of the day*” — *-not* in the dead of night, when the natural glooms of darkness might have increased the terrors of the criminal; not in the heat of the day, lest he should imagine that God came in the heat of passion; not in the early morning as if in haste to slay, but at the close of the day, for God is longsuffering, slow to anger, and of great mercy; but in the cool of the evening, when the sun was setting upon Eden's last day of glory, when the dews began to weep for man's misery', when the gentle winds with breath of mercy breathed upon the hot cheek of fear; when earth was silent that man might meditate, and when heaven was lighting her evening lamps, that man might have hope in darkness; then, and not till then, · forth came the offended Father.

Adam flies and seeks to avoid that very God whom he had once met with confidence, and with whom he had the sweetest fellowship, talking with Him as a man talketh with his friend. And now hear the voice of God as He cries, “Adam. where art thou?” Oh! there were two truths in that short sentence. It showed that *Adam was lost*, or God would not have needed to ask him where he was. Until we have lost a thing, we need not inquire about it; but when God said, “Adam, where art thou?” it was the voice of a shepherd inquiring for his lost sheep; or better still, the cry of a loving parent asking for his child that has ran away from him, “Where art thou?” There are but three words, but they contain the dread doctrine of our lost estate. When *God* asks, “Where art thou?” man must be lost. When God Himself inquires where he is, he must be lost in a more awful sense than you and I have as yet fully known. But *then*, there was also mercy here for

it showed that God intended to have mercy upon man, or else He would have let him remain lost, and would not have said, "Where art thou?" Men do not inquire for what they do not value. There was a gospel sermon, I think, in those three divine words as they penetrated the dense parts of the thicket, and reached the tingling ears of the fugitives — "Where art thou?" Thy God is not willing to lose thee; He is come forth to seek thee, just as by-and-by He means to come forth in the person of His Son, not only to seek but to save that which now is lost, "Where art thou, Adam?" Oh, had God meant to have destroyed the race, He would have hurled His thunderbolt at once, and burned the trees, and let the ashes of the sinner lie beneath His angry gaze. He would have rushed in the whirlwind, and in the storm, and tearing up the cedars and the pomegranates by their roots, He would have said, "Here thou art, thou rebel; traitor, take thy due deserts! Let hell open before thee, and be thou swallowed up for ever." But no, He loves man; He careth for him, and therefore now inquireth 'where he is in tones of calmness, "Adam, where art thou, where art thou?"

The question which the Lord asked of Adam may be used in five different ways. We are not sure in what precise sense the Lord intended it — perhaps in all — for there is always in t]he utterance of the Divine One. a great depth which coucheth beneath. Our words, if they give one sense, do well, but the Lord knoweth how to speak so that He shall teach many truths in few words. We give little in much: God giveth much in little. Many words and little sense — this is too often the rule of man's speech. Few words and much meaning — this is the rule with God. We give gold beaten out into leaf: God giveth ingots of gold when He speaketh. We use but the filings of gems: God droppeth pearls from His lips each time He speaketh to us; nor ,shall we, perhaps, even in eternity, know how divine are God's words — how like Himself, how exceeding broad, how infinite.

We believe, that the inquiry of God was intended in an AROUSING SENSE — "Adam, where art thou?" Sin stultifies the conscience, it drugs the mind, so that after sin man is not so capable of understanding his danger as he: would have been without it. Sin is a poison which kills conscience painlessly by mortification. Men die by sin, as men die when frozen to death upon the Alps — they die in a sleep; they sleep, and sleep, and sleep, and sleep on, till death closes the scene. One of the first works of grace in a man is to put aside this sleep, to startle him from his lethargy, to make him open his eyes and discover his danger. One of the first deeds of the good physician is to put sensibility into our flesh. It has become cold, and dead,

and mortified ;he puts life into it, and then there is pain; but that very pain has a salutary effect upon us.

Now, I think that this question from the Lord was intended to set Adam thinking. "Where art thou?" He had perceived in some degree into what a state his sin had brought him, but this question was meant to stir the depths of his spirit:, and wake him up to such a sense of danger, that he should labor to escape from the wrath to come. "Adam, where art thou? " — look at thyself now, naked, a stranger to thy God, dreading the presence of thy Maker, miserable, undone. "Adam, where art thou?" — with a hard heart, with a rebellious will, fallen from thy high estate. "Adam, where art thou?" Lost! lost to thy God, lost to happiness, lost to peace, lost in time, lost in eternity. *Sinner*, "where *art thou?*" *O* that I might, by earnest words, stir up some callous, careless sinner to answer the inquiry for himself! Man, where art thou? Shall I tell thee? Thou art in a condition in which thy very conscience condemns thee. How many there are who have never repented of sin, have never believed in Christ!

Must not that creature be in a very pitiable position who is afraid of his Creator? You were made to glorify Him; you were made to rejoice in His presence, and to delight in His goodness; but it seems you love not the very food which was meant to sustain you. You must be sick — you must be sick indeed!

"Where art thou?" Thy life is frail; nothing can be more weak. A spider's line is a cable compared with the thread of thy life. Dreams are substantial masonry compared with the bubble structure of thy being. Thou art here and thou art gone. Thou sittest here to-day; ere another week is past thou mayest be in another world.

ADAM IN EDEN.

HAD Adam's heart been in a right state, he would have made a full confession of his sinfulness. "Where art thou?" Let us hear the voice of God saying that to us, if we are out of God and out of Christ. "Where art thou, Adam? I made thee in Mine own image, I made thee a little lower than the angels: I made thee to have dominion over the works of My hands: I put all things under thy feet — the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the depths of the sea. I gave this w whole garden of delights to be thy home. I honored thee with My presence, I thought of thy welfare, and forestalled all thy desires. The moon did not hurt thee by night; the sun did not smite thee by day. I tempered the winds for thee; I clothed the trees with fruit for thy nourishment. I made all things minister to thy happiness. Where art thou? I asked of thee but: that little thing, that thou wouldest not touch one tree which I had reserved for Myself. Where art thou? Art thou in the room of a thief, a rebel, a traitor? Hast thou sinned? O Adam, where art: thou?"

To many' the Lord might 'say, "I gave you a godly mother, who wept over you in your childhood. I gave you a holy father, who longed for your conversion. I gave you the gifts; of Providence — you never wanted for a meal. I clothed your back. I put you in a comfortable position in life. I raised you up from a bed of sickness. I overlooked ten thousand follies. My mercies like a :river have flown to you. When you opened your eyes in the morning, it was to look upon My goodness; and till the last moment of the night I was your helper, and drew the curtains about your defenseless head. I have covered thee with My feathers, under My wings hast thou trusted, and now *where art thou?* Hast thou not forgotten. My commandments, abhorred My person, broken My laws, rejected My Sort? Art thou not at this day a disbeliever, content to trust to thine own works, but not to take the finished righteousness of My beloved Son, the Savior of the world? What hast thou done for Him who has done so much for thee? What art thou? Hast thou not been a cumber-ground — a tree that sucks the soil, but bears no fruit — that drinks it. the genial rain of heaven, but yields no grateful fruit? Where art thou? Art thou not to-day in the camp of My enemy? Art thou not on Satan's side, defying Me, and lifting up the puny arm of thy rebellion against the Lord who made thee, and who keepeth the

breath in thy nostrils — in whose hand thy life is, and whose are all thy ways?”

Read the question again thus, “Where art thou?” The serpent said thou shouldst be a god. Thou thoughtest to be made exceeding glorious. Is it so, Adam? is it so? Where is thy boasted knowledge? Where the honors? Where the vast attainments that rebellion would bring to thee? Instead of the clothing of angels, thou art naked; instead of glory, thou hast shame; instead of preferment, thou hast disgrace. Adam, where art thou? And sinner, where art *thou*? Sin said to thee, “I will give thee pleasure.” Thou hast had it; but what of the pain which followed the pleasure? Sin gave thee its cup full of mixed wine; but what of the red eyes and of the woe?

And then to add to the conviction, the Lord asks of Adam, “*Where* art thou?” as it He asked him, “How didst thou come there?” Adam, thou camest there of thyself, if thou hadst been upright, Eve had not cast thee down. Eve, 'twas not the serpent with whom the main guilt must lie; hadst thou not given ear, he might have tempted long if thou hadst been deaf. And so to-day God says to the sinner, “Where art thou?” Thou art where thou hast brought thyself. That thou hast sinned is thine own fault, and none else's but thine own. Oh, it is hard to make a sinner see that sin is his own property. It is the only thing we have. There is only one thing we created, and that is sin, and that is our own, If I permit anything that is evil, I must confess it is a child that has sprung from my own bowels, it hath its origin 'm myself. If we talk of the fall, men will throw their sin on father Adam.. They speak of the depravity of nature, and then they think they are to be excused, as if depravity of nature did not prove the man to be desperately bad, as if it were not saying that sin is essentially man's own thing, that he hath it in his very bones, and in his blood. If we be sinners there is no excuse for us whatever, and if we live and die so, the guilt shall lie at our own door, but nowhere else. “Adam, where art thou?” Thou art where thou hast willfully put thyself:, and thou remainest willfully in the same desperate state of rebellion against God, and of alienation from Him.

Some have even ventured to translate the Hebrew, “Alas for thee, alas for thee!” It is as if God uttered the words of the prophet, “How can I give thee up? how can I utterly, destroy thee? how can I set thee as Admah? how shall I make thee as Zeboim? My repentings are kindled, My bowels are moved for thee. Where art thou, my poor Adam? Thou didst talk with Me, but thou hast now fled from Me. Thou wast happy once, what art

thou now? Naked, and poor, and miserable. Thou wast once in My image glorious, immortal, blessed; where art thou now, poor Adam? My image is marred in thee, thine own Father's face is taken away, and :thou hast made thyself earthy, sensual, devilish. Where art 'thou now, poor Adam?" Oh, it is wonderful to think how the Lord felt for poor Adam. It is taken for granted by all theologians that God can neither feel nor suffer. There is no such thing in the Word of God. If it could be said that God could not do anything and everything, we should say that He was not omnipotent; but He can do all things, and we have not a God who cannot be moved, but we have one who feels and who describes Himself in human language as having a Father's bowels, and all. the: tenderness of a mother's heart. Just as a father cries over a rebellious son, so does the eternal Father say, "Poor Adam, where art thou?"

What a thought it is that when God comes forth to seek His chosen.]He knows where they are, and He never misses them; and though they may have wandered ever so far, yet it is not too far for Him! If they had gone to the gates of hell, and the gates were half opened to receive them, the Lord would get them even there. If 'they had so sinned that they had given themselves up, and every Christian living had given them up, too; :if Satan had counted upon them, and had made ready to receive them, yet when God comes forth to seek them He will find them, and He will have them after all. You who are lost, perishing sinners, hear the voice of God, for it speaks to you. "Where art thou?' for I am come to seek thee." "*Lord*, I am in such a place that I cannot do anything for myself." "Then I am come to seek thee, and do all for thee." "*Lord*, I am in such a place that the law threatens me, and justice frowns upon me." "I am come to answer the threatenings of the law, and to bear all the wrath of justice." "*But*, *Lord*, I am in such a place that I cannot repent as I would." "I am come to seek thee, and I am exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins." "*But*, *Lord*, I cannot believe in Thee, I cannot believe as I would." "A bruised reed I will not break, and a smoking flax will I not quench; I am come to give thee faith." "But, *Lord*, I am in such a state that my prayers can never be acceptable." "I am come to pray for thee, and then to grant thee thy desires." "But, *Lord*, Thou dost not know what a wretch I am." "Yes, I know thee. Though I asked thee the question, ' Where art thou?' it was 'that thou mightest know where thou art, for I knew well enough." "But, *Lord*, I have been the chief of sinners; none can have so aggravated their guilt as I have." "But wherever thou mayest be, I have come to save

thee." "But I am an outcast from society." "*But* I am come to gather together the outcasts of Israel." "Oh, but I have sinned beyond all hope." "Yes, but I have'. come to give hope to hopeless sinners." "Ay, but: then I deserve to be lost." "Yes, but I have come to magnify the law and make it honorable, and so to give thee thy deserts in the person of Christ, and then to give thee My mercy because of His merits." To those who reject the question as a voice of arousing and conviction, to those who despise it as the voice of mercy bemoaning them, or as the voice of goodness seeking them, it comes in another way; it is the voice of JUSTICE SUMMONING THEM. Adam had fled, but God must have him come to His bar. "Where art thou, Adam? Come hither, man, come hither; I must judge thee, sin cannot go unpunished. Come, and thy guilty spouse with thee. Come hither; I must put questions to thee; I must hear thy pleadings, and since they will be vain and void, I must pronounce thy sentence." For though there was much of pity in the question, there was something of severity too. "*Adam, Adam, where art thou? Come thou hither to be judged.*" To-day you hear not that cry; it is mercifully postponed. You shall hear it soon; you shall hear it for the first time, like mutterings of thunder when the storm begins; when sickness casts thee on thy bed, and death looks through his bony eyes upon thee, and touches; thee with his ghastly hand, and saith, "*Prepare to meet thy God.*"

RUIN IN EDEN.

SOME master in Israel who wanted to help the memories of his hearers has said that the three things to be preached above everything else are the three R's — Ruin, Redemption, and Regeneration. He spake wisely and well. How will men seek salvation if they do not feel their ruin? Where is their salvation :save in the atoning blood? What is salvation but being created anew unto holiness? It is a noteworthy fact that, in Holy Scripture, there are three third chapters which deal with these things in the fullest manner. The third of Genesis reveals Ruin; the third of Romans teaches Redemption; the third of John sets forth Regeneration. Will our young friends be so good as to read those chapters through with care, at home? It is; also worthy of mention that not only does each of these chapters teach its own R, but that it also teaches the other two R's. In the third of Genesis we have :not only Ruin, but we have the Redeemer in “*the* seed of the woman,” and we have Regeneration in the expression, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman.” God's regenerating power creates a hatred of evil in the chosen seed. The same you will find in 'the other chapters; for the third of Romans contains a fearful description of the sin and ruin of men; and in the third of John, after you have read, “Ye must be born again,” not far from it you find it written, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish, but have eternal life,” Believe any of these great truths, and the rest follow as a necessary consequence.

I pray you, never regard that story of the serpent as a fable. It is said, nowadays, that it is a mere allegory. Yet there is nothing' in the Book to mark where history ends and parable begins: it all runs on as actual history; and as Bishop Horsley forcibly remarks, “If any part of this narrative be allegorical, no part is naked matter of fact.” It seems to me that if there was only an allegorical serpent, there was an allegorical Paradise, with allegorical rivers, and allegorical trees; and the men and women were both allegorical, and the chapter which speaks of their creation is an allegory; and the only thing that exists is an allegorical heaven and an allegorical earth. If the Book of Genesis be an allegory, it is an allegory all through; and you have an allegorical Abraham, with allegorical circumcision, an allegorical Jacob and an allegorical Judah; and it is not unfair to push the

theory onward, and impute to Judah allegorical descendants called Jews. But if you borrow any money of this race, you will not find them allegorical when you have to pay. It is idle to call the narrative of the Fall a mere allegory; one had better say at once that he does not believe the Book. There is something sane about that declaration, although it be folly; but to say, "Oh, yes, it is a venerable volume, and worthy to be studied; but it is padded out with martyr an allegory," is to say something which confutes itself, if you come to look into it. The Book is intended to be real history, and it contains some portions which, by the consent of everybody, are real history; but Moses could not be an historian, and yet set mere fables before us as a part of his story. To write a jumble of allegory and of fact causes a man to lose the character of a reliable historian, and we had better repudiate him at once. There was a real serpent, as there was a real Paradise; there was a real Adam and Eve, who stood at the head of our race, and they really sinned, and our race is really fallen. Believe this.

When Satan, "that old serpent, the Devil, and Satan" — as the Apocalypse: calls him — determined to tempt Eve, in order that he might destroy the race in which God evidently' took much delight, he could not appear to the woman as a spirit. Spirits are not to be discerned by the eye; since a pure spirit is a thing which none of the outward senses of human beings can apprehend. An immaterial spirit must be invisible; and therefore he must embody himself in some way or other before he can be seen. That Satan has power to enter into living bodies is clear, for he did so upon a very large scale with regard to men in the days of Christ. He and his legions were even compelled to enter into the bodies of swine rather than be cast into the deep. Being compelled to have an embodiment, 'the master evil spirit perceived the serpent to be at that time: among the most subtle of all creatures; and therefore he entered into the serpent, as feeling that he would be most at home in that animal. Out of the serpent he spoke to Eve, as though the serpent itself had spoken. There was an actual and material serpent, but the evil spirit who is known as "the old serpent" was there, possessing the natural serpent with all his masterly cunning. Cruelly determining to lead the human race into sin, that he might thus ruin it and triumph over God, the fallen angel did not hesitate to assume a reptile form. Well might Milton make him say —

*“O foul descent! 'that I, who erst contended
With gods to sit the highest, am now constrain'd
Into a beast; and, mix'd 'with bestial slime,
This essence to incarnate, and irabrute,
That to the height of deity aspired!”*

Notice, carefully, that when the Lord comes to deal with the serpent, He does not question him as to his guilty and the reason of it; and the reason is, perhaps, that the guilt of the arch-enemy was self-evident; or, better still, because the Lord had no design of mercy for him. He meant to make no covenant of grace for the devil or his angels for He took not up angels, though He took up the seed of Abraham. In the infinite sovereignty of God He passed by the fallen angels, but He chose to raise fallen man. Those who cavil at the doctrine of election should answer this question: “Why is it that God has left devils without hope, and yet has sent His Son to redeem mankind? Is not divine sovereignty manifested here?” We can give no answer to the question, “What is man that God thus visits him with distinguishing grace?” save this — “He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion.” Intending, therefore, no forgiveness to this evil spirit, the Lord put no questions to him. His interrogation of our first parents was a sign of mercy. When God chides with a man's conscience, it is with the view of blessing him. Do I speak to one whose sense of sin is aroused, who is accused by the Word of God, who feels the Spirit of God working within as a spirit of bondage? You may be hopeful because it is so. If God had meant to destroy you, He would have left you alone, even as He left the serpent without a word of expostulation, and He would have passed sentence upon you speedily. The very rebukes of God are tokens of His favor towards men. With the serpent — that is, with the evil spirit — God had no upbraidings, but dealt at once by way of doom.

He pronounced a sentence: upon the serpent which, while it was terrible to him, is most encouraging to us; and so far as our first parents understood it, it must have been a sun of light to their dark, depressed souls. For many a year this was the lone star of believing hearts: this gospel of the serpent's doom. Satan was their enemy; he: had done them wrong. He was also God's enemy, and God would fight against him, and call them into His battle. He would raise up One who would suffer, but would win the victory — One whom He calls “the seed of the woman.” By Him Satan's head

would be bruised; and, in that very fact, the race of man would be unspeakably blest.

SENTENCE ON THE SERPENT IN EDEN.

“THE Lord God said unto 'the serpent.’” Under I the serpent form Satan beguiled the woman, and under that form he was condemned. He is a serpent still. He can go about among the weak and defenseless as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour; but he is most at home as the embodiment of craft. The serpent was most *subtle*, and so is the Evil-one most cunning. You think you understand the ways of Satan; but you are mistaken. You have been tempted by him these thirty years, and you believe your experience', can unravel all his plots. Ah, he has been engaged in the work of tempting men for nearly six thousand years; and he is not only much older, but he is far more acute and more sagacious than you are. His ways are not easily found out; and though we' are not ignorant of his devices, we know not which device he will next use. If we have successfully escaped his nets; for forty years, the skillful fowler may even yet entangle us. We have need each day to cry, “Lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.” John writes of him in the Revelation as “that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world.” He is more cunning than the wisest: how soon he entangled Solomon! He is stronger than the strongest: how fatally he overthrew Samson! Ay, and men after God's own heart, like David, have been led into most grievous sins by his seductions. We do not know where he now lurks, or from what quarter he will next shoot his arrows; but we may rest 'assured that he is always plotting mischief against the people of God, and he is working subtilely to effect their pollution. We may wisely enter into Paul's anxiety when he wrote to the Corinthians, “*But* I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity 'that is in Christ.” From the evil machinations of the subtle one, may the Lord deliver us!

A serpent is very *insinuating*. It can enter where another creature could not. Ever so small an opening makes room for a serpent, and it winds itself in without noise. Satan is very insinuating; and as he entered Paradise, so can he penetrate into the most secret and sacred places. He creeps into the church, watch though we may. He creeps into houses, though sanctified by devotion. Have you never found him intruding into your closet during your'

prayer? There may seem to be no loophole, and yet there he is, where he was least expected. Has he not wound himself into :your families? Has; he not crept into your hearts? How can we keep him out? We watch against his attacks from without; but, behold, he has found a lodging-place within! Subtle and insinuating is Satan: he is a serpent indeed!

And how *venomous*! What poison one fang of the old serpent will throw into our moral system! Look around, and see how many have been poisoned with the desire for strong drink,, with lust, with avarice, with pride, with anger, with unbelief. Fiery serpents are among us: and many die of their venom. If we tolerate the least sin, it is a burning drop in the veins of the soul. One touch of the, fangs of this serpent will work immeasurable sorrow, even if the soul be saved from death. It is only the power of God that keeps us from being destroyed by this viper. Had he his will, he is a spirit so malignant that no heir of heaven would survive. O God, keep Thine own! Deliver us from the Evil-one!

In all probability the reptile called the serpent was a nobler creature before the Fall than now. The words, so far as they literally' concern the serpent, threaten that a change would be wrought in him. It has been a sort of speculative opinion that the creature either had wings;, or was able to move without creeping upon the earth as it now does. Of that we know nothing; but assuredly the serpent is a hated thing, with which manhood is at war, and its form and habit typify all that: is mean and cunning. There is nothing noble, nothing brave, nothing true about the idea of a serpent. Satan was among the first-born of the morning, a swift and shining servant of God; but he transgressed against his Sovereign and fell, and now he is nothing' but a serpent — malignant, base, cunning, and untrue. He is fitly' figured by "*the wily snake.*" "He was a murderer from the. beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he: speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar,, and the father of it" (John 8:44). He goes out to deceive the nations (Revelation 20:8). He works signs and lying wonders (2 Thessalonians 2:9). He lays snares, and takes men captive (2 Timothy 2:26). Keep before your minds the form of a serpent, and remember that after this manner Satan will attack you. Only let me soften your fears with the sight of another serpent: the serpent of brass lifted upon a pole brought life to those whom evil serpents had injured. It seems to me a wonder of condescending grace that our Lord Jesus could allow Himself to be symbolized by a form which had been assumed by' the great enemy' of souls. Yes, there was the brazen serpent

lifted high upon a pole, and they that looked, though bitten by fiery serpents, lived. Even thus is Jesus on the cross the sure: remedy for sin of every kind. Look out with all your eyes of caution for the old serpent, the devil; but at the same time look up with all your eyes of faith to Him who was made a curse for us that we might live.

“The Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed”; and the curse was made emphatic and superlative. He with whom we have to contend has the curse of God upon him even now. God has blessed His people, but He has cursed their great enemy. The curse of God blights and blasts, even as in the case of the fruitless fig-tree, which, beneath the sentence of the Lord Jesus, withered away. The curse of God has fallen upon that foul spirit who represents evil: it could not justly be otherwise. This is his shame and your strength. The next time you are fighting with Apollyon, here is a keen shaft to hurl at him. Tell him he is accursed of God; and what has he to do with those whom the Lord has blessed? he whom God blesses is blessed, but he whom God curses is cursed indeed. Upon all the power of sin and error — yea, upon Satan himself, who is the ringleader in evil 'things, the curse of God abideth; and this is prophetic of their overthrow. The truth shall conquer, holiness shall overcome. Falsehood and wrong bear the brand of Cain upon their brow, and they shall wither from the root.

Satan was cursed with reference to us. Our fall has brought him no gain, but an increase of divine displeasure, of disappointment, and envy. He was under God's wrath before, but now the Lord saith concerning him, “Thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field.” Though there cometh pain and groaning upon all the lower creation through man's sin, there shall come upon the old serpent a far more exceeding measure of the curse, because he has dared to lead into revolt the race of man. Who will willingly be the slave of a tyrant whom the Lord has cursed?

Not only Satan, but every form of sin, is under the curse. The tempter would make you think that some shapes of sin are blessed; but: this is false. All sin has a curse attached to it. Keep far from it. Is it false doctrine? It is accursed. Is it living in wantonness and carnal pleasure? It is accursed. Touch it not. You cannot do wrong without defiling yourself with that which God has cursed. You may imagine that you will gain many good things by yielding a little to sin; but this is a lie of the adversary: evil is loss and ruin. The, curse which God pronounced on the serpent is pronounced

on the whole of his seed, and everything that: is impure, untruthful and unholy lies under the ban of God.

Note THE REMARKABLE PROSTRATION which fell upon the serpent:” Upon thy belly shalt thou go.” So does the serpent move, and so doth evil labor to make progress. Satan moves always as a fallen one: not with the dignity of holiness, but groveling low. God has put upon his every movement the indication that he is no longer great and wise. The movements of the prince of darkness are base and sensual: “Upon thy belly shalt thou go.” His seed also take to the same, posture in going. I have seen the foes of the truth contending against the faith of God, and][have marked their policies, their plots, and their plans; and I have said to myself, “Verily, it is written, Upon thy belly shalt thou go.” Beings engaged in evil designs have no. other way, of going, but with tricks, devices, concealments, double meanings. When men deny the Scriptures and the truth of God, they always go to work in an underhand, mean, and serpentine style: “Upon thy belly shalt thou go.” If guilty man begins to plot for his own advantage, scheme for his own glory', and aim at perverting the truth, you will notice that he never takes a bold, open, manly stand, but he dodges, he conceals, he twists and shifts: “Upon thy belly shalt thou go.” Sin is a mean and despicable thing. The greatest potentate of evil was; here doomed to cringe and crawl, and his seed have: never forgotten their father's posture.

All the objects of the powers of evil are groveling. What do they seek: after? When men forsake the way' of holiness, they rush after polluted and idle amusements. What is there in the world's pleasure which is ennobling? Still is carnal mirth a groveling thing “Upon thy belly shalt thou go.” A-professing man gives up the separated way, and enters upon modern society, and he :no longer walks with God. What is his general course? Within a short time we find him careless of all religion, and tolerant of licentiousness. It is ever so: “Upon thy belly shalt thou go.” If you give way to evil, you shall go down, down, down, till your god is your belly, and you glory in your shame. If a man would be great, let him serve God. If a man would rise to :he angels, ay, rise to God, let him obey the command of his Maker. But if he wishes to degrade himself below the adder, which “glides obscure through bush and brake,” his easy method is to follow Satan, and :rebel against the Most High.

“And dust: shall: thou eat all the days of thy life.” Satan is now to live a defeated life, for such is the force of the expression, “His enemies shall lick

the dust.” It signifies that they are utterly defeated. So Satan all his life long exists as a conquered and chained enemy: his power is broken, and he knows it well. He is defeated as to the whole of his great scheme, and he is to be defeated in the details of it all the days of his life. When he met our Lord in the wilderness, he crept upon his belly with serpentine temptations; but our Lord by His holiness made him eat dust! How often was he in our Lord's lifetime made to feel that his conqueror had come! He cringed before Him, and implored that he might not be tormented before his time. When he saw the Lord Jesus upon the cross, having planned, as he thought, to crush Him by death, he began to dread defeat. When he heard Him cry, “*It is finished,*” and felt His iron heel upon his head, he knew, to his eternal horror, that he had only fashioned for the Christ an opportunity of redeeming mankind. What a mouthful of dust he had to e. at in that day! None more wretched in the universe than Satan, whose works the bleeding Savior had destroyed. It was a day of bitter defeat far the enemy when our Lord rose from the dead. The old serpent had watched the pale corpse; but when he saw it live, and when the angel rolled away the stone, and Jesus, the Christ, came forth to die no more, I warrant you the serpent ate the dust that day. And when the apostles stood forth — men whom Satan despised, humble fishermen — and the Holy Ghost came down upon them; again it was fulfilled: “Dust: shalt thou eat.” When the nations were converted, and the idols were broken, and the truth mightily prevailed, then did Satan remember the words, “Dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.” He has more humiliation yet to come. Arise, and preach Christ and win souls, and the great enemy of souls shall find his power diminished, and his name abhorred, and again he shall lick the dust.

AFTER EDEN — THORNS AND THISTLES.

“THORNS *also and thistles shall it bring forth.*” This was not the penalty which might have been pronounced upon Adam. This curse does not fall directly on him; it glances obliquely, and falls upon the ground whereon he stands: “Cursed is the ground for thy sake.” It is not from materialism that a curse comes upon the spirit of man; but it is from the erring spirit that the curse falls upon the material creation. Let us notice this, and learn from it the infinite mercy of God, in that, while the curse falls upon the serpent distinctly, and his head is bruised, yet upon Adam it comes obliquely. “*Cursed is the ground for thy sake.*” “Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee.” God in His justice never goes beyond justice even in pronouncing His severest sentence; but here in this life He tempers His justice with great patience and longsuffering, “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

Another thing is very noticeable, that though the ground was now to bear thorns and thistles to Adam, yet he was to be above ground, and alive to till it. Had the sentence been carried out to the full, a yawning grave would have: opened at his feet, and there would have been no more of Adam; but he was permitted still to live. Now, whenever thorns and thistles spring up about your path, do not murmur. “Wherefore doth a *living,*’ man complain?” When a felon lies in the dungeon, and the sentence of death has been passed upon him, if his life is spared, he may’ be quite content to live on bread and water for the, rest of his day’s;. Thank God that you are not in. Jhell; thank God that life is still prolonged to you. You are on praying ground and pleading terms with. God, even though that ground may bring forth thorns; and thistles to you. “*He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.*” “We are still spared; and though there are thorns and thistles springing up around us, yet, still, that is a, light punishment compared with what we really’ deserve to suffer.

Notice how sweetness can be extracted from that: which is sour. If the ground was to bring forth thorns and thistles to Adam,. then he was still to live. Not only was he alive, but he was still to live on, for the Lord added, “And thou shalt eat the herb of the field.” Although the sentence took

away from Adam the luscious fruits of Paradise, yet it secured him a livelihood. He was to live; the ground was to bring forth enough of the herb of the field for him to continue to exist. Albeit that henceforth all he ate was to be with the sweat of his face, yet still he was to have enough to eat, and he was to live on. Thorns and thistles might multiply; but there would be the herb of the field for him, and he would be spared. The promises of God are often veiled by His threatenings; and if faith can only look beneath the rough covering of the message, something cheerful and hopeful may be found within. You will have trials, thorns also and thistles shall the ground bring forth to you; but your bread shall be given you, your waters shall be sure. You have been provided for until now, notwithstanding many straits and trials: and it shall be so to the end. The manna, shall not cease till you eat the old corn of Canaan. Till you want no more, God will not cease to feed you all your life long.

I should like to say to those, who have their portion in this life. that it is :not much of a portion. “*Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth*”; and, if this is all you have, you have a very poor pittance to live upon.

*“There is beyond the sky
A heaven of joy and love;”*

but beneath the sky there is no such heaven. Even for the godly there are thorns; and thistles; but for you who are not godly, thorns and thistles are all that you have. If you have no heritage on the other side of Jordan, in the Land of the hereafter, in the Dwelling[place of the blessed, it were better for you that you had never been born. Notwithstanding all the transient delights that you now possess, they will only be as the crackling of thorns under a pot, soon over, and nothing but a handful of ashes left in everlasting darkness. Oh, that you would learn from this not to set your affection upon things below, but to be looking for a better and a brighter' land, where the thorn never grows, and the thistle never springs up!

Ever since that first sin of our first parents, this has been generally true of the 'whole human race, not only of the earth literally, but of everything else round about us, “*Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee.*”

It is so with regard to *the natural world*. This world is full of beauty; it is full of light; it yields a thousand pleasures; but still it is full of terror. There is much, indeed, to distress the frail mortals who live in: this world. Have you ever been to sea in a storm? Have you not fell: as if Nature were at

war with you then? Have you never been on the land in some tremendous thunderstorm, when the whole earth seemed to shake, and the skies were split with the fiery bolts? Ah, then you have felt that this world is not quite a paradise since man has become a sinner! The stars of heaven do not fight for him, but they sometimes fight against him. There are many things in this world, with its stern laws, that make it a place that has not all the comfort that a creature might wish. He is a sinful creature; and although he does not suffer all the discomfort that he deserves, yet this world is changed from what it was when God placed Adam in it to delight himself in Paradise.

As it is in the natural world, so it is in *the social world*. You go out into the wide world of trade and business, and I think you find that thorns also and thistles does it bring forth. You do not have a week's dealing, a week's work, a week's going to and fro in this world without getting a pricking thorn here and there. If we do not all have to complain of this experience, I think we who are Christians will all admit that the world is not congenial to a believing man or woman. The society of the world is not helpful to a holy heart. To have to mix in it is rather a task, for which we need much grace, as we cry, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." You cannot have much to do with the men of the world without finding that many of them are sharper than a thorn hedge; and you cannot go to and fro in the earth without discovering that you are surrounded by those who make thorns and thistles to grow up all around you. Be not surprised when this is the case, for it is only what your Lord foretold: "*If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.*"

It is the same, also, in the *religions world*. We read, in the Book of Hosea, that they turned aside from God, and set up altars; and afterwards it is said, "The thorns and the thistles shall come up on their altars." The worst thorns and thistles that ever wound my heart are those that grow in religious circles. To see God's truth dishonored, to have the glory of Christ's substitution denied, to hear doctrines preached which would be novel if they were not old errors new ramped, and brought forth from the oblivion in which they deserved to rot, and to see Christian people behave themselves as some of them do, having little respect to the name of Him whom they profess to serve, and bringing discredit on the sacred cause for which they ought to be willing to die rather than to cast a slur upon it,

these are thorns and thistles that pierce us to the very heart. You can neither live in the church nor live in the world without finding that this present state of life brings forth thorns and thistles to men, ay, to Christian men, too! Not only to the first Adam and to his seed, but to the second Adam and to his seed, this present state has this as one of its certain characteristics, "*Thorns* also and thistles shall it bring :forth to thee."

TRIALS — THORNS AND THISTLES.

I WILL tread upon delicate ground. I am afraid that many have felt that, even in *the little family, world*, they are not left without trials. God, when He took away Paradise as our home, gave us home to be our paradise; and if there be a place where all felicities are to be, found, it is around the family hearth. "East and west, home is best." "There is no place like home;" yet where is there a home without affliction? The dear child whom you love sickens and dies; perhaps the wife or the husband may be taken away to the long home; or poverty comes in; or one whom you love dearer than yourself pines daily with constant sickness and frequent agony. No, we must not expect perfect peace, perfect felicity, even in the home 'which is blessed with morning and evening prayer, where God locks up the door at night and draws the curtains in the morning; no, not even there shall we be free from the curse that sin brought into this fair world. Still will this word follow us into the sacred precincts of our own dwellings, "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring :forth to thee."

And it is so if you get a little closer home still, to the microcosm or *little world of your own self* There is no part of man which does not yield him its thorns. Many of us have a 'thorn in the flesh. Is there any part of the body which may not, if God so wills it, become the subject of disease, and consequently the source of pain to us? I know some whom God dearly loves, — I know He loves them, for He favors them very highly, — who nevertheless find that in the body of this flesh there are the seeds of corruption. There are the bitter wells of Marah by reason of sharp pain of body; and as to the mind itself, what mind is there that is fullest of faith, and most joyful in the Lord, which is not naturally still the subject of grief? There will come times of depression, seasons of apprehension, nights when the light of God's countenance is withdrawn, or when, though we know that: we possess the love of God, it is not shed abroad in 'the heart by the Holy Ghost to the same extent as in our brighter hours. Yes, and even in the soul itself, by reason of the imperfection of our sanctification, from the fact that we are not so filled by the Spirit, and not so conscious of the abiding of the Spirit within us as we yet shall be, thorns also and thistles are brought forth to us. I may be speaking to some who can say, with an

emphasis, that they oftentimes; find great crop; of thistles springing up in their hearts, and they have to keep the sickle of sacred mortification going to cut them down, and they try if possible to dig them up by the root. But thus it is; you cannot expect a perfect life of happiness in an imperfect world like this. No; your Savior carried the cross, and you will have a cross of some kind or other to carry after Him. “Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee.”

Spontaneously trials will come. Nobody is so foolish as to sow thorns and thistles. I have often wondered who that great fool must have been, who being a Scotsman, desired to see the old Scotch thistle growing up in New Zealand, and therefore sent a packet of seed out there to poison, with his precious thistle, that land where there were none before. I think the man who would venture to sow even one seed of a thistle in such a world as this, where thistles grow quite plentifully enough, must have gone a long way in folly. But if, dear friend, you never cause trouble to others, and do nothing that can bring trouble to yourself, — and you will be a wonderfully wise man if that is the case, — yet, still, 'troubles will come of themselves. If you want a herb of the field that you are to feed upon, you must sow it. Your wheat and your barley, you must sow with care. As to the thorns and thistles, you need not take any trouble about sowing them; they will spring up of themselves spontaneously; and so will the afflictions and tribulations of this life come to you without any effort on your part.

And, as they come spontaneously, so *trials will come unavoidably*. I mind not how careful a man may be with his farm, he will find thorns and thistles springing up, and needing to be destroyed. He may have ploughed and harrowed, and done his best to get rid of every thistle in autumn before it has seeded, and yet he cannot keep the troublesome things out; they will be sure to come. So you may rest assured that troubles of heart, and troubles of body, and troubles of mind will come to you, watch and guard against them as you may. All the prudence and care, ay, and all the prayer and faith that you can summon to your help, will not keep you clear of these Thorns and thistles. As they are spontaneous, so are they unavoidable.

To many, also, *trials are very abundant*. “Thorns also and thistles”; not a thorn and a thistle, but thorns and thistles, and plenty of them, shall it bring forth to you. If any of you are vexed with trial after trial, I pray you do not think it a strange thing; you are not at all alone in such an experience.

Many of you, because of your troubles, will get alone, and say, “*I am the man that hath seen affliction.*” Stop; I can find you another man who can equal you, and many women who can surpass you in their afflictions. The path of sorrow is trodden by thousands of feet; it is hard with traffic; but as it leads to the eternal kingdom when a believer's foot is upon it, we need only rejoice to follow the footsteps of the flock, and look upon our trials as the tokens that we are where the great Shepherd leads us.

Thorns and thistles come abundantly; and *trials come very variously*. It is not one form of trouble alone, but other' forms also: “Thorns also *and thistles*.” You may think that it is bad enough to be yourself ill; but to be poor as well, to have also a sick child, and to be assailed by a slanderous enemy, seems more than you can bear. Ah, well, you are to expect these things! If you had only' one form of trouble, perhaps you would grow used 'to it, and therefore it might lose its effect. It is the very fact that it wounds that makes it useful to us. Solomon says, “By the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better.” No tribulation for the present is joyous; if it were, it would not be tribulation at all. If the rod does not make the child smart:, 'what is the use of it? And if our troubles do not make us grieve, why then they are not troubles, and there, is no room for grace to support us under them! We' may expect to have 'trials of every sort and size, for they attend the followers of the Lamb as long as they are in the world 'that lies under this curse, “Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee.”

Trials will come very frequently, for thorns and 'thistles seem to spring up very early in the morning, and very early in the spring, and very late in the autumn, and even far into the winter. When is there a time when a man in this world, ay, a Christian man, too, can be sure that he will be perfectly free from trouble?

And *trials come universally*. I have seen thorns and thistles on the tops of the Surrey Hills, growing by myriads, enough to seed a kingdom with them; and if you go down into the valley, into the poor man's little plot of ground, you will find thorns and thistles there:. They grow in the gardens of Windsor Castle as well as in the backyard of your lodging-house. Thorns also and thistles grow anywhere, on dunghills or in conservatories; they seem to be universally scattered. The downy wings carry the thistle-seed everywhere, and it springs up in most unlikely places. If you think that other people are to be envied because of their freedom from trial, it is

possible that, if you knew more about them, you would find that they were to be pitied, and that your lot, after all, is much better than theirs.

Now know this, and then *it will prevent disappointments*. If you begin your Christian life imagining that, because you are a Christian, everything is to go smoothly with you, and that you are henceforth never to have any more troubles, you will be bitterly disappointed when the: thorns and thistles begin to spring up; but expect them, look forward to them, and then, when they do come, half of their sting will be gone. You will say, “Well, when I took this farm, I knew that thorns and thistles would spring up, I calculated upon seeing them. Now that they have come up, to be forewarned is in great measure to be forearmed; I shall not sit down and weep with bitter disappointment, for what I suffer is no more than I expected.”

EXPECT THORNS AND THISTLES.

BEING forewarned that there will be thorns and thistles, *should brace up our soul to expect them.* The finest men in all the world are not to be found in the warm, genial climates, where the earth has only to be tickled with a hoe, and it laughs with plenty; but the strongest and the most enterprising spirits have been found at the back of the north wind, where there are frosts and ice, and long, dreary winters, and men have a hard struggle for a livelihood. They become really men under that stern training. Now, if there were no thorns ;and thistles, no struggles and no trials, should we haw: any brave Christians? Should we have an }, great and noble souls at all? When did the Church yield, her best men for her Lord's service? It was in the persecuting times, when they had to swim through seas of blood to hold fast the truth of Christ. These are silken days, and we have wretched specimens of Christians everywhere; but if the times of persecution were to come once more, with the rough winds blowing, and the whole sea of the world tossed in tempest, we: should then find brave sailors who would put the ship's head to t. he wind, and ride safely over the stormy billows in the name of the Eternal God. It is, perhaps, the worst thing that can happen to us to be without any kind of trouble. We do not grow in grace very quickly without trial, and we do not then develop the graces of the Spirit as we do when God sends the thorns and thistles to grow up around us.

The knowledge that we may expect the thorns and the thistles *should prevent our clinging to this world.* I should not want to stop here always, when all that I have as a warranty of this farm is this, "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee." There is a land —

*"Where everlasting spring abides,
And never-withering flowers."*

Oh, let my heart be set upon the world to come! Let me cheer' my soul with the prospect of being for ever with the Lord, where nothing can distress or annoy my glorified spirit for ever. The Lord does not mean believers to be satisfied with this world. If you are His child, however fair your portion here, He means you to 'be always restless until you rest in Him, and never to be fully satisfied until you wake up in His likeness.

Wherefore, be thankful for the thorns and thistles, which keep you from being in love with this world, and becoming an idolater, as so many of your fellow-men are.

Does not the Lord intend by these trials and troubles to bring us to *seek after higher things*? Are there not many men, 'who would have been themselves lost, if they' had not lost: their all? I talked with one, the other day, who said to me, "I never saw until I lost my eyes.": Another said to me, as [noticed that he had lost a leg, "Ah, sir, it was the loss of that leg that made me think, and brought me to my Savior feel:!" Some of you cannot go to heaven with all your possessions, and with all your prosperity. It will be necessary to have these things cut away. You are like a ship that is going down through overloading, and you will have to be unloaded that you may float: and blessed is that hand of God which does unload you of many an earthly joy, that you may find your all in the world to come! Affliction is God's black dog, that He sends after wandering sheep to bring them back to the fold. Do not begin fighting the dog, and trying to struggle with him, for you will get nothing by that, but run away to the Shepherd. One of these days you will be glad of all the rough treatment that the black dog gave you in the day of your tribulation. Thorns and thistles shall the earth bring forth to thee; but if these bring thee nearer to thy God, they are the best crop the ground can grow.

These thorns and thistles *should make us look to Christ to change all things around us*. The world will always go on bringing forth thorns and thistles until He come; and when He comes, our glory and delight, then "instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree." Only His grace and His own glorious presence can change this visible creation, as it shall be changed, when "the wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock." We look for that happy transformation; but as for moral transformations, they take place every day where Jesus comes. He constantly turns thorns and thistles into fir trees and myrtle trees. He makes what was our sorrow to become the base of sweet content, and out of all our griefs we gather gladness, blessed be His name!

If any say that this is a dreary subject, remember how much more dreary it was to Him than it ever can be to you, for when He was crowned on earth, the only crown He ever wore was a crown of thorns. This curse of the earth was on His head, and wounded Him full sore. Was He crowned with

thorns, and do you wonder that they grow up around your feet? Rather bless Him that ever He should have consecrated the 'thorns by wearing them for His diadem. Be willing to wear the thorn-crown, too; and if that be not given you to prick your temples, and to make every thought an agony, be satisfied to go on treading a thorny path, for your Lord has been that way before. The day shall come when all these thorns will make us sing more sweetly. The special music of some of the redeemed is due to their special trials.

“The deeper their sorrows, the louder they'll sing.”

The transports of heaven 'will reach a height in those who have passed through great afflictions which they cannot attain otherwise.. *“These* are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple.” Wherefore, be not sorry that the earth shall bring forth thorns and thistles to you, for without these you could not come through these great tribulations, and enter into so great and glorious a rest.

I would to God that some who have no portion in the world to come, would lay all this to heart. So you have come to]London, :young man, and you attend theaters, and music-halls, and so on? Well, they will bring forth thorns and thistles to you. That is the kind of ground where they grow very large, and with very sharp thorns on them. Oh, but you, my young friend, do not go to such places, you are getting on nicely in business? Yes, but you have no guarantee that it will. always be so. Thorns and thistles will it bring forth to you, as 'well as to others; and suppose that you should prosper; suppose that you should make £10,000; suppose that you should make much more than that? Do you not know that, with all that, there will come great care, and that, after all, there is no satisfaction in it, and that when all that makes success in life is summed up, apart from laying hold of eternal things, it is all nothing but smoke. Thorns and thistles for dying beds are often made out of riches. There are more thorns and thistles to the rich than to the poor when they come to die, if they have lived an ill-spent life. Oh, sirs, if you could have all the world, it would only be a bigger plot of thorns and thistles for you without Christ; but if you get Him, if Jesus be your portion, then if your trials should be heaped up as high as heaven, you would not mind, for Christ would come, and be with you in the worst ,of them; and you would still rejoice and glory in tribulation also, and your

tribulation would work in you patience, and patience experience, and that experience would work in you the likeness of Christ, and so bring you nearer heaven!

It matters', not to the believer what form his life may take when once Christ has become his life, and it will not matter much to you who are not saved what form your life takes if you continue without the Savior; it will be death all the same, and it will land you in eternal death. Oh, God, grant that we may never settle down upon this thistle-plot, and try to make it to be our heritage; but may we find our portion in the Lord Jesus Christ!

TREES PLANTED IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD.

IT sounds oddly to hear of planting a tree in a house, and of its flourishing in courts; but an oriental house is a sort of quadrangle. It is a foursquare building, with the middle open to the sky, and generally there is a small garden, in which a palm tree, or an olive, or some other evergreen tree (for they generally, prefer that sort) will be found planted; so that what seems strange to us — a tree planted in a house — was not at all strange to David or to anybody else who lived in the city of Jerusalem. And it is a very beautiful figure — this being planted within the four courts of God's house, that we might grow right in the middle of the place where God with His family deigns to dwell.

Planting implies that *there has been something done for us that we could not do for ourselves*. A tree cannot plant itself. There are self-sown trees, but such are not “those that be *planted* in the house of the Lord.” And you know, there is a necessity that there should be a work: of grace upon our souls, which shall come, not from ourselves, but distinctly from God, for “every plant which My heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up.” It cannot plant itself, and, if it could, it must be rooted up, because it would not be planted by the heavenly Father. There must be wrought upon us, in order to our being truly in the courts of the Lord's house, a work of grace infinitely beyond the power of the will, or all the power that dwells in human nature. We must, in fact, be new-created. We must be born again. We must have as great a work wrought upon us as was wrought upon the body of Christ when He was raised from the dead. The eternal power and Godhead of the divine Spirit must put forth the fullness of its strength to raise you up from your death in sin, or otherwise you will be like: sear branches and cast-off pieces of wood, but never will you be trees planted, made to live and to grow in the courts of the Lord's house. There must be something done for us, if we are planted..

That implies, too, that there must be *a great change in our position*, for a tree that is planted has been growing somewhere else. It has to reach a certain height in the nurseryman's garden, if we are speaking of England, and then it is planted where it is meant to be permanently fixed. So must it

have been in the East. The tree grew somewhere else. After a time it was dug up, its roots were loosened, it was taken away from the place where it had been accustomed to stand. Many a tender rootlet was made to bleed, and it was then carried and put in another place altogether', and so, from being outside the court it came to be inside the court of the house of the Lord. So if we are to answer the condition described we must have been dug up and transplanted. This is to have undergone a great and wonderful change.

Planting means not only that something has been done for us that we could not do for ourselves, and that a great change has taken place in our position, but it implies that *there is life in us*. I suppose that if we speak of planting a post or planting a pillar we hardly use correct language. We plant a thing that has life in it, and we do not consider that a thing has been planted unless it be a living thing. Most certainly the promise could not be fulfilled to any but a living tree, for it is said — "They that be planted shall flourish, and they shall bring forth fruit." God does not intend to have dead stumps standing in His court, —

"That little garden walled around."

And then it seems that the fact of our being planted implies that *we ourselves have taken hold of the soil wherein we have been planted*. A tree that is rightly planted, so as to flourish, begins to send out its roots — to drink in moisture, to select from the earth around it those portions which are fit food for vegetable life.

Are you so incorporated with the church of God that you have got a grip of the fellowship of the saints, that you have effectually laid hold of the citizenship of our Lord's faithful disciples? Are you seeking for vital truth to sustain your soul's vitality? Do you in the ordinances send out the rootlets of your desire, to seek after what God has prepared for you? Is there in you a living sap flowing, which sap is being fed by what you draw in from the soil in which God has placed you? Surely you know what this means? Sabbath days are often feeding times to you; and your visits to the Lord in prayer are building-up times to your spirit; and when you search the Word in private, and when the Holy Ghost communes with you in your quiet retirement — ay, and when, even in the midst of business, your soul breathes her swift ejaculations up to heaven, 'then are the roots of your soul taking hold of Christ, and drawing out of Him the vital element which

you need. You are of the right kind if this be the case, and you shall flourish in the courts of our God.

They shall flourish *because God has said that they shall*. His promises are sure to be fulfilled. If He plants a tree He will cause it to flourish. There seems to be very much against the Christian, many perils to which he is exposed, when he is first planted. Indeed, in the early childhood of Christian life we undergo a world of trial. Such was our weakness, and such our exposure to the bleak atmosphere of this present evil world, the chances were all against us. But there is no chance with God. What He plants is sure to take root. If He says it shall flourish, flourish it will. Satan may seek to tear it up; the foxes may try to spoil the vines; there may be chilling winds; there may be long droughts; the sun may seek to smite it by day, and the moon by night; but God has promised that it shall flourish, and flourish it must; therefore I invite young Christians to be very hopeful. See to it that you are rightly planted, and then you may depend upon it that you will really flourish. God, who hath been pleased to give you grace, will bestow on you more grace, and then more grace — grace upon grace — grace for every exigence and every emergency. As your needs arise those needs shall be supplied. Just as you require spiritual health, spiritual health shall be vouchsafed to you if you seek it at His hands, knowing that it is at His disposal. You shall not be a half-starved Christian — a sort of living skeleton of a believer — but you shall flourish; you shall be peaceful, happy, strong, useful. Set your heart upon this, and ask the Lord to make you thrive, and bloom, and fructify. Your leaf shall not wither, and He will cause you to prosper if you are planted in the courts of the Lord.

If you are altogether Christians, planted in His house — not merely in His garden, but in His house — then you shall flourish, for you have the promise that you shall. And flourish you well may, because of *the goodness of the soil*. They are quite sure to have good soil in the little garden enclosed by the house. It may be rocky outside, but when a man has built the four walls of his house in the East, he generally takes all the soil that is in the middle away. It may be very bad and poor, but then he has brought in baskets the richest soil that he can possibly get, for he must have a good tree in the middle of his house. It would not do every moment of the day to look out, or rather to look in, and see a little scrubby tree half alive. No, he procures the best soil he can get, and those who are planted in the house of the Lord are planted in the best soil possible. They are planted where the means of grace abound. They are planted where Christians help one

another with mutual fellowship. They are planted where the ordinances of the Gospel are freely enjoyed by, all who dwell there. They are planted where the Holy Spirit has promised to abide. They are planted where the Word of God does not return void. They are planted where the eye and the heart of Christ perpetually rest. They are planted in His church — -the church that He hath redeemed with His most precious blood. The soil is good, and they ought to flourish, and they shall.

And then they' are planted in a *sheltered position*. You know that trees, even if they have good soil, are sometimes a great deal kept back by having a cold northerly aspect. They may be very much bitten by the frost; but a tree that is planted right in the middle of the forecourt, surrounded by the walls, is sheltered. There is the natural warmth of the house round about it, and it is sheltered from that which other trees out in the vineyard, or out in the garden, may have to endure.

The cold could not get at you. You scarcely had enough of the cold of the world to do you any injury. The warm Sun of Righteousness was reflected upon you; not only did it come directly upon you by divine favor, but it was reflected upon you with grateful sympathy by the walls of the house of the Lord in which you had been planted. You know it has been so. Is it any wonder, then, that you flourish? There is a little wonder sometimes; that you do not flourish more, and that you do not bring forth more fruit; for what more could God do than He has done for some of you who have been planted in the house of the Lord? Are you not like a vineyard on a very fruitful hill which He has edged about and walled, and in which He has put a wine-press, and which He has watered every morning, and, lest any should hurt it, has kept night and day? How sour the grapes, and how few the clusters fit for the Great Vine-dresser to gather, no one knows better than yourself. Yet they ought to flourish, because they are planted in good soil, and because they are placed in a sheltered position.

The greatness of God's love makes Him very zealous for us and very jealous; of us. If He sees those whom He very much loves, with the slightest evil thing about them, He: is quick: to observe it and prompt to purge it away. You know that you do not like to see a spot on your dear child's face. You will have it washed off as soon as possible. So will the]Lord cleanse His people, both without and within. The care and the trouble He has had with us, as I have already said, none of us can tell. We ought to bring forth fruit, to the profit of the Husbandman, to the glory of

God. Branches that bring forth fruit He purges. Those that bring forth, very little fruit He lets very much alone. If there be a man who brings forth much fruit, that man will have much trial, because it will pay the Vine-dresser to prune him. Some branches will not pay for it. They will never do more than they are doing, and so there they are, and thus they are left to prove their feebleness; but those that will pay for pruning will be pruned again and again. And, truly, when the man of God is in his right mind, he will bless the Lord for the honor He puts upon him when He afflicts him with the view of making him still more useful. This is evermore our Lord's design. Does He not say that they shall never perish whom He protects and provides for, holding them in His hands? But, as they cannot flourish if they run to wood, He will be quite sure to use His knife to take off this new shoot and that new shoot, because it is not fruit-bearing wood, and He takes it away, and He leaves the vine in such a condition that it will bring forth good fruit in due time. They shall flourish, and well they may, when they are so near to the Great Husbandman's hand.

FRUITFUL OLD TREES.

THERE are some trees; that promise exceedingly well for fruit, but the blossoms did not knit, hence they fail to yield fruit in due season. But those whom God plants, and whom He makes to flourish, bring forth fruit, and continue to bring it forth till old age. During all their youth and all their manhood they keep fruitful, and then they bring forth fruit when their years decline and their days are numbered. When others are in the sear and yellow leaf, then are their fruits ripe and mellow. When others are decaying they are ripening. They are growing sweeter, better, holier, when others are not growing at all. “*They shall bring forth fruit in old age*” — that time when one does not expect much fruit bearing — when the strength faileth, when the capacity for projecting seems to have gone, and the power for carrying out what is projected has become very little. “*They shall bring forth fruit in old age.*” This is not merely a cheering promise, but it is a very gratifying fact that God's people do bring forth fruit in old age. Very luscious fruit :some of them produce. Yea, we look for the best fruit in the oldest saints. “*What fruit then,*” you will ask, “*do they bring forth?*”

Well, there is the fruit of *testimony*. I distinctly recollect hearing a blind old minister talk of the lovingkindness of the Lord 'when I was sixteen or seventeen, and the encouragement that he gave me has never departed from me. A young man could not have done that, because he had not attained so much experience; but the weight of years, and even of infirmities, made that venerable blind man's testimony very, very weighty to my soul. “*They shall bring forth fruit in old age.*”

Saints bring forth fruit in the way of *savor* when they grow old. Many young ministers can rattle out some of the truths of the Gospel very readily; but if you want to taste the sweetness, to feel the unction, to enjoy the savor, you must hear one who has had long and deep experience. It must be so. There is an inimitable mellowness about the Christian who has grown old in his Master's service. If you want to hear about the sea, talk to an “*old salt.*” If you want to hear about war, talk to an old soldier who has been in the battle and smelt gunpowder, and knows what it is to have lost a leg. He is the man to tell you. And so., if you want to know about the real deeps, the truth, the vitality, the power of religion, you must not go to

boy's: you must go to those who bring forth fruit in old age, because they can speak out of the fullness of their soul.

The aged Christian ought to have, and I hope he often has, the fruit of *patience*. After having suffered so long and enjoyed the mercies of God so long, he ought to learn to be patient. I once heard a good Christian man say that he was confessing a fault. He said, “*I am afraid that the fruit of my old age is peevishness.*” “No,” I said, “that is not a fruit of your old age; it is a fruit of your old nature.” But the fruit of old age; where there is grace in old age, should be patience.

One of the most delicious fruits that Christians produce in their old[age is *calm, quiet confidence in God*. John Bunyan has described this in his *Pilgrim's Progress*, in the beautiful picture of the land Beulah. I shall not: at all object to have a grey head, and eyes like lamps whose wasting oil is spent, weak shoulders and tottering knees, if I may get to Beulah. You know that he describes it as a land that was just on the verge of the river, and so near to the celestial country that the shirting ones did often cross the river, and there was a pervading smell of sweet spices all over the land, because it lay so near to the city of the blessed that when the wind blew that way it wafted the spices across, and they could, in quiet places of the land, often hear the songs of the shining ones who wandered there. The inhabitants were at perfect rest. The land was called Beulah, for God's delight was; in her. They that dwelt in her were called Hephzibah, for they were married unto the Lord; and they' were sitting there, many of them, close by the brink of the river, waiting till a message should come from the King., for the King's messengers every now and then came into the country, and they said, “The pitcher is broken at the cistern. Rise up, my love, and come away.” And so, one by one, the Beulahites crossed that river. On bright sunny mornings they were known to cross it singing, “O grave, where is thy victory?” Well, it is that patient abiding, that quiet waiting, that holy confidence, that divine anticipation.

“They shall be fat and flourishing,” which means that Christians, in their advanced years, shall have a fullness of savor and life in them. I have known some Christians, both old and young, who have been very dry sticks, not :[at and flourishing certainly; they had very little savor, very little unction, though they had very sharp teeth to bite the young people with; they were very critical, very ready to look harshly at them, and ask them hard questions; and if they could not spell the biggest word in the

whole confession of faith, they have said, “*Ah*, the young people nowadays are not what they used to be in my time.” We have known some of that sort. But when they are planted in the house of God, and God makes them to flourish, they are full of the juice of love; they are full of Christian kindness and gentleness; they are full of life; they are full of real vigor — not the vigor of the flesh, but the rigor of the Spirit; and they love the Lord and delight in Him, and delight to help the young people, and to encourage them in the ways of the Lord. Oh, I like to see an old man thus fat and flourishing!

And it is added, in addition to their being fat, that they shall be flourishing. It means that the aged bell ever shall have a special verdure. This flourishing means his profession; and how delightful is the profession of Christianity in advanced age. I do not mean that some people get exceedingly attached to the pastor whom they have heard for many, many years. One old woman used to say that she liked to hear the old minister better than anybody else. “*Well*, but,” they said, “he is getting very feeble.” “Oh,” said she, “but then I recollect what he used to be, and I would sooner see him shake his head than I would hear anybody else preach.” And I have no doubt that, though that grows to be an infirmity and folly, there is something praiseworthy in it, because you recollect the times and seasons when the Lord refreshed your soul by him: and there is a moral glory about a man as you look at him who has been, say for fifty years, living and laboring as a public professing Christian, without a stain upon his reputation, not a spot on his character. ‘Why, the young people say, “Bless God! if He has; kept him, why should He not keep me; and if the Lord has sustained him under many trials, why should He not sustain me?”’ It is not what the man says; it is the man who says it that gives force to all he says. It is what you know is behind the voice; it is the experience of the Lord's goodness; it is the long-continued honorable conduct which God has enabled him to evince, and to show to others, by the abounding grace that was within him, which preaches in accents louder than the finest voice can articulate.

Nor is it only that He keeps His promises, but the Lord is kind and generous towards His servants. I always think it a shameful, heartless thing to turn adrift, when he gets old, a man who has been in your service from his youth. It is one of the things that have become more common in present than in former times, to turn out old servants. Since you have had the pith of their life — -the marrow out of their bones — do keep a roof over 'their

heads; grant them a pension or at least a pittance; supply them with a bit of bread and cheese till they die. I think it is only right that an old servant, a faithful servant, should be so treated. You know how David puts it. "O God, Thou hast taught me: from my youth, and hitherto have I declared Thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not." It is not likely that He would, is it? Such a God as He turn His old servants off? You remember the Amalekite who had a master that was an Egyptian, and the master left him to perish, and David found him. Ah, well, that is how the Egyptian masters do, 'butt that is not how our Master does. Thou wilt not leave or desert me when my age and my infirmities multiply upon me. When these eyes grow dim Thou wilt look upon me; when another shall guard me, and lead me whither I would not, Thou still wilt be my Friend and Helper, and lay Thy finger on my eyelids as I close them in the hour of death. It is a faithful God we serve, and He keeps His people alive in their old age, that they may show that He is a faithful and upright God.

MANNA IN THE FIELD.

EXODUS 16

THE Israelites must have learned *His goodness*; because He had not supplied them with tasteless food. According to the Apocrypha, which is not: to be received as Scripture, but still is often valuable in some respects, each man tasted the manna according to his own liking. There was something about it that: enabled the mouth to give its own flavor to it; and their marchings through the wilderness, and their' weariness, would often add a sauce to it that made it exceedingly sweet to them. It was like wafers made with honey, not at all unpalatable. It was, as I have, already told you, like fresh oil, by no means disagreeable to an Eastern. God did not give them beggars' food, spare scraps :and broken victuals. He had said, "I will rain bread from heaven for you," and He kept: His word. The least bit of heaven's bread must be delicious to the taste. "Man did eat angels' food,": said the psalmist; and that cannot be bad food which falls from the table of cherubim and seraphim, such food as spirits might partake of if they might partake of any, light, and pure, and ethereal, and spiritual, as far removed from the grosser forms of materialism as food well could be, a godlike food for a godlike race if they had but been worthy of their destiny, and had been willing to learn what God was so ready to teach them.

Their position was in many respects a very pleasant one. They had not to work for daily bread, they had only to go out and gather it. *It was given every day*; they never had any store. A man who gathered manna for twenty years might say, in language that I have often heard," I ain't a bit forwarder, I am just where I was twenty years ago," as if it was not getting forwarder to be twenty years older, and to have had twenty years of mercy. Yet there was no store of manna; all up and down the wilderness there was not a single bank in which people could put their money, there was no such thing as a dividend to be received by anybody, and nobody could be laying up anything. Each Israelite had what he wanted for the day; he kept on having just so much and no more,, and this was a test. Could he endure that test?

And then, again, as there was no store for the whole of them, and they did not get any richer, so there was no opportunity for greed, for *it was given*

to every man. He who thrust out his two hands to rake up the manna, when he returned to his tent, had an omerful for himself, and his wife, and his eight children, but he had not any more. He thought the next day, perhaps, that he would sweep away by the half-hour together if he could, as long as the dew was remaining, and get an extra quantity; but when he examined it, he had exactly as much as he and his family could eat, and no more. The rest was all gone, evaporated, and nothing was left over and above what he needed; and his poor palsied neighbor, who could only get a little together in his basin, with his hand, found that, somehow, he had enough, for God made it to grow in the basin; and when he looked at it, there was just enough for the day's supply.

It is so with grace; God gives us as much grace as we want, but there is nobody here who has any grace' laid up. Oh, yes! I heard one person say that she' had so much grace that she had not sinned for months. Ugh! I thought I smelt something. I did not say anything; but I remembered what manna does when it is kept, and there I left the subject. I hope none: .of you think that you have more grace than you need, because you have not. You may, possibly, have as much grace as will last you through to-day; but: you will need as much as that to-morrow morning, if not more. Oh, yes, I know that you have an iron safe, and you go and rattle your keys, and you say, "Look here; I have grace enough locked up for the next six weeks." Go again, and you will be glad to run away from the stench, for you will find that you have locked up so much pride, and nothing else. We do not want dying grace till we come to die; be satisfied to have living grace while you live.

This gift of the manna,, every day for every man, was a test by which the Lord taught the children of Israel.

So was *that Friday storing*, when they said to themselves, "We get into the habit of gathering our food every morning, but here: comes this Friday, when we have to gather twice as much." I do like consistency, always doing the same thing; but here is a command to do twice as much once a week, here is a law that shifts a bit. I like systematic theology; but here is a sliding seat. Here is a double supply for Friday, and I have to store half of it up. So one man did not store it up when he was told to do so, and another man tried to store it up when he was told not to do so. Thus the Lord tested and tried them. It is a wonderful thing, that testing to which God puts us. Sometimes, when we think that we have such a surplus of

faith in Him, He just tests us, and we find that we have not any. The grandest life is a life of dependence upon God, for that is true independence. If you wholly depend upon God, then have you risen to independence. He who has nothing but what God gives him day by day, has a competence. He is the man who has saved most who has least, for he is saved from the: worry of taking care of it. If he is still dependent upon God's providence, and faith can keep her hold, he is the best-off man after all. You said that you envied the Israelites. Ah, well you may; but you want faith, or else what might be a theme of envy becomes a subject of discontent. So I leave that point.

The Lord teaches us by this :manna as to temporal things — He teaches us that *our supplies depend* upon Him. Where did all the manna come from? It all came from God. Child of God, all thy supplies must come from God. Learn thou that. Whatever the second causes, whatever the intermediary sources, all thou art to have will come whence all thou hast had has. come, namely, from God.

Learn, next, that *our supplies are sure to faith*. If the manna did :not fail for forty' years, neither will the Lord fail to supply thy needs. Thy God will give thee thy livery, if thou art His servant. He will give thee thy daily rations also if thou servest Him. “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” He who carves for himself will cut his fingers, and get an empty plate; but he who waits for the great Host of all the chosen family to carve for him shall haw.' enough, and that of the best. “My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

But learn from the children of Israel that *our sup.. plies will have to be gathered and prepared by ourselves*, God sent the manna from heaven; but the people had to go out every morning, and get it in; and when they had gathered it, we read that they used to beat it in mortars, or grind it in mills, and bake it in pans, and make it into cakes. God is not the patron of idleness, lie will have His people work; and His rule is, “If any' man will not work, neither shall he eat,” a rule He often carries out with those who are idlers. Though labor came at first as a curse, God has turned it into a blessing.

And, once more, *our supplies ought to content us*, for the children of Israel had enough for all their needs. They had no superfluities; but they had all-sufficiency. They had no luxuries; but yet if they chose to think: so, their

daily mercies became luxuries to them. Oh, that God might teach us to trust Him as to temporals!

“I WILL RAIN BREAD FROM HEAVEN FOR YOU.”

EXODUS 16:4

It seems to us that it must have been a very difficult thing to supply food for the hundreds of thousands, — I shall not be incorrect if I say the millions, — who were in the wilderness; but, difficult as that was, the commissariat was not so difficult as the education. To train that mob of slaves into a nation under discipline, to lift up those who had been in bondage, and make them fit to enjoy national privileges, — this was the Herculean task that Moses had to perform. And their God, who loved the children of Israel, and chose them, and determined to make them a peculiar people unto Himself, undertook to teach them, and He used their food as part of the means of their education. Animals are often taught through their food. When they could not be reached in any other way, they have been instructed by their hunger, and by their thirst, and by their feeding. And the Lord, who knew of what a coarse nature Israel was composed, and how the people had degenerated from the old stock during their long bondage, took care to teach them by every means, not only by the higher and the more spiritual, by the typical and symbolical; but He also taught them by their hunger and by their thirst, by the supply of water from the rock, and by the manna which He rained from heaven.

God desired to teach them Himself by the gift of the manna; and He taught them, first, *His care over them*, that He was their God, and that they were His; people, and that He would lay Himself out to provide for them. Think of the care that God had over them, over each one of them, for each man had his own omer of manna. No woman, no child, was forgotten, Every morning, there was a sufficient quantity for every man, according to his eating for that day. There was no more; and there was never any less, so carefully did God watch over each individual. The individuality of the Divine love is a great part of the sweetness of it. God thinks; of every separate child of His as much as if He had only that one. The multiplicity of His elect does not divide the loaf of His affection. He has an infinite affection for each one, and He will take care of the details of each chosen life. He will see your omer just filled precisely, to an ounce. He will give

you all you can possibly require; but He will give you nothing that you can lay by to minister to your pride.

And this care was shown every day. The Lord taught them the continuity of His remembrance by its coming every day. If He had sent one great rain of liberalities to refresh His inheritance, and had bidden them gather up 'the vast store, and carry it with them in all their journeyings, they could not so well have learned His care as when He sent it fresh every morning. Besides, they would have had the burden of carrying it, and they were free from that, for the heavenly supplies were always close at hand, exactly at the spot where they pitched their tents, and tarried. Every morning, there was the manna precisely where they needed it, and that without any man's shoulder being made raw by carrying his food in his kneading-trough. The Lord teaches you and me, in the same way, that He. not only' cares for each one, but cares for each one each day and each moment, tracking our footsteps, and meteing out the full supply of the hour according as the peculiar necessity arises. "He is always thoughtful, always thoughtful of me," thou mayest say of thy Lord; "always thoughtful of all the brotherhood, of the whole company of the redeemed, but none the less thoughtful of each one because there are so many myriads to be cared for every moment of every day." Was not that a sweet lesson for the children of Israel to learn as they gathered their daily bread?

But Jehovah taught them, next, *His greatness*. He had taught them that in Egypt by His mighty plagues, and at the Red Sea, when He branded the breast of the waters; with His mighty rod. But now He gently taught them His greatness, His exceeding greatness, first by the quantity of the manna. There was enough for them all. How much it required, I leave arithmeticians to calculate. But, remember, that quantity fell every morning for forty years. What a great God is He who could feed the canvas city of His chosen people for forty years at a stretch, and yet without His stores being ever drained! His greatness was also seen by the mode in which He fed these myriads. Usually our bread springs up from the soil, but, these people were in a waste, howling wilderness. Wonder of wonders, their bread came down from the sky! Shall men live on air? Will you sustain a population on mist, and cloud and dew?

Yet out of a seeming vacuum came a constant plenty. Every morning the earth was covered with the heaped up food of all that multitude; and they had nothing to do but to go out and gather it. What a God is this whose

matchings through the wilderness were so marvelous! Jehovah, Thy paths drop fatness! Wherever Thou dost put Thy foot, the wilderness and the solitary place are glad for Thee. If Thou dost lead Thy people through a desert, it is no desert to them. The heavens supply what the earth denies. Behold, the greatness of your God, ye who are fed by His care!

And, next, they learned *His liberality combined with His greatness*, for every day they were fed; but not fed as Joseph supplied the people in Egypt, when he took from them all their stores to buy the corn, and at last took: themselves to be bondsmen unto Pharaoh, and their lands to be Pharaoh's freehold, that they might live. No; there 'was never a pretense of paying for that daily bread. The richest man had his omer filled, but he paid not a doit for it; and the poorest man had his; omer just as full at the same price. There was "nothing to pay"; no manna-tax was ever exacted of the Israelite's hand. Oh, the liberality of God!: His cry is, "Ha, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk." Do you notice how Jehovah's invitation grows? He says first, "Come ye to the waters," but He corrects Himself before He gets through with it, and says, "Come, buy' wine and milk without money and without price." The Lord is; infinitely good, essentially. He :is growingly good, experimentally. The more we trust Him, the more we discover of His liberality. He "giveth liberally, and upbraideth not." He scarcely upbraided Israel,, despite their frequent murmurings, but the manna fell continually; and the abundance of it must always have struck the people. God's liberality never stinted them. Oh, yes, I have no doubt that it is quite right to weigh out the bread and to weigh out the meat, so much bone and so much fat to be allowed to every prisoner in the gaol, and possibly to every pauper in the poor-house! But that is not God's way of going to work. Though we deserve to be in prison, and though we are all of us pensioners on His bounty, yet He gives each one his omer full. If a man has a large appetite, he may eat as much as he likes, and the manna seems to grow while he is eating; and if he has a small appetite, though he may have gathered :much, yet still he will have nothing over. God supplied the manna bountifully, yet exactly according to the capacity of the receiver.

THE SLOTHFUL GARDENER.

PROVERBS 24

HIS day has come, his day is going, and he lets the hours glide by to no purpose. Let me not press too hardly upon anyone, but let me ask you all to press as hardly as you (:an upon yourselves while you inquire each one of himself — “Am I employing the minutes as they fly?” This man had a vineyard, but he did not cultivate it; he had a field, but he did not till it. Do you use all your opportunities? I know we each one have some power to serve God; do we use it? If we are His children He has not put one of us where we are of necessity useless. Somewhere we may shine by the light which He has given us, though that light be only a farthing candle. Are we thus shining? Do we sow beside all waters? Do we in the morning sow our seed, and in the evening still stretch out our hand? For if not, we are rebuked by the sweeping censure of Solomon, who saith that the slothful is a “*man void of understanding.*”

Having opportunities he did not use them, and next, *being bound w the performance of certain duties he did not fulfill them.* When God appointed that every Israelite should have a piece of land, under that admirable system which made every Israelite a landowner, He meant that each man should possess his plot, not to let it lie waste, but to cultivate it. When God put Adam in the Garden of Eden it was not that he should walk through the: glades and watch the spontaneous luxuriance of the unfallen earth, but that he might dress it and keep it,. and He had the same end in view when He allotted each Jew his piece of land; He meant that the holy soil should reach the utmost point of fertility through the labor of those who owned it. Thus the possession of a field and a vineyard involved responsibilities upon the sluggard which he never fulfilled, and therefore he was void of understanding. What is your position? A father? A master? A. servant? A minister? A teacher? Well, you have your farms and your vineyards in those particular spheres; but if you do not use those positions aright you will be void of understanding, because you neglect the end of your existence. You miss the high calling which your Maker has set before you.

The slothful farmer was unwise in these two respects, and in another also; *for he had capacities which he did not employ.* He could have tilled the

field and cultivated the vineyard if he had chosen to do so. He was not a sickly man, who was forced to keep his bed, but he was a lazybones who was there of choice.

You are not asked to do in the service of God that which is utterly beyond you, for it is expected of us according to what we have, and not according to what we have not. The man of two talents is not required to bring in the interest of five, but he is expected to bring in the interest of two. Solomon's slothful man was too idle to attempt tasks which were quite within his power. Many have a number of dormant faculties of which they are scarcely aware, and many more have abilities which they are using for themselves, and not for Him who created them. If God has given us any power to do good, pray let us do it, for this is a wicked, weary world. We should not even cover a glow-worm's light in such a darkness as this. We should not keep back a syllable of divine truth in a world that is so full of falsehood and error. However feeble our voices, let us lift them up for the cause of truth and righteousness. Do not let us be void of understanding because we have opportunities that we do not use, obligations that we do not fulfill, and capacities which we do not exercise.

As for a sluggard in soul matters, he is indeed void of understanding, for he trifles with matters which demand his most earnest heed. Hast thou never cultivated thy heart? Has the ploughshare never broken up the clods of thy soul? Has the seed of the Word never been sown in thee? or has it taken no root? Hast thou never watered the young plants of desire? Hast thou never sought to pull up the weeds of sin that grow in thy heart? Art thou still a piece of the bare common or wild heath? Poor soul! Thou canst trim thy body, and spend many a minute at the glass; dost thou not care for thy soul?

And yet all the while thy soul is uncombed, unwashed, unclad, a poor neglected thing! Oh, it should not be so! You take care of the worse part, and leave the better to perish through neglect. This is the height of folly! He that is a sluggard as to the vineyard of his heart is "*void of understanding.*" If I must be idle, let it be seen in my field and my garden, but not in my soul.

Look at the sluggard's land: "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof." Land will produce something. Soil which is good enough to be made into a field and a

vineyard must and will yield some fruit or other; and so. you and I, in our hearts, and in the sphere God gives us to occupy, will be sure to produce something. We cannot live in this world as entire blanks; we :shall either do good o,' do evil, as sure as we are alive. If you are idle in Christ's work, you are active in the ,devil's work. The sluggard by sleeping was doing more for the cultivation of thorns and nettles than he could have done by any other means. As a garden 'will either yield flowers or weeds, fruits or thistles, so something either good or evil will come out of our household, our class, or our congregation. If we do not produce a harvest of good wheat, by laboring for Christ, we shall sow tares to be bound up in bundles for the last dread burning.

If' it be not farmed for God, the soul will yield its natural produce; and what is the natural produce of land if left to itself? What but thorns and nettles, or some other useless weeds? 'What is the natural produce of your heart and mine? What but sin and misery? What is the natural produce of your children, if you leave them untrained for God? What but unholiness and vice? What is the natural produce of this great city if we leave its streets, and lanes, and alleys without the Gospel. What but crime and infamy? Some harvest there will be, and the sheaves will be the natural produce of the soil, which is sin, death, and corruption.

If we are slothful, the natural produce of our heart and of our sphere will be most inconvenient and unpleasant to ourselves. Nobody can sleep on thorns, or make a pillow of nettles. No rest can come out of an idleness which lets ill alone, and does not by God's Spirit strive :o uproot evil.. 'While you are sleeping, Satan will be sowing. If you withhold the seed of good, Satan will be lavish with the seed of evil, and from that evil will come anguish and regret for time, and, it may be, for eternity. The garden put into thy charge, if thou waste thy time in slumber, will reward thee with all that is noisome and painful! "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring' forth to thee."

In many instances there will be a great deal of this evil produce: for a field and a vineyard will yield more thistles and nettles than a piece of ground that has never been reclaimed, If the land is good enough for a garden, it will present its owner with a fine crop of weeds if he only stays his hand. A choice bit of land fit for a vineyard of red wine will render such a profusion of :nettles to the slothful that he shall rub his eyes with surprise. The man who might do most for God, if he were renewed, will bring forth most for

Satan if he be let alone. The very region which would have glorified God most if the grace of God were there to convert its inhabitants, will be that out of which the vilest enemies of the Gospel will arise.

While we look: upon the *lazy* man's vineyard, let us also peep into the ungodly sluggard's heart. He does not care about repentance and faith. To think about his :soul, to be in earnest about eternity, is too much for him. He wants to take :things easy, and have a little more folding of the arms to sleep. What is growing in his mind and character? In some of the spiritual sluggards you can see, drunkenness, uncleanness, covetousness, anger, and pride, and all sorts of thistles and nettles; or where these ranker weeds do not appear, by reason of the restraint of pious connections, you find other sorts of sin. The heart cannot be altogether empty; either Christ or the devil will possess it. If you believe in Christ, I want to peep over the hedge into *your /wart* also, if you are a sluggish Christian; for I fear that nettles and thistles are threatening you also. Did I not hear you sing the other day —

“Tis a point I long to know “?

That point will often be raised, for doubt: is a seed which is sure to grow in lazy men's minds. I do not remember reading in Wesley's Diary a question about his own salvation. He was so lousy in the harvest of the Master that it did not occur to him to distrust his God. Some Christians have little faith in consequence of their having never sown the grain of mustard-seed which they have received. If you do not sow your faith by using it, how can it grow? When a man lives by faith in Christ Jesus, and his faith exercises itself actively in the service of his Lord, it takes root, grows upward, and becomes strong, till it chokes his doubts. Some have sadly morbid forebodings; they are discontented, fretful, selfish, murmuring, and all because they are idle. These are the weeds that grow in sluggards' gardens.

May I next ask you to look into your own house and home? It is a .dreadful[thing when a man does not cultivate the field of his own family. I recollect in my early days a man who used to walk out with me into the villages when I was preaching. I was glad of his company till I found out certain facts, and then I shook him off, and I believe he hooked on to somebody else, for he must needs be gadding abroad every evening of the week. tie had many children, and these grew up to be wicked young men and women, and the reason was that the father, while he would be at this meeting and that, never tried to bring his own children to the Savior. What is the use of zeal abroad if there is neglect at home? How sad to say, “My

own vineyard have [not kept"! Have you never heard of one who :said he: did not teach his children the ways of God because he thought they were so young that it was very wrong to prejudice them, and he had rather leave them to choose their own religion when they grew older? One of his boys broke his arm, and while the surgeon was setting it the boy was swearing all the: time. "Ah!" said the good doctor, "I told you what would happen. You were afraid to prejudice your boy in the right way, but the devil had no such qualms; he has prejudiced him the other way, and pretty strongly too." It: is our duty to prejudice our field in favor of corn, or it will soon be covered with thistles. Cultivate a child's heart for good, or it will go wrong of itself, for it is already depraved by nature. Oh, that we were wise enough to think of this, and leave no little one to become a prey to the destroyer!

As it is with homes, so it is with *schools*. A gentleman had been an atheist for years, and in conversing with him, I found that he had been educated at one of our' great public :schools, and to that fact he traced his infidelity. He said that the boys were stowed away on Sunday in a lofty gallery at the far end of a church, where they could scarcely hear a word that the clergyman said, but simply sat imprisoned in a place where it was dreadfully hot in summer and cold in winter. On Sundays there were prayers, and prayers, and prayers, but nothing that ever touched his heart; until he was so sick of prayers that he vowed if he once got out of the school he would [Lave done with religion. This is a sad result, but a frequent one. Sunday-school teachers can make their classes so tiresome to the children that they will hate Sunday; can fritter away the time in school without bringing the lads and lasses to Christ, and so do more hurt than good. I have known Christian fathers who by their severity and want of tenderness have sown their family field with the thorns and thistles of hatred to religion instead of scattering the good seed of love to it. Look at the great field of *the world*. Do you see how it is overgrown with thorns and nettles? If an angel could take a survey of the 'whole race, what tears he would shed, if angels could weep! What a tangled mass of weeds the whole earth is! Yonder the field is scarlet with the poppy of popery, and over the hedge it is yellow with the wild mustard of Mahomedanism. Vast regions are smothered with the thistles of infidelity and idolatry. The world is full of cruelty, oppression, drunkenness, rebellion, uncleanness, misery. What the moon sees t What God's sun sees! What scenes of horror! How far is all this to be attributed to a neglectful church? Nearly nineteen hundred years are gone, and the

sluggard's vineyard is but little improved! England has been touched with the spade, but I cannot say' that it has been thoroughly weeded or ploughed yet. Across the ocean another field equally favored, knows well the ploughman, and yet the weeds are rank. Here and there a little good work has been done, but the vast mass of the world still lies a moorland never broken up, a waste, a howling wilderness. What has the church been doing all these years? She ceased after a few centuries to be a missionary church, and from that hour she almost ceased to be a living church. Whenever a church does not labor for the reclaiming of the desert, it becomes itself a waste. You shall not find on the roll of history that for a length of time any Christian community has flourished after it has become negligent of the outside world. I believe that if we are put into the Master's vineyard, and will not take away the weeds, neither shall the vine flourish, nor shall the corn yield its increase.

We see, next, the little value of natural good intentions; for this man, who left his field and vineyard to be overgrown, always meant to work hard one of these fine days. To do him justice, we must admit that he did not mean to sleep much longer, for he said, "*Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep Only a little doze, and then he would tuck up his sleeves and show his muscle. Probably the worst people in the world are those who have the best intentions, but never carry them out. Unaided nature always wilt! produce thorns and nettles, and nothing else. My soul, if it were not for grace, this is all thou wouldst have produced. Are you producing anything else? Then it is not nature, but the grace of God that makes you produce it. Those lips that now most charmingly Sing the praises of God, would have been delighted with an idle ballad if the grace of God had not sanctified them. Your heart, that now cleaves to Christ, would have continued to cling to your idols — -you know what they were — if it had not been for grace divine.*

"Surely you do not object to my having a little more sleep?" says the sluggard. "*You have waked me so soon. I only ask another little nap.*" "*My dear man, it is far into the morning.*" He answers, "*It is rather late, [know; but it will not be much later if I take just another doze.*" You wake him again, and tell him it is noon. He says, "*It is the hottest part of the day; I daresay if I had been up I should have gone to the sofa and taken a little rest from the hot sun.*" 'You knock at his door when it is almost evening, and then he cries, "*It is of no use to get up now, for the day is almost over.*" You remind him of his overgrown field and weedy vineyard, and he

answers, "Yes, I must get up, I know." He shakes himself, and says, "I do not think it will matter much if I wait till the clock strikes. I will rest another minute or two." He is glued to his bed, dead while he liveth, buried in his laziness.

“THE FIELD OF THE SLOTHFUL.”

“I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face there, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction.” Proverbs 24:30-32

No doubt Solomon was sometimes glad to lay aside the robes of state, escape from the forms

of court, and go through the country unknown. On one occasion, when he was doing so, he looked over the broken wall of a little estate which belonged to a farmer of his country. This estate consisted of a piece of ploughed land and a vineyard. One glance; showed him that it was owned by a sluggard, who neglected it; for the weeds had grown right plentifully, and covered all the face of the ground. From this, Solomon gathered instruction. Men generally learn wisdom if they have wisdom. The artist's eye :sees the beauty of the landscape because he has beauty in his mind. “To him that hath shall be; given,” and he shall have abundance; for he shall[reap a harvest even from a field that is covered with thorns and nettles. There is a great difference between one man and another in the use of the mind's eye. When we were boys we were taught a little; poem, called, “Eyes and no eyes,” and there was much of truth in it; for some people have eyes and see not, which :is much the same as having no eyes; while others have quick eyes for spying out instruction. Some look only at the surface, while others see not only the outside shell, but the living kernel of truth which is hidden in all outward things.

We may find instruction everywhere. To a spiritual mind nettles have their use, and weeds have their doctrine. Are not all thorns and thistles meant to be teachers to sinful men? Are they not brought forth of the earth on purpose that they may show us what sin has done, and the kind of produce that will come when we sow the seed of rebellion against God? “I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding,” says Solomon; “I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction.” Whatever you see, take care to consider

it well, and you will not see it in vain. You shall find books and sermons everywhere, in the land and in the sea, in the earth and in the skies, and you shall learn from every living beast, and bird, and fish, and insect, and from every useful or useless plant that springs out of the ground.

We may also gather rare lessons from things that we do not like. I am sure that Solomon did not in the least degree admire the thorns and the nettles that covered the face of the vineyard, but he nevertheless found instruction in them. Many are stung by nettles, but few are taught: by them. Some men are hurt by briars, but here is one who was improved by them. Wisdom hath a way of gathering grapes of thorns and figs of nettles, and she distills good from herbs which in themselves are noisesome and evil. Do not fret, therefore, over thorns, but get good out of them. Do not begin stinging yourself with nettles; grip them firmly, and then use them for your sours health. Trials and troubles, worries and turmoils, little frets and little disappointments, may all help you if you will. Like Solomon, see and consider them well — look upon them, and receive instruction.

Solomon was a man whom none of us would contradict, for he knew as much as all of us put together; and besides that, he was; under Divine inspiration when he wrote this Book of Proverbs. Solomon says a sluggard is “a man void of understanding.” The slothful man does not think so; he puts his hands in his pockets, and you would think from his important air that he had all the Bank of England at his disposal. You can see that he is a very wise man in his own esteem, for he gives himself airs which are meant to impress you with a sense of his superior abilities. How he has come by his wisdom it would be hard to say. He has never taken the trouble to think, and yet I dare riot say that he; jumps at his conclusions, because he: never does such a thing as jump — he lies down and rolls into a conclusion. Yet he knows everything, and has settled all points; meditation is too hard work for him, and learning he never could endure; but to be clever by nature is his delight. He does not want to know more than he knows, for he knows enough already, and yet he knows nothing. The proverb is not complimentary to him, but I am certain that Solomon was; right when he called him “a man void of understanding.” Solomon was rather rude according to the dainty manners of the present times, because this gentleman had a field and a vineyard, and as Poor Richard saith, “When I have a horse and a cow every man biddeth me good morrow.” How can a man be void of understanding who has a field and a vineyard? Is it not generally understood that you must measure a man's understanding

by the amount of his ready cash? At all events, you shall soon be flattered for your attainments if you have attained unto wealth. Such is the way of the world, but such is not the way of Scripture. Whether he has a field and a vineyard or not, says Solomon, if he is a sluggard he is a fool; or if you would like to see his name written out a little larger, he is a man empty of understanding. Not only does he not understand anything, but he has no understanding to understand with. He is empty-headed if he is a sluggard. He may be called a gentleman, he may be a landed proprietor, he may have a vineyard and a field; but he is none the better for what he has; nay, he is so much the worse, because he is a man void of understanding, and is therefore unable to make use of his property.

I am glad to be told by Solomon so plainly that a slothful man is void of understanding, for it is useful information. I have met with persons who thought they perfectly understood the doctrines of grace, who could accurately set forth the election of the saints, the predestination of God, the firmness of the divine decree, the necessity of the Spirit's work, and all the glorious doctrines of grace which build up the fabric of our faith; but these gentlemen have inferred from these doctrines that: they have to do nothing, and thus they have become sluggards. Do-nothingism is their creed. They will not even urge other people to labor for the Lord, because, say they, "God will do His own work. Salvation is all of grace!" The notion of these sluggards is; that a man is to wait, and do nothing; he is to sit still, and let the grass, grow up to his ankles in the hope of heavenly help, To arouse himself would be an interference with the eternal purpose, which he regards as altogether unwarrantable. I have known him look sour, shake, his aged head, and say hard things against earnest: people who were trying to win souls. I have known him run down young people, and like a great steam ram, sink them to the bottom, by calling them unsound and ignorant. How shall we survive the: censures of this dogmatic person? How shall we: escape front this very knowing and very captious. :sluggard? Solomon hastens to the rescue and extinguishes this gentleman by informing us that he :is void of understanding. 'Why, he is the standard .of orthodoxy, and he .judges everybody! Yet: Solomon applies another standard to him, and says he is void of understanding. He may know the doctrine, but he does not understand it; or else he would know that the doctrines of grace lead us to seek the grace of the doctrines; and that when we see God at work: we learn that He worketh in us, not to make us go to sleep, but to will and to do of His own good pleasure. God's; predestination of a people is His

ordaining them unto good works, that they may show forth His praise. So, if you or I shall from any doctrines, however true:, draw the inference that we are warranted in being idle and indifferent about the things of God, we are void of understanding; we are acting like fools; we are misusing the gospel; we are: taking what was meant for meat and turning it into poison. The sluggard, whether he is sluggish about his business or about his soul, is “a man void of understanding’

As a rule, we may' measure a man's understanding by his useful activities; that is what the wise man very plainly tells us.

“THE APPLE TREE AMONG THE TREES OF THE WOOD.”

“Is the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons.” Song of Solomon 2:3.

BY the apple tree would probably be intended by the oriental writer the citron, the pomegranate,

or the orange. I suppose he did not refer to the apple tree of our gardens, for it would scarcely be known to him. The word would not, however, be properly rendered if we confined it to any of the three fruit trees mentioned, or if we excluded our own apple from it, for the term apple comprehends all large round fruit not enclosed in a shell; and so we may, without making any mistake, think of the apple tree of our own English orchards, and yet the metaphor will stand good, except that the shadow of our apple tree at home is hardly so excellent a retreat from the sun as the shadow of the other trees included under the term. Our own apple tree will suffice us, however, and we shall not need to enter into any minute distinctions, or to carry you away to Palestine; we can sit at home in England, and can say with great propriety, if we love the Lord Jesus Christ, “As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons.” The point of the metaphor is this. There are many trees of the forest, and they all have their uses, but when one is hungry, and faint, and thirsty, the forest trees yield no succor, and we must look elsewhere; they yield shelter, but not refreshing nutriment. If, however, in the midst of the wood one discovers an apple tree, he there finds the refreshment which he needs; his thirst is alleviated, and his hunger removed. Even so the church here means to say that there are many things in the world which yield us a kind of satisfaction — many men, many truths, many institutions, many earthly comforts, but there are none which yield us the full solace which the soul requires; none which can give to the heart the spiritual food for which it hungers; Jesus Christ alone supplies the needs of the sons of men. As the apple tree is the exception to the forest trees in bearing its fruit, as it stands on that account in contrast to the trees of the wood, so does Jesus our Beloved contrast with all others, and transcendently excel them: —

*“An apple tree in simple beauty stands,
 And waves its juicy treasure gracefully,
 Among the barren trees which crowd the wood,
 Of lofty form, but destitute of fruit:
 So Jesus, 'midst the failing sons of men
 Bears for my use the fruits of covenant love,
 And fills my heart with rare delight and rest.”*

Wandering up and down in the New Forest, the only real forest of our country, and finding rest in its vast solitudes, often has this text occurred to me: “As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among' the sons.”

Imagine yourself, upon some sultry day in autumn, as a wanderer in the leafy lanes of a great forest, where the grand cathedral aisles reach before you to lengths immeasurable, or huge domes of foliage rise above you like a second sky. Imagine yourself roaming amidst the ferns and brakes, trampling on the briars and hollies, or sitting down on mossy banks and knolls soft with layers of sere leaves. Suppose also that you are hungry and thirsty, and that no rippling streams offer their cooling floods, while you are so far away from human call that, hungry though you might be even to death, there would be no eye to see you, and consequently no hand outstretched for your help. In such a plight it needs no imagination to conceive you as glancing to the trees, your only companions, and silently appealing to them for aid. Some of them look as if their bowing branches would sympathize if they could, others grotesquely grin at you, and most of them sternly refuse you succor by their solemn silence. You will ask in vain of oak, or ash, or elm.

Suppose you appeal to yonder stately tree which is *the greatest* of them all, the king of the forest, unequalled in greatness or girth; admire its stupendous limbs, its gnarled roots, its bossy bark, the vast area beneath its boughs. You look up at it and think what a puny creature you are, and how brief has been your life compared with its duration. You try to contemplate the storms which have swept over it, and the suns which have shone upon it. Great, however, as it is, it cannot help you: if it were a thousand times higher, and its topmost boughs swept the stars, yet it could minister no aid to you. This is a fit picture of the attempt to find consolation in systems of religion which are recommended to you because they are greatly followed. Here is a religion which has been patronized by kings and nobles for centuries, a religion which has the support of the great and fashionable at

the present hour, will not this content you? Is it not enough to belong to the same religion as the majority, especially when that majority includes the aristocrats of the land? Is not the voice of the people the voice of God? What more do you want? Why should you be singular? Alas, the great tree is; not the fruit-bearing tree. The true Christian, believing in Jesus Christ with all his heart, counts it no desirable thing to be found in the broad road where the many go, for he remembers that his Master spake of it as leading to destruction: majorities are nothing to him, for he remembers that "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." He does not reckon that the greatness of the company will make right wrong, or overawe the Judge of all, or make eternal punishment one whit the less intolerable. We desire not the way of the multitude; the way of the Crucified we delight to follow. It is not the mightiest tree of the forest that we look to with hope, but to the Lord Jesus, our Beloved, who is the apple tree among the trees of the wood; His fruit is sweet to our taste. He is the way, the truth, and the life. to us; His person is most dear unto us, and His teachings are the food of our spirits. Happy are ye who dare to be singular with Christ. Blessed are ye who have found the narrow way which leadeth unto life eternal. Blessed are ye because ye are not carried away with the strong current and fashion of the age, but have heard the voice that saith, "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds." Wisdom tells the hungry man to prefer the solitary apple tree to whole groves of the hugest oaks or beeches; and wisdom given from above has; brought you, O believer in Jesus, to prefer your Redeemer to all the great ones of the earth.

TREES OF THE FOREST.

SONG OF SOLOMON 2

SUPPOSE that in your wanderings to and fro you come upon another tree which is said to be *the oldest* in the forest. 'We all of us have a veneration for age. Antiquity has many charms. I scarcely know, if antiquity and novelty should run a race for popular favor, which might win. Nowadays we are pestered by a class of men who would fain fascinate our nation to error by the charms of antiquity. They will tell us that a certain ceremony, though no trace of it is to be found in Scripture, must be venerable because practiced in the fourth century; and they imagine that worship in buildings which were founded by Saxons and garnished by Normans, must be peculiarly acceptable with God. To be ancient, is it not a great advantage? As cleanliness is next to godliness, surely antiquity must be next to orthodoxy. Yet if there be no Scripture to warrant it an ancient ceremony, it is only an. ancient farce. There are some things which are so old as to be rotten, worm-eaten, and fit only to be, put away. Many things called ancient are but clever counterfeits, or wherein they are true they are but the bones and carcasses of that which once was good when life filled it with energy and power. There is an "old way which wicked men have trodden," as well as a good old way in which the righteous walk. We cannot be certain that a thing is right because it is old, for Satan is old, and sin is old, and death is old, and hell is old; yet none of these things are right and desirable on that account. No, Jesus Christ our Lord, since the day in which we have known Him by' faith, has quieted our conscience, has calmed our fears, has given us joy and peace through believing, and we are not to be seduced from Him by all the antiquated falsehoods which may weave their spells around us. Old even to decay may be the trees in which other travelers delight, but as for us;, we choose the tree of heavenly fruit — the apple tree is our choice, Jesus is our]Beloved. Ritualists may glory in their fourth century doctrines, their fathers., their councils, and their ancient customs; the Bible is primitive enough for us, the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is venerable enough for us; we are content with Him, and want no more. To us the main thing is to find food for our souls, the bread that never perishes, the fruit which will quench our desperate thirst. We have :found it: in the Savior, and from the Savior we 'will not depart.

It may be that in the midst of the forest, while you are hungry and thirsty, you come upon a strangely *beautiful tree*: its proportions are exact, and as you gaze upon it from a distance you exclaim. "How wonderful are the works of God!" and you begin to think of those trees of the Lord which are full of sap:, the cedars of Lebanon which He hath planted. You stand under it and look up among the majestic boughs and the spreading branches, and you again admire the beauty of Nature as it comes from the hand of the Most High. But beauty can never satisfy hunger, and when a man is dying of thirst it is vain to talk to him of symmetry and taste. He wants food. This reminds us that nowadays there be some who try to satisfy the souls of men with beauty. Look at their processions; who would not be charmed with their varied costumes, their spangled banners, their gilded crosses, and their melodious hymns? listen to their choir; is not the singing perfection? If you want a concert on the Sabbath day, and do not like to attend a theater:, you can find it in the cathedral, and in many a parish church, and please the Lord almost as well; if *you* want to have your senses gratified and cannot conscientiously attend an opera on Sunday, you can have ear and eye gratified at church — ay, and the nose as; well in some places; and these amusements they mistake for religious exercises. Compared with the plainness of worship which we follow, our casting out of everything like symbol, our abhorrence of everything that would take away the mind from God Himself and fix it upon secondary objects — - compared with all this, their worship is enchanting indeed to the carnal mind, and we do not wonder that those who, are led by taste should follow after it.

But oh, if a man once hungers after the bread of heaven, his taste for finery will be reduced to a very secondary position ;as a governing power of his mind. If once the soul craves after God, after peace, pardon, truth, reconciliation, holiness, it will seek the Lord .Jesus, the apple tree, and forget the other trees, however shapely they may be. "These bear no fruit for me," says the hungry soul. The awakened conscience listens to the chant as it is echoed among the massive pillars, and watches the smoke as it rises like a cloud among the arches of the roof, and he cries, "What are chanting and smoke to me? [want a Savior." He sees the procession, and after he has gazed upon it he says, "What are these mummeries to me? I want washing in the blood of Christ." As the incense smokes to heaven he says to himself, "O for the incense of the Savior's merit; what are these gums of Araby to me if they should burn all day long?" He turns away, sick

and faint in heart, from all the 'gew-gaws and outward trappings of modern popery, and he cries; "O God, thou art a Spirit, and they that worship Thee must worship Thee in spirit and in truth. I want *Thee*, O my God; I want spiritual life within myself, that I may commune with Thee, and where: can I find it but in my Savior? He gives it to me; He is the only fruit-bearing tree amongst the trees of the wood."

In the forest we shall come upon some very *wonderful* trees. I have seen instances in which branches are curiously interlaced with one another; the beech sends forth a long drooping bough, and lest it should not be able to support itself, another bough strikes up :from below to buttress it, or descends from above and clasps it, and the boughs actually grow into one another. Strange things may be observed in the undisturbed woods, which are not to be seen in our :hedgerow trees, or discerned in our gardens; trees; have odd habits of their own, and grow marvelously if left to their own sweet wills. I have stood under' them and said., "How can this be? This is singular' indeed! }tow could they grow like this? What: wondrous interlacings, and intertwining, and gnarlings, and knottings!" Yes, but if a man were hungry and thirsty', he would not be: satisfied with curiosities.

As we are wandering in the forest and are still hungry, I hear someone saying, . "Ah, here is the place for food; you need not boast of your apple tree: the ground is covered with meat beneath this noble tree." I look up, — it is autumn time, — and I see a huge tree loaded with beech nuts, which fall like rain. "Here is the place for food." Was that a human voice I heard? No, it was the gruntings of a herd of swine. See how content they are — how happy; how they are munching the mast as it falls from the trees. Yonder is a grove of oaks, all shedding their acorns, and how delighted the swine are! How they fatten upon the spoil! "Will you not come here?" they seem to say as they munch in comfort; "*will* you not come here? Do not tell us about trees which bear no fruit; there is fruit enough here, surely?" Even thus I hear a voice from the Exchange: — "Here are the trees which bear us; golden apples, come hither and be filled." I hear it from those who cater for public amusements :—"Here are the fruits which can delight the soul. Here is the place to spend a happy day." And so I hear it from the gay followers of vice: — "This dalliance, this dance, this flowing bowl, this sweet-sounding viol, these are real jays." Yes, to you, to you who choose them. Beech nuts and acorns are good enough for swine. To you who can find comfort, solid comfort, in the gain of merchandise, or in the pleasures of sin, or in the delights of pomp, these

things are good enough; but a *man*, a God-made man, a man into whom God has put a new heart — not a swine's heart, but a man's heart — wants apples, not acorns, wants spiritual food, food for an immortal nature, and there is no such food to be found short of the Lord Jesus Christ, for He, and He only, is the apple tree among the trees of the wood.

The spouse spoke of the tree which she most desired; the wonder was that she found it. It was an apple tree, but it was not in a garden, a fruit tree, but not in a vineyard; it was “among the trees of the wood.” Who would know of so great a rarity as an apple tree in a wood if he were not first told of it? So Jesus Christ at this present day is not known to all mankind. It is a most unhappy thought that probably the majority of the human race have not heard of the Savior at all, and a very large proportion have never heard of Him except through misrepresentations. Only a small minority of our fellow men know anything about the Savior.

*“What millions never knew the Lord!
What millions hate Him when He's known.”*

Even in our own country you will not find it a difficult thing to meet with persons who are totally ignorant of Christ. Try' it, and you shall find in country towns and in hamlets men grown up who could not give you an answer to this questions” How is it that the death, of Jesus saves the soul?” Nay, who do not even know the fact that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. “Well,” say you, “we know the rural districts are ignorant.” Yes, but they are far superior in light to parts of London. You can readily find children in our streets, and what is worse, artisans in our workshops, to whom the bare name of Jesus may be known, but anything like the doctrine of His substitutionary atonement is a thing of which they have not heard. Living in the light they abide in darkness, amid a thousand lamps they see not. One of the problems which may most surprise us is the existence of such dense ignorance in persons who live in intimate connection with instructed people. If you want the grossest ignorance, probably you would not find it in Pekin or Timbuctoo, but in London or New York. Where the greatest light is, there the shadows are deepest. Men nearest to the church are often furthest from God. You cannot easily find an apple tree in a great forest. If you were put down in the middle of a forest and to did there was an apple tree there, you might wander for many a day before you discovered it, and often go over your own footsteps, lost in endless mazes, but you would not find the object of your search; and so,

though there be a Savior, men have not found the Savior, and there may even be souls here present who long for that which Jesus is able to give, and yet have not discovered Him. You know all about Him in the letter of His Word, but you cannot find Him spiritually, and I hear you cry, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him." I know I am speaking to some such. You have been going up and down for months with your prayers, and your tears, and your good works; you have been trying to do all you can to save yourselves, but you find your own actions to be barren trees, and you know that there is an apple tree somewhere, but you cannot find it. Ah, poor soul, you are like the Ethiopian eunuch; when he was asked if he understood what he read, he gave the answer, "How can I unless some man should guide me?" Do you not wonder that the spouse, found her apple tree among the trees of the wood? The fact is, none ever find it except they are led there, and none can lead a soul to that apple tree but the eternal Spirit of God.

Now, is it not a strange place for an apple tree to be found in — in a wood? We seldom hear of such a thing; an apple tree should grow in a garden. How should it be found in a forest? And is it not a strange thing that a Savior should be found for us among men — not among angels? Ye shall search for a Savior amongst "*the* helmed cherubim and sworded seraphim" as long as you will, but there is none there. The Savior is found in a manger at Bethlehem, in a carpenter's shop at Nazareth; amongst the poor and needy is He seen while He sojourns amongst the sons of men.

*“As in some sere and unproductive wood
One lovely, fruit-producing apple tree,
Bright contrast to the ruin'd thousands round;
So in this populous 'but vicious world,
O thou Desire of nations, didst Thou stand.”*

Now, there is something very sweet about this, because a wood is the very place where we most love to find Christ growing. If I had come upon an apple tree in the forest, and it had happened to be the time of ripe fruit, I should have felt no compunction of conscience in taking whatsoever I was able to reach, for a tree growing in the forest is free to all comers. Should there be a hungry one beneath its bough, he need not say, "May I?" when his mouth waters at the golden fruit: he need not say, "It would be stealing; I am 'unlit to take it; I am unworthy of it." Man, if there be an apple tree in the forest, no man can keep it for himself or deny your right to it, for each wanderer has a right to what fruit he can gather. The animals

have rights of pasturage, and the birds have rights of nesting, and you have rights of feeding. Pluck away, man, and eat to thy full. The shadows and the fruits of forest trees are free to all who need. It was little wonder that when the spouse, all hungry and faint, did come upon this apple tree in the forest she acted as she did. Straightway she sat down under its shadow, with great delight, and its fruit was sweet unto her taste. She looked up at it; that was the first thing she did, and she perceived that it met her double want. 'The sun was hot, there was the shadow: she was faint, there was the fruit. Now, see how Jesus meets all the wants of all who come to Him. God's anger, like the hot noon-day sun, falls on me, how can I escape it? There is no escape from the anger of God except by an interposer. What is a shadow? Is it not caused by the interposition of the bough, or the rock, or whatever it may be, which comes between us and the sun? If we sit under a tree in the shadow, it is because the tree receives the heat, and so we escape from it. Jesus Christ's great office is the Interposer, the Mediator, the Substitute, the Atonement, the Sacrifice, and when we hide beneath Him we are screened. God's wrath cannot come on us, because it has come upon Him on our behalf.

*“When Christ my screen is interposed
Between the sun and me,
My joyful heart and lips unclosed,
Adorey the glorious tree.”*

That is a beautiful picture in Solomon's Song where the king is said to ride in his chariot of love. He takes his spouse with him, and they ride together in his palanquin, and it has over it a canopy. Did you ever notice what it is made of? It is said, “The covering thereof was of purple;” for truly the only interposition between us and the sun of God's wrath is the purple canopy of the atoning blood. Is it not delightful to sit down beneath the scarlet canopy of the Savior's blood, and feel, “God cannot smite me: He has smitten His Son; payment He cannot demand the second time: if Jesus suffered in my stead, how can God make me suffer again for sin? Where were the justice of the Most High to punish an immaculate Substitute, and then punish men for whom that Substitute endured His wrath?” This is the cool, calm, holy shadow under which we abide.

But then, the spouse also found that she herself was thirsty, and that the fruit of the tree exactly met her case. Our inner life wants sustenance and food; now, in the Lord Jesus is; life, and the bread of life. He is that bread which came down from heaven, whereof if a man eat he shall live for ever.

The spouse, when she had begun to enjoy the provision and the shade, and had sat down under it as; if she intended to say, “I never mean to leave this place; in this delicious shadow I mean to repose for ever,” then she also began to tell of it to others. She describes Christ as the apple tree, and gives her reason for so calling Him — “I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste.” Experience must be the ground on which we found our descriptions. If a preacher wants to preach with power, let him tell what he has felt, and tasted, and handled. It is of little use to say Christ is precious, unless you can add, “I have found Him so.” Therefore the church brings in her own experience — “Sweet shade! I there sat down as one at home, and there regaled my soul with most delicious fare.” She could not hold her tongue about her Beloved. She must speak; she could not retain the secret of this apple tree, and say to herself, “*Others* may go to it; and so perhaps when I go another time there may be nothing left for myself;” but she spread the news. She set it down in black and white in the inspired volume for an everlasting testimony that there is an apple tree among the trees of the wood, of which she had eaten, that so others might eat of it too, and enjoy the same sweetness for themselves.

“BY THE ROES, AND BY THE HINDS OF THE FIELD.”

CANT 2:7

THE spouse was in the full enjoyment of fellowship with her Beloved. Her joy was so great as almost to overpower her, and yet, so nearly does fear tread upon the heels of joy, she was filled with dread lest her bliss should come to an end. She feared lest others should disturb her Lord, for if He were grieved she would be grieved also, and if He departed the banquet of her delight would be over. She was afraid even of her friends, the daughters of Jerusalem; she knew that the best can interrupt fellowship as well as the worst, and therefore she adjured even Zion's daughters not to sin against Zion's King'. Had they aroused her Beloved and broken His sacred peace, she would not have found a recompense in their company, but would rather have regarded them with aversion, for having robbed her of her chief delight. The adjuration which she used is a choice specimen of oriental poetry: she charges them, not as we should prosaically do, by everything that is sacred and true, but '!' by the roes, and by the hinds of the field.”

“The roes and the hinds of the field” are creatures of great beauty.. Who can gaze upon them as they wander among the bracken without an inward admiration? Now, since nothing can be more lovely than communion with Jesus, the spouse exhorts the daughters of Jerusalem by all the loveliest objects in nature to refrain from disturbing it. No one would wish to drive away the gazelle, but would feast his eyes upon it, and yet its graceful elegance can never be compared with that beauty of holiness, that comeliness of grace which are to be seen in fellowship with Jesus. It is beautiful from both sides; it is a lovely display of condescension for our beloved Lord to reveal Himself to us, and on the other hand it is a charming manifestation of every admirable virtue for a believer to enter into fellowship with his Lord. He who would disturb such mutual intercourse must be devoid of spiritual taste, and blind to all which is most worthy of admiration.

As one delights to see the red deer in the open glades of the forest, and counts them the finest ornaments of the scene, so do men whose eyes are opened rejoice in the saints whose high communion with heaven renders them beings of superior mould to common mortals. A soul in converse with its God is the admiration of angels. Was ever a lovelier sight seen than Jesus at the table with the beloved disciple leaning on His bosom? Is not Mary sitting at the Master's feet a picture worthy of the choicest art? Do nothing, then, O ye who joy in things of beauty, to mar the fellowship in which the rarest beauty dwells. Neither by worldly care, nor sin, nor trifling make even the slightest stir which might break the Beloved's repose. His restful presence is heaven below, and the best: antepast of heaven above; in it we find everything that is pure, and lovely, and of good report. It is good, and only good. Why, then, O daughters of Jerusalem, should ye stir up our Beloved, and cause His adorable excellency to be hidden from us? Rather join with us in preserving a joy so fair, a bliss so comely.

The next thought suggested "by the roes, and by the hinds o[the field]" is that of tender innocence. These gentle creatures are so harmless, so defenseless, so timid, that he: must have a soulless soul who would do them harm or cause them fright. By all, then, that is tender, the spouse beseeches her friends not to disturb her Beloved. He is so good, so kind, so holy, harmless, and undefiled, that the most indifferent ought to be ashamed to molest His rest. About Him there is nothing to provoke offense, and everything to forbid it. Idle is a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; He gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; He hid not His face from shame and spitting. Being reviled He reviled not again, but in His death agonies He prayed for His enemies. Who, then, could find cause for offense in Him? Do not His wounds ward off the blows which might be challenged had He been of another character? Who will wish to vex the Lamb of God? Go elsewhere, ye hunters! "The hind of the morning" has already sweated great drops of blood falling to the ground. When dogs compassed Him, and the assembly of the wicked enclosed Him, He felt the full of grief — will ye afflict Him yet again?

In fellowship with Jesus there is a tenderness which ought to disarm all opposition, and even command respectful deference. A soul communing with the Son of God challenges no enmity. The world may rise against proselyting zeal, or defiant controversy, or ostentatious ceremonialism, for these have prominence and power, and are fair game for martial spirits: but

fellowship is quiet, retiring, unobtrusive, harmless. The saints who most abound in it are of a tender spirit, fearful to offend, non-resistant, and patient — surely it would be a superfluity of cruelty to wish to deprive them of their unselfish happiness, which deprives no heart of a drop of pleasure, and costs no eye a tear. Rather let even those who are most indifferent to religion pay a generous respect to those who find their delight in it. Though the worldling may care nothing for the love which overpowers the believer's ravished spirit, let him tread with reverent care when he passes the closet of devotion, or hears a stray note from the song of meditative gratitude. Rough men have paused when they have suddenly come upon a fair gazelle grazing in a secluded spot: charmed at the sight Of such tender loveliness they have scarcely dared to move a foot lest they should alarm the gentle roe; and some such feeling may well forbid the harsh criticism or the vulgar laugh when even the infidel beholds a sincere heart in converse with its Lord. As for those of us who know the blessedness of fellowship with Jesus, it behoves us to be doubly jealous of our words and deeds, lest in a single instance we offend one of the Redeemer's little ones, and cause him to lose even for an hour his delight in the Lord. How often are Christians careless about this; till at the sight of some professors the more spiritual may well take alarm, and cry out in anguish, "*I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till He please.*"

A third thought most certainly had place in the mind of the anxious spouse; she meant to adjure and persuade her friends to silence by everything which sets forth love. The lilies and the roes have always been sacred to love. The poet of the Canticles had elsewhere used the symbol of the text to set forth married love. "Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe" (Proverbs 5:19). If ever there was true love in all this selfish world, it is the love of Jesus first, and next the love of His people. As for His love, it passeth the love of women, many waters cannot quench it, neither can the floods drown it; and as for the love of the church, he who best knows it says, "How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! How much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointment than all spices!" If love, therefore, may plead immunity from war, and ask to have its quietude respected, the spouse used a good argument when she pleaded "by the roes and by the hinds of the field," that her royal Bridegroom's rest of love might not be invaded. If you love, or are loved, or wish to be loved, have a

reverent regard for those who commune with Jesus, for their souls take their fill of love, and to drive them from their bliss would be inexcusable barbarity. O ye who have any hearts to feel for others, do not cause: the bitterest of sorrow by depriving a sanctified soul of the sweetest of delights. Draw not nigh hither with idle tale, or wanton speech, or empty mirth: the place whereon thou standest is holy ground, for surely God is in that place where a heart enamored of the altogether Lovely One delights itself in the Lord.

“THE FLOWERS APPEAR ON THE EARTH.”

“My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.”
Canticles 2:10-13.

“THE things which are seen are types of the things which are not seen. The works of creation are pictures to the children of God of the secret mysteries of grace. God's truths are the apples of gold, and the visible creatures are the baskets of silver. The very seasons of the year find their parallel in the little world of man within. We have our winter — dreary, howling winter, — when the north wind of the law rusheth forth against us, when every hope is nipped, when all the seeds of joy lie buried beneath the dark clouds of despair, when our soul is fast fettered like a river bound with ice, without waves of joy, or flowings of thanksgiving. Thanks be unto God, the soft south wind breathes upon our soul, and at once the waters of desire are set free, the spring of love cometh on, flowers of hope appear in our hearts, the trees of faith put forth their young shoots, the time of the singing of birds cometh in our hearts, and we have joy and peace in believing through 'the Lord Jesus Christ. That happy springtide is followed in the believer by a rich summer, when his graces, like fragrant flowers, are in full bloom, loading the air with perfume; and fruits of the Spirit, like citrons and pomegranates, swell into their full proportion in the genial warmth of the Sun of Righteousness. Then cometh the believer's autumn, when his fruits grow ripe, and his fields are ready for the harvest; the time has come when his Lord shall gather together His “*pleasant* fruits,” and store them in heaven; the feast of ingathering is at hand — the time when the year shall begin anew, an unchanging year, like the years of the right hand of the Most High in heaven.

Now each particular season has its duty. The husbandman finds that there is a time to plough, a time to sow, a time to reap; there is a season for

vintage, and a period for the pruning of the vine; there is a month for the planting of herbs, and for the ingathering of seeds. To everything there is a time and a purpose, and every season has its special labor. It seems that whenever it is springtide in our hearts, then Christ's voice may be heard saying, "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away." Whenever we have been delivered from a dreary winter of temptation or affliction, or tribulation, — whenever the fair spring of hope cometh upon us, and our joys begin to multiply, then we should hear the Master bidding us seek after something higher and better, and we should go forth in His strength to love Him more, and serve Him more diligently than aforesaid. To any with whom the time of the singing of birds is come, in whom the flowers appear — to any such I hope the Master may speak till their souls shall say, "My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up:, my love, my fair one, and come away." I shall have to, use the general principle in illustration of four or five different cases.

With regard to the universal church of Christ, you can plainly perceive that she has had her ebbs and flows. Often it seemed as if her tide retired; ungodliness, heresy, error, prevailed: but she has had her flood tide, when once again the glorious waves have rolled in, covering with their triumphant righteousness the sands of ignorance and evil. The history of Christ's church is a varied year of many seasons. She has had her high and noble processions of victory; she has had her sorrowful congregations of mourners during times of disaster and apparent defeat. Commencing with the life of Christ, what a smiling spring it was for the world when the Holy Spirit was poured out in *Pentecost*. Then might the saints sing with sweet accord —

*"The Jewish 'wintry state: is gone,
The mists are fled, the spring comes on;
The sacred turtle dove we hear,
Proclaim the new, the joyful year;
The immortal vine of heavenly root,
Blossoms and buds and gives her fruit;
Lo, we are come to taste the wine,
Our souls rejoice and bless the vine."*

The winter was over and past — -that long season in which the Jewish state lay dead, when the frosts of Pharisaism had bound up all spiritual life. The rain was over and gone, the black clouds of wrath had emptied themselves upon the Savior's head; thunder and tempest and storm, all dark

and terrible things were gone for ever. The flowers appeared on the earth; three thousand in one day blossomed forth, baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Fair promises created for beauty and delight sprang up, and with their blest fulfillment clothed the earth in a royal garment of many colors. The time of the singing birds was come, for they praised God day and night, eating their bread with joy and singleness of heart. The voice of the turtle was heard, for the Spirit — that hallowed dove from heaven — descended with tongues of fire: upon the apostles, and the Gospel was preached in every land. Then had earth one of her joyous Sabbaths; the fig tree put forth her green figs; in every land there were some converts; the dwellers in Mesopotamia, Medes, Parthians, Elamites — some of all — had been converted to God, and the tender grapes of new-born piety and zeal gave forth a sweet smell before God. Then it was that Christ: spake in words which made the heart of His church to burn like coals of juniper : —

*“My Fellow-friende, my Beautiful,
Arise and come thy way.”*

The bride arose, charmed by the heavenly voice of her spouse, she girt on her beautiful garments, and for some hundred years or more she did come away; she came away from her narrowness of spirit, and she preached to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ: she came away from her attachment to the: State, and she dared to confess that Christ's kingdom was not of this world: she came away from her earthly hopes and comforts, for “they counted not their lives dear unto them that they might win Christ and be found in Him:” she came away from all ease and rest of body, for they labored more and more abundantly, making themselves sacrifices for Christ. Her apostles landed on every shore; her confessors were found among people of every tongue; her martyrs kindled a light in the midst of lands afflicted with the midnight of heathen darkness. No place trodden by foot of man was left unvisited by the heralds of God, the heroic sons of the church. “Go ye forth into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature,” was ringing in their ears like a clarion sounding the war charge, and they obeyed it like soldiers who had been men of war from their youth. Those were brave days of old when with a word the saints of God could overcome a thousand foes, that word the faithful promise of a gracious God.

Alas, alas, that season passed away, the church grew dull and sleepy; she left her Lord, she turned aside, she leaned upon an arm of flesh, courting

the endowments of earthly kingdoms; then there came a long and dreary winter, the Dark Ages of the world, the darker ages of the church. At last the time of love returned, when God again visited His people and raised up for them new apostles, new martyrs, new confessors. Switzerland and France, and Germany and Bohemia, and the Low Countries, and England and Scotland had all their men of God, who spoke 'with tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. The time of Luther and Calvin, and Melancthon, and of Knox was come — heaven's sunny days, when once again the frost should give way to approaching summer. Then it was that men could say once again, "The winter is past," priestcraft has lost its power, the rain is over and gone; false doctrines shall no more be as tempests to the church; the flowers appear on the earth — little churches; plants of God's right hand planting, are springing up everywhere.

The time of the singing of birds was come; Luther's hymns were sung by ploughmen in every field; the psalms translated were scattered among all people — carried on the wings of angels, and the Church sang aloud unto God, her strength, and entered into His courts with the voice of thanksgiving, in such sort as she had not hoped for during her long and weary winter night. In every cottage and under every' roof-tree, from the peasant's hut to the prince's palace, the singing of birds was come, Then peace came to the people and joy in the Lord, for the voice of the turtle was heard delighting hill and valley, grove and field, with the love-notes of gospel grace. Then fruits of righteousness were brought forth, the Church was "an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard, spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices ;" and a sweet savor of faith and love went up to heaven, and God rejoiced therein. Then the Master sweetly cried, —

*"Rise up, my love, my fair one; come away,
Soar on the wings of thy victorious faith
Above the realms of darkness and of sin!"*

But she did not hear the voice, or she heard it but partially. Satan and his wiles prevailed; the little foxes spoiled the vines and devoured the tender grapes. Corruption, like a strong man armed, held the spouse, and she came not forth at her Beloved's call. In England she would not come away; she hugged the arm of flesh; she laid hold upon the protection of the State; she would not venture upon the bare promise of her Lord. O that she had left dignities and endowments and laws to worldly corporations, and had

rested on her Husband's love alone! Alas for our divisions at this time, what are they but the bitter result of the departure of our fathers from the chastity of simple dependence such as Jesus loves? In other lands she confined herself too much within her own limits, sent forth few missionaries, labored not for the conversion of the outcasts of Israel; she would not. come away, and so the Reformation never took place. It commenced but it ceased, and the churches, many of them, remain to this day half reformed, in a transition state, somewhere between truth and error.

And now in these days we have had another season of refreshing. God has been pleased to pour out His Spirit upon men again. Perhaps the late revivals have almost rivaled Pentecost — certainly in the number of souls ingathered, they may bear rigid comparison with that feast of firstfruits. I suppose that in the north of Ireland, in Wales, in America, and in many parts of our own country, there have been wrought more conversions than took place at the descent of the Holy Spirit. The Lord's people are alive and in earnest, and all our agencies are quickened with new energy. The time of the singing of birds is come, though there are some: harsh croaking ravens still left. The flowers do appear on the earth, though much unmelted snow, still covers the pastures. Thank God, the winter is over and passed to a great extent, though there are some: pulpits; ;and churches as frost-bound as ever. We thank God that the rain is over and gone, though there are still some who laugh at the people of God and would destroy all true doctrine. We live in happier days than those which have passed, We may speak of these times as the good old times wherein time is older than ever it was, and, I think, better than it has been for many a day.

“A GARDEN ENCLOSED.”

“A garden in closed is my sister, my spouse.” Canticles 4:12.

WE understand this sacred love-song to be a Cantic of Communion between the Lord Jesus Christ and His church. His is the Bridegroom, and she the bride. Solomon furnishes the figure, as some think, and his Solyma is with him; but the type is dimly seen, it is the antitype which shines forth as the sun to the view of all spiritual minds.

A church is a congregation of faithful men who are believers in the Lord Jesus, men in whom the Holy Spirit has created faith in Christ, and the new nature of which faith is the sure index. The one church of Jesus Christ is made up of all believers throughout all time. Just as any one church is made up of faithful men, so is the one church of Christ made up of all faithful churches in all lands, and of all faithful men in all ages.

The church was viewed as one in the purpose of God before the world was. The Eternal Father chose to Himself a people, and gave them over to His Son, that they might be His portion for ever and ever. This is the church of which we read — “Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it.” This is “the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood.” This is the church with which the marriage supper shall be celebrated when the Well-beloved shall come to take His own unto Himself for ever. While we at this time speak of the church as a whole, it 'will be quite correct for each individual believer to take home to himself any truth, whether doctrinal, experimental, or practical, which we treat of as the heritage of the church. Each saint may say, “*This* belongs to me.” That which belongs to the redeemed family belongs to each member of that family. That which is true of light is true of each beam; that which is true of water is true of each drop; and that which is true of the church as a whole is true of each member of that mystical body.

The love of the Lord Jesus is to His church as a body, and it is the same to each believer as a member of that body. That which is true of the whole number is true of the units which make it up. He who invites a company to a feast virtually invites each person of the company. Jesus loves each one of His people with that same love wherewith He loves the whole of His people; insomuch that if you are Christ's beloved, and if you were the only

persons who were ever born into the world, and all His love were yours, He would not then love you one atom more than He loves; you now. The love of Jesus is dispersed, but not divided; it flows to all with the same force with which it flows; to one. To redeem a single soul our Ransom must have laid down His life, and He loves each one 'with such a love that He did lay down His life for each one, as much as if there had not been another to redeem. We shall not be presumptuous if we enjoy all the love of Jesus of which we are capable, enjoying and appropriating the words of love to ourselves as if they were meant for us alone. The invitation of the Bridegroom in this Song gives a permit to the largest faith and to the most daring enjoyment. "*Eat, O friends; yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.*"

He calls the church, "My sister, My spouse." As if He could not express His near and dear relationship to her by any one term, He employs the two. "My sister" — that is, one by birth, partaker of the same nature. "My spouse" — that is, one in love, joined by sacred ties of affection that never can be snapped. "My sister" by birth, "My spouse" by choice. "My sister" in communion, "My spouse" in absolute union with myself. I want you who love the Savior to get a full hold of this; thought of near and dear kinship under this head. Oh, how near akin Christ is to all His people!

Try to realize the person of Christ. I am not going to speak of a doctrine, or a mere historical fact that has, vanished into the dim past. No, we speak of a real Person. Jesus Christ *is*. As man and as God in 'the perfection of His nature He still exists. He dwells at the right hand of God at this moment, and though He cannot be here in His corporeal person, yet He is everywhere by His spiritual presence, which is more real still. Do not spirit Him away. Believe that He truly is, and that He truly is here — as much here and as really he. re as He was at Jerusalem, when He sat at the head of the table, and entertained the twelve at the last supper. Jesus is a real Man, a real Christ — recollect that.

Then let this further truth be equally well realized, that He *has so taken upon Himself our human nature that He may correctly call His church His sister*. He has become so truly man in His incarnation, that He is not ashamed to call us brethren. He calls us so because we are so. No: He is not a deified man any more than He is a humanized God. He is perfectly God, but He is also perfectly man; and man such as we are, touched with the feeling, not only of our attainments, but of our infirmities; not only trusting in all points as we do, but tempted in all points like as we are,

though without sin. He was, when He was here, evidently man and eminently man; and He now so remembers all that life passed through while here below that He remains in perfect sympathy with us at this very moment. Change of place has made no change of heart in Him. He in His glory is the same Jesus as in His humiliation.

No man is so fully a man as Jesus Christ, If you speak of any other man, something or other narrows his manhood. You think of Milton as of a poet and an Englishman, rather than as a man. You think of Cromwell rather as of a warrior, than as a man. Either his office, his work, his nationality, or his peculiar character, strikes you in many a man rather than his manhood; but Jesus is *the* Man, the model Man: in all His; deeds and words man to the fullness of manhood, in its purest and truest state. The second Adam is, *par excellence*, man.

We may not think of Him as one amongst a vast number who may be distantly akin to us, as all men are akin to one another by descent; but *the Lord comes near to each individual*. He takes each one of His believing people by the hand, and says, "My brother." He salutes the whole church as "My sister." He says this with tender emphasis. The love between brothers, if those brothers are what they should be, is very strong, and peculiarly disinterested and admirable. A brother is born for adversity. A true brother is one upon whom you can rely in time of need. One heart in two bodies is the realization of true brotherhood. Such is, emphatically, the relationship of the Redeeming Lord to each believer. He is your brother. "The man is next of kin unto us." You may have the joy of saying, "I know that my near Kinsman liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."

The second term, "My spouse," indicates another kinship, dearer, and, in some respects, nearer: a kinship undertaken of choice, but, once undertaken, irrevocable and everlasting. This kinship amounts to unity, insomuch that the spouse loses her name, loses her identity, and, to a high degree, is merged in the greater personality' to which she is united. Such is our union to Christ, if indeed we be His, that nothing can so well set it forth as marriage union. He loves us so much that He has taken us up into Himself by the absorption of love. We may henceforth forego our name, for "this is the name wherewith *she* shall be called, The Lord our righteousness." Wonderful that the very name which belongs to our Lord

Jesus, and one of the most majestic of His names, should yet be used as the name of His church. The Lord Jesus Christ's name is now named upon her, and she is permitted to make use of His name whenever she draws near to the throne of the heavenly grace in prayer. “: In His name” — this is to be her great plea whenever she intercedes with heaven. She speaks in the name which is above every name, the name at which angels bow.

“A SPRING SHUT UP, A FOUNTAIN SEALED.”

CANTICLES 4:12.

“A GARDEN enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.” We are not only like a garden, but a, garden *enclosed*. If the garden were not: enclosed, the wild boar out of the wood would bark the vines, and uproot the flowers; but infinite mercy has made the church of God an enclosure, into which no invader may dare to come. “*For* I, saith the Lord, will be. unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.” Is she a spring? Are her secret thoughts, and loves, and desires like cool streams of water? Then the Bridegroom calls her “*a* spring shut up.” Otherwise, every beast that passed by might foul her waters, and every stranger might quaff her streams. She is a spring shut up, a fountain sealed, like some choice cool spring in Solomon's private garden around the house of the forest of Lebanon — -a fountain which he reserved for his own drinking, by placing the royal seal upon it, and locking it up by secret means, known only to himself. The legend hath it that there were fountains which none knew of but Solomon, and he had so shut them up that, with his ring he touched a secret spring, a door opened, and living waters leaped out to fill his jeweled cup. No one knew but Solomon the secret charm by which he set flowing the pent-up stream, of which no lip drank but his own. Now, God's people are as much shut up, and preserved, and kept from danger by the care of Christ, as the springs in Solomon's garden were reserved expressly for himself.

This is a cheering thought for all believers, that the Lord has set apart him that is godly for Him- self. He has taken measures to *J)reserve* all His; chosen from all those who would defile and destroy' them. He walled them round about with His diviner decree of old, saying, “This people have I chosen for Myself.” He then issued His command that none should injure them; saying, “Touch not Mine anointed, and do My' prophets no harm.” He sets a hedge: about them in providence, so that nothing shall by any means harm them. He has shut them up from the enemy, and sealed them up for perpetual preservation.

The wandering Bedouins in the East plunder the open fields; but a king's garden, enclosed and protected, is safe from their ravages. So are the saints enclosed from all invading powers. Specially has the Lord walled them about with grace. While angels keep watch and ward around this sacred garden to drive off the powers of darkness, the invincible grace of God is ever like a wall about the plants of the Lord's right: hand planting, so that neither sin nor the world shall be able to uproot them. You are a garden, and a garden is a tender thing, soon destroyed; but the Lord, who planted you, has seen to your protection and provision. A garden in the East is a very needy place. One day's burning sun might suffice to wither all its verdure; but then the Lord has declared of his church, "The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night." "I the Lord do keep it;][will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will ;keep it night and (lay." A garden is a dependent, tiling, requiring perpetual care from the husbandman; and that care the church of God shall have, for it is written, "He careth for you." Jesus says, "My Father is the husbandman"; and surely that is enough.

In a garden weeds spring up; and, alas! in the church, and in our hearts, the weeds of sin are plentiful; but there is One who will take care to pluck up evil growths, and cut away all rank shoots, that none of the precious plants may be choked or overgrown. In all ways every single: plant, however feeble, shall be tended with all-sufficient skill.

It is *very* precious to see how the Lord lays Himself out to preserve His own beloved. We are too dear to Him to let us perish. Yet:, O tender plant, thou art: often fearful! Didst thou say the other day that He had left thee? How can this be? Dost thou know at what a price He bought thee? Leave thee? Will the husband forget his beloved spouse, and will the Husband of your soul forget you? Let not the thought tarry' with you for a moment, for it is dis-honoring to your Lord's love. "*Can* a woman forget her suckling child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." You are as safe as Jesus, for on His heart He bears your name. You are as safe as He is, for on the: arm of His strength He wears your name, as the high priest: wore the names of the tribes upon his shoulder, as well as upon his breast-plate. "I give unto My sheep," says He, "*eternal* life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand."

I look upon this sense of security in a Christian as being-the mainspring of unselfish virtue. What is that perpetual anxiety to save yourself? What is that daily hungering and perpetual thirsting? It is only a spiritualized selfishness. Only when a man is saved does he forget self. When I know that I am saved I am able to glorify God. The thought of saving myself by anything that I shall do, or be, or feel, I hurl to the winds, for I am already saved as a believer in Christ. Now is there scope for virtue. Now is there an opportunity to love God, and to love one's fellow-men from a pure, unselfish motive. A man is drowning, the ship, is going down from under him; he is not a likely man to be looking after the interests of those about him. Once let him grasp an oar in the lifeboat, and he is the man to be the savior of others. I want you to be out of the wreck, and in the lifeboat, that you may be a hearty worker for the salvation of the perishing. I want you to get out of that "if," "perhaps," "*peradventure*, may be," into certainty and full assurance, for then your undivided zeal will go for the glory of God. "We know that we have passed from death unto life," says the apostle, speaking in the name of the saints in his clay; and when you once know this, then you will rejoice to proclaim life to those around you. When you are assured that you are not only a garden, but a garden enclosed, not only a spring, but a spring shut up, and a fountain sealed against all adversaries — then you will give all your strength to Him who has thus secured you. A happy and holy security in Christ will put spirit into you, and cause you to do exploits. For the love you bear His name, you will be ready to live to this sole end — to magnify and glorify the Lord Jesus, whose you are, and whom you serve.

"A garden enclosed is My' sister, My spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed." A garden is a plot of ground separated from the common waste for a special purpose: such is the church. The church is a separate and distinct thing from the world. I suppose there is such a thing as the Christian world; but I do not know what it is, or where it can be found. It must be a singular mixture. I know what is meant by a worldly Christian; and I suppose the Christian world must be an aggregate of worldly Christians. But the church of Christ is not of the world. "Ye are not of the world," says Christ, "even as I am not of the world." Great attempts have been made of late to make the church receive the world, and wherever it has succeeded it has come to this result — the world has swallowed up the church. It must be so. The greater is sure to swamp the less. They say, "Do not let us draw any hard and fast lines. A great many good people attend

our services who may not be quite decided, but still their opinions should be consulted, and their votes should be taken upon the choice of a minister, and there should be entertainments and amusements, in which they can assist." The theory seems to be, that it is well to have a broad gangway from the church to the world: if this be carried out, the result will be that the nominal church will use that gangway to go over to the world, but it will not be used in the other direction. It is thought by some that it would perhaps be better to have no distinct church at all. If the world will not come up to the church, let the church go down to the world; that seems to be the theory. Let the Israelites dwell with the Canaanites, and become one happy family. Such a blending does not appear to have been anticipated by our Lord in John 15: Read verses eighteen and nineteen:" If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but]I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." Did He ever say — "Try to make an alliance with the world, and in all things be conformed to its ways"? Nothing could have been further from our Lord's mind. Oh, that we could see more of holy separation; more dissent from un — godliness, more nonconformity to the world! This is "the dissidence of dissent" that I care for, far more than I do for party names; and the political strife which is engendered by them.

Let us, however, take heed that our separateness; from the world is of the same kind as our Lord's. We are no': to adopt a peculiar dress, or a singular mode of speech, or shut ourselves out from society. He did not so; but He was a man of the people mixing with them for their good. He was seen at a wedding-feast, aiding the festivities: He even ate bread in a Pharisee's house, among captious enemies. He neither wore phylacteries, nor enlarged the borders of His garments, nor sought a secluded cell, nor exhibited any eccentricity of manner. He was separate from sinners; only because He was holy and harmless, and they were not. He dwelt among us, for He was of us, No man was more a man than He; and yet, He was; not of the world, neither could you count Him among them. He was neither Pharisee, nor Sadducee, nor Scribe; and at the same time, none could justly confound Him with publicans and sinners. Those who reviled Him for consorting with these last did, by that very reviling, admit that He was a very different person from those with whom He went. We, want all members of the church of Christ to be, manifestly and obviously, distinct persons, as much as if they were of a separate race, even when they are

seen mingling with the people around them. We are not to cut ourselves off from our neighbors by affectation and contempt. God forbid! Our very avoiding of affectation, our naturalness, simplicity, sincerity, and amiability of character, should constitute a distinction. Through Christians being what they seem to be, they should become remarkable in an age of pretenders. Their care for the welfare of others, their anxiety to do good, their forgiveness of injuries, their gentleness of manner — all these should distinguish them far more than they could be distinguished by a livery, or by any outward signs.

I long to see Christian people become more distinct from the world than ever, because I am persuaded that:, until they are so, the church will never become such a power for blessing men as her Lord intended her to be. It is for the world's good that there should be no alliance between the church and the world by way of compromise, even to a shade. See what came to pass 'when the church and the world became one in Noah's day: when "the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair'," and were joined with them. Then came the Deluge. Another deluge, more desolating even than the former, will come., if ever the church forgets her high calling, and enters into confederacy with the world.

The church is to be a garden, walled, taken out of the common, and made a separate and select plot of :ground. She is to be a spring shut up, and a fountain sealed, no longer open to the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the field.. Saints are to be separate from the rest of men, even as Abraham was when he said to the sons of Seth, "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you."

Are you foreigners in a country not your own? You are no Christian, remember, if you are not so. "*Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing.*" That is the Lord's own word to you. Did not He Himself suffer without the gate that you might go forth unto Him without the camp? Are you at one with the rest of mankind? Could anybody live with you, and never see that any alteration had taken place in you? Would they' think that you were just the same as any other man? Then, by your fruits ye shall be known. If there is no difference of life between you and the world, the text does not address you as the "sister" and the "spouse" of Christ. Those who are such art: enclosed from the world and. shut up for Christ. "I wish I were more so,"

cries one. So do I, my friend,. and may you and I practically prove the sincerity of that desire by a growing separateness from the world!

The church of God is “a garden enclosed.” What for? *Why*, that nobody may come into that garden, to eat the fruit thereof, but the Lord Himself. It is “a spring shut *up*,” that no one may drink of the stream but the Lord Jesus. A church exists only for the Lord Jesus to accomplish His ends and purposes among the sons of men. Never may this be forgotten. May the Spirit of God daily sanctify us unto the Lord, to be a peculiar people! I am persuaded that if any church desires to be much honored of the Lord in these days, both as to internal happiness and external usefulness, it will find that the nearest way to its desire is to be wholly consecrated to the Lord. The church is not formed to be a social club, to produce society for itself; not to be a political association, to be a power in politics; not even to be a religious confederacy, promoting its own opinions: it is; a body created of the Lord to answer His own ends and purposes, and it exists for nothing else. The heavenly Bridegroom says to His church, “Forget also thine own people, and thy Father's house; so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty: for He is thy Lord; and worship thou Him.” Churches which fail of their high vocation shall be cast forth as salt that has lost its savor. If we do not live for the Lord, we are dead while we live. If we do not bring glory to His name we cannot justify our existence. If we are not as a garden enclosed for Jesus, we are mere bits of waste land; if we are not fountains sealed for Jesus, we are mere brooks in the valley, and shall soon run dry.

“But,” cries one, “are we not to seek the good of our fellow-men?” Assuredly we are to do so for Christ's' sake. “Are we not to seek to help on sanitary, educational, and purifying processes, and the like?” Yes, so far as all can be done for His sake. We are to be the Lord's servants for the blessing of the world, and we may do anything which He would have done. In such a garden as the text speaks of, every plant bears flowers for its owner, every tree yields fruit for him. You are not to bear fruit for the markets, but fruit for the Master's table. You are not to do good that you may have honor as an industrious and energetic community, but that glory may be given to Jesus, to whom you belong. “All for Jesus,” is to be our motto. No one among us may dare to live unto himself, even in the refined way in which many are doing it, who even try to win souls that they may have the credit of being zealous and successful. We may so far degenerate as even to attempt to glorify Christ that we may have the credit of glorifying Him. It will not do. We must be truly, thoroughly, really living

for Jesus: we must be a garden enclosed, reserved, shut tip for Him. Your life is to be a stream that flows for the refreshment of Him who poured out His life for you! You are to let Him drink of the deep fountains of your heart:, but no one else may rival Jesus there. You are a spring shut up, a fountain sealed for Jesus, for Jesus only, and that altogether, and always. Should self come forward, or personal advantage, you are, to bid them be gone. They must have no admission here. This garden is strictly private. Trespassers beware! Should the world, the flesh, or the devil leap over the wall, and stoop down to drink of the crystal fountain of your being, you are to chase them away, lest: their leprous lips should defile this spring, and prevent the King from drinking thereat again. The wall must wholly enclose the garden, for a gap anywhere will admit an intruder everywhere. If one part of our being be left under the dominion of sin, it: will show its power everywhere.

The spring must be sealed at the very source, that every drop may be for Jesus throughout the whole of its course. Our first thoughts, desires, and wishes must be His, and then all our words and deeds.

A GARDEN WITH PLEASANT FRUITS.

“Awake, O north wind; and come, Thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits.” Song of Solomon 4:16.

THE soul of the believer is the garden of the Lord. Within it are rare plants, such as yield “spices” and “pleasant fruits.” Once it was a wilderness, overgrown with thorns and briars; but now it is “a garden enclosed” an “orchard of pomegranates.”

At times within that garden everything is very still and quiet; indeed, more still than could be wished. Flowers are in bloom, but they seem scentless, for there are no breezes to waft the perfume. Spices abound, but one may walk in the garden, and not perceive them, for no gales bear their fragrance on their wings. I do not know that, in itself, this is an evil condition: it may be that “So He giveth His beloved sleep.” To those who are worn with labor, rest is sweet. Blessed are they who enjoy a Sabbath of the soul!

The loved one desired the; company of her Lord, and felt that an inactive condition was not altogether suitable for His coming. Her prayer is first about her garden, that it may be made ready for her Beloved; and then to the Bridegroom Himself, that He would come into His garden, and eat its pleasant fruits. She pleads for the breath of heaven, and for the Lord of heaven.

She cries for the breath of heaven to break the dead calm which broods over her heart. She cannot unlock the caskets of spice, nor cause the sweet odors to flow forth: her own breath would not avail for such an end. She looks away from herself to an unseen and mysterious power. She breathes this earnest prayer, “Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden!”

In this prayer there is an evident sense of inward sleep. She does not mean that the north wind is asleep: it is her poetical way of confessing that she herself needs to be awakened. She has a sense of absent-mindedness, too,

for she cries, “*Come*, thou south.” If the south wind would come, the forgetful perfumes would come to them, selves, and sweeten all the air. The fault, whatever it is, cannot lie in the winds; it lies in ourselves.

Her appeal, as we have already said, is to that great Spirit who operates according to His own will, even as the wind bloweth where it listeth. She does not try to “*raise* the wind” — that is an earthly expression relating to worldly matters; but, alas, it might fitly be applied to many imitations of spirituality! Have we not heard of “getting up revivals”? Indeed, we can no more command the Holy Spirit than we can compel the wind to blow east or west. Our strength lies in prayer. The spouse prays, “Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south!” She thus owns her entire dependence upon the free Spirit. Although she veiled her faith in a Divine Worker under the imagery of her song, yet she spoke as to a person. We believe in the personality of the Holy Ghost, so that we ask *Him* to “Awake” and “Come.” We believe that we may pray to Him; and we are impelled to do so.

The spouse does not mind what form the Divine visitation takes so long ;as she feels its power. “Awake, O north wind;” though the blast be cold and cutting, it may be that it will effectually fetch forth the perfume of the soul in the form of repentance and self-humiliation. Some precious graces, like rare spices, naturally flow forth in the form of tears; and others are only seen in hours of sorrow, like gums which exude from wounded trees. The rough north wind has done much for some of us in the way of arousing our best graces. Yet it may be that the Lord will send something more tender and cheering; and if so, we would cry, “Come, thou south.” Divine love warming the heart has a wonderful power to develop the best part of a man's nature. Many of our precious things are brought forth by the sun of holy joy.

Either movement of the Spirit will sufficiently bestir our inner life:: but the spouse desires both. Although in Nature you cannot have the north wind and the south blowing at the same time; yet in grace you can. The Holy Ghost may be at one and the same time working grief and gladness, causing humiliation and delight. I have often been conscious of the two winds blowing at once; so that, while I have been ready to die to self, I have been made to live unto God. “*Awake*, O north 'wind; and come, thou south!” When all the forms of spiritual energy are felt, no grace will be

dormant. No flower can keep asleep when both rough and gentle winds arouse it.

The prayer is — “blow,” and the result is — “blow.” Lord, if Thou blowest, my heart floweth out to Thee! “Draw me, we will run after Thee.” We know right well what it is to have grace in our souls, and yet to feel no movement of it. We may have much faith in existence, yet none in exercise, for no occasion summons it into action.. We may have much repentance, yet no conscious repenting; much fire of love, yet no love flaming forth; and much patience in the heart, though at the moment we do, Not display it. Apart from the occurrences of Providence, which arouse our inward emotions one way and another, the only plan by which our graces (:an be set in active exercise is by the Holy Spirit breathing upon us. He has the power to quicken, arouse, and bestir our faculties and graces, so that holy fruits within us become perceptible to ourselves, and to others who have spiritual discernment. There are states of the atmosphere in which the fragrance: of flowers; is much more diffused than at other times. The rose owes much to the zephyr which wafts its perfume. How sweet is even a :field of beans after a shower! We may have much spice of piety, and yet yield small fragrance unless the living power of the Holy Spirit moves upon us. In a wood there may be many a partridge, or gay pheasant, and yet we may not see so much as one of 'them until a passing foot tramples down the underwood, and causes the birds to rise upon the wing. The Lord can thus discover our graces by many a ;messenger; but the more choice and spiritual virtues need an agent as mysterious and all-pervading as the wind — need, in fact., the Spirit of the Lord to arouse them. Holy Spirit, thou canst come to us when we cannot come to Thee! From any and every quarter 'Thou canst reach us, taking us on our warm or cold side. Our heart, which is our garden, lies open at every point to Thee. The wall which encloses it does not shut Thee out, we wait for a visitation. We feel glad at the very thought of it. That gladness is the beginning of the stir; the spices are already flowing forth.

The second half of the prayer expresses our central desire: we Long for the Lord of heaven to visit us. The bride does not seek: that the spices of her garden may become perceptible for her own enjoyment, nor for the delectation of strangers, nor even for the pleasure of the daughters of Jerusalem, but for her Beloved's sake. Jure is to come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits. We are a garden for His delight. Our highest wish is that Jesus may have joy in us. I fear that: we often come to the table of

communion with the idea of enjoying ourselves; or, rather, of enjoying our Lord; but we do not rise to the thought of giving Him joy. Possibly that might even seem presumptuous. Yet, He says, "My delights were with the sons of men." See how joyfully He cries in the next chapter: "I am come into My garden, My sister, My spouse: I have gathered My myrrh with My spice ; I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey; I have drunk My wine with My milk." Our heavenly Bridegroom rests in His love, He rejoices over us with singing. Often He takes more delight in us than we do in Him. We have not even known that He was present, but have been praying Him to come; and all the while He has been near us.

The spouse calls Him, "My Beloved." When we are sure that He is ours we desire Him to come to us as ours, and to reveal Himself as ours. Those words, "My Beloved," are a prose poem: there is more music in them than in all the laureates' sonnets. However slumbering my graces may be, Jesus is mine. It is as mine that He will make me live, and cause me to pour forth my heart's fragrance.

While He is hers she owns that she is wholly His, and all that she has belongs; to Him. In the first clause she says, "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden "; but now she prays, "Let my Beloved come into His garden." She had spoken just before of her fruits, but now they are *His* fruits. She was nor. wrong when she first spoke; but she is more accurate now. We are not our own. We do not bring forth fruit of ourselves. The Lord saith, "From Me is thy fruit found." The garden is of our Lord's purchasing, enclosing, planting and watering; and all its fruit belongs to Him. This is a powerful reason for Elis visiting us. Should not a man come into his own garden, and eat his own fruits? Oh, that the Holy Spirit may put us; into a fit condition :to entertain our Lord!

The prayer of the spouse is — "*Let my Beloved come.*" Do we not say, "Amen, let Him come "? If He does not come in the glory of His Second Advent at this moment, as, perhaps, He may not, yet let Him come. If not to His judgment-seat, yet let Him come into His garden. If He will not come to gather before Him all nations, yet let Him come to gather the fruit of His redemption in us. Let Him come into our little circle; let Him come into each heart. "Let my Beloved come.": Stand back, ye that would hinder Him! O my Beloved, let not my sinful, sluggish, wandering thoughts prevent Thee from coming! Thou didst visit the disciples, "The doors 'being shut'; wilt Thou not come where every opened door bespeaks Thy

welcome? Where shouldst Thou come but to Thy garden? Surely my heart hath great need of Thee. Many a plant within it needs Thy care. Welcome, welcome, welcome! Heaven cannot welcome Thee more heartily, O my Beloved, than my' heart shall now do! Heaven doth not need Thee so reach as I do. Heaven hath the abiding presence of the Lord God Omnipotent; but if Thou dwell not within my soul, it is empty, and void, and waste. Come, then, to me, I beseech Thee, O my Beloved!

The spouse further cries — “ *Let Him eat His pleasant fruits.* ” I have often felt myself overcome with the bare idea that anything I have ever done should give my Lord pleasure. Can it be that any offering I ever gave Him should be thought worthy of His acceptance; or that anything I ever felt or said should be a joy to Him? Can He perceive any perfume in my spices, or taste any flavor in my fruits? This is a joy worth worms. It is one of the highest tokens of His condescension. It is wonderful that the King from the far country should come from the glory land, where all choice fruits are at their best, and enter this poor enclosure in the wilderness, and there eat such fruits as ours:., and call them pleasant, too! O Lord Jesus, come into our hearts now! O Holy Spirit, blow upon our hearts at this moment! Let faith, and love, and hope, and joy, and patience, and every grace be now like violets which betray themselves by their perfume, or like roses which load the air with their fragrance!

THE KING'S GARDEN,

Song of Solomon 5:1.

WORKERS for Christ must remember that even if they have to care for the garden, their chief business must be to commune with the Lord and Master of that garden, since He Himself calls them to do so. "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." In happy and auspicious times, when the Spirit of God is working, it is very natural to say, "We must now work: more abundantly than ever," and God forbid that we should hinder such zeal, but the more spiritual privilege is not to be put in the second place. Let us commune as well as work, for therein shall we find strength for service, and our service shall be done the better, and become the more acceptable and ensure the larger blessing. If while we serve like Martha, we at the same time commune like Mary, we shall not then become cumbered with much serving; we shall serve and not be cumbered, and shall feel no fretfulness against others whose only faculty may be that of sitting at the Master's feet.

The voice of the Master Himself calls us to consider His presence: He tells us He is come. What? Could He come without our perceiving it? Is it not possible? May we be like those whose eyes were holden so that they knew Him not? Is it possible for us to be like Magdalen, seeking Christ while He is standing very near us? Yes, and we may even be like the disciples who, when they saw Him walking on the water, were afraid, and thought it was a spirit, and cried out, and had need for Him to say, "It is I, be not afraid," before they knew who it was! Here is our ignorance, but here is His; tenderness. He may come and yet we may not recognize Him; but here when He cometh He takes care to advertise us of the blessed fact, and calls us to observe and to consider, and to delight in it. He would, for our own comfort, prevent it being said of us, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not."

This coming was in answer to prayer. Our translators, in dividing the Bible into chapters, seem to have been utterly regardless of the connection or the sense, so that they brought down their guillotine between two verses which must not be divided. The church had said, "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden;" She had also said, "Let my Beloved come into His garden and eat His pleasant fruits." In answer to

that prayer the. Beloved replies, 'I am come into My garden.' Prayer is always heard, and the' prayer of faithful souls finds an echo in Jesus' heart. How quickly' the spouse was heard! Scarce had the words died away, "*Let my Beloved come,*" before she heard him say, "I am come! Before they call, I will answer ;; and while they are yet speaking I will hear." He is very near unto His people, and hence He very speedily answers; their request. And how fully does He answer it, too! You will perhaps say, "But she had asked for the Holy Spirit, she had said, 'Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; ' and yet there is no mention of the heavenly wind as blowing through the garden." The answer is that the Beloved's coming means all that. His visit brings both north and south wind; all benign influences are :sure to follow where He leads the way; spices always flow out from the heart when Christ's sweet love flows, in, and where He is, Christians have all things in Him. There was a :Full answer to her prayer, and there was :more than an answer, for she had but said," Let Him ,come and eat," but, lo, He gathers myrrh and spice, and He drinks of wine and milk; He does exceeding abundantly above what she had even asked or even thought, after the, right royal manner of the Son of God, who doth not answer us according to the poverty of our expressions and the leanness of our desires, but according to His riches in glory, giving to us grace upon grace out of His own inexhaustible fullness.

What an unspeakable blessing this is! If the voice had said, "I have sent My angel," that would have been a precious boon; but it is not so spoken; the word is, "I am come." What, doth /are before whom angels adoringly bow their]heads, doth He before whom perfect spirits cast their crowns, doth He condescend to come into the church? Ay, it is even so. There is a personal presence of Christ in the midst of H. is people. Where two or three are met together in His name, there is He in the midst of them; His corporeal presence is in]heaven, but His spiritual presence, which is all we want — -all it is expedient for Him as yet to grant — is assuredly in our midst. He is with us truly and really when we meet together in our solemn assemblies, and with us too when we separate and go our ways in private to fight the battles of the Lord.

Where Jesus Christ is not: in the garden, the plants wither, and like untimely figs, the fruits fall from the trees. Blossoms come not, or if they appear, they do but disappoint when Jesus is not there to knit and fructify them; but when He comes, even the driest boughs in the garden become like Aaron's rod that budded.

Remember, too, that if He had dealt with us according to our sins, and [rewarded us after our iniquities, we should never' have heard the footfall of the Beloved traversing the garden. How many have grieved the Holy Spirit by careless living and backsliding! How have most of us followed Him afar off instead of keeping step with Him in service and fellowship! Alas! my Lord, if Thou hadst regarded only the sins of the pastor of the church, Thou hadst long ago left this flock; but Thou hast not dealt with us severely, but according unto Thy love and to Thy mercy Thou hast blotted out our sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud our transgressions, and still dost Thou condescend to come into Thy garden.

If you take each word of this remarkable sentence, you will find a meaning. "I am come." There is the *personal* presence of Christ: "I *am* come." There is the *certainty* that it: is so. It is no delusion, no dream, no supposition. "I *am* truly come." Blessed be the name of the Lord, at this present time it is assuredly so. Many of His saints can bear testimony that they have seen His face and have felt the kisses of His lips,, and have proved even this day that His love is better than wine. Note the next word, "I am come *into* My garden." How near is the approach of Christ to His church! He comes not to the garden door, nor to look over the wall, nor in at: the gate and out again; but *into* His garden. Down every walk, midst the green alleys, among the beds of spices He walks, watching each flower, pruning the superfluous foliage of every fruit-bearing plant, and plucking up by the roots such as; His heavenly Father hath not planted. His delights are with the sorts of men. His intercourse with His chosen is most familiar; so that the spouse may sing, "My Beloved is gone down into His garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies." Jesus Christ the Lord forgets not His church, but fulfills the promise: "I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." He never comes without the winnowing fan when He visits His threshing floor; beware if thou be as chaff. He hath come into His garden. O you who have not enjoyed much of His gracious company, pray Him to cast a look towards you, and be you like the sunflower which turns its face to the sun, to refresh itself with his beams. O pant and long for His presence. If your soul is as dark as the dead of night, call out to Him, for He heareth the faintest sigh of any of His chosen.

"I am come into Mr., garden," saith He. Note here the possession which Christ claims in the church. If it were not *His* garden, He would not come into it. A church that is not Christ's church shall have none of His presence,

and a soul that is not Christ's has no fellowship with Him. If He reveal Himself at all, it is unto His own people, His blood-bought people, the people who are His by purchase and by power, and by the surrender of themselves to Him.

Since the garden is His own, He will not suffer even the least plant to perish. My brethren who work for Christ, do not be downcast if certain portions of the work should not seem to succeed. He will attend to it. "The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand." It is more His work than ours, and souls are more under His responsibility than ours. So let us hope and be confident, for the Master will surely smile upon His "*vineyard of red wine.*"

The next word denotes *cultivation*. "I am come into My *garden.*" The church is a cultivated spot; it did not spring up by chance, it was arranged by Himself, it has; been tended by Himself, and the fruits belong to Himself. Thankful are we if we can truly know that as a church-

***"We are a garden walled around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground."***

THE BRIDEGROOM IN HIS GARDEN.

NO sooner does the spouse say, "Let My beloved come into His garden, than her Lord answers, "I am come into My garden." "*Before* they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." When we desire our Lord Jesus to come to us, He has already come in a measure; our desire is the result of His coming. He meets us in all our desires, for He waiteth to be gracious. Our "come" is no sooner uttered than it is; lost in His "Behold, I come quickly!"

When we perceive that the: Bridegroom has come, we perceive also that He has done exactly what He was asked to do. How cheering to find that our mind is in harmony with His mind! Our heart saith, "*Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits.*" His heart replies, "*I have gathered My myrrh with My spice; I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey; I have drunk My wine with My milk.*" "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart." The Lord Jesus makes the desires of His saints to be the foreshadowings of His own actions:" The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." His secret counsel is made known in the believing soul by desires inspired of the Holy Ghost.

I note, with much delight, that matters which seem inconsistent with perfection are not refused by the heavenly Bridegroom. As the Lord did not refuse for an offering the leavened cakes of the first-fruits, so in this instance, He saith, "I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey." The honey would be purer without the comb; but as it is incident thereto, He takes the one with the other. He graciously accepts, not only our heart's desire, but the very mode in which our weakness works towards that desire. It is as if He delighted in the words of our prayers as well as in the essence of our prayers, and prized the notes of our songs as well as the meaning of them. Yes, I believe our Lord puts our tears as well as our sorrows into His bottle, and hears our groanings as well as our desires. The honeycomb which contains the honey is precious to Him. After He had risen from the grave, He ate a piece of a honeycomb, and [doubt not that He had a reason for choosing that food: sweet gathered from sweets, yet

not without wax. Our Lord accepts our services without nicely noting and critically rejecting the infirmity which goes with them.

He Himself gathers what He enjoys: “*I have gathered My myrrh with My spice.*” Many a holy' thing, which, we have not in detail offered to Him in set form, He knows to have been given in the gross; and so He takes with His own hand what He knows we have by a comprehensive covenant made over to Him. How' sweetly does He fill up our blanks, and believe in our consecration, even when we do not repeat the form of it!

Moreover, He makes mixtures out of our fruits, for He gathers myrrh with balsam, and drinks wine with milk; thus taking the rarer with the more common. He knows how to make holy compounds out of the graces of His people, thus increasing their excellence. He is the best judge of what is admirable, and He is the best fashioner and compounder of character: He is using His skill upon us. Often by our mingled experiences He accomplishes an increase of virtue in us. Some graces are the result of work and wisdom, as wine which must be trodden from the grapes; others are natural, like milk which flows from living fountains without art, of man: but the Lord accepts them both, and so combines them that they are pleasant to Him to a high degree. Simple faith and experimental prudence make up a sacred milk and wine; and the like may be seen in rapturous love and calm patience, which blend most deliciously. The Lord loves us, and makes; the most of us. He /is pleased with all that is the true produce of His grace, and finds no fault with it; on the contrary, He says, “*I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey.*”

It is evident that the Lord Jesus is made happy by us. These poetical sentences must mean that He values the graces and works of his people He gathers their myrrh and spice because He values them; He eats and drinks the honey and the milk because they are pleasant to Him. It is a wonderful thought that the Lord Jesus Christ has joy of us. We cost Him anguish even unto death, and now He finds a reward in us. This may seem a small thing to an unloving mind, but it may well ravish the heart which adores the Well-beloved. Can it be true that we afford joy to the Son of God, the Prince Emmanuel? The King has been held in the galleries, He has been charmed by us. Our first repentance made Him call together His friends and neighbors; the first gleam of faith He ever saw in us made His heart rejoice; and all that He has seen in us ever since of His own image, wrought by His grace, has caused Him to set: of the travail of His soul. Never has a

husbandman taken such pleasure in the growth of his choice plants as our Lord has taken in us. “The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him; in those that hope in His mercy.” That is a thought to be rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel. Yes, the Lords church is; His Hephzibah, for, saith He, “My delight is in her.”

The Lord Jesus will not and cannot be happy by Himself: He will have us share with Him. Note'. how the words run — “ I have eaten”; “Eat, O friends!” “I have drunk”; “Drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved!” His union with His people is so close that His joy is in them, that their joy may be full. He cannot be alone in His joy. That verse of our quaint hymn is always true : —

*“And this I do find, we two are so joined,
He'll not be in glory and leave me behind.”*

He will not be happy anywhere without us. He will not eat without our eating', and He will not drink without our drinking. Does He not say this in other words in the Revelation — “ If any man hear My voice,. and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me”? The inter-communion is complete the enjoyment is for both. To make our Lord Jesus happy we must be happy also. How can the Bridegroom rejoice if His bride is sad? How can the Head be content if the members pine'? At this table of fellowship His chief concern is that we eat and drink. “Fake, eat,” saith He; and again, “Drink ye ;all of it.” I think I hear Him now say — “I have eaten, and I have drunk; and although I will drink no more of the fruit: of the vine until that Clay' that I drink it new in the kingdom of God; yet eat ye, O friends: drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved!” Thus we: have seen, first, that Christ is :made happy by us; and, secondly, that He insists upon our sharing His; joy with Him.

INTERCOURSE IN THE GARDEN.

SONG OF SOLOMON 8

EVIDENTLY the spouse held with her companions *frequent intercourse*, — “The companions hearken to thy voice.” She frequently conversed with them. I hope it is so among those who dwell in Christ's garden. It should be so “Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another ;” they had not now and then a crack, now and then the passing of the time of day, but they held frequent converse. Heaven will consist largely in the communion of saints, and if we would enjoy heaven below we must carry out the words of the creed in our practice: — “I believe in the communion of saints.” Let us show' that we do believe in it. Some persons. sit still in their pews till the time to go, and then walk down the aisle in majestic isolation, as if they were animated statues. Do children thus come in and out of their father's house with never a word for their brothers and sisters? I know professors who float through life like icebergs from whom it is safest to keep clear: surely these partake not of the spirit of Christ? It is well when such icebergs are drawn into the gulf stream of Divine love and melt away into Christ and His people. There should be among those who are children of the common Father a mutual love, and they should show this by frequent commerce in their precious things, making a sacred barter with one another. I like to hear them making sacred exchanges: one mentioning his :trials, another quoting his deliverances; one telling how God has answered prayer, and another recording how the word of God has come to him with power. Such converse ought to be as usual as the talk of children of one family.

“Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions *hearken* to thy voice.” They do not merely hear it, and say to themselves, “I wish she would be quiet,” but they hearken, they lend an ear, they listen gladly. [know some Christians whose lips feed many. I could mention brethren and sisters who drop pearls from their lips whenever they speak. We have still among us Chrysostoms, or men of golden mouths; you cannot be with them for half an hour without being enriched. Their anointing is manifest, for it spreads

to all around them. When the Spirit of God makes our communications sweet, then the more of them the better.

“Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice.” She was in the gardens, but she was not quiet there, and why should she be? God gives us tongues on purpose that they should be used. As He made birds to sing, and stars to shine, and rivers to flow, so has He made men and women to converse with one another to His glory. Our tongue is the glory of our frame, and there would be no glory in its being for ever dumb. The monks of La Trappe, who maintain perpetual silence, do no more than the rocks among which they labor. When God makes bells He means to ring them. It may be thought to be a desirable thing, the converse was *commendable*; for the Bridegroom does not say to the spouse, “Thou that dwellest in the gardens, thy companions hear too much of thy voice.” No; He evidently mentions the fact with approval, because He draws an argument from it why He also should hear that self-same voice.

Is it because we have nothing to say of love, and grace, and truth that we meet and part without learning or teaching anything? Perhaps so. I wish we had a little more small change of heavenly converse: we have our crowns and sovereigns for the pulpit, we need groats and pence for common talk, all stamped with the image and superscription of the King of heaven. O Holy Spirit, enrich us after this sort! May our communications be such that if Jesus Himself were near we might not be ashamed for Him to hear our voices. Make your conversation such that it may be commended by Christ Himself.

These communications were, no doubt, *very beneficial*. As iron sharpeneth iron, so does a man countenance his Friend. Oh, what a comfort it is to drop in upon a cheerful person when you yourself are heavy! What a ballast it puts into your ship, when you are a little too merry, to meet with one in sore travail who bids you share his burden and emulate his faith. We are all the better, believe me, when our Lord can praise us, because the companions hearken to our voices.

In fact, our communications with one another ought to be *preparatory* to higher communications still, The converse of saints on earth should be a rehearsal of their everlasting' communion in heaven. We should begin here to be to one another what we hope to be to one another world without end. And is it not pleasant to rise from communion with our brethren into communion with the Bridegroom? — to have such

talk to one another that at last we perceive that truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son .Jesus Christ? We thought that we only communed with our brethren; but, lo! we see that the Lord Himself is here: do not our hearts burn within us? We,. too, are talking of Him, and now we see that He Himself is here, opening to us; the Scriptures, and opening our hearts to receive those Scriptures in the power of them.

“*The companions hear thy voice cause Me to hear it.*” It is beautiful to hear the Beloved say in effect, “I am going away from you, and you see Me no more; but I shall see you: do not forget Me. Though you will not hear My voice with your bodily' ears, I shall hear your 'voices: therefore speak to Me. Unseen I shall feed among the lilies; unperceived I shall walk the garden in the cool of the day: when you are talking to others do not forget Me. Sometimes turn aside, and. when you have shut to the door, and no eye can see, nor ear can hear, then let Me]hear thy voice: it has music in it to My heart, for I died to give you life. Let Me hear the voice of your prayer, and praise, and love.”

It is very *loving and condescending*” to us that the Lord should wish to hear our voice.

It is condescending and gracious, and yet how *natural* is! How like to Christ! Love ever seeks the company of that: which it loves. What would a husband say if his wife was seen to be chatty and cheerful to everybody else, but: never spoke to him? I cannot suppose such a cases it would make too sorrowful a household. I should pity the poor, broken-hearted man who should be forced to say, “My beloved, others hear thy voice, and admire it; wilt thou not speak to me, thy husband?” O believer, will you let the Lord Jesus, as it were with tears in His eyes, say to you, “You talk to everybody but to Me: you lay yourself out to please everybody but Me: you are a charming companion to everybody but to Me”? Oh, our Beloved, how ill have we treated Thee? How much have: we slighted Thee? In looking back, I fear there are many of us who must feel as if this gentle word of the Lord had also a. sharp side to it. I do remember my faults this day,, The text goes like a dagger to my soul, for I have,. spoken all day long to others, and have had scarce a word for Him whom my .soul loveth. Let us mend our converse, and henceforth show our Lord a truer' love.

EMPLOYMENT IN THE GARDEN.

CANT 8

ADAM was not put in the garden that he might simply walk through its borders, and admire its; flowers, and taste its fruits; but he was placed there to keep it and to dress, it. There was sufficient to be done to prevent his stagnating from want of occupation. He had not to toil sufficiently to make him 'wipe the sweat from his brow, for that came of the curse: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread:" but still he was not permitted to be idle, for that might have been a worse: curse. Even for a perfect man unbroken leisure would not be a blessing. It is essential even to an unfallen creature that he should have work to do — fit work and honorable, seeing it is done by a creature for the great Benefactor who had created him. If we had not our daily tasks to fulfill, rest would corrode into rust, and recreation would soon gender corruption.

You and I are set in the garden of the church because there is work for us to do which will be beneficial to others and to ourselves also. Some have to take the broad ax and hew down mighty trees of error; others of a feeblor sort can with a child's hand train the tendril of a climbing plant, or drop into its place a tiny seed. One may plant and another may water; one may sow and another gather fruit. One may cut up weeds and another prune vines. God hath work: in His church for us all to do, and He has; left us here that we may do it. Our Lord Jesus would not keep a single saint out of heaven if there were not a needs-be for his being here in the lowlands to trim these gardens of herbs, and watch these beds of spices. Would He deny His well-beloved the palm branch and the crown if it were not better for us to be holding the pruning-hook and the spade? A school-book wherewith to teach the little children may be for a while more to our true advantage than a golden harp. To turn over the pages of Scripture wherewith to instruct the people of God may be more profitable to us than to hear the song of seraphim. I say, the Master's love to His own which prompts Him to pray, "*I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory,*" would long ago have: drawn all the blood-bought up to Himself above, had it not been the

fact that it is in infinite wisdom seen to be better that they should abide in the flesh. Ye are the light of the world, ye are the salt. of the earth shall the light and the salt be at once withdrawn? Ye are to be as a dew from the Lord in this dry and thirsty land; would ye be at once exhaled? Have you found out what you have to do in these gardens?]I-lave you found out the plants for which you are to care? If not, arouse yourself and let not a moment pass till you have discovered your duty and your place. Speak unto Him who is the Lord of all true: servants, and say to Him, "Show me what Thou wouldest have me to do. Point out, I pray Thee, the place wherein I may serve Thee." Would you have it said of you that you were a wicked and slothful servant? Shall it be told that you dwelt in the gardens, and allowed the grass to grow up to your ankles, and suffered the thorns and the thistles to multiply until your land became as the sluggard's vineyard, pointed at as a disgrace and a warning to all who passed by? "*Thou that dwellest in the gardens!*" The title sets forth employment constant and engrossing.

I know many Christian people who do not feel that they dwell in the gardens. They reside in a certain town or village where the Gospel may be preached, but not in demonstration of the Spirit and in power. A little Gospel is; made to go a long way with some preachers. In some ministries there is no life or power, no unction or savor. The people who meet under such preaching are cold of heart and dull in spirit; the prayer-meetings are forgotten; communion of saints has well-nigh died out; and there is a general deadness as to Christian effort. Believe me, it is a dreadful thing when Christian people have almost to dread their Sabbath days; and I have known this to be the case. When you are called to hard toil through the six days of the week you want a good spiritual meal on the Sabbath, and if you get it, you find therein a blessed compensation and refreshment. Is it not a heavenly joy to sit still on the one day of rest, and to be fed with the finest of the wheat? I have known men made capable of bearing great trials — personal, relative, pecuniary, and the like — because they have looked backward upon one Sabbatic feast, and then forward to another. They have said in their hour of trouble, — "Patience, my heart; the Lord's day is coming, when I shall drink and forget my misery. I shall go and sit with God's people, and I shall have fellowship with the Father and with the Son, and my soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, till I praise the Lord with joyful, lips." But what a sorry case to dread the Sunday, and to :mutter, "*I shall get nothing next Sunday any more than I did last Sunday*

except some dry philosophical essay, or a heap of the childish toys and fireworks of oratory, or the same dull mumbling of a mechanical orthodoxy.”

“THOU THAT DWELLEST IN THE GARDENS.”

CANT 8:13

THE Song is almost ended: the bride and Bridegroom have come .to their last stanzas, and they are about to part for a while. They utter their adieux, and the Bridegroom says to His beloved, “Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause Me to hear it.” In other words — “When I am far away from thee, fill thou this garden with My name, and let thy heart commune with Me.” She promptly replies, and it is her last word till He cometh, “Make haste, my Beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.” These farewell words of the Well-beloved are very' precious to His chosen bride. Last words are always noticed: the last words of those who loved us dearly are much valued; the last words of One who loved us to the death are worthy of a deathless memory. The last words of the Lord in this canticle remind me of the commission which the Master gave to His disciples or ever He was taken up; when He said to them, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” Then, scattering benedictions with both His hands, He ascended into the glory, and “*a* cloud received Him out of their sight.”

You will see why I say this, and you will detect a striking likeness between the commission connected with the ascension and the present adieu, wherein the spiritual Solomon saith to his espoused Solyma, “Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause Me to hear it.”

The Bridegroom, speaking of His bride, says,” Thou that dwellest in the gardens.” The Hebrew is in the feminine, and hence we are bound to regard it as the word of the Bridegroom to His bride. It is the mystical word of the church's Lord to His elect one. He calls her “Inhabitress of the gardens “ — that is the word. So, then, we who make up the church of God are here addressed under that term, “Thou that inhabitest the gardens.”

He whom we love dwelleth in the ivory palaces, wherein they make Him glad: He is gone up into His Father's throne, and has left these gardens down below, tie came down awhile that He might look upon His garden, that He might see how the vines flourished, and gather lilies; but He has now returned to His Father and our Father. He watered the soil of His garden with His bloody sweat in Gethsemane, and made it to bear fruit unto life by being Himself laid to sleep in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea; but all this lowly work is over now. He does not dwell in the gardens as to His corporeal presence; His dwelling-place is on the throne. Jesus has not taken us up with Him; He will come another time to do that; but now He leaves us among the seeds and flowers and growing plants to do the King's work until He come.. He was a visitor here, and the visit cost Him dear; but He is gone back unto the place whence He came out, having finished the work which His Father gave Him: our life-work is *not* finished, and hence we must tarry awhile below, and be known as inhabitants of the gardens.

It is expedient that we should be here, even as it is expedient that He should *not* be here. God's glory is to come of our sojourn here, else He would have taken us away long ago. He said to His Father, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." He Himself is an inhabitant of the palaces, for there He best accomplishes the eternal purposes of love; but His church is the inhabitress of the gardens, for there she best fulfills the decrees of the Most High. Here she must abide awhile until all the will of the Lord shall be accomplished in her and by her, and then she also shall be taken up, and shall dwell with her Lord above. The title is given by way of distinction, and marks the difference between her condition and that of her Lord.

Next, it is given by way of *enjoyment*. She dwells in the gardens, which are places of delight. Once you and I pined in the wilderness, and sighed after God from a barren hind. We trusted in man, and made flesh our arm, and then we were like the heath in the desert, which seeth not when good cometh. All around us was the wilderness of this world, a howling wilderness of danger, and need, and disorder. We said of the world at its very best, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Do you remember how you roamed, seeking rest and finding none? Your way was the path of darkness which leadeth unto death. Then you were poor and needy, and sought water and there was none, and your tongue cleaved unto the roof of your mouth for thirst. Then came the Lord who bough': you, and He sought

you until He brought you into the gardens of His; love, where He satisfied you with the river of the water of life, and filled you with the fruits of His Spirit:, and now you dwell in a goodly land: “The fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew.!: Your portion is with the Lord's saints;, yea, with Himself; and what can be a better portion? Is it not as the garden of the Lord? You dwell where the great Husbandman spends His care upon you and takes a pleasure in you. You dwell where the infinite skill and tenderness and wisdom of God manifest themselves in the training of the plants which His own right hand has planted; you dwell in the church of God, which is laid out in due order, and hedged about and guarded by heavenly power; and you are, therefore, most fitly said to dwell in the gardens. Be thankful: it is; a place of enjoyment for you: awake and sing, for the lines have fallen unto you in pleasant places. Just as Adam was put into the Garden of Eden for his own happiness, so are you put into the garden of the church for your comfort. It is not a perfect paradise of bliss, but it has many points of likeness to paradise: for God Himself doth walk therein, the river of God doth water it, and the tree of life :is there unguarded by the flaming sword. Is it not written, ”I the Lord do keep it: I will water it every moment; lest any hurl: it, I will keep it night and day”? Although you are distinguished from your Lord by being here while He is there, yet you are made partakers of His joy, and are not as those: who are banished into a salt land to die in desolation. The Lord's joy is in His people, and you are made to have a joy in them also: the excellent of the earth, in whom is all your delight, are made to be the comrades of your sojourning.

SPRING IN THE GARDEN.

THAT which is sown in the garden springs up from out of the ground because there is vitality in it. The life is dormant for a while, but it displays itself in due season. There is at the appointed hour for all the buried seeds a bursting of grave clothes, a rending of sepulchers, and an upheaval of the earth, and then in resurrection freshness comes forth the blade, to be succeeded by the ear, and that by the full corn in the ear. Even so the truth of God is a living and incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever; or, to use another figure, it is as the tell tree and as the oak, whose substance is in them when they lose their leaves. It is not possible that the truth of God should perish; even if it be cut down, at the scent of water it will bud and send forth new shoots. Life in garden seeds may be destroyed, under certain influences the life-germ may perish, but the living truth of God is immortal and unconquerable. The Lord has Himself declared that it abideth for ever: "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand for ever." Therefore do we assuredly look for a blessed spring time, we wait to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living; yea, we expect to see the universal reign of the everlasting Gospel.

But seed springs up not .only because of its own vitality, but because of its surrounding circumstances. Put the seed away in the mummy's hand, and hide it in the pyramid, and though it may be vital, still it is not quickened into growth. The seed under a clod 'waits awhile till all its surroundings become propitious, and then it begins to germinate.. The moisture and the warmth co-operate, and the ::oil begins to yield its nourishment to the little life-germ. So we may rest assured that God will make all things propitious in His providence to the growth of His own truth. He knows under what conditions religious thought will spring up in the minds of men, and He can create those conditions; He has created them, and He will! The dews, are they not in His hand? The rains, doth He not pour them forth from His palm? The sunlight, is it not the smiling of His face; and the heat, is it not the breath of His love? Is not the residue of the Spirit with Him? Can He not open the bottles of heaven? Is He not the Father of Lights also, who (:ant pour forth the brightness of His grace upon men's hearts? We may rest assured that because all conditions are in the hand of God, and He can order them according to His own will, He will cause the seed which He has sown in the earth 'to spring up. Why, methinks I may' say of the Gospel,

that, under the Divine superintendence, everything is in league with it. They fight from heaven — the stars in their courses fight for the Gospel of Jesus. For it winds blow and tempests rage. It is in league with the stones of the field, and the beasts of the field are at peace with it. The stupendous wheels of Providence as they revolve are full of eyes, and all those eyes are fixed upon Christ and upon His cross, and as they turn upon 'their mystic axles, they revolve for ever with one design; methought I heard them speak as they move onward, and a voice from among them said, "Let the name of God be glorious, and let the Christ of God be king among the people." The Gospel must spread therefore; it is, in itself, vital and energetic, and the Lord of hosts ordereth all things to secure its growth.

But the corn comes not up out of the earth because it is vital, or because of its surroundings merely, for, as we believe, there is the actual power of God at work throughout Nature. We have never been able to agree with the theory that Nature once started, works of itself, like a clock which has been wound up. We believe that its operations conform to certain laws, but there must be some power to carry out the laws, or else they would be a dead letter. Everything that exists is a continuous emanation from the Most High, and everything that is done anywhere in the world, God lendeth the strength and giveth the power whereby it is done. If we were to see performed upon this stage, in a single moment, the turning of one grain of wheat into a full grown ear, we should exclaim, "Wonderful!" and regard it as a miracle. But if God is pleased to take some few months in performing the same operation, it is not the less wonderful. If spring came but once in a century, what wonder it would excite in all hearts! If it had never happened but once, it would be considered to be the crown of miracles, and skeptics would ridicule those who believed in its possibility; yet God creates our harvests as surely as if there never had been a harvest before, and He forms our ripe fields by His omnipotence as truly even as He fashioned man in the Garden of Eden, perfect at once!

God is alive, and God is at work; He hath not betaken Himself into His secret chambers and shut the door behind Him, and left us orphans in the world, and the earth without a ruler and without a friend! He worketh everywhere; in the deepest caverns of the sea and among the highest pinnacles of the heavens: and there, He worketh among the violets of yonder bank, and the primroses which peer forth from amidst the sere leaves around the underwood of the copse: and there also, where the bees begin to hum, the lark to sing, and the lambs to play.

It is God that sendeth "Spring, the Awakener," to fill earth's bosom with flowers. He doeth it all! And it is because of this that we expect the Gospel to flourish — not merely because the Word of God is vital, and because God will order Providence in its behalf, but because He is at work in it — mysteriously at work, it is true, but certainly at work, for the Spirit of the living God which was given at Pentecost has never gone back to heaven; He is here still, and He that wrought amongst the crowds of the streets of Jerusalem and made them cry out, "Sirs:, what must we do to be saved?" is working in our cities even at this day. Where Jesus Christ is preached, His Spirit is pledged to be present. God's Spirit worketh evermore. He is breaking hard hearts as the winter pulverizes the clods; He is melting stubborn wills into obedience as the vernal showers soften the hard earth; and He is awakening the young germs of hope, and prayer, and desire, just as the warm sunlight is calling up the green blades and the flowers. The Spirit of God worketh ever. O ye adversaries of the Gospel, it is not the Gospel alone that ye have to stand against, but the God over all, blessed for ever, omnipotent and eternal, is engaged in the battle! If the Gospel be His sword ye may well tremble at its edge, but ye may be much more afraid when ye remember the arm which wields that deadly weapon, which can divide asunder soul and spirit. The Gospel is His arrow and His bow, but He who draws that bow and directs that arrow is the same God who launches thunderbolts in the day of tempest, and touches the hills and they smoke. The God of the Gospel is He who wheels the earth in its orbit, and marshals all the stars. Jehovah invisible, but also almighty, is engaged to show Himself strong for the Gospel, therefore do we expect victory. Despite the times of depression and of sorrow, days of refreshing must come from the presence of the Lord. The spring must follow the winter: "As the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and peace to spring forth before all the nations."

SPRING FOLLOWS WINTER.

IF at any time our mind should grow desponding concerning; the; progress of the Gospel, and I confess mine is very heavy at times, it ought to encourage us to remember that the Gospel will conquer, not because it looks as if it would, but because God has declared and decreed that it shall do so. I know of no efforts which have been made to promote the advent and progress of spring. A blustering March; a cold February; rain and mist through November, December, and January; I saw nothing in the atmosphere or the sky to help on spring. Did it want any helping? Did it need human aid? No; the earth pursued its ordained orbit, and every hour it neared the point where spring, laden with flowers, lay in kind ambush, longing to scatter her garlands over the glad earth. God wants no helpers to create spring: He sends it in His own time, and lo it cometh. Even thus the Lord stands in no need of creature help to effect the designs of His grace. Spring has never lingered until assembled parliaments have permitted and commanded its coming; neither has it waited for emperors to smile, and say — “Let the buds come forth.” Far away in the dense forest, and here in Merry England in a thousand woods, the sap is flowing in the trees, and myriads of buds are swelling, but not: by man's art or aid. The daffodils are blooming in the meadows where no man planted them, and the bluebells in the dells where gardener's spade has never come. Yea, and I know right well that the dews of Divine grace and the showers of regenerating love tarry not for man, nor wait for the sons of men.

If there had been a general revolt against the spring, :it would not have been delayed. If the kings of the earth had set themselves, and the rulers taken counsel together, no single gleam of sunlight would have hesitated to shine forth. If the Pope himself, in his infallibility, had issued a bull forbidding the sun 'to re-cross the equator, and advance to the northern tropic, I venture to predict that it would have pursued the even tenor' of its way, despite the bidding of his Holiness. None can stay the marches of the year, or' turn the seasons from their course. Who is he that can fight against the Lord, or withstand the power of the Most High? Our help cometh from the Lord who made heaven and earth. We do not reckon on the progress of the Gospel because we have a company of rich men to help us, a goodly fellowship of eloquent divines to advocate the cause and a considerable number of respectable persons to support the good work. No,

our Master has not come to such a beggarly state of dependence that He needs a mortal's help. He has told us that "cursed is he that trusteth in man and maketh flesh his arm," and He has not come to trust in man Himself and make flesh His arm: "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." As comes the spring by God, Jehovah's own arrangement; so shall come the time. of the church's triumph, and the victory of truth, by God's appointment, let men say what they will.

Be it never forgotten that the disheartening circumstances of the winter may have been all of them promotive of the success of the spring. I cannot tell what connection there may have been between the sharp frost and the coloring of the cowslip, but I have no doubt that if the flowers could speak they could tell. I do not know what is the connection between the drenching showers and the gushes of song from the woodlands, but doubtless the larks and the thrushes hold the secret: among them; neither do I know how howling winds are linked with leafy bowers, but what the oak or the elm could say if they were permitted to prophesy for awhile lit is not for me to guess. There is an intimate inter-marriage and commingling of the dark and of the bright, the chill and the warm; and from this has come forth the joy of spring. Every child knows that March winds and April showers bring forth the sweet May flowers; so all the sorrows and troubles which the church has borne, and shall yet bear, are mothers of the victories she shall yet achieve. Her days would never be so bright if her nights had not been so dark. Believe, therefore, that the worst times are working on towards something better. We have God's promise to sustain us in all our efforts to spread abroad His kingdom, He has Himself declared that, "As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth; and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall My word be that goeth forth out of My mouth; it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." The Lord God cannot lie, He must keep His promise; and He cannot be disappointed by unforeseen difficulties; His power is irresistible; therefore we feel quite sure that His word must win the day!

Bethink you for a moment, you who are growing weary through the long night, whose watches seem as if they would never end. I hear you cry, "When will the day break; and the shadows flee away?" Be not dispirited, but encourage yourselves with these thoughts. Remember what a sowing has already gone before. Christ sowed the earth with His own self.

Remember, too, who is the Husbandman of this field. He has not bidden His church till the world without Divine help: "My Father is the Husbandman." God Himself is watching over the broad field of the world to promote the growth of what the Savior sowed, and shall He fail? Shall it be said at the close of the great Husbandman's work, there is no result from it? The idols are still firm on their pedestals; Antichrist sits upon her seven hills in pompous state, and the simple Gospel is still in the minority! Will the Almighty fail? How think you? Can Omnipotence be defeated? No! It cannot be; as Jehovah liveth, it cannot be! The living God must conquer.

Moreover, there is the Spirit of God Himself, as well as the Father and the Son, and He has deigned to dwell in the midst of the church. The Spirit of God is here, and is specially at work. He moved upon chaos, and turned it into order; He it is also that quickeneth the dead, and shall He be defeated and disappointed in the conversion of this world? Let the thought be accursed, for it is near akin to blasphemy, if it be not blasphemy itself. The true God must make the knowledge of Himself to "cover the earth as the waters cover the sea." God's honor is engaged in the matter. On this battle-field of the world He has flung down the gauntlet to the powers of hell, and Satan has taken up the gage of battle, and the fight has raged long, but it must end in victory for God, it cannot be otherwise!

“THE GRASS WITHERETH, THE FLOWER FADETH.”

ISAIAH 40:6-8; 1 PETER 1:23-25.

THE Spirit blows upon the flesh, and that which seemed vigorous becomes weak, that which was fair to look: upon is smitten with decay; the true nature of the flesh is thus discovered, its deceit is laid bare, its power is destroyed, and there is space for the dispensation of the ever-abiding Word, and for the rule of the Great Shepherd, whose words are spirit and life. There is a withering wrought by the Spirit which is the preparation for the sowing and implanting by which salvation is wrought.

The withering before the sowing was very marvelously fulfilled in the preaching of John the Baptist. Most appropriately he carried on his ministry in the desert, for a spiritual desert was all around him; he was the voice of one crying in the wilderness. It was not his work to plant, but to hew down. The fleshly religion of 'the Jews was then in its prime. Pharisaism stalked through the streets in all its pomp; men complacently rested in outward ceremonies only, and spiritual religion was at the lowest conceivable ebb. Here and there might be found a Simeon and an Anna, but: for the'. most part men knew nothing of spiritual religion, but said in their hearts: “We have Abraham to our father,” and this is enough. What a stir he made when he called the lordly Pharisees a generation of vipers! How he shook the nation with the declaration, “Now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees”! Stern as Elias, his work was to level the mountains, and lay low every lofty imagination. That word, “Repent,” was as a scorching wind to the verdure of self-righteousness, a killing blast for the confidence of ceremonialism. His food and his dress called for fasting and mourning. The outward token of his ministry declared the death amid which he preached, as he: buried in the waters of Jordan those who came to him. “Ye must die and be buried, even as He who is to come will save by death and burial.” This was the meaning of the emblem which he set before the crowd. His typical act ,was as thorough in its teaching as we. re his words; and as if that were not enough, he warned them of a yet more searching and trying baptism with the Holy Ghost and with fire, and of the coming of One whose fan was in His hand, thoroughly to purge His floor.

The Spirit in John blew as the rough north wind, searching and withering, and made him to be a destroyer of the vain gloryings of a fleshly religion, that the spiritual faith might be established.

When our Lord Himself actually appeared, He came into a withered land, whose glories had all departed. Old Jesse's stem was bare, and our Lord was the Branch which grew out of his root. The scepter had departed from Judah, and the lawgiver from between his feet; when Shiloh came. An alien sat on David's throne, and the Roman called the covenant-land his own. The lamp of prophecy burned but dimly, even if it had not utterly gone out. No Isaiah had arisen of late to console, them, nor even a Jeremiah to lament their apostasy. The whole economy of Judaism was; as a worn-out vesture; it had waxed old; and was ready to vanish away. The priesthood was disarranged. Luke tells us that Annas and Caiaphas were high priests that year — two in a year or at once, a strange setting aside of the laws of Moses. All the Dispensation which gathered around the visible, or as Paul calls it, the “worldly” sanctuary, was coming to a close; and when our Lord had finished His work, the veil of the Temple was rent in twain, the sacrifices were abolished, the priesthood of Aaron was set aside, and cardinal ordinances were: abrogated, for the Spirit revealed spiritual things. When He came who was made a priest, “not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life,” there was “*a* disannuling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.”

“LIKE A WATERED GARDEN, AND LIKE A SPRING OF WATER.”

ISAIAH 58:11.

“AND THOU SHALT BE LIKE A WATERED GARDEN.” This figure of a garden is a very sweet and attractive one. I need not tell you how much taste may be displayed and how much pleasure may be derived from the cultivation of such plots of ground. Our fancy is soon at work to invent a picture of flower-beds, and fruit-trees, shady walks, and pleasant fountains, laid out close to some grand mansion, and opening its fairest views to the best apartments of the palace. Such a garden needs constant care, and then, although it may be more beautiful at one season than another, it will never be like a wild heath, or totally bereft of charms.. But alas! some professors of religion are not like this: there is little evidence of diligent cultivation in their character. Instead of flowers of some kind all the year round, it is hard to say that they ever show much bloom: fruits you would never expect from them, But you know that it is a comely thing for every Christian church, whether it be a large mansion or a little villa, to have a garden surrounding it, so that you may look out from the windows and see the 'various walks and the different plants that flourish there. I have seen some gardens attached to small houses where the owner has portioned off little plots to each member of his family. And thus I believe the home has been made pleasanter and happier. But oh! it is always a good thing when every member of the church has a spot to engage his heart and hands;, and when they can all look with so much more satisfaction upon the tender blossoms and the full-blown flowers because they have watched and tended and watered the plants with a ministry of love. This, though, is merely a hint by the way. It is not the exact meaning of the passage before us. Your own soul is to be under cultivation. The heavenly Gardener shall rejoice in your bloom.

An African traveler tells us that he has often seen the contrast between an unwatered garden and a watered garden, and has been much surprised at it. In the case of the watered garden there may be a spring just outside of it,

and the master has diligently brought in the water ever), morning, or every evening, poured it into the trench, and made it run along, and so the plant receives the moisture, and bears fruit, forming a pleasant contrast to the and desert outside. But there is another garden, with similar plants, apparently selected with the same care, but as it has not been watered, the traveler says that he has frequently observed the holes where the plant should be, without: a vestige of the plant that has been perceptible. There was the, trench where the water should have flowed; there were paths in the garden; there was everything save and except this — there was no life, because there was no water. O Christians, you know what this means! When the Holy Spirit visits God's people:, they are like a garden that is watered every day. They are green and flourishing, and their graces are an honor to the God who nourished them. But if the Holy Spirit be taken a way from them how different is it! If He were utterly withdrawn from us — which, thank God, He will not be — we should be just like the wilderness from which we were taken, and not a vestige of grace would remain. Christian, as all depends upon the watering of the Spirit, so make it a matter of soul concern with thee to be watered continually by God's grace. Oh, do not trust to the stock thou hast, for it will fail thee! Do not rely upon what thy soul may find within itself as being its own wisdom and strength, or thou wilt be deceived; but go thou to the, Lord, and pray that thou mayest be as a watered garden — not as a garden only, but as a watered garden. So may each one of us do!

As “a spring of water whose waters fail not.” There are many wells in the East which do fail, and many apparent springs which deceive the traveler. I observe that the margin has it,” whose waters deceive not, or lie not.” When a caravan comes to a well, if there be no water in it the travelers are deceived; and if the husbandman should come to a reservoir, and find the water is; all gone, then the reservoir has lied unto him and deceived him. And how many a man who has appeared like a Christian has been but a mere deceiver! We looked into his conversation, where there should have been a savor of godliness, but we found none. We hoped that in his actions he would be like the Master whom he professed to serve, but we saw none of that Masters likeness. We trusted that when he came into communion with the church, he would add to its comfort and its usefulness, but he has merely added to its numbers, and has been an encumbrance upon its march. He has been a deceiver; his waters have lied unto us.

Not so God's true people; they shall not deceive. They shall have so much grace that when a Christian friend expects to find grace in them, he shall not be disappointed. He shall be refreshed by their conversation, he shall be encouraged by their holy example. A spring of water is not dependent upon anything beyond itself. Deep down in the caverns of the earth great treasures of water have been prepared by God, and the spring subsists upon its own secret source. And so does the Christian. God has provided in the covenant a depth of living 'water. It is one of the blessings pronounced upon Israel's sons. Christ Himself has declared that he who drinks of the water of life shall find it in him, "*a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*" The reservoir must be filled at certain times, and then it gets dry, but the spring is filled from itself. So the Christian is not dependent upon the ordinances. He thrives upon them, but he is not dependent upon them. If, by Providence, he is denied the use of them, he has a spring within; nay, he has a spring in the secret depths of the eternal love of God, which wells up within him at all times, so that he becomes as "*a spring of water, whose waters fail not.*" I do not know how some people, who believe that a Christian can fall from grace,, manage to be happy. It must be a very commendable thing in them to be able to get through a day without despair. If I did not believe the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints, I think I should be of all men the most miserable, because I should lack any ground of comfort. I could not say whatever state of heart I came into, I should be like a well-spring of water, whose 'waters fail not. I should rather have to take the comparison of an intermittent spring that might stop on a sudden, or a reservoir which we had no reason to expect would always be full.

“AS THE GARDEN CAUSETH THE THINGS THAT ARE SOWN IN IT TO SPRING FORTH.”

ISAIAH 61:11.

THE air has been balmy with the breath of spring, and all Nature has felt the influence of the “ethereal mildness.” The earth — of which, through the long winter, we might have said, “she is not dead but sleepeth” — has now awakened, and she beginneth already to put on her garments of glory and beauty. Wild flowers are: springing up in the hedgerows, buds upon the trees are hastening to burst, the time of the singing of birds is come, and if the voice of the turtle be not heard in our land, yet we trust the winter is past — .the rain is over and gone. Now, Nature is not at work to amuse and please us merely — its mission is instruction. Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter, are God's four Evangelists, bringing each one a different version of the self-same Gospel of Divine Love.. Spring has its own peculiar evangel, and it is for us to read it, and to interpret it, by the light of God's Spirit. A :lose: analogy is often hinted at in the Old and New Testaments between the spring-time and the work of God in the hearts of men. As God has promised, in the outward world, that there shall be seed-time, and then harvest — winter and a following summer, so He declares, over and over again, that His word, which, when it goeth forth, is like unto the sowing, shall not return unto Him void, but shall prosper in the thing whereto He hath sent it. As surely as in due season the earth bringeth forth her bud, and the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring' :forth, so shall God's great purposes be accomplished, and righteousness and praise shall spring forth before all the nations.

'There is a spiritual spring-time appointed of God, and it will surely come; as certainly as spring comes to the earth physically, so surely will it come to the church spiritually: *there may be in God's work, and in our work for God, a .period of unrequited labor.* The analogy between the processes of Nature and God's work in the church holds good not only as to the revivals of spring, but as to the depressing incidents of winter. There is a time when the husbandman is occupied with the plough and with the scattering of the

seed, while from day to day he sees no result from his labor. He trusts to the earth his golden grain, and buries it in hopes of a future upspringing, but month after month he has no return. He watches patiently, he sees the dreary months go round, but not a single ear is brought home to give him promise; much less do ample sheaves reward his toil. "Dread winter reigns tremendous o'er the conquered year," the vegetable world lies dead. As it is in the natural world we must expect it to be in the spiritual world; there will ordinarily be a time of unrequited sowing for the Lord's laborers. To a great extent this was so with the church of God in her early history; then she was fitly imaged in these words — "a sower went forth to sow." True, through the infinite compassion of the great Husbandman, there were souls saved at once by the preaching of the Gospel; but yet the wide spread of the Gospel was not a work of a few months — years of self-denial were needed. Good men had to toil throughout the whole of their lives, ay, and to lay down those lives, too, by painful and bloody, deaths, and yet at the first Christ's kingdom did not come. Generation after generation of holy martyrs and confessors went to prison and to death to bear testimony to the truth as it is in Jesus. It: was the church's time of sowing, and her seed was steeped in tears and blood. God's presence and power did not so much reveal themselves in immediate success as in patient endurance, heroic fortitude, and boundless self-sacrifice. Holy hymns were not sung by assembled thousands where passers- by could hear them, but in the crypts and in the catacombs the righteous praised the Lord. The Word of God was in those days hidden away like a buried thing, concealed like the seed-corn beneath the clods. The church, parted with her holiest sons, who died that she might live, and grow, and multiply, and subdue the earth; but for many years it seemed as if the sacrifice had 'been made in vain, for her truths were still the scoff' of the age, the butt of perpetual ridicule. It looked as if her principles, as well as her martyrs, would be buried. Imperial tyrants boasted that they would exterminate Christianity, and leave to the church :neither root nor branch, nor place, nor name. This was but the Lord's winter, with its bitter chills and driving tempests and stormy winds, fulfilling His word; and we: also must expect to see the great sowing work of the church proceed under the same trying conditions. We must not always reckon to see nations converted the moment the Gospel is preached to them; and especially where new ground has been broken up, where countries have just received the Gospel message, we must not be disappointed if neither to-day nor to-morrow we are rewarded with abundant results. God's plan involves. ploughing, sowing, and waiting, and

after these the up-springing and the harvest. “Be patient, therefore, unto the coming of the Lord., Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious :fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain.”

While the seed is under the ground a thousand adversaries present themselves, all apparently in array against its ever rising from the earth. The seed might look up from the soil and say of the frosts and storms of winter, '!' All these things are against me.” It was but a few weeks ago that the earth wherein the husbandman had sown his grain was frozen as though it were of iron; beneath his foot it was hard as the share with which he had formerly ploughed it. Then came the snow and buried the green blades beneath its fleecy showers. Who could imagine that harvests would spring forth from frost-bound clods or from beneath so thick a shroud of snow? Then came the rain, again and again. It deluged everything. The weeping months followed each other in mournful procession; and yet despite frost, snow, rain, and floods, seeds are peeping forth in the garden, the almond blossom is in its beauty, the golden cup of the crocus is brimmed with sunshine, and the trees are bursting into leaf.

So we must expect to see in the church of God: desperate obstacles will obstruct the spread of the Gospel, fearful disappointments will wither hope, solemn calamities will overthrow success, iniquity will abound, and the love of many will wax cold! When we survey the condition of affairs apart from faith in God, it may even seem to us that our cause is hopeless, and the further prosecution of it a forlorn endeavor. We must expect to see it so. If it be so in Nature so may it also be in grace, and I sometimes think that we have fallen upon such times even now. I admit that there is a tendency among men advanced in years to depreciate, the present, and to say that the former times were better than now; with that feeling I think I have little or no sympathy, neither my age nor my temperament lead me in that direction, yet I fear that in some respects the present era is peculiarly trying to the Christian church in this country. Our nation has grown enormously rich. Pride and fullness of bread have taken off men's thoughts from God and His salvation. Boundless luxury has bred indifference to the Gospel The lower classes, as they are called are less than ever within the reach of the Gospel.

“CAST OUT IN THE OPEN FIELD.”

“None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live, I yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live.” Ezekiel 16:5, 6.

DOUBTLESS the Lord here describes the Jewish people when they began to multiply in the land of Egypt, and were grievously oppressed by Pharaoh. Pharaoh had commanded them to cast out the male children that they might perish. Hence, the figure of an infant deserted, cast out into the open field to perish by wild beasts, by starvation, or exposure, was a very apt portrait of the youthful state of Israel. when God looked upon her in love, and brought her out of Egypt to set her in a goodly land. But all the best divines and expositors concur in the belief that we have here also a most extraordinarily apt and significant description of the human race by nature, and of the way in which God in Divine mercy passes by the sinner when utterly lost and helpless, and by the power of the Spirit, bids him “Live.”

The verse presents an infant exposed to die. All the common offices that were necessary for its life and health have been forgotten. Its heartless parents have hid it out in the open field, having no regard whatever for it; and there it lies before our eye, covered with blood, exposed to wild beasts, famishing, ready to perish. Among many heathen nations there existed the barbarous custom of leaving deformed children to perish in the woods or fields. Among the Spartans it was an established regulation to abandon their weaker offspring to perish at the foot of Mount Taygetus; and in these times there are dark places of the earth which are full of this unnatural cruelty. The Jews were certainly free from this sin, but it was a practice of their near neighbors, and therefore well known to them; and moreover, the remembrance of Egypt and their great lawgiver among the crocodiles of the Nile, and all the males murdered by royal decree, would make the metaphor very simple to them.

Here is an *early ruin*. It is an infant. A thousand sorrows that one so young should be so deeply taught in misery's school! It is an infant; it has not yet tasted joy, but yet it knoweth pain and sorrow to the full. How early art thou blasted, O sweet flower! How soon are thy young dawns quenched in darkness, O rising sun! A ruin so terrible and so early has fallen upon each of us. Let proud man kick against the doctrine as Jhe may, Scripture telleth us assuredly that we are "*born in sin and shapen in iniquity.*" We came not into this world as Adam came into the garden, without flaw, without condemnation, without evil propensities; but lo, by one man's offense we are all made sinners, and through his desperate fall our blood is tainted and our nature is corrupt. From the very birth we go astray, speaking lies, and in the very birth we lie under the condemnation of the law of God.

The next 'very apparent teaching is *utter inability* It is an infant — what .can it do for itself? If it were a child of some few years it might be able, with tottering feet, to find its way to some shelter; if it had the gift of articulate speech, it might sob out its wants, and tell to the passer-by what it needed; but it is an infant, it cannot speak. It knows pain, but it has not mind enough to know wherefore the pain is there. It is ignorant; and although conscious of its ills, untutored, undeveloped intellect can neither describe the evil, nor prescribe the remedy.

Though it may cast its little eyes around, even if help were thee it were not in its power to avail itself of the proffered aid. It is impotent, helpless, utterly powerless; if anything is to be done for it must all be done by another's hand. Not even clay on the potter's wheel is more helpless than this infant as it now lies cast out in the open field. Such is human nature; it can by no means help towards its own restoration.. "Dead," saith our apostle, "*dead in trespasses and sins,*" and what shall the dead in their graves do towards resurrection? Shall the worm become mother of life, or shall corruption be the father of immortality? No, trumpet ,of God, there is no life in the dull, cold ear of death, and no hearing in the hollow skull of the skeleton; if the graves open, a Divine hand must break the seal, upheave the mould, and uplift the mouldering corpse. If there be resurrection, it must come from God, and from God alone. It must be a miracle in the beginning and a miracle even to the end.

But, mark you — and this is a thought that may crush our boastings and make us; hang our head like a bulrush evermore — this inability is our own

sin. This is laid at our door, not: as an excuse for our sinfulness, but as a frightful aggravation of our guilt, that we have become so bad that we cannot make ourselves good, that our nature is so now desperately evil both by its native depravity and by our continual practice of sin, that iniquity has become our nature; so that it is as natural to us to sin, as for water to descend, or sparks to fly upward.

***“Where vice has held its empire long,
'Twill not endure the least control;
None but a power divinely strong
Can turn the current of the soul.”***

Apparent, too, is yet a third misfortune — we are *utterly friendless*. “None eye pitied thee, to do any of these things unto thee.” We have no friend in heaven or' in earth that can do aught for us, unless God shall interpose. Grant you that a tender parent may pity, but no parent can change his child's nature or cleanse away the sin of his offspring. Let it be granted that there are ministers of Christ whose tearful eyes would woo you to Christ, but the most earnest evangelist cannot quicken your soul. The most thundering of all God's Boanerges cannot awake the dead. Let: it be considered that angels are anxious for your conversion, that were you saved they would clap their wings with joy and make glad holiday in heaven; but an angel's power cannot snatch you from the grave of your sin, nor could the whole host of seraphs with their kindred cherubs combined, do aught to deliver you from the ruin into which by Adam's sins and your own, you have been brought. Weep and lament your kinsfolk may for you, but no lamentation can make an atonement for your sin, no human tears can cleanse your filthiness, no Christian zeal can clothe you with righteousness, no yearning love can sanctify our nature. Friendless, helpless, and ruined from our earliest: state — what miserable creatures are men! Sinai thunders at us, the law condemns us, justice bares its sword, holiness is incensed, and truth is sworn to destroy. Where, where shall we fly, if thou refuse us, O God?

Furthermore, we are by nature in a sad state of *exposure*. Cast out into the open field, left in a 'wilderness where it is not likely that any should pass by, thrown where the cold can smite by night and the heat can blast by day, left where the wild beast goeth about seeking whom he may devour — such is the estate of human nature: unclothed, unarmed, helpless, exposed to all manner of ravenous destroyers. Little do any of us know how exposed by nature we are to sloth, to drunkenness, to lust and pride and

unbelief, to all those young lions which hunt in company with the great: lion of the pit, who seeketh whom he may devour. O Lord God, Thou alone knowest the awful dangers which prowl around an unregenerate man; what mischiefs waylay him; what crimes beset him; what follies haunt him! As God only knows the fullness of the guilt of even one sin, so His infinite mind alone can grasp the number of those tremendous temptations which are planted like snares of death in the path of an unconverted soul.

It seems that this child, besides being in this exposed state, was *loathsome*. "Thou wast cast out to the loathing of thy person." It was in such a condition that the sight: of it was disgusting, and its person was so destitute of all comeliness that it was absolutely loathed. Such is man by nature, but he will not believe it; he still flattereth himself that he is comely as the curtains of Solomon, while he is black as the tents of Kedar. We think ourselves angels, when we are nearest akin to devils; but when we get akin to angels, then we mourn the devil that still is within us. I know' this, that when God the Holy Ghost give s a man a view of himself, he is utterly loathsome in, his own esteem. One of the cardinals of the olden times — when cardinals were sometimes saints — . happened to pass by a meadow where he saw a shepherd leaning on his crook, weeping. He stopped to ask the lad what made him weep. The lad replied by pointing to the ground, for just at his feet there was a toad. "I was weeping," said he,, "to thin k that God should have made me a creature so infinitely superior to this loathsome reptile at my feet, and that I should have made myself such a creature that this loathsome thing is superior to me, because :it has never sinned." As the cardinal went his way, he said, "*Verily* hath it happened that the foolish and unlearned enter into the kingdom of heaven before us, for this peasant has found out the truth.." Not vipers nor toads are more venomous or more loathsome to men than man must be to God, or would be to himself if he could see himself with the eyes of truth, and if the veil of pride were once lifted up from his eyes. The image of God in man is all obliterated; we have ashes for beauty, shame for glory', rottenness for health, and hell for heaven.

In this case, there was nothing in the *birth* of this child, in its original parentage, that could move the passer-by. We are told in some former verses, "*Thy* birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite," both of them belonging to an accursed race. Look unto the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. 'There was nothing in your birth and mine why He should have pity on us. Kings,

princes, mighty men boast much of their pedigrees, but the Lord knoweth nothing of the glory of these family trees, and ancestries; nay, rather, He leaveth the mighty man in the dust, cutting down the high tree, that He cause the low tree to flourish. He poureth contempt upon princes, and knoweth no respect of persons.

Nor was there anything in this child's *beauty*, for it was loathsome. Men are often affected by beauty. "Doubtless Pharaoh's daughter preserved Moses because he was a comely child. We know that Ahasuerus chose Esther because of her beauty; and there have been many who have been exalted in the world for their personal attractions; but it was not so with man in God's sight. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores."

Furthermore, as we have found no motive yet, either in necessity or the child's birth or beauty, so we find none in any *entreaties* that were uttered by this child. It doth not seem that it pleaded with the passer-by to save it, for it could not as yet speak. So, though sinners do pray, yet when a sinner prays, it is because God has begun to save him. A sinner's prayers can never be the cause of his salvation, for, mark you, the truth is that no man ever seeks; God first; God has first sought him, and began a good work in his soul before he ever turns to God. In some cases, this is very extraordinarily proved. The old writers used to quote the instance of a man who went into a wood, having been an outrageous sinner, with the determination of destroying himself, and while he adjusted the rope, some passer-by, hearing a sound, came and expostulated with him, and the words were blessed to his salvation. Is there any preparation or preparatory process in a man who has come to such a pitch of sin, that he is about to take away his own life, to wash his hands in his own blood? Surely this was grace. There were one or two cases in Whitefield's history, of men who came into places where he was preaching, with stones in their pockets; to pelt him with, but who became themselves converted. Was there anything there for the grace of God to get hold of, anything to foster, to favor, or nourish the grace, the sovereign grace of the Most High? Nay, rather, while they were yet without anything whatsoever that could have cried after God, He was found of them that sought Him not; He called them a people that were not a people, and her beloved that was not beloved, I know some think that the sinner takes the first step, but we know better. If he did, it were like the old Romish miracle of St. Dennis, where we are told

that after his head was off, he picked it up and walked two thousand miles with it in his hand. Whereupon, some wit observed that he did not see any wonder in the man's walking two thousand miles, for all the difficulty lay in the first step. Just so, I see no difficulty in a man's getting all the way to heaven, if he can but take the first step, for all the miracle lies in that first step, the making the dead soul live, the melting of the adamant heart, the thawing of the northern ice, the bringing down of the proud look; this is the work, this is the difficulty; and if man can do that himself, verily, he can do the whole. But when God looketh upon men to save them, it is not because they cry to Him, for they never do and never will cry until the work of salvation is begun.

It does not appear that the pity of the passer-by was shown upon this child because of any *future service* which was expected of it. This child, it seems, was; nourished, clothed, luxuriously decorated; and yet, after all that, you will find it went astray from Him who had set His heart upon it. The Lord foresaw this, and yet loved that child notwithstanding. God knew that you and I, though He loved us when there was nothing good in us; after we were saved should still rebel. He knew that we had backsliding hearts. He knew that 'we should be unbelieving even to the end, but He loved us notwithstanding all. He did not love you because He foresaw you would be a preacher; nor you because He knew you would be a tract distributor; *nor you* because He knew that you would be an indefatigable Sunday-school teacher; He loved you although He knew that you would be ungrateful and unkind to Him; cold in your soul, worldly in your spirit.

“THE MOUNTAINS SHALL DROP' SWEET WINE.”

AMOS 9

THE promise seems to convey the idea of surprising ingatherings; and I think there is also the idea of *amazing rapidity*. How quickly the crops succeed each other. Between the harvest and the ploughing there is a season even in our country; in the East it is a longer period. But here you find that no sooner has the reaper ceased his work, or scarce has he ceased it, ere the ploughman follows at: his heels. This is a rapidity that is contrary to the, course of Nature; still it is quite consistent with grace. Our old Baptist churches in the country treat young converts with what they call[summering and wintering. Any young believer who wants to join the church in summer, must wail: till the winter, and he is put off from time to time, till it is sometimes five or six years before they admit him; they want to try him, and see whether he is fit to unite with such pious souls as they are. Indeed, among us all there is a tendency to imagine that conversion must be a slow work — that as the snail creeps slowly on its way, so must grace move very leisurely in the heart of man. We have come to believe that there is more true divinity in stagnant pools than in lightning flashes. We cannot believe for a moment in a quick method of traveling to the kingdom of heaven. Every man who goes there must go on crutches and limp all the way; but as for the swift beasts, as for the chariots whose axles are hot with speed, we do not quite understand and comprehend that.

Now, mark, here is a promise given of a revival, and when that revival shall be fulfilled this will be one of the signs of it — the marvelous growth in grace of those who are converted. The young convert shall that very day come forward to make a profession of his faith; perhaps before a week has passed over his head you will hear hi[m publicly defending the cause of Christ, and ere many months have gone you shall see him standing up to tell to others what God has done for his soul. There is no need that the pulse of the Church should for ever be so slow. The Lord can quicken her heart, so that her pulse shall throb as rapidly as the pulse of time itself; her floods shall be as the rushing of the Kishon when it swept the hosts of Sisera in its fury'. As the fire from heaven shall the Spirit rush from the

skies, and as the sacrifice which instantly blazed to heaven, so shall the church burn with holy and glorious ardor. She shall no longer drive heavily with her wheels torn away, but as the chariot of Jehu, the son of Nimshi, she shall devour the distance in her haste. That seems to me to be one of the promises of the text — the rapidity of the work of grace, so that: the plougher shall overtake the reaper.

God does not promise that there shall be fruitful crops without labor; but here we find mention made of ploughmen, reapers, treaders of grapes, and sowers of seed; and all these persons are girt with singular energy. The ploughman does not wait, because, saith he, the season has not yet come for him to plough, but seeing that God is blessing the land, he has his plough ready, and no sooner is one harvest shouted home than he is ready to plough again. And so with the sower; he has not to prepare his basket and to collect his seed; but while he hears the shouts of the vintage, he is ready to go out to work.

Now one sign of a true, revival, and indeed an essential part of it, is the increased activity of God's laborers. Why, time was when our ministers thought that preaching twice on Sunday was the hardest work: to which a man could be exposed. Poor souls, they' could not think of preaching on a week-day, or if there was once a lecture, they had bronchitis, were obliged to go to Jerusalem, and lay by, for they would soon be dead if they were to work too hard. I never' believed in the hard work of preaching yet. But the cry used to be, that our ministers were hardly done by, they were to be pampered and laid 'by', done up in velvet, and only to be brought out to do a little work occasionally, and then to be pitied when that work was done. I do not hear anything of that talk nowadays. I meet with my brethren in the ministry who are able to preach day after day, day' after day, and are not half so fatigued as they were; and I saw a brother minister who has been having meetings in his church every day, and the people have been so earnest that they will keep him very often from six o'clock in the evening till two in the morning. "Oh!" said one of the members, "our minister will kill himself." "Not he," said I, "that is the kind of work that will kill no man. It is preaching to a sleepy congregation that kills good ministers, but not preaching to earnest people." So when I saw him, his eyes were, sparkling, and I said to him, "Brother, you do not look like a man who is being killed." "Killed, my brother," said he, "why I am living twice as much as I did before; I was never so happy, never so hearty, never so well." Said he, "I sometimes lack my rest, and want my sleep, when my people keep

me up so late, but it will never hurt me; indeed," he said, "I should like to die of such a disease as that — the disease of being so greatly blessed." There was a specimen before me of the ploughman who overtook the reaper, — of one who sowed seed, who was treading on the heels of the men who were gathering in the vintage. And the like activity we have lived to see in the church of Christ. Did you ever know so much doing in the Christian world before? There are grey-headed men around me who have known the church of Christ sixty years, and I think they can bear me witness that they never knew such life, such vigor and activity, as there is at present. Everybody seems to have a mission, and everybody is doing it. There may be a great many sluggards, but they do not come across my path now. I used to be always kicking at them, and always being kicked for doing so. But now there is nothing to kick at — everyone is at work — Church of England, Independents, Methodists, and Baptists — there is not at single squadron that is behindhand; they have all their guns ready, and are standing shoulder to shoulder, ready to make a tremendous charge against the common enemy. This leads me to hope, since I see the activity of God's ploughmen and vine-dressers, that there is a great revival coming, — that God will bless us, and that right early.

A time of revival shall be followed by very extraordinary conversion. But, albeit that, in the time of revival, grace is put in extraordinary places, and singular individuals are converted, yet these are not a bit behind the usual converts; for if you notice, the text does not say, "the mountains shall drop wine" merely, but they "shall drop *sweet* wine." It does not say that the hills shall send forth little streams; but "*all the hills shall melt.*" When sinners, profligate and debauched persons, are converted to God, we say, "Well, it is a wonderful thing, but I do not suppose they will be very first-class Christians." The most wonderful thing is, that these are the best Christians alive; that the wine which God brings from the hills is sweet wine; that: when the hills do melt they *all* melt. The most extraordinary ministers of any time, have been most extraordinary sinners before conversion. We might never have had a John Bunyan, if it had not have been for the profanity of Elstow Green; we might never have heard of a John Newton, if it had not have been for his wickedness on shipboard. I mean he would not have known the depths of Satan, nor the trying experience, nor even the power of Divine grace, if he had not been suffered wildly to stray, and then wondrously to be brought back. These great sinners are not a whit behind those who have been trained under pious

influences, and so have been brought into the church. Always in revival you will find this to be the case, that the converts are not inferior to the best of the converts of ordinary seasons — that the Romanist, and the men who have never heard the Gospel, when they are converted, are as true in their faith, as hearty in their love, as accurate in their knowledge, and as zealous in their efforts, as the best of persons who have ever been brought to Christ. “*The mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.*”

God does not say *if men are willing*”; but He gives an absolute promise of a blessing. As much as to say, “[have the key of men's hearts; [can induce the ploughman to overtake the reaper; I am master of the soil — however hard and rocky it may be] can break it, and I can make it fruitful.” When God promises to bless; His church and to save sinners, He does not add, “If the sinners be willing to be saved.” No, great God! Thou ledest free will in sweet captivity’, and Thy free grace is all triumphant. Man *has* a free will, and God does not violate it; but the free will is sweetly bound with fetters of the Divine love till it becomes more free than it ever was before. The Lord, when He means to save sinners, does not stop to ask them whether they mean to be saved, but like a rushing mighty wind the Divine influence sweeps away every obstacle; the unwilling heart bends before the potent gale of grace, and sinners who would not yield are made to yield by God. I know this, if the Lord willed it, there is no man so desperately wicked that he would not be made now to seek for mercy; however infidel he might be, however rooted in his prejudices against the Gospel, Jehovah hath but to will it, and it is done. Into thy dark heart, O thou who hast never seen the light, would the light stream; if He did but say, “Let there be, light,” there would be light. Thou mayest bend thy fist and lift: up thy mouth against Jehovah; but He is thy Master yet — thy Master to destroy thee, if 'thou goest on in thy wickedness; but thy Master to save thee now, to change thy heart and turn thy will, as He turneth the rivers of water.

If it were not for this doctrine, I wonder where the :ministry would be. Old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon. The power of preaching is nought — it can do nothing in the conversion of men by itself; men are hardened, obdurate, indifferent; but the power of grace is greater than the power of ,eloquence or the power of earnestness, and once let that power be put forth, and what can stand against it? Divine Omnipotence is the doctrine .of a revival. We may not see it in ordinary days, by reason of the coldness of our hearts; but we *must* see it when these extraordinary works of grace are wrought. Have you never heard the Eastern fable of the

dervish, who wished to teach 'to a young prince the fact of the existence of a God? The fable hath it, that the young prince ,could not see any proof of the existence of a first cause; so the dervish brought a little plant and set it before him, and in his sight that little plant grew 'up, blossomed, brought forth fruit, and became a 'towering tree in an [tour. The young man lifted up his hands in wonder, and he said, "*God* must have done this." "Oh, but," said the teacher, "thou sayest God has done this because it is done in an hour; hath He not clone it when it is accomplished in twenty years?" It was the same work in both cases; it was only the rapidity that astonished his pupil. So when we see the church gradually built up and converted, we lose the sense, perhaps, of a present God; but when the Lord causes the tree suddenly to grow from a sapling to a strong, tall monarch of the forest, then we say, "This is God."

We are all blind and stupid in measure, and we want to see sometimes some of these quick upgoings, these extraordinary motions of Divine influence, before we will fully understand God's power. Learn, then, O church of God to-day, this great lesson of the nothingness of man, and the Eternal All of God. Learn, disciples of Jesus, to rest on Him: look for your success to *His* power, and while you make your efforts, trust not in your efforts, but in the Lord Jehovah. If ye have progressed slowly, give Him thanks for progress; but if now He pleases to give you a marvelous increase, multiply your songs, and sing unto Him who worketh all things according to the counsel of His will. The duty of the church is not to be measured by her success. It is as much the minister's duty to preach the Gospel in adverse times as in propitious seasons. We are not to think, if God withholds the dew, that we are to withhold the plough. We are not to imagine that, if unfruitful seasons come, we are therefore to cease from sowing our seed. Our business is with act, not with result. The church has to do her duty even though that duty should bring her no present reward. "If they' hear thee not, Son of man, if they perish they *shall* perish, but their blood will I not require at thine hands." If we sow the seed, and the birds of the air devour it, we have done what we were commanded to do, and the duty is accepted even though the birds devour the seed. We may expect to see a blessed result, but even if it did not come we must not cease from duty. But while this is true so far, it must nevertheless be a Divine and holy stimulant to a Gospel laborer, to know that God is making him successful. And in the present day we have a better prospect of success than we ever had, and we should consequently work the harder. When a

tradesman begins business with a little shop at the corner, he waits awhile to see whether he will have any customers. By-and-bye his little shop is crowded; he has a name; he finds he is; making money. What does he do? He enlarges his premises; the back yard is taken in and covered over; there are extra men employed; still the business increases, but he will not invest all his capital in it till he sees to what extent it will pay. It still increases, and the next house is taken, and perhaps the next: he says, "This is a paying concern, and therefore I will increase it."

I am using commercial maxims, but they are common sense rules. There are, in these days, happy opportunities. There is a noble business to be done for Christ. Where you used to invest a little capital, a little effort, and a little donation, invest more. There never was such heavy interest to be made as now. It shall be paid back in the' results cent per cent; nay, beyond all that you expected you shall see God's work prospering. If a farmer knew that a bad year was coming, he would perhaps only sow an acre or two; but if some prophet could tell him, "Farmer, there will be such a harvest next year as there never was," he would say, "I will plough up my grass lands, I will stub up those hedges; every inch of ground I will sow." So do you. There is a wondrous harvest coming. Plough up your headlands; root up your hedges; break up your fallow ground, and sow, even amongst the thorns. Ye know not which shall prosper, this or that; but ye may hope that they shall be alike good. Enlarged effort should always follow an increased hope of success. When revival comes, an instrumentality will still be wanted. The ploughman is wanted, even after the harvest, and the treader of grapes is wanted, however plentiful the vintage; the greater the success the more need of instrumentality. The ploughman shall never be so much esteemed as when he follows after the reaper, and the sower of seed never so much valued as when he comes at the heels of 'those who tread the grapes. The glory which God puts upon instrumentality should encourage you to use it.

THE PLOUGHMAN OVERTAKING THE REAPER.

“Behold, the days come, saith the -Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grasses him that soweth seed; and the mountain, shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.” Amos 9:13

GOD'S promises are not exhausted when they are fulfilled, for when once performed, they stand just as good as they did before, and we may await a second accomplishment of them. Man's promises',, even at the best:, are like a cistern which holds but a temporary supply; but God's promises are as a fountain, never emptied, ever overflowing, so that you may draw from them the whole of that which they apparently contain, and they shall be still as full as ever. Hence it is that you will frequently find a promise; containing both a literal and spiritual meaning. In the literal meaning it has already been fulfilled to the letter; in the: spiritual meaning it shall also be accomplished, and not a jot or tittle of it shall fail. This is true. of the particular promise which is before us. Originally, as you are aware, the land of Canaan was very fertile; it was a land that flowed with milk and honey. Even when no tillage had been exercised upon it, the land was so fruitful that the bees who sucked the sweetness from the wild flowers produced such masses of honey that the very woods were sometimes flooded with it. It was “A land of wheat:, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of o!l, olive and honey.” When, however, the children of Israel thrust in the ploughshare and began to use the divers arts of agriculture, the land became exceedingly fat and fertile, yielding so much corn, that they could export through the Phoenicians both corn, and wine, and oil, even 'to the pillars of Hercules, so that Palestine became, like Egypt, the granary of the nations. It is somewhat surprising to find that now the land :is barren, that its valleys are parched, and that the miserable inhabitants gather miserable harvests from the and soil. 'Yet the promise stands true, that one day in the very letter Palestine shall be as rich and fruitful as ever it was. There be those who understand the matter, who assert that if once the rigor of the Turkish rule could be removed, if men were safe from robbers, if the man who sowed could reap, and keel? the corn which his own industry had sown and gathered, the land might yet

again laugh in the midst of the nations, and become the joyous mother of children. There is; no reason *in the soil* for its barrenness. It is :simply the neglect that has been brought on, from the fact that when a man has been industrious, his savings are taken from him by the hand of rapine, and the very' harvest for which he toiled is often :reaped by another, and his own blood spilt upon the soil.

But, while this promise will doubtless be carried out, and every word of it shall be verified, so that the hilltops of that country shall again bear the vine, and the land shall flourish with wine, yet, I take it, this is more fully a spiritual than a temporal promise; and I think that the beginning of its fulfillment is now to be discerned, and we shall see the Lord's good hand upon us, so that the ploughman shall overtake the reaper, the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.

According to the mataphor here used, the harvest is; to be so great that,, before the reapers can have fully' gathered it in, the ploughman shall begin to plough. for the next: crop; while the abundance of fruit shall be so surprising, that before the treader of grapes can have trodden out all the juice of the vine, the time shall come for sowing seed. One season, by reason of the abundant fertility, shall run into another. Now' you know what this means in the church. It prophesies that in the church of Christ we shall see the most: abundant ingathering of souls. Pharaoh's dream has: been enacted again in the last century. About a hundred years ago, if I may look back in my dream, I might have seen seven ears of corn upon one stalk, rank and strong; anon, the time of plenty went away, and I have seen the seven ears of corn thin and withered in the east: wind. The seven ears of withered corn have eaten up and devoured the seven ears of fat corn, and there has been a sore famine in the land. Lo, I see in Whitefield's time, seven bullocks coming up from the river,, fat and well-favored, and since then we have lived to see seven lean kine come up from the same river; and lo! the seven lean kine have eaten up the :even fat kine, yet have they been none the better for all that they have eaten. We read of such marvelous revivals a hundred years ago, that the music of their news has not ceased to ring in our ears; but we have seen, alas, a season of lethargy, of soul-poverty among the saints, and of neglect among the ministers of God. The product of the seven years has been utterly consumed, and the church has been none. the better. Now, I take it, however, we are about to see the seven fat years again. God is about to send times of surprising fertility to His church. When a sermon has been preached in these modern times, if

one sinner has been converted by' it, we have rejoiced with a suspicious joy; for we have thought it something amazing. But where we have seen one converted, we may yet see hundreds; where the Word of God has been powerful to scores, it shall be blessed to thousands; and where, hundreds in past years have seen it, nations shall be converted to Christ. There is no reason why we should not see all the good that God hath given us multiplied a hundred-fold; for there is sufficient vigor in the seed of the Lord to produce a far more plentiful crop than any we have yet gathered. God the Holy Ghost is not stinted in His power. When the sower went forth to sow his seed, some of it fell on good[soil, and it brought forth fruit, some twenty-fold, some thirty-fold, but it is written, "*some a hundred-fold.*" Now we have been sowing this seed, and thanks be to God, I have seen it: bring forth twenty and thirty-fold; but I do expect to see it bring forth a hundred-fold. I do trust that our harvest shall be so heavy, that while we are taking in the harvest, it shall be time to sow again; that prayer meetings shall be succeeded by the inquiry of souls as to what they shall do to be saved, and ere the inquirers' meeting shall be done, it shall be time again to preach, again 'to pray; and then, ere that is over, there shall be again another influx of souls, the baptismal pool shall be again stirred, and hundreds of converted men shall flock to Christ.

HEALING BEAMS.

MALACHI 4

THE Sun of righteousness, when He rises on those that fear the Lord, gives them healing. There is healing in His wings. By the wings of the sun are meant the beams that shoot up from it into the air, or seem to slant down from it when it is aloft in the sky. There is really healing to men's bodies in the sun. Have we not seen them come to the sunny land consumptive, and doubled with weakness, and as they have sat in the sun and warmed themselves for a few weeks, the wound within the lung has begun to heal, and the consumptive man has breathed again, and you have seen that he would live. Some have gone thither who scarce could speak, and beneath the sun they began to speak again, like men whose youth has been renewed. The sun is the great physician. Where he enters not the physician will be needed, but where he shines men speedily revive. As for the Sun of Righteousness, oh, how He heals the sick! I would like sick Christians to sit in His sunlight by the year together, if you did nothing else but bask there, as animals delight to bask in the sun. The flowers know the sun, and they, turn their cups to him and drink in of the health he gives them from his golden store. Oh, that we had as much sense to know the Sun of Righteousness, that we might by prayer, and meditation, and holy living, bask and sun ourselves in His delicious beams! We shall be strong indeed if He rises upon us with healing in His wings. He has risen, but we wander into the shade: He has risen, but we get into the ice wells of worldliness and sin, and shut out His warmth, and then we wonder we are sick, but sick we always shall be, till we come out into the light again, and Jesus shines; on us from morn till eve.

"When the Sun of Righteousness shines the Christian gets his liberty. "Ye shall go forth." I have been staying where the invalid does not venture out if the wind blows, and if it is a little chill and the sun is not bright he must stay indoors or lose the benefit he has received; but when the sun is out and the air is calm, then he comes forth and leaves his bedroom, and is all alive once more. There are Christians who have been kept indoors a long time; they have not walked the length of the promise, nor spied out the breadth of the covenant, nor climbed to the top of Pisgah to gaze upon the landscape. If the Sun of Righteousness, even the Lord Jesus, shall shine

upon you, you will go forth not only to enjoy Christian life, but to enter into Christian service, and you will go further afield to bring others to Christ.

Then you will begin to grow'. That is another effect of the sun, and how wonderfully the sunlight makes things grow. Here we have in our hot-houses little plants that we think so wonderful that we show them to our friends, and put them on our tables as rarities, but I have seen them in the sunny south ten times as large growing in the open fields, because the sun has looked upon them. The rarities of our country are the common-places of the land of the sun. I have known Christians', who have received a little faith and been perfectly astonished at it, and God has blessed them with a little love to Jesus, and they have felt as though they were splendid saints; but if they lived in the sunlight: they might move mountains by their faith, and their love would lead them to devote their whole life to Jesus; and yet: they would not be astonished. The Sun of Righteousness can produce fruits rich and rare. Our cold, sunless land, beneath its cloud and fog, 'what can it yield in the winter? In more favored parts of the earth, even in our winter, the trees are golden with fruits. So is it with the soul. What can it grow if it lives in worldliness? What can it produce if it: lives to itself? But when it knows the love of Jesus and the power of His grace, even in its worst estate it brings forth the richest and the rarest fruit to the glory of His grace.

Live in the sunlight: get out of the shadows. There are dreary glens in this world where the sun never shines: they are called glens of pleasure, and sometimes the pale moon looks down on them with sickly ray; but the saint knows the light of the sun from the light of the world's moon. Get away from those: chill places :into the clearlight. "*But,*" says one," I did not know there were joys in religion." You do not: know true religion:, then, for it is "a thing of beauty, and a joy for ever." He who knows Christ has seen. the sun, but until he has known Him he has seen but: the glow-worm's glitter.

'THE SUN — THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

“But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings, and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.” Malachi 4:2.

THE Jews expected that the coming of the Messiah would exalt every one of the Israelitish race. Their expectations were great, but they were also carnal and sensuous, since they looked for an earthly king, who would make the despised nation victorious over all its enemies, and enrich every man of Abraham's race. The Scriptures gave them no ground, for such universal expectations, but quite the reverse, and the prophet explains that the coming of Christ would certainly be like the rising of the sun, full of glory and of brightness, but the results would not be the same to all. TO those who thought that they were righteous, and despised others, but who were wicked in their conversation, the rising of that sun would bring a burning, withering day. “The day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble.” They shall not be like plants full of sap that would flourish in the tropical heat, but like stubble, which becomes drier and drier, until it takes fire: “and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord, that it shall leave them neither root nor stock,” for so might it be translated, and then the figure would be, congruous throughout. It would scorch up the stubble-field in which there was no lite, so intense would be the heat. Now that was the consequence of Christ's coming. The religion of the Jews at His coming was dry and dead, like stubble. The Pharisee thought that he was righteous because he put on a broad phylactery, and tithed anise, and mint, and cummin, and such trifles; the Sadducee thought much of himself because he was a man of common sense, a 'thinker, a rationalist; and other sectaries of that period found equally frivolous grounds for glorying. The ministry of Christ dried them up, and they have ceased to be. We use the name of Pharisee and Sadducee to-day, but there is no person in the world who would like to wear either name.

The result of Christ's coming, by His Spirit as well as by His personal advent, is always much the same. Revival will not have an equally

beneficial effect upon all. To some the rising of this sun will bring healing and blessing, but to others it will bring scorching and withering. Know ye not that the summertide which fills the corn and makes it hang its golden head, blushing in very modesty for the blessing which has come upon it, fetches up also the noxious weeds from their secret lairs? Tares gather encouragement from the sun as well as doth the wheat, and so the bad come to their ripeness as well as the good; but the ripeness of that which is bad is only a hurrying on to destruction: the dryness of the stubble is the preparation for its being utterly consumed. We may well pray for revival, but we must not suppose that to the more formalist a revival will bring a blessing. It may possibly disgust him, and drive him from religion altogether. He will discover that he has no true religion, as he sees the work of the Spirit of God around him, and so the day of the Lord will to him "burn as an oven," and being proud and at the same time doing wickedly, his empty profession of religion will consume like the stubble.

The people of God sometimes fall into a condition which they deplore, and the Sun of Righteousness is to arise upon them; for this implies that they were in the dark until then. Whatever other light there may be, we every one of us know that until the sun rises our condition is one of comparative darkness. There are children of God who walk in darkness, dear children of God, too; indeed, I am inclined to think that every child of God gets into the dark sometimes. Some begin with brightness, and then they get a cloudy time in the middle of their experience, while others have their worst darkness at last. Knox and Luther had their sharpest temptations when they came to die. It has been well said that God sometimes puts His children to bed in the dark. It does not matter, for they wake up in the light, in the eternal morning; but a dark season usually happens to us somewhere between the new birth and heaven, perhaps to make the brightness all the brighter when the night shall be for ever ended. Are you in the dark at this moment, and are you wondering at it because everybody else seems so lively in their religion? Does it seem to you as if, though you have been a believer for years, you were never in a worse state than now, while others are rejoicing? Then ask yourself — Do you fear the Lord still? Is your soul humbled in the presence of His majesty, and have you a desire for His glory? Never despair; the Sun shall rise upon you soon.

Very clear it is, too, that the children of God may' sometimes be in ill-health, for the Sun of Righteousness is to arise upon them with healing in His wings; which would not be so needful a promise if they' were not sick.

A Christian may be bowed down with grievous spiritual maladies. His pulse may' beat slowly, his heart may become feeble; he may be alive, and that may be about all; lethargy may seize: him, palsy may make him tremble despondently, he: may have wandered from his God. Alas! even an: ague fit may be upon him, in which he shakes with unbelief from head to foot. It may be his eyes have, become so blinded that he cannot see afar off; and his ears may be dull of hearing, and he may be like: the fools in 'the psalm, whose souls abhorred all manner of meat. He may have put away from him the comforts of the promise, and he may be brought very low; yet he shall not die, but live, and proclaim the works of the Lord, for the soul sickness of a saint is not unto death. He shall be recovered from it, and he shall sing of the Lord whose name is "Jehovah Rophi, the Lord that healeth thee." Oh, child of God, if thou art in a sick and sorrowing state, cry mightily unto thy Lord, and the Sun of Righteousness shall arise upon thee with healing in His wings.

Note again, that the children of God may be in a condition of bondage, for when the Sun of Righteousness arises "they shall go forth as calves of the stall." Understand the figure. The calf in the stall is shut up, tied up with a halter at night, but when the sun rises the calf goes forth to the pasture; the young bullock is set free. So the child of God may be in bondage. The recollection of past sins and present unbelief may halter him up and keep him in the stall, but when the Lord reveals Himself he is set free. Even true children of God may sometimes have to cry like Paul that they are sold under sin; they may forget the blood of redemption for a season, and think themselves still to be slaves, and yet be the true children of God. Hence the beauty of the promise that they shall go forth.

The children of God may be in such a state that they are not growing, for else we should not have the promise, "Ye shall go forth and: grow up" when the Sun of Righteousness shall shine. Do you feel as if you had not grown in grace for months? You need the Sun of Righteousness to shine upon you, and you will grow as the plants do. The trees are all bare in winter, and their boughs apparently sear and dead, but: bring us the spring sun, and the buds will begin to swell, the leaves will appear, and the trees shall blossom and yield fruit. So shall it be with you. The Lord has not left you. You may have stayed in your growth awhile, but you shall grow again.

“The Sun of Righteousness shall arise.” Child of God in the dark:, in prison, ungrowing and unhappy, what a promise is here for you! “The Sun of Righteousness shall arise.” His. rising is to do it all, there is nothing for you to do, no works for you to perform in order to get the needed blessing. The Sun of Righteousness shall arise; now, the rising of the sun is one of the most wonderful things in Nature, not merely for its grandeur and beauty, but for its sublime display of strength. Who could hold back the horses of the sun? What hand could block the golden wheel of his chariot, or bid him stay his course? The time is come for him to rise, and lo, he delights the world with dawn. Holy Spirit, such is Thy power. When it is Thy time to work who can stand against Thee? As the sun floods the whole earth with his splendor, and no power can hinder his movements, so will the Holy Spirit work, and none can let Him. Plead ye then this promise, and cry, “O Sun of Righteousness, arise upon those that fear Thee: come now in all Thy majesty and wealth of grace: pour upon us Thy light and heat and life, and fill this place with Thy glory.”

Fear His name. May the Sun of Righteousness arise, and give you just such clearness and light!

PLANTS WHICH GOD HATH NOT PLANTED.

MATTHEW 15:13.

JESUS CHRIST had spoken certain truths which were highly objectionable to the Pharisees. Some of His loving disciples were in great fright, and they came to Him and said, "Knowest Thou not that the Pharisees are offended?" Now our Savior, instead of making any apology for having offended the Pharisees, took it as a matter of course, and replied in a sentence which is well worthy to be called a proverb, — "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." Now we have oftentimes, as Matthew Henry very tritely remarks, a number of good and affectionate but very weak hearers. They are always afraid that we shall offend other hearers. Hence, if the truth be spoken in a plain and pointed manner, and seems to come close home to the conscience, they think that surely it ought not to have been spoken, because So-and-so, and So-and-so), and So-and-so took offense at it. If we never offended, it would be proof positive that we did not preach the Gospel. They who can please man will find it quite another' thing to have pleased God. Do you suppose that men will love those who faithfully rebuke them? If you make the sinner's heart to groan, and waken his conscience, do you think he will pay you court and thank you for it? Nay, not so; in fact, this ought to be one aim of our ministry, not to offend, but to test men and make them offended with themselves, so that their hearts may be exposed to their own inspection. Their being offended will discover of what sort they are. A ministry that never' uproots will never water; a ministry that does :not pull down will never build up. He who knoweth not how to pluck up the plants which God hath not planted, scarcely understandeth how to be a worker of God in His vineyard. Our ministry ought always to be a killing as well as a healing one, — a ministry' which kills all false hopes, blights all wrong confidences:, and weeds out all foolish trusts, while at the same time it trains up the feeblest shoot of real hope, and tenders comfort and encouragement even to the weakest of the sincere followers of Christ.

Our Savior was thus led from the remark of His disciples to utter this memorable proverbial saying. If we understand it aright, it applies to every

doctrine and to every false system of religion. Whatever God hath not planted will be rooted up. As for heretical teachers, let them alone; they be blind leaders of the blind, and if the blind lead the blind they shall both fall into the ditch. Many good people are greatly concerned about the growth of papacy in England. They fear the day will come when papacy shall have quenched the light of Gospel grace. I trust you will not get nervous upon that point. It is of little consequence what men are, if they are not saved, if they are not brought to know the Lord. I do not know that it is a very important item what kind of religion they have if they have not got the true one. They may receive the awful doom of unbelievers in Christ, and enemies to the Gospel, as Romanists or Mahometans; or like too many in this land, being merely professing Christians who deceive themselves and others, they may incur the same wrath of God, and inherit the same condemnation. But do not think for a moment that the harlot of the Seven Hills will ever prevail against the bride of Christ. Not she. The Lord will by-and-bye, when her iniquity shall be full, utterly destroy her. Only be sure in your heart that God has not planted it, and you may be equally sure that He will pluck it up. Prophets may plant it with their pretended revelations, martyrs may water it with their blood, confessor after confessor may defend it with his learning and with his courage, time may endear it, literature may protect it, and kings may keep guard about it, but He that ruleth in the heavens, and careth nought for human might, shall certainly grasp its trunk, and, pulling it up, even though it be strong as a cedar, shall hurl it into the fire, because He hath not planted it. Yes, every hoary system of superstition, every ancient form of idolatry, every venerable species of will-worship, shall be certainly overturned, as God is true. Leave them alone; be not over anxious.

The Greek word not only signifies plants — for you know we are in the habit of calling a thing a plant which grows in the woods — but the Greek word has nicer discrimination. As Tyndal very well remarks, it is not merely a plant, but a root that has been designedly put into the ground and taken care of. We must not only be comparable to living plants; but we must be comparable to those which come under the Gardener's care, which are planted in the soil, tended by His skill, and looked upon with interest as being His own. Now, there are: many professors who are like wild plants; they were never planted by any servant of God, much less by God Himself. They are thorns and briars; they bring forth wild fruits, noxious, bitter, poisonous, acrid, and deadly to the taste of the passer-by. They grow in

abundance. London is like: some wild heath that is covered with its ferns and gorse, and even with something worse than these — wild plants that spring up spontaneously. Now, these will have to be rooted up. When the day comes for God to clear His commons, there will be a blaze indeed, when He shall say, “Gather them together in bundles to burn; but gather the wheat Into My garner.” The drunkard, the swearer, the adulterer; those who live by cheating and robbing their neighbors; those who never darken the walls of God's sanctuary; those to whom the Sunday is the busiest day in the week; those who are without God and without hope, and without Christ, these we may call self-sown plants, uncared for, untutored, and must be rooted up, for He will say, “Gather out of My kingdom all things that offend, and they that do iniquity.”

Some of those plants that God never did plant are very *beautiful*. If you go into the fields, there are many plants that grow there that are quite as lovely as those in the garden. Look at the foxglove and the dog rose; look at many of the blossoms we pass by ;as insignificant, they are really beautiful; but they are not plants that have ever been planted. Now, how many we have in our congregation who are really beautiful; yet they are none of God's planting — men and women whose character is upright, whose manners are, amiable, whose life is irreproachable. They are not immoral, they neither cheat nor lie; but they are exemplary; their disposition is kind, tender-hearted, and affectionate. But there must be something more than this, for Jesus says, “Every plant which My heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up.” Though it be a lovely plant, though it seems to be a fair flower externally, yet since the root of it hath sucked its nourishment out of the wild wastes of sin, whether of infidelity or lawlessness, it is evil in the eye of God, and it must be plucked up.

Further, how many there are of our wild wood plants that even bring forth fruit. The schoolboy in the country can tell us that the wood is an orchard, and that often he has had many a luscious meal from those wild fruits that grew there. Yet, though the birds may come and satisfy their hunger from these wild fruits, and though the seeds may be in the winter the sparrow's garner, and the linnets storehouse, yet they are not planted, and they do not come under the description of plants that have been planted. So, too, there may be some who really do some good in the world. Without you a mother's wants might not be provided for; from your table many of the poor are fed. This is good; I would that all of you did more of it, but remember that this, is not enough; there must be God's planting in you, or

else the fruits you bring forth will be selfish fruits. You will be like Israel, who was denounced as being an empty vine, because, forsooth, he brought forth fruit unto himself. Charity is good. Noble charity, be thou honored among men! But there must be faith, and if we have no faith in Christ, though we give our bodies to be burned, and bestow our goods to feed the poor, yet where Christ is, we certainly can never come.

Many of those wild plants have very strong roots. If you were to go and try to dig them up, you would have a task before you not easily accomplished. Look at the wild dock: did you seek to pull it up? Piece after piece it breaks away, and you have to send some sharp instrument deep into the soil before you can root it out, and even then, if there be but a piece left, it springs up and thrives again. Oh, how many there are who have as much tenacity of life in their false confidence, as there is in the dock — in its root some cannot shake. “I never have a doubt,” said one, “I never had a doubt or a misgiving.” You remember Robert Hall said, “Allow me to doubt for you, sir,” because he knew the man to be an ill-liver. And so some are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men; they speak with an air of satisfaction; their language sounds like assurance, but it is presumption; it looks like confidence: in Christ, but it is confidence in themselves. And such will strike their roots very deep, and they will be: very strong indeed, so that you cannot shake them; yet, alas for them! they are not plants of the Lord's right-hand planting, and therefore the sentence is; passed; and ere long it shall be executed without: pity — they shall be rooted up.

GRAIN OF MUSTARD SEED... GREW, AND WAXED A GREAT TREE.”

LUKE 13:19.

THE parable may be understood to relate to our Lord Himself, who is the living Seed. You know also how His church is the tree that springs from Him, and how greatly it grows and spreads its branches until it covers the earth. From the one man Christ .Jesus, despised and rejected of men, slain and buried, and so hidden away from among men — from Him, I say, there ariseth a multitude which no man can number. These spread themselves, like some tree · which grows by the rivers of water, and they yielded both gracious sheller and spiritual food. A great little parable, it has a word of teaching within the smallest compass. The parable is itself like a grain of mustard seed, but its meanings are as a great tree.

“It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took.” *He took it:* that is to say, picked it out from the, bulk. It was only one grain, and a grain of a very insignificant seed; but he ,did not let it lie on the shelf, he took it in his hand to put it to its proper use. A grain of mustard seed is too small a thing for public exhibition; the man who :takes it in his hand is almost the only one who spies it out. It was only a grain of mustard seed, but the :man set it before his own mind as a distinct object to be dealt with. He was not sowing mustard over broad acres, but he was sowing “a grain of mustard seed” in his garden. It is well for the teacher to know what he is going 'to teach; to have that truth distinctly in his mind's eye, as the man had the grain of mustard seed between his fingers. Depend upon it, unless a truth is clearly seen and distinctly recognized by the teacher, little will come, of it to the taught. It may be a very simple truth; but if a man takes it, understands it, grasps it and loves it, he will do something with it.

This man *had a garden:* “Like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden.” Some Christian people have no garden — no persona; sphere of service. They belong to the whole clan of Christians, and they pine to see the entire band go out to cultivate the whole world;

but they do not come to personal particulars. It is delightful to be warmed up by missionary addresses, and to feel a zeal for the salvation of all the nations; but, ;after all:, the net result of a general theoretic earnestness for all the world does not amount to much. As we should have no horticulture if men had no gardens, so we shall have no missionary work done unless; each person has a mission. It is the duty of every believer in Christ, like the first mart, Adam, to have a garden to dress and to till. Children are in the Sunday-schools by millions: thank God for that! But have *you* a class of your own? All the church at work for Christ! Glorious theory! Are *you* up and doing for your Lord? It will be a grand time when every believer has his allotment, and is sowing it with the seed of truth. The wilderness and the solitary place will blossom as the rose when each Christian cultivates his own plot of roses.

Where should this unnamed man sow his mustard seed but in his own garden? It was near him, and dear to him, and thither he went. Teach your own children, speak to your neighbors, seek the conversion of those whom God has especially entrusted to you.

Having a garden, and having this seed, *the man sowed it:* and simple as this is, it is the hinge of the instruction. You have a number of seeds in a pillbox. There they are, look at them! Take that box down this clay twelve months, and the seeds will be just the same. Lay them by in that dry box for seven years, and nothing will happen. Truth is not to be kept to ourselves: it is to be published and advocated. There is an old proverb, "Truth is mighty, and will prevail." The proverb is true in a sense; but it needs to be taken with a grain of salt. If you put truth away, and leave it without a voice, it 'won't prevail; it will not even contend. When have great truths prevailed? Why, when brave men have persisted in declaring 'them. Daring spirits have taken up a cause which has been, at the first, unpopular, and they have spoken about it so earnestly, and so often, that at length the cause has commanded attention: they have pressed on and on till the cause has triumphed altogether. Truth has been mighty, and has prevailed; but yet not without the men who gave it life and tongue. Not even the Gospel itself, if it be not taught, will prevail. If revealed truth be laid on one side and kept in silence, it will not grow. Mark how, through the Dark Ages, the Gospel lay asleep in old books in the libraries of monasteries, till Luther and his fellow reformers fetched it out and sowed it in the minds of men.

This man simply cast it into his garden. He did not wrap it round with gold leaf, or otherwise adorn it; but he put it into the ground. The naked seed came into contact with the naked soil. Do not try to make the Gospel look fine; do not overlay it with your fine words, or elaborate explanations. The Gospel seed is to be put into, the young heart just as it is. Get the truth concerning the Lord Jesus into the children's minds. Make them know not what you can say about the truth, but what the truth itself says. It is wicked to take the Gospel and make a peg of it: to hang our old clothes upon. The Gospel is not a boat to be freighted with human thoughts, fine speculations, scraps of poetry, and pretty tales. No, no, the Gospel is the thought of God: in and of itself it is the message which the soul needs. It is the Gospel itself which will grow. Take a truth, specially that: great doctrine, that man is lost and that Christ is the only Savior, and see to it that you place it in the mind. Teach plainly the, great truth that whosoever believeth in Him hath everlasting life; and that: the Lord Jesus bare our sins in His own body on the tree, and suffered for us, the just for the unjust — I say take these truths and set them forth to the mind, and see what will come of it. Sow the very truth; not: your reflections .on the truth, not your embellishments of the truth, but the truth itself. This is to be brought: into contact with the mind; for the truth is the seed,. and the human mind is the soil for it to grow in.

It is an easy thing to deliver an address upon, mustard seed, to give the children a taste of the pungency or' mustard, to tell them how mustard seed would grow, what kind of a tree it would produce, and how the birds would sing among its branches. But this is not sowing mustard seed. It is all very fine to talk about the influence of the Gospel, the ethics of Christianity, the elevating power of the love of Christ, and so on; but what we want is the Gospel itself, which exercises that influence. Sow the seed: tell the children the doctrine of the Cross, the fact that with the stripes of Jesus we are healed, and that by faith in Him we are justified.

That which is described in the parable was an insignificant business: the man took the tiny seed and put it into his garden. It is a very commonplace affair to sit down with a dozen children around you, and open your Bible and tell them the well-worn tale of how Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. No Pharisee is likely to stand and blow a trumpet when he is going to teach Children: he is more likely to point to the children in the temple, and sneeringly say, "Hearest thou what these say?" It is a lowly business altogether: but yet to the mustard seed, and to the

man with a garden, the sowing is the all-important matter. The mustard seed will never grow unless put into the soil the owner of the garden will never have a crop. of mustard unless he sows the seed. Dear Sunday-school teacher, do not become weary of your humble work, for none can measure its importance.

“AS SMALL AS MUSTARD SEED.”

WE have seen that he sowed: what did he sow? It was one single seed, and that seed a very small one; so very, very small, that the Jews were accustomed to say, “As small as mustard seed.” Hence the Savior speaks of it as the smallest among seeds; which it may not have been absolutely, but which it was according to common parlance; and our Lord was not teaching botany, but speaking a popular parable. Yes, the Gospel seems a very simple thing: Believe and live! Look to Jesus dying in the sinner's stead! Look to Jesus crucified, even as Israel looked to the brazen serpent lifted up upon a pole. It is simplicity itself: in fact the Gospel is so plain a matter that our superior people are weary of it, and look out for something more difficult of comprehension.

But the seed, though very small, was a *living thing*. There is a great difference between a mustard seed and a piece of wax of the same size. Life slumbers in that seed. What life is we: cannot tell. Even if you take a microscope you cannot spy it out. It is a mystery: but it is essential to a seed. The Gospel has a something in it not readily discoverable by the philosophical inquirer, if, indeed, he can perceive it at all. Take a maxim of Socrates or of Plato, and inquire whether a nation or a tribe has ever been transformed by it from barbarism to culture. A maxim of a philosopher may have measurably influenced a man in some right direction; but who has ever heard of a man's whole character being transformed by any observation of Confucius or Socrates? I confess I never have. Human teachings are barren. But within the Gospel, with all its triteness and simplicity, there is; a divine life, and that life makes all the difference. The human can never rival the divine, for it lacks the', life-fire. It is better to preach five words of God's Word than five million words of man's wisdom. Men's words may seem to be the wiser and the more attractive, but there is no heavenly life in them. Within God's Word, however simple it may be, there dwells an omnipotence like that of God, from whose lips it came.

A seed is a very comprehensive thing. Within the mustard seed what is to be found? Why, there is all in it that ever comes out of it. It must be so. Every branch, and every leaf, and every flower, and every seed that is to

be, is, in its essence, all within the seed: it needs to be developed; but it is all there. And so, 'within the simple Gospel, how much lies concentrated? Look at it! Within that truth lie regeneration, repentance, faith, holiness, zeal, consecration, perfection. Heaven hides itself away within the Gospel. Like a young bird in its nest, glory dwells in grace. We may not at first see all its results, nor, indeed, shall we see them at all, till we sow the seed and it grows; but yet it is all there.

And for this reason it is so wonderful: *it is a divine creation*. Summon your chemists: bring them together with all their vessels and their fires. Select a jury of the greatest chemists now alive, analytical or otherwise, as you will. Learned sirs, will you kindly make us a mustard seed? You may take a mustard seed, and pound it, and analyze it, and you may thus ascertain all its ingredients.. So far so good. Is not your work well begun? Now make a single mustard seed. We will give you a week. It is a very small affair. You have all the elements of mustard in yonder mortar. Make us one living grain: we do not ask for a ton weight. One grain of mustard seed will suffice us. Great chemists, have you not made so small a thing? A month has gone by. Only one grain of mustard seed we asked of you, and where is it? Have you not made one in a month? What are you at? Shall we allow you seven years? Yes, with all the laboratories in the kingdom at your service, and all known substances for your material, and all the world's coal-beds for your fuel, get to your work. The air is black with your smoke, and the streams run foul with *your* waste products; but where is the mustard seed? This baffles the wise men: they cannot make a living seed. No; and nobody can make a Gospel, or even a new Gospel text. The thinkers of the age could not even concoct another life of Christ to match with the four Gospels which we have already.

I go further: they could not create a new incident which would be congruous with the facts we already know. Plenty of novel writers nowadays can beat out imaginary histories upon their anvils: let them write a fifth Gospel — say the Gospel according to Peter, or Andrew. Let us have it! They will not even commence the task. Who will write a new Psalm, or even a new promise? Clever chemists prove their wisdom by saying at once, “No, we cannot make a mustard seed “; and wise thinkers will equally confess that they cannot make another Gospel. My learned brethren are trying very hard to make a new Gospel for this nineteenth century; but you teachers had better go on with the old one. The advanced men cannot put life into their theory. This living Word is the finger of God.

That simple grain of mustard seed must be made by God, or not at all; and He must put life into the Gospel, or it will not have power in the heart. The Gospel of Sunday-school teachers, that Gospel of "Believe and live," however men may despise it, has God-given life in it. You cannot make another which can supplant it; for you cannot put life into your invention. Go on and use the one living truth with your children, for nothing else has God's :life in it.

To sow a mustard seed is. a very inexpensive act. Only one grain of mustard: nobody can find me a coin small enough to express its value. I do not know how much mustard seed the man had; certainly it is not a rare thing; but he only took one grain of it, and cast it into his garden. He emptied no exchequer by that expenditure; and this is one of the excellencies of Sabbath-school work, that it neither exhausts the church of men nor of money. However much of it is done, it does not lessen the resources of our Zion: it is done freely, quietly, without excitement, without sacrifice of life; and yet what a fountain of blessing it is!

Still, it was an act of faith. It is always an act of faith to sow seed; because you have, for the time, to give it up, and receive nothing in return. The farmer takes his choice seed-corn, and throws it into the soil of his field. He might haw: made many a loaf of bread with it; but]he casts; it away. Only his faith saves him from being judged a maniac: he expects it to return to him fifty-fold. If you had never seen a harvest, you would think that a man burying good wheat under the clods had gone mad; and if you had never seen conversions, it might seem an absurd thing to be constantly teaching to boys and girls the story of the Man who was nailed to the tree. We preach and teach as a work of faith; and, remember, it: is only as an act of faith that it will answer its purpose. The rule of the harvest is, "*According to thy faith, be it unto thee.*"

It seems to me that our Lord selected the mustard seed in this; parable, not because its results are the greatest possible from a seed — for an oak or a cedar are much greater growths than a mustard tree — but He selected it because it is the greatest result as compared with the size of the seed.

"It grew." That was what the sower hoped would come of it: he placed the seed in the ground, hoping that it would grow. It is not reasonable to suppose that he would have :sown it if he had not hoped that it would spring up. Do you always sow in hope, do you trust that the Word will live and grow? If you do not, I do not think your success is very probable.

Expect the truth to take root, and expand and grow up. Teach divine truth with earnestness, and expect that the life within it will unveil its wonders.

But though the sower expected growth, he could not himself have made it grow. After he had placed the seed in the ground, he could water it, he could pray God to make the sun shine on it; but he could not directly produce growth. Only He who made the: seed could cause it to grow. Growth is a continuance, of that almighty act by which life is at first given. The putting of life into the seed is God's work, and the bringing forth of the life from the seed is God's work too. This is a matter within your hope, but far beyond yore: power.

A PLACE CALLED GETHSEMANE.”

It is a part of the teaching of Holy Writ that man is a composite being; this nature being divisible into three parts — “spirit,” “soul,” and “*body*.” I am not going to draw any nice distinctions between the spirit and the soul, or to analyze the connecting link between our immaterial life and consciousness and the physical condition of our nature and the materialism of the world around us. Suffice it to say, that whenever our vital organization is; mentioned, this triple constitution is pretty sure to be referred to. If you notice it carefully, you will see in our Savior sufferings on our behalf that the passion extended to His spirit, soul, and body; for although at the last extremity upon the cross it were hard to tell in which respect He suffered most, all three being strained to the utmost, yet it is certain there were three distinct conflicts in accordance with this threefold endowment .of humanity.

The first part of our Lord's dolorous pain fell upon His Spirit. This took place at the table, in that upper chamber where He ate the Passover with His disciples. Those who have read the narrative attentively, will have noticed these remarkable words in the thirteenth chapter of John and the twenty-first verse: “*When* Jesus had thus said, He was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me.” Of that silent conflict in the Savior's heart whilst He was sitting at table no one was a spectator. Into any man's spiritual apprehensions it were beyond the power of any other creature to penetrate; how much less into the spiritual conflicts of the man Christ Jesus! No one could by any possibility have gazed upon these veiled mysteries. He seems to have sat there for a time like one in the deepest abstraction. He fought a mighty battle within Himself. When Judas rose and went out it may have been a relief. The Savior gave out a hymn as if to celebrate His conflict; then, rising up, He went forth to the Mount of Olives. His discourse with His disciples there is recorded in that wonderful chapter, the fifteenth of John, so full of holy triumph, beginning thus, “I am the true vine.” He went to the agony in the same joyous spirit like a conqueror, and oh! how He prayed! That famous prayer, what a profound study it is for us! It ought, properly, to be called “The Lord's Prayer.” The manner and the matter are

alike impressive. “These words spake Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee.” He seems to have been chanting a melodious paean just then at the thought that His first battle had been fought, that His spirit, which had been troubled, had risen superior to the conflict, and that He was already victorious in the first of the three terrible struggles. As soon as this had occurred there came another hour, and with it the power of darkness, in which not so much the spirit as the soul of our blessed JLord was to sustain the shock of the encounter. This took place in the garden. You know that after He had come forth triumphant in this death-struggle, He went to the conflict more expressly in His body, undergoing in His physical nature the scourging, and the spitting, and the crucifixion; although in that third case there was a grief of spirit and an anguish of soul likewise, which mingled their tributary streams. Meditate upon each separately, according to the time and the circumstance in which the pre-eminence of any one of these is distinctly adverted to.

This second conflict well deserves our most reverent attention. I think it has been much misunderstood. Possibly a few thoughts may be given which shall clear away the mist from our understanding, and open some of the mystery. It seems to me that the agony in the garden was a repetition of the temptation in the wilderness. These two contests with the prince of darkness have many points of exact correspondence. If carefully pondered, there is a singular and striking connection between the triple temptation and the triple prayer. Having fought Satan at the first in the wilderness, on the threshold of His public: ministry, our Lord now finds him at the last in the garden as He nears the termination of His mediatorial work on the earth. Keep in mind that it is the *soul* of Jesus of which we now have to speak.

Jesus went to the GARDEN, there to endure the conflict, because it was the place of meditation. It seemed fit that His mental conflict should be carried on in the place where man is most at home in the pensive musings of his mind —

“The garden contemplation suits.”

As Jesus had been accustomed to indulge Himself with midnight reveries in the midst of those olive groves, He fitly chooses a place sacred to the studies of the mind to be the place memorable for the struggles of His soul

*“In a garden man became
Heir of endless death and pain.”*

It was there the first: Adam fell, and it was meet that there

*“The Second Adam should restore
The ruins of the first.”*

SEEN WITH CHRIST IN THE GARDEN.

JOHN 18

THE question is, "Did not *I see thee* in the garden with Him?" We did not want to be observed: we were far from courting observation. There are some of the Lord's people who would like to go to heaven without being seen with the Lord Jesus in the streets by daylight. They would be saved, and yet never be seen with their Savior. I do not think that the sin of this age, with most Christians, is obtrusiveness; far more likely it is unholy fear. Some think it: modesty; but I question whether this is its real name. I will not call it cowardice, but I will take their own expression, and call it backwardness. They say they are of a "retiring" disposition, which I interpret in a way very little to their credit. I have heard of a soldier who was of a very "retiring" disposition when the battle was on, and he retired with great diligence as soon as the first shots were fired. I think I heard that he was hung up as a deserter and a coward. No good comes of a retiring disposition of that kind. We have that sort of "retiring" person with us nowadays, but such people will have to answer for it when the Lord denies those who denied Him.

Without desiring to be known, you that have been with Christ have been found out; you have been seen in the garden with your Lord, by *those associated in family life with you*. They were not long before they discovered that you were a Christian. A man who carries in his hand otto of roses will soon be known to bear it by the perfume which is scattered abroad. He that has grace in his heart needs not to advertise it; it will advertise itself. Mother finds out that there is something very different in John from what there used to be. Sister Jane finds out that Mary seems quite altered from what she, used to be. Father discovers that mother is so different from what she was a little while ago. Like water in a leaking vessel, religion oozes out. Love to Jesus is sure to be found out. Believe me, your friends know that you follow Jesus. They have known it long, and they will yet say to you, "Did not I see thee in the garden with Him?" You were observed at private prayer. You were noticed reading the Scriptures. At first you blushed to find it commended, or to find it blamed; you do not

do so now, for you are aware that everybody knows it. If you have not been found out, I should think you have no grace to spare, for even a little true religion is spied out in these days.

And you have been found out *by certain curious people who are always prying about*. We do not admire them, but we can never get rid of them — certain persons from whom no secret can ever be hid. They seem to know things by instinct, and they tell them by compulsion, whispering them with the preface that nobody must repeat what they say, though they themselves take license to communicate the secret to everybody they meet. These tattlers soon find out that a man is a Christian, and they speedily spread the intelligence, not always with pleasure — in some instances with malicious sarcasm. They ferret out the fact of your change, and[when they see you, they sneeringly ask:, “Did not I see thee in the garden with Him?”

Especially will this be: known *to those who are affected by our procedure*. The gentleman whose ear had been cut off knew Peter. So did his kinsman, who, to his alarm, saw a sword come so very close to his kinsman's skull. He recognized Peter at once; and no wonder. It was only by the flash of one of those torches that he caught a glimpse of the disciple with the sword; but, as; Peter cut off that man's cousin's ear, the impression made was :particularly vivid. So, if you begin to talk about Christ to people, if you ask theta whether they are saved, some of them will thank you for your holy anxiety; but others, who choose to feel annoyed, will judge that you wantonly tread upon their corns, and they will feel that you have assaulted them. Deal faithfully, with their :souls, and they will photograph your portrait on the sensitive plate of a very angry nature. They do not want to see you any more. They “fight shy” of you, and so on; for they judge you to be very rude: and personal. I hope that you will always have a little company of friends who will remember you by reason of their smarting ears. I do not invite you to cut their ears off; quite the reverse: rather heal their ears with a touch of Christ's golden ointment; but at the same time, make their ears to tingle with your warnings and entreaties, Tell them about Christ crucified; and then the next time they see you, they will say, “That is the man who spoke to me about my sin and my Savior.” Be recognized because of the earnestness of your concern for the salvation of others.

As we have been in the garden with Jesus, and we have been *seen* there, we are now the subjects of very high expectations; that is to say, people

expect a great deal from those who are known to be associated with Jesus. *They are very unreasonable sometimes*, and expect far more than they are warranted in looking for, and consequently much more than they will ever get. I have known some expect young Christians, who have just come to Christ, to be perfect — to know everything, to be able to preach a sermon, pray in public, give a five-pound note, and listen patiently to all the nonsense everybody chooses to talk. Well, they may expect what they like; but they will not get unreasonable things. Should we expect from another what we cannot render ourselves? In these days they expect a man to do everything, and then to attempt more. When you have toiled from morning to night, and laid yourself out in your Master's service — time, talents, substance, every-things — somebody will snarl because you cannot do what he demands of you. The mercy is that we are not the servants of man: we are the servants of God; and if we please our Master, that is quite enough for us. One master is enough for the best of servants. If we are popular in heaven, we may wisely be indifferent to the judgments of men.

You see the world expects a good deal of us, and when the world does not get it, the question may be very properly put to us; “*Did not I see thee in the garden with Him? :*” It is a salutary thing for a man to know that his inconsistency is observed. Then he begins to see himself as others see him. It is very painful, very disagreeable; but, at the same time, very likely to bless the man. A man is apt to get a little angry about it; but it is a good thing for him to know how his conduct strikes other people. I have read of an old lady who gazed into a looking-glass, and remarked that they did not make good mirrors nowadays, for those which she used to look into, fifty years ago, showed her quite different from what she now was. The looking-glasses were very inferior in these times. When the world observes that your character is inconsistent, it may be that it is a truthful looking-glass, although it does not exhibit your beauties, but shows up your wrinkles and blotches. Do not quarrel with the looking-glass, but quarrel with your own self. Depend upon it; you are disfigured with spots which you need to get rid of. When convicted by your conscience of an inconsistency, even though the conviction comes to you through an unkind, ungenerous remark of a wicked man, yet still take the lesson home, and go to God for grace and forgiveness, and begin again. A very plain-spoken enemy may do us ten times more service than an indulgent friend.

Such a question as this should effectually recall us to holiness — to deep repentance of the past, and to strong resolves for the future. I will imagine

that a certain Christian man has come to town for a holiday, and during the season of his holiday in London, he is asked by a friend to go to a questionable place of amusement. I will imagine that he yields to the invitation and goes; though I am sorry even to imagine such a thing. Well, he has gone where he should not have gone; and I should like some venerable minister, some saint of God, to meet him in the street as he comes out, and say to him, "Did not I see thee in the garden with Him?" What a rebuke! How it would cut him to the heart! I have heard that even professing Christians, when they go over to Paris, will go where they ought not to go; and they have pleaded, as an excuse, that they wanted to see the manners and customs of the Continent. To put it in plain English, they want to join in with the manners and customs of the devil. You have no more right to go into wrong places in Paris than in London. I should quite as soon be seen in a theater or a music-hall in London as in Paris; indeed, I am told that our home production is by far the safer of the two. You have no right to go anywhere where you are ashamed to be seen by Christian people, or by the whole world. We are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses in heaven and in hell, and we should mind how we act. Take that to yourself, if you have crept into the devil's dominions on the sly. Someone will catch you there, and say, "Did not I see thee in the garden with Him?"

And if you are ever tempted to conceal your religion, then I hope that this question will come whistling in your ears, "Did not I see thee in the garden with Him?" I have sometimes been obliged to a wicked world for what it has done to inconsistent professors of religion. I remember a young man, in my early pastorate, going to a certain place of doubtful fame, and in the midst of a dance, somebody cried out, "That is one of Spurgeon's people. Fling him out of the window." And out he went. I felt grateful for that act of discipline from the adversary. I wish that they, would fling out of the window all who dare come in among the people of God while their hearts are with the world and its evil pleasures. Those who were gathered in that assembly felt that they did not want the company of a downright hypocrite, and so they put him out of their synagogue. If you should ever be found in "gay company," or even in respectable company where evangelical doctrine is at a discount, I hope you will have things made uncomfortable for you. If you hold your tongue and are quiet, and try to be one of the clan, where Jesus is dishonored, I hope this question will fall into your ear like a drop of burning lava, "Did not I see thee in the garden with Him?" Stand up for your Master in all companies and in all places, or else renounce His service.

“Did not I see thee in the garden with Him?” I should like to be welcomed with that question as I enter the skies at the last. I should not object to have that spoken to me by some bright spirit as I pass through the pearly gates: “Did not I see thee in the garden with Him? Yes, bright seraph, you may have seen me; and now you see that He casts not off His poor friend in the day of His glory.” The angel of the Lord saw you when you repented, he spied you out in that little room where you wept alone because of sin. Upstairs in the solitary chamber, where you told the Lord how father and mother were opposed to you, and yet you meant to follow the Lamb in all the ways of service and obedience, you were “seen of angels.” Beloved, the brave adherence of the least of our Lord's disciples is seen, known, and remembered in heavenly places. In the last great day you that have been with Christ here, and trusted Him amid the clouds, and the darkness, and the derision, shall see Him, and reign with Him, and He shall acknowledge you as His, since you were in the garden with Him in the day of His humiliation.

ON DANGEROUS GROUND.

JOHN 18:25.

PETER was on dangerous ground. When his Master was being buffeted, he was trying to make himself comfortable. We read of the high priest's servants that they warmed themselves, and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself. He stood with them, and they were rough servants of ill masters. He was in bad company, and he was a man who could not afford to be in bad company; for he was so impulsive, and so easily provoked to rash actions.

The Holy Spirit having notified us once that Peter was on unsafe ground, in the words "Peter stood with them and warmed himself," specially observes that he remained there, which was worse still. Any man may inadvertently stumble upon a boggy piece of ground: but if he be a wise man, he will make all speed that he may soon pass it, and be on sound soil again. He does ill to linger upon a quagmire, for thus he toys with danger, and courts destruction. The Holy Ghost has recorded it further on, in the twenty-fifth verse, a second time, "Simon Peter stood and warmed himself." Take heed of abiding in the place of danger. Thou mayest be called in providence to go through the: Campagna when it reeks with miasma; but thou art not called to live there. If thou hast to cross a sea, cross it; but do not try to cast anchor in mid-ocean, and thus keep thy ship continually amid the billows. Where there is peril there should be a prudent haste. Quick! Pilgrim be quick, and tarry not in the place of danger! The enchanted ground may lie on the road to the Celestial City, and therefore it may be thy duty to traverse it with anxious speed; but if thou sit down in it — if thou take thy rest in any of the arbors there provided by the evil prince, thou mayest sleep thyself into no end of misery. Linger no longer in the wilderness than you are forced to do: hurry through the enemy's country, and rest not till you are in Immanuel's Land.

Voluntary continuance on evil ground leads to repeated temptations. First the maid, then several men, and last of all this kinsman of the man whom he had wounded, began to try Peter in the high priest's hall. They put to him questions which led him to deny that he ever was a disciple of the Prophet of Galilee. The longer you stop in an evil place, the more numerous will

your temptations become. Temptations are like flies: they come one or two at the first, but by-and-by they buzz about you in swarms. When the deadly arrows from Satan's bow fly in such showers, it ill becomes you to be at ease.

While you tarry on dangerous ground your weakness increases. Peter, who might at first have owned his Master, did not do it, but denied Him. Having once denied Him, it was almost inevitable that he should do the same again; and so, again and again, he said, "I know not the man." And as the weakness increases, and the sin gains force, the fault deepens in blackness. Thrice he denied his Master, and in the end he added oaths and curses, as if it would be a sure proof that he had never been with Christ if he could swear. One distinguishing mark of a Christian in those days was that he swore not at all, by any oath of any sort, upon any subject, good, bad, or indifferent. Thus Peter, seeing that he could profanely swear, was giving good evidence, as the listeners thought, that he could never have been with Jesus of Nazareth.

You see the reason why, when you come near the place of temptation, you should hasten by it as quickly as possible. Linger not where the plague rages: stay not where temptation abounds. While Peter was getting increased velocity in sin, he was losing all his strength to get out of sin. Why, at the very first, when he had defiled his Lord to the maid, he ought to have crept away into a secret place and wept; or more bravely still he should have rushed right through the crowd up to his dear Master yonder, and have said, "Forgive Thy servant for his treachery and cowardice." But no; he perseveres in the falsehood he has spoken, He adds lie to lie, and sinks deeper in the mire. Left to himself, his course is downward, and there is no hope for the deserter.

There are some who are in positions of life which they ought to give up: positions which are sinful, and cannot be held by persons who are honest, truthful, and chaste. It is of no use to try to fight the battle of the Cross where some people are: they are harnessed to the chariot of the devil, and they must come out of it, or be driven to destruction. If they are engaged in a trade which, in the very essence of it, is bad, let them get away from it. If they are in associations which are distinctly sinful, they must break loose from those associations, and not pretend to be Christians.

Talking the other evening with a young girl who has, I trust, escaped from the grosser sin into which she might soon have fallen, I said to her: "There

are three things you can do, and those three things I will set before you by an illustration. When you get outside the, Tabernacle, there will be a tramcar. Now, go up to the car, and put one foot on the car, and keep the other foot on the ground, and if you do not come down with a smash I am very much mistaken. Yet many people try to keep in with the world and keep in with Christ, and they will never do it, but will make a terrible, fall of it before long. Now, the second thing that you can do is, that you can keep standing in the road in the mud, and not get into the car at all. You can stop there, and let the tramcar go by: that is all fair and straight. If you want to live in the world, and be of the world, well, live in the world, and be of the world, and take What pleasure it can give you, and reap the fruit of it at last. But there is a third thing you can do — namely, get right off the road into the car, and let the car take you right away where it is going. Now, it is this third thing that I commend to you. Get right into Christ, and let the Lord Jesus,. by the power of His Holy Spirit, carry you right away from the unclean place where you :now stand, bearing you in safety along the tram-lines of holiness till He brings you to the terminus of glory ,at His own right hand. May the Lord deliver you from halting between two opinions, or choosing the wrong opinion; and may He now decide you to leap into the gospel chariot, and leave all sinful company and doubtful ways that you may own the Lord Jesus, and be His true disciple!”

Many of us have. had special association with our Lord. If any were: to ask us, “Did not I see thee in the garden with Him?” we should right gladly answer, “Yes, you have probably seen me; for I have often been there.” We are by no means ashamed to own that we have been much in the company of the despised Redeemer.. Let us think how we have been, many of us, associated with our Lord Jesus Christ: it will do us good to consider our close connection with our well-beloved Lord.

CHRIST IN THE GARDEN.

HE went to that particular garden, it strikes me, because it was within the boundaries of Jerusalem. He might have gone to Bethany that night as He had on former nights, but why did He not? Do you not know that it was according to the Levitical law that the Israelites should sleep 'within the boundaries of Jerusalem, on the Paschal night? When they came up to the Temple to keep the Passover they must not go away till that Paschal night was over. So our Lord selected a rendezvous within the liberties of the city, that He might not transgress even the slightest jot or tittle of the law. And again, He chose that garden, amongst others contiguous to Jerusalem, because Judas knew the place. He wanted retirement, but He did not want a place where He could skulk and hide Himself. It was not for Christ to give Himself up — that were like suicide; but it was not for Him to withdraw and secrete Himself — that were like cowardice. So He goes to a place which He is quite sure that Judas, who was aware of His habitudes, knows He is accustomed to visit; and there, like one who, so far from being afraid to meet His death, pants for the baptism with which He is to be baptized, He awaits the crisis that He had so distinctly anticipated. “*If they seek me,*” He seemed to say, “*I will be where they can readily find me, and lead me away.*” Every time we walk in a garden I think we ought to recollect the garden where the Savior walked, and the sorrows that befell Him there. Did He select a garden, I wonder, because we are all so fond of such places, thus linking our seasons of recreation with the most solemn mementoes of Himself? Did He recollect what forgetful creatures we' are, and did He therefore let His blood fall upon the soil of a garden, that so often as we dig and delve therein we might lift up our thoughts to Him who fertilized earth's soil, and delivered it from the curse by virtue of His own agony and griefs?

Christ's spiritual suffering was altogether within the veil. No one could descry or describe it. But His; soul-sufferings had some witnesses. Not the rabble,, not the multitude; when they saw His bodily suffering, that was all they could understand, therefore it was all they were permitted to see. Just so, Jesus had often shown them the flesh as it were, or the carnal things of His teaching, when He gave them a parable; but He had never shown them the soul, the hidden life of His teaching, this He reserved for His disciples. And thus it was; in His passion; He let the Greek and the Roman gather

around in mockery, and see His flesh torn, and rent, and bleeding, but He did not let them go into the garden with Him to witness His anguish or His prayer. Within that enclosure none came but the disciples. And not all the disciples were there. There were a hundred and twenty of His disciples, at least, if not more, but only eleven bore Him company then. Those eleven must cross that gloomy brook of Kedron with Him, and eight of them are set to keep the door, their faces towards the world, there to sit and watch; only three go into the garden, and those three see something of His sufferings; they behold Him when the agony begins, but still at a distance. He withdraws from them a stone's cast for He must tread the wine-press alone, and it is not possible that the priestly sufferer should have a single compeer in the offering which He is to present to His God. At last it came to this, that there was only one observer. The chosen three had fallen asleep, God's; unsleeping eye alone looked down upon Him. The Father's ear alone was attent to the piteous cries of the Redeemer.

*“He knelt,, the Savior knelt and prayed,
When but His Father's eye
Look'd through the lonely garden's shade
On that dread agony:
The Lord of all above, beneath,
Was bow'd with sorrow unto death!”*

Then there came an unexpected visitor. Amazement wrapped the sky, as Christ was seen of angels to be sweating blood for us. “Give strength to Christ,” the Father said as He addressed some strong-winged spirit.

*“The astonish'd seraph bow'd his head,
And flew from worlds on high.”*

He stood to strengthen, not to fight, for Christ must fight alone; but applying some holy cordial, some sacred anointing to the oppressed Champion who was ready to faint, He, our great Deliverer, received strength from on high, and rose up to the last of His fights. Does not all this teach us that the outside world knows nothing about Christ's soul-sufferings? They' draw a picture of Him; they carve a piece of wood or ivory, but they do not know His soul-sufferings; they cannot enter into them. Nay, the mass of His own people even do not know them, for they are not made conformable to those sufferings 'by a spiritual fellowship. We have not that keen sense of mental things to sympathize with such grievings as He had, and even the favored ones, the three, the elect out of

the elect, who have the most of spiritual graces and who have therefore the most of suffering to endure, and the most of depression of spirits, even they cannot pry into the fullness of the mystery. God only knows the soul-anguish of the Savior when He sweat great drops of blood; angels saw it, but yet they understood it not. They must have wondered more when they saw the Lord of life and glory sorrowful with exceeding sorrowfulness, even unto death, than when they saw this round world spring into beautiful existence from nothingness, or when they saw Jehovah garnish the heavens with His Spirit, and with His hand form the crooked serpent.. We cannot expect to know the length and breadth and height of these things, but as our own experience deepens and darkens we shall know more and more of what Christ suffered in the garden.

CHRIST'S HEAVINESS IN THE GARDEN.

SUCH is the dolefulness and gloom of a heavy soul, yea, a soul exceeding heavy even unto death, that I could imagine the pangs of dissolution to be lighter. In our latest hour joy may light up the heart, and the sunshine of heaven within may bear up the soul when all without is dark. But when the iron entereth into a man's soul, he is unmanned indeed. In the cheerlessness of such exhausted spirits the mind is confounded; well can I understand the saying that is written, "I am a worm and no man," of one that is a prey to such melancholy. Oh, that cup! When there is not a promise that can give you comfort, when everything in the world looks dark, when your very mercies affright you, and rise like hideous specters and portents of evil before your view, when you are like the brethren of Benjamin as they opened the sacks and found the money, but instead of being comforted thereby said, "*What is this that God hath done unto us?*" when everything looks black, and you seem, through some morbid sensitiveness into which you have fallen, to dis; tort every object and every circumstance into a dismal caricature, let me say to you, that for us poor sinful men this is a cup more horrible than any which inquisitors could[mix. I can imagine Anne Askew on the rack, braving it out, like the bold woman she was,, facing all her accusers, and saying —

*"I am not she that lyst
My anchor to let fall;
For every dryzzling myst
My ship's substantial,"*

but I cannot think: of a man in the soul-sickness of such depression of spirits as I am referring to, finding: in thought: or song a palliative for his woe. When God touches the very secret of a man's soul, and his spirit gives way, he cannot bear up very long; and this seems to have been the cup which the Savior had to drink just then, from which He prayed to be delivered, and concerning which He was heard.

Consider for a moment what He had to depress His soul. Everything was draped in gloom, and overcast with darkness that might be felt. There was *the past*. Putting it as I think He would look at it, His life hart been

unsuccessful. He could say with Isaiah, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." And how poor was that little success He did have! There were His twelve disciples; one of them He knew to be on the way to betray Him; eight of them were asleep at the entrance to the garden, and three asleep within the garden[He knew that they would all forsake Him, and one of them would deny Him with oaths and curses! What was there to comfort Him? When a man's spirit sinks he wants a cheerful companion; he wants somebody to talk to him. Was not this felt by the Savior? Did not He go three times to His disciples? He knew they were but men; but then a man can comfort a man in such a time as that. The sight of a friendly face may cheer one's own countenance, and enliven one's heart.. But He had to shake them from their slumbers, and then they stared at Him with unmeaning gaze. Did He not return back again to prayer because there was no eye to pity, and none that could help? He found no relief. Half a word sometimes, or even a smile, even though it be only from a child, will help you when you are sad and prostrate. But Christ could not get even that. He had to rebuke them almost bitterly. Is not there a tone of irony about His remonstrance? "Sleep on now and take your rest." He was not angry, but He did feel it. When a man is low spirited, he feels more keenly and acutely than at other' times; and although the splendid charity, of our Lord made that excuse — "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak," yet it did cut Him to the heart, and He had an anguish of soul like that which Joseph felt when he was sold into Egypt by his brethren.

You will see, then, that both the past and the present were sufficient to depress Him to the greatest degree. But there was *the future*; and as He looked forward to that, devoted as His heart was, and unfaltering as was the courage of His soul (for it were sacrilege and slander, methinks, to impute even a thought of flinching to Him), yet His human heart quailed: He seemed to think — "Oh! how shall I bear it?" The mind started back from the shame, and the body started back from the pain, and the soul and body both started back from the thought of death, and of death in such an ignominious way: —

*“He proved them all — the doubt, the strife,
 The faint, perplexing dread;
 The mists that hang o'er parting life
 All gathered round His head:
 That He who gave man's breath might know
 The very depths of human woe.”*

None of us have such cause for depression as the Savior had. We have not His load to carry; and we have a helper to help us whom He had not, for God who forsook Him will never forsake us. Our soul may be cast down within us, but we can never have such great reason for it, nor can we ever know it to so great an extent as our clear Redeemer did. I wish I could picture to you that lonely Man, friendless like a stag ;it bay, with the dogs compassing him round about, and the assembly of the wicked enclosing him; foreseeing every incident of His passion, even to the piercing of His hands and His feet, the parting of His garments, and the lots cast upon His vesture, and anticipating that last death-sweat without a drop of water to cool His lips! I can but conceive that His soul must have felt within itself a solemn trembling, such as might well make Him say, “I am exceeding sorrowful even unto death.”

Advancing a little further, I want you to think of the agony. 'There is no wrestling where there is only one individual. To this agony, therefore, there must have been two parties. Were there not, however, mystically speaking, two parties in Christ? What do I see in this King of Sharon but, as it were, two armies? There was the stern resolve to do all, and to accomplish the work which He had undertaken; and there was the mental weakness and depression which seemed to say to Him, “You cannot; you will never accomplish it.” “Our fathers trusted in Thee, and Thou didst deliver them. They cried unto Thee and were delivered; they trusted in Thee and were not: confounded”; ”but I am a worm and no man, a reproach of men, and despised of the people”; so that the two thoughts come into conflict — the shrinking of the soul, and yet the determination of His invincible will to go on with it, and to work it out. He was in an agony in that struggle between the overwhelming fear of His mind and the noble eagerness of His spirit. I think, too, that Satan afflicted Him; that the powers of darkness were permitted to use their utmost craft in order to drive the Savior to absolute despair.

One expression used to depict it I will handle very delicately'; a word that, in its rougher sense, means, and has been applied to, persons out of their

mind and bereft for a while of reason. The term used concerning the Savior in Gethsemane can only be interpreted by a word equivalent to our "distracted." He was like one bewildered with an overwhelming weight of anxiety and terror. But His divine nature awakened up His spiritual faculties and His mental energy to display their full power. His faith resisted the temptation to unbelief. The heavenly goodness that was within Him so mightily contended with the Satanic suggestions and insinuations which were thrown in His way that it came to a wrestling. I should like you to catch the idea of wrestling, as though you saw two men trying to throw one another, struggling together till the muscles stand out and the veins start like whipcord on their brows. That were a fearful spectacle when two men in desperate wrath thus close in with each other. But the Savior was thus wrestling with the powers of darkness, and He grappled with such terrible earnestness in the fray' that He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood : —

*“The powers of hell united prest,
And squeezed His heart, and bruised His breast,
What dreadful conflicts raged within,
When sweat and blood forced through His skin!”*

Observe the way in which Christ conducted the agony. It was b7 prayer, t- [e turned to His Father three times with the self-same words. It is an index .of distraction when you repeat yourself. Three times with the self-same words He approached His God — “ My Father, let this cup pass from Me.” Prayer is the great cure-all for depression of spirit. “When my :spirit is overwhelmed within me, I will look to the rock that is higher than I.” There will be a breaking up altogether, and a bursting of spirit, unless you pull up the sluices of supplication, and let the soul flow out in secret communion with God. If we would state our griefs to God they 'would not fret and fume within, :and wear out our patience as they are sometimes wont 'to do. In connection with the agony and the prayer there seems to have been a bloody sweat. It has been thought by some that the passage only means that the sweat was; like drops of blood; but then the word '! like” is used in Scripture to signify not merely resemblance but the identical thing itself. We believe :that the Savior did sweat, from His entire person, great drops of blood :falling down to the ground. Such an occurrence is very rare indeed among men. It has happened some few times. Books of surgery record a few instances, but I believe; that the persons who under some horrifying grief experience such a sudor never recover; they have

always died. Our Savior's anguish had this peculiarity about it, that though He sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground, so copiously as if in a crimson shower, yet He survived. His blood must needs be shed by the hands of others, and His soul poured out unto death in another form. Remembering the doom of sinful re. an — that he should eat his bread in the sweat of his face, we see the penalty of sin exacted in awful measure of Him who :stood surety for sinners. With the perspirings on his face, and huge drops on his brow, man toils for' the bread that perishes; but bread is only the staff of life: when Christ toiled for life itself to give it: to men He sweat, not the common perspiration of the outward form, but the blood which flows from the 'very heart itself.

CHRIST'S VICTORY IN THE GARDEN.

THE heavenly J Lover who had nought to gain except to redeem our souls from sin and Satan, and to win our hearts for Himself, leaves the shining courts of His eternal glory and comes down as a Man, poor, feeble, and despised. He is so depressed at the thought of what is yet to be done and suffered, and under such pressure of Satanic influence, that He sweats drops of blood, falling upon the cold frosty soil in that moon-lit garden.. Oh, the love of Jesus! Oh, the weight of sin! Oh, the debt of gratitude which you and I owe to Him!

*“Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small:
Love so amazing, so .divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.”*

Our imagination is slow to fix upon this precious feature of the dolorous history. Though He had said, “If it be possible let this cup pass from Me,” yet presently we observe how tranquil and calm He is when He rises up from that scene of prostrate devotion! He remarks, as though it were in an ordinary tone of voice He announced some unexpected circumstance, — “He is at hand that: shall betray Me; rise, let us be going.” There is no distraction now, no hurry, no turmoil, no exceeding sorrow even unto death. Judas comes, and Jesus says, “Friend, wherefore art thou come?” You would hardly know Him to be the same Man who was so sorrowful just now. One word with, an emanation of His Deity suffices to make all the soldiery fall backwards. Anon He turns round and touches the ear of the high priest's servant, and heals it as in happier days; He was wont to heal the diseases and the wounds of the people who flocked round Him in His journeys. .Away He goes, so calm and collected that unjust accusations cannot extort a reply from Him; and though: beset on every hand, yet is He led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth. That was a magnificent calmness of mind that sealed His lips, and kept Him passive before His foes;. You and I could not have done it. It must have been a deep profound peace within which enabled Him to be thus mute and still amidst the hoarse murmur of the

council and the boisterous tumult of the multitude. I believe that having fought the enemy within, He had achieved a splendid victory; He was heard in that He feared, and was now able in the fullness of His strength to go out to the last tremendous ,conflict in which He met the embattled hosts of earth and hell; and yet unabashed after He had encountered them all, to wave the banner of triumph, and to say, "It is finished."

ROYAL GARDENS.

IN Joseph's; garden, in the new tomb, the Beloved of our souls slept for awhile, and thence arose to His glory-life. Detained of death He could not be, for He was no longer a lawful Captive; He had finished His work: and earned His reward, and therefore the imprisoning stone was' rolled away. He is not here, for He is risen; the seal is broken, the watchmen are dispersed, the stone is removed, the Captive is free. What comfort is here, for, as Jesus rose, so all His slumbering saints shall likewise leave the tomb. His resurrection is the resurrection of all the saints. Wait but awhile, and the tomb shall be no longer the treasury of cleath. So surely as the Lord came forth from the sepulcher to glory and immortality, all His saints are justified and clean. None can accuse us, now that the Lord has risen indeed no more to die. His one offering hath]perfected for ever all the chosen ones, and His glorious uprising is the guarantee of their acceptance. Faith delights in the garden where Magdalene found her unknown, yet well-known, Lord, and where angels]kept watch and ward over the couch which the immortal Sufferer had :relinquished. Henceforth it is to us a King's garden, abounding with pleasant fruits ;and fragrant flowers.

And now I desire to take you to a King's garden. You will :not have far to go. Put your hand into your bosom and your finger will be on the latch of its door. It is the garden of the human heart.

The heart is a little garden, little apparently, but yet so extensive that it is all but infinite, for who can tell the limit of the heart of man, or how far-darting the imaginations and the affections of the soul of man may be? Now, this little-great thing, the human heart, is meant to be a garden for God. Did I say it was a garden? It should be so, but alas! by nature it scarcely deserves the name, for I perceive it to be all overgrown with weeds; thistle and briar, deadly nightshade, and nettles;, and I know not what besides, spring up everywhere. I see trees, but they drop with poison, like the deadly upas, whose drip is death. There are no luscious fruits, but instead thereof grapes of Gomorrha and apples of Sodom; this loathsome den of festering evils is what should have been God's garden, but lo! it is a tangled wilderness of all manner of noisome things; thorns, also, and thistles doth it bring forth.

What must be done to this neglected garden? What heavenly horticulture can be used upon it to reclaim it from its desert state? God, the great Husbandman, must come and turn it over after His own fashion. The rough plough of conviction must be dragged through it. The spade of trouble must break up the surface: and smash in pieces the clods, and kill the weeds, and fire must burn up the rubbish. Has that ever been done in the garden of your heart? Have you ever had your soul ploughed and cross-ploughed and harrowed with sorrow till you were driven well-nigh to despair? Have you seen your sweet sins killed, so that you could not take pleasure in them any longer, but desired to be clean rid of them? That must be done if the garden is to be reclaimed and made worthy of the Divine Owner.

Then when the soil is broken up, and the clods are turned, there must be seed-sowing, and the planting of slips from the tree of life, seeds from the nurseries of heaven, seeds that shall turn to flowers which shall be full of sweet perfume, acceptable to Christ. The seeds of faith, and love, and hope, and patience, and perseverance, and zeal, must be carefully cast into prepared soil by the Holy Spirit's hand, and fostered by the same kindly care. Ere the heart can be called a garden fit for the King of kings, these must bud, and blossom, and yield their fruits. When I regard attentively that garden which was so lately covered over with weeds, but which is now sown and planted, I perceive that the plants grow not well unless the soil be drained. There must be always drained out of us much superfluity of naughtiness and excess of carnal confidence, or our heart will be a cold swamp, a worthless, plant-killing bog. Affliction drains us. We do not like to have our money or our friends taken from us, and yet the love of these might ruin us for all fruit-bearing if God did not remove them. Besides the draining, there must also be constant hoeing, and raking, and digging. After a garden is made, the flower-beds are never left long alone; the gardener must have his eye upon them, or they run to riot. If they were left to themselves, they would soon breed weeds again and return to the old confusion, but the hoe must be constantly kept going, if the garden is to be clean. So with the garden of the heart; cleansing and pruning must be done every day, and God must do it: through ourselves, and we must do it by constant self-examination and repentance, striving in the power of the Holy Spirit to keep ourselves free from the sins which do so easily beset us.

The heart is a King's garden. Jesus bought it with His precious blood, and He has now by His grace come into it and claimed it to be His own. If your heart be His, oh, keep it for your Beloved! Do not give the keys to anyone else. The love of husband, wife, and child, each of these is to have its proper place, but the heart's core is the King's garden. Mark you, it is not the husband's garden, nor the wife's garden, nor the child's; garden; the dearest idols we have known must not be set up there; it is the King's garden. I hope you will say to-night, before you go to rest, "O King:, come into my garden, and eat my pleasant fruit! Awake, O heavenly wind, and blow upon the garden of my soul, and let all the plants of my new nature give forth their sweetness, that my Beloved may be charmed with my company, and that I may be filled with His sweet love."

The church of God is a garden. Many thoughts are gathered in that one metaphor like bees in a hive. It is called a garden in Solomon's Song, so I know that we are not wrong in using the illustration. But what does a garden mean?

A garden is not the open waste, the heath, or the common; it is not a wilderness; it is walled around; it is hedged in. Ah! Christian, when you join the church, remember you, too,, become by profession hedged in for King Jesus. I earnestly desire to see the wall of separation between the church and the world made broader and stronger.

The King's garden is *a place of order*. You do not, when you go into your garden, find the flowers all put in anyhow, but the wise gardener arranges them according to their tints and hues, so that in the midst of summer the garden shall look like a rainbow that has been broken to pieces and let down upon the earth, delightful to :gaze upon. All the walks are regular, the beds are in proportion, and the plants well arranged, just as they should be. Such should the Christian church be — -pastor, deacons, elders, members, all in their proper places. We are not a load of bricks, but a house. The church is not a mere heap, but it is to be a palace built for God, a temple in which He manifests Himself. Let us all try to maintain order in the household of Christ, and above all things hate discord and confusion. Let us be men who know how to keep rank, maintaining a decent order and regularity in all things. We seek not the order which consists in all sleeping in their places, like corpses in the catacombs, but we desire the order which finds all working in their places for the common cause of the Lord Jesus. May we never become a .disorderly, disunited, irregular

church. May there be order in the: garden, preserved by the power of love and grace.

A garden is a *place of beauty*. Such should the Christian church be. You gather together the fairest flowers from all lands, and put them in your garden, and if you see no beauties in the streets, you expect to see them in the florist's beds. So, if there be no holiness, no love, no zeal, no prayerfulness outside in the world, yet we should see these things in the church. We are not to take the world to be our guide, but we are to excel it. We must do more than others. The Lord Jesus Christ told His disciples that *their* righteousness must exceed that of even the Scribes and Pharisees, or they could not enter the kingdom; and the genuine Christian must seek to be more excellent in his life than the best moralist, because Christ's garden ought to have the best flowers in all the world. Even the best is poor compared with Christ's deservings; let us not put Him off with withered and dying plants. The rarest, richest, choicest lilies and roses ought to bloom in the place which Jesus ca. Us His own.

The King's garden is a *place of growth*, too. I do not suppose the florist would think that soil fit to be a garden in which his plants would not grow, It would be a dead loss to him if the slips remained slips, and if the buds never turned to flowers. So in the church of God. We are not introduced into fellowship to be always the same, always little children and babes in grace. We should grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The prayer-meeting should be a school of practical education for our beloved young members, a place for the young nestlings to try their callow wings. If they try to pray, at first they may almost break down, perhaps, but if they will not give way to a foolish timidity, they will soon get over it, and find themselves useful, not merely in public prayer, but in a thousand works of usefulness besides. Growth should be rapid where Jesus is the Husbandman, and the Holy Spirit the dew from above.

Again, a garden is a *place of retirement*. When a man is in his garden, he does not expect to see all his customers walking down between the beds to do business with him. "No," saith he, "I am walking in the garden, and I expect to be alone." So the Lord Jesus Christ would have us reserve the church to be a place in which He can manifest Himself to us, as He doth not unto the world. 'Oh! I wish that Christians were more retired, that they kept their hearts more shut up for Christ! I am afraid we often worry and trouble ourselves, like Martha, with much serving, so that we have not the

room for Christ: that Mary had, and do not sit at His feet as we ought to do. The Lord grant us grace to keep our hearts as closed gardens for Christ to walk in!

The church is a garden, but it is *the King's* garden. The church is not: mine, nor yours, but the King's. It is the King's garden,, because he chose it for Himself.

*“We are: a garden walled around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground;
A little spot enclosed by grace
Out of the world's wild wilderness.”*

We are the King's because He bought us. Naboth said he would not give up his vineyard, because he inherited it. So doth Christ inherit us by an indefeasible title. We are His heritage, and He has so dearly bought us with His Own blood that He will never give us up, blessed be His name! We are His, because He has conquered us. He won us in fair fight, and now we acknowledge the validity of His title-deeds, and confess, every one of us, as the members of His church, that we are His, and that He is ours.

What a nobility this gives to Christ's church! I have sometimes heard people talk disparagingly of church meetings; there may be but few persons present, some of those may be young members, some may be very old, yet I have been much grieved when I have heard people despise such a church meeting, for Christ would not despise it. Let such beware. Whenever the church meets, either as a whole or representatively, there is a solemn dignity cast about that assembly which is not to be found in a parliament of kings and princes. You cannot keep a garden in proper order without work. We want more laborers in the church, especially of one sort. We want some who will *be planters*.

In every church there ought to be some *to watch over those who are planted*. When we receive members we ought to look after them, and as one person cannot do it thoroughly, as even the elders and deacons are hardly numerous enough for so great a work, it should be the aim and duty of all the experienced Christians in the church to fondly tend the younger ones. I believe that many of you do this, and I am very thankful to zealous friends who are not in office in the church, but who do a great deal in visiting the sick and watching over the younger members. Only I want *all of you* to do it. Oh! if everybody were duly anxious about keeping this

garden in order, how beautifully trimmed all the borders would be, and how few weeds should we find springing up in the beds.

There should be a little band in every church *to collect the straggling*. Our vines will grow out of order if they can, but we must deal wisely with them, and fasten them up in their places. We must be on the alert where we see backsliding begin. How much can be done by old Christians in trying to stop backsliding amongst the young! I believe that half the cases that have gone badly might have been stopped by a little: judicious forethought, if believers had taken them in time.

Sometimes we need *to burn up the rubbish and sweep up the leaves*. In the best church there will always be some failing leaves. Somebody gets out at the elbow with another brother, We are not any of us perfect.

Now, I have said that the church wants laborers, but it wants something else. *It wants new plants*. Our King finds plants for His garden outside the wall. He takes the wild olive branches, and grafts them into the good olive, and then the sap changes the nature. A new thing that? It is not thus in our gardens at home, but wonders are wrought in the garden of the King. He transplants weeds from the dunghill, and makes them to grow as lilies in the midst of His fair garden. Will you be such a plant? May the Master's love constrain you to desire 'to be such a one, and, if you desire it, you shall have it.

But all the laborers and all the new plants would not be what the church requires if she had not something else, for every garden wants *rain*, and every' garden needs *sunshine*.

Do pray' in the family, do pray in the closet for us. Do not let us become poor in prayer. It is a bad thing to become poor in money, because we need it: for a thousand causes, and cannot get on without it. But we can do without :money better than we can do without prayer. The very least thing that a church, member can do is to plead with God that the blessing may descend. It is the King's garden, and will you not pray for it? It: is the King's; own garden, wherein He loves to walk, and which He has purchased with His blood; shall not your prayers go up that His church may flourish, and that His kingdom may come?

This King's garden, *what does it produce?* Sometimes in our garden we have a tree which is so loaded with fruit that we have to put props under it to keep the branches from trembling. I am afraid that this is not the picture

of most of us. You say to the gardener sometimes, "Will there be any fruit on that tree this season? It is time that it should show." He looks, and looks, and looks again, and at last the good man says, "I think I can see one little one up at the top, sir, but I do not know whether it will come to much." That, I am afraid, is the photograph of many professors. There is fruit; or else they would not be saved ones, but it is "a little one." "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples."

THE GROWTH OF A HARVEST.

A VERY wonderful thing it is, that the seed should grow. If we did not see it every day, we should be more astonished at: the growth of seed than at all the wonders of magicians. A growing seed is God's abiding miracle. You see a piece of ground near London covered with a market-garden, and after a few months you go by the place, and you see streets, and a public square, and a church, and a great population. You say to yourself, "*It is remarkable that all these houses should have sprung up in a few months.*" Yet that is not at all so wonderful as for a ploughed field to become covered four feet high with corn, and all without the use of wagons to bring the material, or 'tools to work it up into a harvest. Without noise of hammer, or the ringing of trowels; without handiwork of man, the whole has been done. Wonder at the growth of grace. See how it increases, deepens, strengthens! Growth in grace is a marvel of Divine love. That a man should repent through the Gospel, that he should [believe in Jesus, that he should be totally changed, that he should have a hope of heaven, that he should receive power to become a child of God — .these are all marvelous things; and yet they are going on under our eyes, and we fail to admire them as we should. The growth of holiness in such 'fallen creatures as we are is the admiration of angels, the delight of all intelligent beings.

To the sower this growth was very pleasing. How pleasant it is to see the seed of grace grow in children! Do you not remember when you first sowed mustard-and-cress as a boy, how the very next morning you went and turned the ground up to see how much it had grown. How pleased you were when you saw the little yellow shoot, and afterwards a green leaf or two! So is it with the true teacher: he is anxious to see growth, and he makes eager inquiry for it. What he expected is; taking' place, and it is most delightful to him, whatever it may be to others.

Next, having started growing, *it became a tree*; Luke says, "*It waxed a great tree.*" It was great in itself; but the greatness was seen mainly in comparison with the size of the seed. The growth was great. Here is the wonder: not that it: became a tree, but that, being a mustard seed, it should become "a great tree." Do you see the point of the parable? It was only a word spoken — "Dear boy, look to Jesus." Only such a word, and a soul was saved, its sin was forgiven, its whole being was changed, a new heir of

heaven was born. Do you see the growth? A word produces salvation! A grain of mustard seed becomes a great tree! A little teaching brings eternal life.

A boy was about as wild as any roamer of our streets: a teacher knelt by his side, with his arm about the lad's neck. He pleaded with God for the boy, and with the boy for God. That boy was converted, and as a youth in business he was an example to the work-room; as a father, he was a guide to his household; as a man of God, he was a light to all around; as a preacher of righteousness, he adorned the doctrine of God his Savior in all things. There is much more which I might easily picture; but you can work it out as well as I can. All that is to be desired may spring out of the simple talk of a humble Christian with a youth. A 'mustard seed becomes a great tree; at few' words of holy admonition may produce a noble life.

This great tree became a shelter : “the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.” Mustard in the East does grow very large indeed. The commonest kind of it may be found eight or ten feet high; but there is a kind which will grow almost like a forest tree, and there probably were some of these latter trees in the sheltered region wherein our Lord was speaking. A mustard which grew here and there in Palestine was of surprising dimensions. When the tree grew, the birds came to it. Here we have *unexpected influences*. Think of it. That man took a mustard seed which you could hardly see if I held it up. When he took the mustard seed, when he put it into his garden, had he any thought of bringing birds to that spot? Not he. You do not know all you are doing when you are teaching a child the way of salvation by Jesus Christ. When you are trying to bring a soul to Christ, your action has ten thousand hooks to it; and these may seize on innumerable things. Holy teaching is the: opening of a well, and no one knows all the effect: which the waters will produce on that spot. There: seems no link between sowing a grain of mustard seed and birds of the air; but the winged wanderers soon made a happy connection. There may seem no connection between teaching that boy and the reclaiming of cannibals in New Guinea; but I can see a very possible connection. Tribes; in Central Africa may have their destiny shaped by your instruction of a tiny child. When John Pounds bribed an urchin with a hot potato to come and learn to read the Bible, I am sure John Pounds had no idea of all the ragged-schools in London; but there is a clear line of cause and effect in the whole matter. A hot potato might be the coat-of-arms of the Ragged-school Union. When Nasmyth went about from house to house visiting in

the slums of London, I do not suppose that he saw in his act the founding of the London City Mission and all the Country Town Missions. No man can tell the end of his beginnings, the growth of his sowings. Go on doing good in little ways, and you shall one day wonder at the-great results. Do the next thing that lies before you. Do it well. Do it unto the Lord. Leave results with His unbounded liberality of love; but hope to reap at least a hundredfold.

How many fowls carne and roosted under that one mustard tree I do not know. How many birds in a day, how many birds in a year, came and found a resting place, and picked the seeds they loved so well, I cannot tell. When one person is converted, how many may receive a blessing out of him none can tell. Now is the day for romances: our literature is drenched with tales religious or irreligious.. What stories might be written concerning benefits bestowed, directly and indirectly, by a single godly man or woman! When you have written a thrilling story upon the subject, I can assure you I can match it with something better still. One single individual can scatter benedictions across a continent, and belt the world with blessing.

But what is that I hear? I see this mustard tree — it is a very wonderful tree; but I not only see, I hear! Music! music! The birds! the birds! It is early morning, the sun :is scarcely up — what torrents of song! Is that the way to produce music? Shall I sow mustard seed, and reap songs? I thought we must buy an. organ:, or purchase a violin; or by some wind or stringed instrument come at music; but here is a new plan altogether. Nebuchadnezzar had his flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music; but' all that mingled sound could not rival the melody of birds. I shall sow mustard seed now, and get music in God's own way. When you teach your children the Gospel of the Lord Jesus, you are sowing the music of heaven. Every time you tell the tidings of pardon bought with blood, you are filling the choirs of glory with sweet voices, which, to the Eternal Name, shall, day and night, trill out songs of devout gratitude. Go on, then, if this is to be the result. If even heaven's high harmonies depend upon the simple teaching of a ragged-school, let us never cease from our hallowed service.

Nowadays people want ten per cent. for their money. Hosts of fools are readily caught by any scheme, or speculation, or limited liability company, that promises to give them immense dividends! I should like to make you wise by inviting you to an investment which is sure. Sow a mustard seed,

and grow a tree. Talk of Christ, and save a soul: that soul saved will be a blessing for ages, and a joy to God throughout eternity.

“SUPPOSING HIM TO BE THE GARDENER.”

JOHN 20:15.

I WAS sitting in a very lovely garden, in the midst of all kinds of flowers which were blooming in delightful abundance all around. Screening myself from the heat of the sun under the overhanging boughs of an olive, I cast my eyes upon palms and bananas, roses and camellias, oranges and aloes, lavender and heliotrope. The garden was full of color and beauty, perfume and fruitfulness. Surely the gardener, whoever he might be, who had framed, and fashioned, and kept in order that lovely spot, deserved great commendation. So I thought, and then it came to me to meditate upon the church of God as a garden, and to suppose the Lord Jesus to be the gardener, and then to think of what would most assuredly happen if it were so. “Supposing Him to be the gardener,” my mind conceived of a paradise where all sweet things flourish, and all evil things are rooted up.

The wonder is *that there should be a church at all in the world*; that there should be a garden blooming in the midst of this sterile waste. Upon a hard and flinty rock the Lord has made the Eden of His church to grow, How came it to be here — an oasis of life in a desert of death? How came faith in the midst of unbelief, and hope where all is servile fear, and love where hate abounds? “Ye are of God, little children, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one.” Whence this being “of God,” where all beside is fast shut up in the devil? How came there to be a people for God, separated and sanctified, and consecrated, and ordained to bring forth fruit unto His name? Assuredly it could not have been so at all if the doing of it had been left to man. We understand its existence, “supposing Him to be the gardener,” but nothing else can account for it. He can cause the fir' tree to flourish instead of the thorn, and the myrtle instead of the briar; but no one else can accomplish such a change. The garden in which I sat was made on the bare face of the rock, and almost all the earth of which its terraces were composed had been brought up there, from the shore below, by hard labor, and so upon the rock a soil had been created. It was not by its own nature that the garden was found in such a place; but by skill and labor it had been formed: even so the church of God has had to be constructed by the Lord

Jesus, who is the author as well as the perfecter of His garden. Painfully, with wounded hands, has He built each terrace, and fashioned each bed, and planted each plant. All the flowers have had to be watered with His bloody sweat, and watched by His tearful eyes: the nail-prints in His hands, and the wound in His side are the tokens of what it cost Him to make a new Paradise. He has given His life for the life of every plant that is in the garden, and not one of them had been there on any other theory than “supposing Him to be the gardener.”

Besides, there is another wonder. *How comes the church of God to flourish in such a clime?* This present evil world is; very uncongenial to the growth of grace, and the church is not able by herself alone to resist the evil influences which surround her. The church contains within itself elements which tend to its own disorder and destruction if left alone; even as the garden has present in its soil all the germs of a tangled thicket of weeds. The best church that ever Christ had on earth would within a few years apostatize from the truth if deserted by the Spirit of God. The world never helps the church; it is all in arms against it; there is nothing in the world's air or soul that can fertilize the church even to the least degree. How is it, then, that notwithstanding all this the church is a fair garden unto God, and there are sweet spices grown in its beds, and lovely flowers are gathered by the Divine hand from its borders? The continuance and prosperity of the church can only be accounted for by “supposing Him to be the gardener.” Almighty strength is put to the otherwise impossible work of sustaining a holy people among men; almighty wisdom exercises itself upon this otherwise insuperable difficulty. Hear ye the word of the Lord, and learn hence the reason for the growth of His church below. “I, the Lord, do keep it: I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.” That is the reason for the existence of a spiritual people still in the midst of a godless and perverse generation. This is the reason for an election of grace in the midst of surrounding vice, and worldliness, and unbelief. “Supposing Him to be the gardener,” I can see why there should be fruitfulness, and beauty, and sweetness even in the center of the wilderness of sin.

Another mystery is also cleared up by this supposition. The wonder is *that ever you and I should have been placed among the plants of the Lord.* Why are we allowed to grow in the garden of His grace? Why me, Lord? Why me? How is it that we have been kept there, and borne with in our barrenness, when He might long ago have said, “Cut it down: why

cumbereth :it the ground?" Who else would have borne with such waywardness as ours? Who could have manifested such infinite patience? Who could have tended us with such care, and when the care was so ill-rewarded, who would have renewed it so long from day to day, and persisted in designs of boundless love? Who could have done more for His vineyard? who could or would have done so much? Any mere man would have repented of his good intent, provoked by our ingratitude. None but God could have had patience with some of us! That we have not long ago been slipped off as fruitless branches of the vine; that we are left still upon the stem, in the hope that we may ultimately bring forth fruit, is a great marvel. I know not how it is that we have been spared, except upon this grounds" supposing Him to be the gardener " ; for Jesus is all gentleness and grace, so slow with His knife, so tardy with His ax, so hopeful if we do but show a bud or two, or, perchance, yield a little sour berry — so hopeful, I say:, that these may be hopeful prognostics of something' better by-and-by. Infinite patience! Immeasurable long-suffering! where are ye to be found save in the breast of the Well-beloved? Surely the hoe has spared many of us simply and only because He who is meek and lowly in heart is the gardener!

LITTLE PLANTS IN THE GARDEN.

ONE of the duties of a Christian is *joy*. That is a blessed religion which among its precepts commands men to be happy. When joy becomes a duty, who would wish to neglect it? Surely it must help every little plant to drink in the sunlight when it is whispered among the flowers that Jesus is the gardener. "Oh," you say, "I am such a little plant; I do not grow well; I do not put forth so much leafage, nor are there so many flowers on me as on many round about me!" It is quite right that you should think little of yourself: perhaps to droop your head is a part of your beauty: many flowers had not been half so lovely if they had not practiced the art of hanging their heads. But "supposing Him to be the gardener," then He is as much a gardener to you as He is to the most lordly palm in the whole domain. In the Menton garden right before me grew the orange and the aloe, and others of the finer and more noticeable plants; but on a wall to my left grew common wallflowers and saxifrages, and tiny herbs such as we find on our own rocky places. Now the gardener had cared for all of these, little as well as great; in fact, there were hundreds of specimens of the most insignificant growths all duly labeled and described. The smallest saxifrage could say, "*He* is my gardener just as surely as he is the gardener of the Gloire de Dijon or Mar&hal Nell." Oh, feeble child of God, the Lord taketh care of you! Your heavenly Father feedeth ravens, and guides the flight of sparrows; should He not much more care for you:, oh ye of little faith? Oh, little plants, you will grow' rightly enough. Perhaps you are growing downward just now rather than upward. Remember that there: are plants of which we value the underground root much more than we do the haulm above ground. Perhaps it: is not yours to grow very fast; you may' be a slow-growing shrub by nature, and you would not be healthy if you were to run to wood. Anyhow, be this your joy, you are in the garden of the Lord:, and, "supposing Him to be the gardener," He will. make the best: of you. You cannot be in better hands.

Another' duty is that of *valuing the Lord's presence, and praying for it*. We ought whenever the Sabbath morning dawns to pray our Well-beloved to come into His garden and eat His pleasant fruits. What can we, do without Him? All day long our cry should go up to Him," O Lord, behold

and visit this vine, and the: vineyard which Thy right hand has planted.” We ought: to agonize with Him that He would come and manifest: Himself to us as He does not unto the world. For what is a garden if the gardener never comes near it? What is the difference between it and the wilderness if he to whom it belongs never lifts up a spade or pruning-hook upon it? So that it is our necessity that we have Christ with us, “supposing Him to be the gardener”; and it is our bliss that we have Christ walking between our beds and borders, watching every plant, training, tending, maturing all. “Supposing Him to be the gardener,” it is well, for from Him is our fruit found. Divided from Him we are nothing; only as He watches over us can we bring forth fruit. Let us have done with confidence in men, let us forego all attempts to supply facts of His spiritual presence by routine or rant, ritualism or rowdyism; but let us pray our Lord to be ever present with us, and by that presence to make our garden grow.

“Supposing Him to be the gardener,” there is another duty, and that is — let each one *yield entirely to If ira*. A plant does not know how it ought to be treated; it knows not when it should be watered or when it should be kept dry: a fruit-tree is no judge of when it needs to be pruned, or digged, or dunged. The wit and wisdom of the garden lieth not in the flowers and shrubs, but in the gardener.

“Supposing Him to be the gardener,” thou mayest well say, “I would neither have will, nor wish, nor wit, nor whim, nor way, but I would be as nothing in the Gardener's hands, that He may' be to me my wisdom and my all. Here, kind Gardener, Thy poor plant bows itself to Thy hand; train me as Thou wilt.” Depend upon :it, happiness lives next door to the spirit of complete acquiescence in the will of God, and it will be easy ':o exercise that perfect acquiescence when we suppose the Lord Jesus to be the gardener. If the Lord hath done it, what has a saint to say? Oh, thou afflicted one, the Lord hath done it: wouldst thou have it otherwise? Nay, art thou not thankful that it is even so:. because so is the will of Him in whose hand thy life is, and whose are all thy ways? The duty of submission is 'very plain, “supposing Him to be the gardener.”

Let this be a stimulus to your fruit-bearing, that: Jesus is the gardener. Where you have brought: forth a single cluster, bring forth a hundred, “sup.. posing Him to be the gardener.” If He is to have the honor of it, then labor to do that which will give Him great renown. If our spiritual state were to be attributed to ourselves, or to our minister, or to some of our

fellow Christians, we might not feel that: we were under a great necessity to be fruitful; but if Jesus be the, gardener, and is; to bear the blame or the, honor of what we produce, then let us use up every' drop of sap and strain every fibre, that, to the utmost of which our manhood is capable, we may produce a fair reward for our Lord's travail. Under such tutor-ship and care we ought to become eminent scholars. Doth Christ train us? O! let us never cause the world to think meanly of our Master. Students feel that their *alma mater* deserves great things of them, so they labor to make their university renowned. And so, since Jesus is teacher and university to us, let us feel that we are bound to reflect credit upon so great a teac]her, upon so divine a name. Surely we ought to do something worthy of such a Lord? Each little flower in the garden of the Lord should wear its brightest hues, and pour forth its rarest perfume, because Jesus cares for it. The best of all possible good should, be yielded by every plant in our Father's garden, supposing .Jesus to be the gardener.

I have found in this supposition a relief from crushing responsibility. One has a work given him of God to do, and if he does it rightly he cannot do it carelessly. The first thing when he wakes he asks, "How is the work prospering?" and the last thought at night is, "What can I do to fulfill my calling?" Sometimes the anxiety even troubles his dreams, and he sighs, "O Lord, send now prosperity!" How is the garden prospering which we are set to tend? Are we broken-hearted because nothing appears to flourish? Is it a bad season? or is the soil lean and hungry? It is a very blessed relief to an excess of care if we can fall into the habit of "*supposing* Him to be the gardener." If Jesus be the Master and Lord in all things it is not mine to keep, all the church in order. I am not responsible :[or the growth of every Christian, nor for every backslider's errors, nor for every professor's faults of life. This burden must not lie on me so that I shall be crushed thereby. "*Supposing* Him to be the gardener," then, the church enjoys a better oversight than mine; better care is taken of the garden than could be taken by the most vigilant watchers, even though by night the frost devoured them, and by day the heat. "*Supposing* Him to be the gardener," then all must go well in the long-run. He that keepeth Israel doth neither slumber nor sleep; we need not fret and despond. I beg you earnest workers, who are becoming depressed, to think this out a little. You see it is yours to work under the Lord Jesus; but it is not yours to take the anxiety of His office into your souls as though you were to bear His burdens. The undergardener, the workman in the garden, need not fret about the whole garden

as though it were all left to him. No, no; let him not take too much upon himself. I pray you bound your anxiety by the facts of the case. So you have a number of young people around you, and you are watching for their souls as they that must: give account? This is well; but do not be worried and wearied; for, after all, the saving and the keeping of those souls is not in your hands, but it rests with One far more able than yourself. Just think that the Lord is the gardener. I know it is so in matters of providence. A certain man of God in troublous times became quite unable to do his duty because he: laid to heart so much the ills of the age; he became depressed and disturbed, and he went on board a vessel, wanting to leave the country, which was getting into such a state that he could no longer endure it. Then one said[to him, “Mr. Whitelock, are you the manager of the world?” No, he was not quite that. “Did not God get on pretty well with it before you were born, and don't you think He will do very well with it when you are dead?” That reflection helped to relieve the good man's mind, and he went back to do his duty. I want you thus to perceive the limit of your responsibility: you are not the Gardener Himself; you are only one of the Gardener's boys, set to run on errands, or do a bit of digging, or to sweep the paths. The garden is well enough managed even though you are not head manager in it.

While this relieves us of anxiety it makes labor for Christ very sweet, because if the garden does not seem to repay us for our trouble we say to ourselves, “It is not nay garden after all. ' Supposing Him to be the gardener,' I am quite willing to work on a barren piece of rock, or tie up an old withered bough, or dig a worthless sod; for, if it only pleases Jesus, the work is for that one sole reason profitable to the last degree. It is not mine to question the wisdom of my task, but to set about it in the name of my Master and Lord. 'Supposing Him to be the gardener,' lifts the ponderous responsibility of it from me, and my work becomes pleasant and delightful.”

A PATH STREWN WITH LEAVES AND BROKEN BRANCHES.

CONSTANTLY our trouble is that we have so many' plants to look after that we have not time to cultivate any one in the best manner, because we have fifty more all wanting attention at the time; and then before we have done with the watering-pot we have to fetch the hoe and the rake and the spade, and we are ;puzzled with these multitudinous cares, even as Paul was when he said, "That which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches." Ah, then it is a blessed thing to do the little we can do and leave the rest to Jesus," supposing Him to be the gardener."

In the church of God there is a discipline which we cannot exercise. I ,do not think it is half so hard to exercise discipline as it is riot to be able to exercise it when yet you feel ,that it ought to be done. The servants of the householder were perplexed when they might not root up the tares. "Didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares? An enemy hath done this." "Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? Not so," saith he, "lest ye root up the wheat with them." This afflicts the Christian minister when he must not remove a pestilent, hindering weed. Yes, but "supposing *Him* to be the gardener," and it is His will to let that weed remain, what have you and I to do but to hold our peace? He has a discipline more sure and safe than ours, and in due time the tares shall know it. In patience let us possess our souls.

And then, again, there is that succession in the garden which we cannot keep up. Plants will die down, and others must be put into their places or the garden will grow bare; but we know not where to find these fresh flowers. We say, "When yonder good man dies, who will succeed him?" That is a question I have heard many a time, till I am rather weary of it:. Who is to follow such a man? Let us wait till he is gone and needs following. Why sell the man's coat when he can wear it himself? We are apt to think when this race of good brethren shall die out that none will arise worthy to unloose the lachets of their shoes.

In every time of darkness and dismay, when the heart sinks and the.. spirits decline, and we think it is all over with the church of God, let us fall back on this, "supposing Him to be the gardener," and expect to see greater and

better things than these. We are at the end of *our* wits, but He is not at the beginning of His yet: we are nonplussed, but He never will be; therefore let us wait and be tranquil," supposing Him to be the gardener."

This supposition will give you a deliverance from many gloomy fears. I walked down the garden, and I saw a place where all the path was strewn with leaves and broken branches, and stones, and I saw the earth upon the flower-beds tossed about, and roots lying quite out of the ground: all was in disorder. Had a dog been amusing himself? or had a mischievous child been at work? If so, it was a great pity. But no: in a minute or two I saw the gardener come back, and [perceived that he had been making all this disarrangement. He had been cutting, and digging, and hacking, and mess-making; and all for the good of the garden. It may be it has happened to some of you that you have been a good deal clipped lately, and in your domestic affairs things have not been in so fair a state as you could have wished: it may be in the church we have seen ill weeds plucked up, and barren branches lopped, so that everything is *en deshabelle*. Well, if the Lord has done it our gloomy fears are idle. "Supposing Him to be the gardener," all is well.

As I was talking this over' with my friend, I said to him — "Supposing Him to be the gardener," then the *serpent* will have a bad time of it. Supposing Adam to be the gardener, then the serpent gets in and has a chat with his wife, and mischief comes of it; but supposing Jesus to be the.. gardener, woe to thee, serpent: there is a blow for thy head within half a minute if thou dost but show thyself within the boundary. So, if we are afraid that the devil should get in among us, let 'us always in prayer entreat that there may be no space for the devil, because the Lord Jesus Christ: fills all, and keeps out the adversary. Other creatures besides serpents intrude into gardens; caterpillars and palmerworms, and all sorts of destroying creatures are apt to devour our churches. How can we keep them out? The highest wall cannot exclude them: there is no protection except one, and that is, "supposing Him to be the gardener." Thus it is written, "I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts."

Many are to the church what weeds are to a garden. They are not plante, d by God; they are not growing under His nurture, they are bringing forth no fruit to His glory. Take heed; for one of these days, "supposing Him to be

the gardener,'” He will reach you, and you shall know what that word meaneth, “Every plant which My heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up.” Take heed to yourselves, I pray.

Others among us are like the branches of the vine 'which bear no fruit. We have often spoken very sharply to these, speaking honest truth in unmistakable language, and yet we have not touched their consciences. Ah, but “supposing Him to be the gardener,” He will fulfill that sentence: “*Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away.*” He will get at you, if *we* cannot. Would to God, ere this old year were quite dead, you would turn unto the Lord with full purpose of heart; so that instead of being a weed you might become a choice flower; that instead of a dry stick, you might be a sappy, fruit-bearing branch of the vine.

Certain of us have been made to suffer much physical pain, which often bites into the spirits, and makes the heart to stoop: others have suffered heavy temporal losses, having had no success in business, but, on the contrary, having had to endure privation, perhaps even to penury. Are you ready to complain against the Lord for all this? I pray you, do not so. Take the supposition of the text into your mind. The Lord has been pruning you sharply, cutting off your best boughs, and you seem to be like a thing despised, that is constantly tormented with the knife. Yes, but “supposing Him to be the: gardener,” suppose that your loving Lord has wrought it all, that from His own hand all your grief has come, every cut, and every gash, and every slip: does not this alter the case? Hath not the Lord done it? Well then, if it be so, put your finger to your lip and be quiet, until you are able from your heart to say, “The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.” I am persuaded that the Lord hath done nothing amiss to any one of His people; that no child of His; can rightly complain that he has been whipped with too much severity; and that no one branch of the vine can truthfully declare that it has been pruned with too sharp an edge. No; what the Lord has done is the best that could have been done, the very thing that you and I, if we could have possessed infinite wisdom and love, would have wished to have done; therefore let us stop each thought of murmuring, and say, “The Lord hath done it,” and be glad.

Go back to Eden for a minute. When Adam was the gardener, what happened? The Lord God walked in the garden in the cool of the day. But “supposing HIM to be the gardener,” then we shall have the Lord God dwelling among us, and revealing Himself in all the glory of His power, and

the plenitude of His Fatherly heart; making us to know Him, that we may be filled with all the fullness of God. What joy is this!

“Supposing Him to be the gardener,” and God to come and walk among the trees of the garden, then I expect He will remove the, whole of the garden upward with Himself to fairer skies; for He rose, and His people must rise 'with Him. I expect a blessed transplantation of all these flowers below to a clearer atmosphere above, away from all this smoke, and fog, and damp, up where the sun is never clouded, where flowers never wither, where fruits never decay. Oh, the glory we shall then enjoy up yonder, on the hills of spices in the garden of God! “Supposing Him to be the gardener,” what a garden will He form above, and how shall you and I grow therein, developing beyond imagination. “It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” Since He is the author and finisher of our faith, to what perfection will He conduct us, and to what glory will He bring us! Oh, to be found in Him! God grant we may be! To be plants in His garden, “supposing Him to be the gardener,” is all the heaven we can desire.

LEAVES FOR THE HEALING OF NATIONS.

REVELATION 22:2.

WE have in the twenty-first and twenty-second chapters of the Book of the Revelation a very wonderful description of heaven upon earth. I shall not attempt to go into any' prophetic explanations as to when this will be fulfilled, but we know this for certain, for we have it in so many words, that the holy city, New Jerusalem, will descend out of heaven from God, and that, in a word, there will be for a time at least a heaven on earth. But inasmuch as heaven, be it where it may, is still heaven, the description of heaven on earth sufficiently avails to reveal to us in some measure the present joys and blessings of the celestial state. We shall not make any mistake if we read the passage as hundreds of thousands have done before us, and as all common readers will always persist in doing, as a description of the heavenly state as it is at present, for what can come down from heaven but that which is in heaven? The results of the revealed presence of the God of love must be to His saints very much the same at: all times; the same glory will be revealed, the same happiness bestowed, the same occupations followed, the same fellowship enjoyed. We may, therefore, consider that we have before us a description of what heaven now is and shall be world without end, save only that the bodies of the saints are not yet raised, and therefore all the minute details may not be fully developed. The glowing metaphors here employed, for we must to a large extent regard the language as figurative, are evidently taken from the Garden of Eden. That was; man's first inheritance, and it is a type of his; last. That Paradise which the first Adam lost the Second Adam will regain for us, with added bliss, and superior joy; we shall dwell where a river rolls with placid stream, and compasses a land where there is gold, "And the gold of that land is good, there is bdellium and the onyx stone"; a river watering every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and flowing hard by the tree of life, in the midst of the garden. Yet, though there is a likeness between heaven and Eden, there is a difference too; for the earthly' paradise, with all its perfections, was still of the earth earthy, and the second paradise is, like the Lord from heaven, heavenly and divine. The fatal tree of knowledge of

good and evil, hedged about by a solemn threatening, grows not in the garden of the immortals. They have known evil, but they now “*know* the Lord,” and know evil no more. Everything in the diviner paradise, is fuller and more abundant. The gold, which in Eden lay in the soil, is used in the heavenly paradise to pave the streets; the river has no earthly source, but is “a pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal; proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb”; the Lord, who in Eden walked only at solemn intervals “*among* the trees of the garden in the cool of the day,” has in heaven His tabernacle among men, and dwells among them; while the trees which grew in Eden, and ripened their fruits only in autumn, are succeeded by trees with twelve fruitages in the year.

It has been thought that man would have preserved the immortality of his body 'by eating of the tree of life in Eden, and that therefore when he sinned he was shut out from it, “lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever.” Some even go so far as to think that the extreme longevity of the antediluvians may have been helped by the remaining influence of that wondrous food upon the constitution of man for many generations. Of that we know nothing, it is all conjecture. It is, however, very customary for expositors to speak of the tree of life in the garden as the sacrament of the primeval age, the eating of whose fruit they conceive to be the grand means of preserving Adam from death. Now, there is a tree of life in heaven, but there is this difference, that it is more accessible — more accessible even than when Adam was in perfection, for if there were but one tree of life in the garden, the garden was certainly divided by the river which flowed [in several streams through it, and therefore the tree could not always be easily reached from all parts of the garden. In the passage before us we have the tree, of life on either' side of the river, which I suppose intended that there were many such trees; though there was only one tree as to its kind, yet many in number'. The picture presented to the mind's eye would appear to be that of a wide street, with a river flowing down the center, like some of the broader canals of Holland, with trees growing on either side, all of them of the same kind, all called the tree of life. I do not know how we can make the figure out in any other way. Some have represented the tree as only one, and growing in the bottom of the river, rising out of the water, and so sending boughs on either side, being itself so large as to shade all the city. Such a conception is almost monstrous, and to conceive of many trees of life, all one tree as to quality and nature, growing all along the street, is to present a beautiful

image, which can very readily be conceived by the mind. At any rate, to all the inhabitants of heaven the tree of life is equally and perpetually accessible. They may come at it when they may. No cherub's flaming sword stands there to keep them back, but they may always come and eat of its twelve fruitages, and pluck its healing leaves.

“Joy

*Here holds court within its own metropolis.
And through its midst the crystal river flows
Exhaustless from the everlasting throne,
Shaded on either side by trees of life
Which yield in still unvarying interchange
Their ripe vicissitude of monthly fruits
Amid their clustering leaves, medicinal.”*

The leaves of this true *arbor vitae* were for the healing of the nations. Of what can this tree be a type but of our Lord Jesus Christ and His salvation? What can it signify but that the presence of Christ preserves the inhabitants of heaven for ever free from sickness, while beyond heaven — the precincts, among the nations — the saving influence is scattered? As the leaves fall from the trees, so does sacred influence descend from our Lord Jesus in heaven down to the sons of men; and as the leaves; are the least precious products of a fruit-bearing tree, so the least things that have to do with Him and come from Him have a healing virtue in them. The heavenly city is described as *having an abundance of all manner of delights*. Do men rejoice: in wealth? “The very streets are paved with gold exceeding clear and fine.” The gates are pearls and the walls are built of precious stones. No palace of the Caesars or of the Indian Moguls could rival the gorgeous riches of the city of the Great King.

*“That city with the jeweled crest
Like some new-lighted sun;
A blaze of burning amethyst,
Ten thousand orbs in one.”*

In our cities we feel greatly the need of light. It must have been a dreary age when our ancestors groped their way at night through unlighted streets, or gathered poor comfort from the feeble, struggling rays of a poor candle placed over each householder's door. The heavenly city knows no night at all, and consequently needs no candle; indeed, its endless day is independent of the sun itself, “for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.” Conveniences for worship are terribly needed in

many of our great cities, and it is a good work to erect temples in which worshippers may assemble; but, speaking paradoxically, heaven is well supplied in this respect, because of an utter absence both of the need of such places and of the places themselves. "I saw no temple therein," for indeed the whole place is a temple, and every street is in the highest sense hallowed ground. O blessed place, where we shall not need to enter into our closet to worship our Father who is in heaven, but shall in the open street behold the unveiled vision of God!

A LEAF FROM THE TREE OF LIFE.

REVELATION 22

WE may aise, learn that the humblest and most timid faith in Jesus Christ will save. It is a grand thing to believe in Jesus Christ with all your heart, and soul, and strength; it is delightful never to doubt, but to go from strength to strength until you come to full assurance of understanding; but if you cannot thus mount up with wings as eagles you will be saved if you come limping to Jesus. If you have but a mustard-seed of faith you are saved. She who in the press touched but the hem of the Savior's garment found that virtue flowed out of Him and came to her. Pluck a leaf of this tree by thy poor trembling faith, and if thou darest not take more than that yet shall it make thee whole.

After we have been saved from our sin by faith in Jesus Christ it is very wonderful how everything about Christ will help to purge the blood, which as yet is not cleansed. Study His example, and as you look at the lovely traits of His character, His gentleness, and yet His boldness, His consecration to our cause and His zeal for the glory of God, you will find as you value His excellences they will exercise a curative power over you. You will be ashamed to be selfish, you will be ashamed to be idle, you will be ashamed to be proud 'when you see what Jesus was. Study Him, and you will grow' like Him. If we take His precepts, and I hope we prize them as highly as we do His doctrines, there is not a command of our Lord but what possesses a sacred power, by the application of the Holy Spirit, to cure some fault or other of our character. Do thou as He bids thee, and thou shalt be made whole. Why, there is not a word that ever fell from those dear lips but what bears; healing in it for some one or other of the thousand ills that have befallen our humanity. It is a sweet thing to get even a broken text from His mouth. His least words are better than the best of others. Lay a word from Him, like a grain of medicine, upon your tongue, and keep it there all day. With what a flavor it fills the mouth! How sweetly it perfumes the breath! It is a grand thing to bind a promise round your arm; how strong it makes each sinew! How forceful for the battle of life! It is a blessed thing to take His cheering words, which are fragrant as "a

cluster of camphire,” and carry them in the bosom, for they chase away sadness and inspire dauntless courage. A word of His, being *His*, and recognized as *His*, and coming home to the heart as *His*, brings healing to head and heart, conscience and imagination, desire, and affection. A leaf of the tree of life is a medicine fitted to raise the dead. Do you not know its power by a joyful experience? Blessed be God, some of us know it right well, and can bear glad witness to its matchless power!

“The leaves of the trees; were for the healing of the nations.” Not this or that malady; the medicine is universal in its curative power. Take this medicine; then, to any man, whoever he may be, and let it be applied by the Spirit of God, and it will heal him of whatsoever disease: he has, because the Gospel strikes at the root of all diseases.

This medicine heals disease because it searches into the innermost nature. Some medicines are only for the skin; others will only touch a few organs, and those not vital; but the leaves of the Gospel tree, when taken as medicine, penetrate the veins and search the heart. Their searching operations divide between the joints and the marrow, and discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. A wondrous medicine this! It searches the soul through and through, and never ceases its operations till it has purged the entire manhood of every relic of sin, and made it completely clean. Lord, give us these leaves!

These leaves prevent the recurrence of disease by enabling the man henceforth to find good in all that comes to him. A person diseased, if healed, may, by the food which he shall afterwards receive, bring on the disease again. Place a man under certain conditions which cause him an illness; you may heal him, but if you lead him back to those conditions he may soon be ailing again. And here in such a world as this, even if Christ healed us to-day we should be sick to death to-morrow, if the medicine had not some wondrous continuance of power. And so it is; for all things that come to us after conversion are changed, because we are changed; “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.”

This wondrous medicine abides in the system as a source of health. “The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life..” Other medicine taken into the system acts in its own manner, and there is an end of it, but this abides. These healing leaves change the life blood, affect the spirits, and make the nature other than it

was before. Yonder in heaven those faces which look so bright and comely, fresher than newborn babes, owe their freshness to these healing leaves; and so until the glory life begins the abiding power of the healing h.=aves keeps 'the soul of the believer in perpetual health, and will keep him so world without end.

The leaves will heal all diseases: these leaves heal whole nations. They are suited to the peculiarities of differing nations. The Gospel has never been carried to a people who did not want it, or whom it did not suit. It has been found equally applicable to the ignorant Hottentot and the subtle Hindoo. No man has been found too degraded for its operation, nor too civilized for its benefits. The Gospel has such abundant power that it heals nations, and "nations" is a large word, comprehending millions; but the leaves of this tree can heal countless armies of men.

It is a happy circumstance that an agent of such, potency is diffusible by the simplest means. A. medicine consisting of leaves may be carried by the apothecary where he wills: it is no cumbrous matter.. So may we carry the Gospel to the utmost ends of the earth; and we will carry' it, and send it to every' habitation. The winds shall waft it, the waves shall bear it wherever man is found. These leaves are not: cumbrous like the :stage properties of popery, but are: readily scattered, and wherever they go no climate injures them. The cold of Greenland has not been too severe to prevent the Greenlander rejoicing in the: Savior's blood; and the heat of the torrid zone has'. not been too intense to prevent believers from rejoicing in the Sun of Righteousness. The Gospel heals nations wherever the nations may be, and readily heals them of the direst miseries and the blackest crimes. It is the cure for poverty, by making men wise and economical; it is the cure for slavery, teaching men to love their fellows and respect the rights of all; it is the cure for drunkenness, weaning the drunkard from his filthy appetite, saving' him from the spell which binds him. The Gospel is the only preventive for war. We shall need no blood-red soldiery when once the warriors of the Cross; have won the day. This is the cure for those foul evils which are the curse of our social economies, which human laws too often increase instead of removing. This shall purge us from every form of knavery, rebellion, and dis,content, and this only,, God grant that its healing influences may drop upon the nations thick as leaves in Vallambrosa, till that Golden Age shall dawn in which the world shall be the abode of moral health!

HEALTH ON ALL BENEATH ITS SHADE.

REVELATION 22

CITIES on earth should[more and more strive after purity. I am glad that more attention is being paid to cleanliness. Too long has the age of filth made the crowded populations the prey of disease and death. Up yonder in heaven the sanitary measures are perfection, for “there shall by no means enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie.” There every inhabitant is without fault before the throne of God, having neither spot nor wrinkle. There everything is healthy, everything holy, and the thrice Holy One Himself is there in their midst. As for the necessities under which glorified beings may be placed, we know but very little about: them, but certainly if they need to drink there is the river of the water of life, clear as crystal, and if they require to eat there are abundant fruits ripening each month upon that wondrous tree. -All that saints san possibly need or desire will be abundantly supplied. No pinning want or grim anxiety shall tempt them to ask the question, “*What shall we eat, or what shall we drink:, or wherewithal shall we be clothed?*” “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne' shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters.”

Nor is there merely provision made for bare necessities, their love of beauty is considered. The city itself shines “like a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, slear as crystal”; and her glorious foundations are garnished with all manner of precious stones, insomuch that her light:, as seen afar by the nations,gladdens',them and attracts them to her. A city whose streets are lined with trees laden with luscious fruits must be lovely beyond all expression. They said of the earthly Jerusalem, “Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion”; but what shall we say of thee, O Jerusalem above? Zion! Zion! Our happy home where our Father dwells, where Jesus manifests His love, whither so many of our brethren have wended their happy way, to which our steps are evermore directed: blessed are the men that stand in thy streets and worship within

thy gates! When shall we also behold thy brightness and drink of the river of thy pleasures? Thus in all respects the new Jerusalem is furnished, even with medicine it is supplied, and though we might suppose it to be no more needed, yet it is a joy to perceive that it is there to prevent all maladies in those whom aforesaid it has healed. Leaves for health are plentiful above, and hence the inhabitant shall no more say, *“I am sick.”*

As everything good is present nothing ill is there. One of the worst ills that can ever happen to a man is sickness, for, if he be suffering from disease, his gold is cold and cheerless metal; if he be languishing, the light is dark in his tabernacle; if he pine away with pain, he cannot enjoy his food; neither is beauty any longer fair to him. But there can be no sickness in heaven, because the tree of life bestows immortal health on all beneath its shade; its leaves exhale a balmy influence, fostering the vigor of immortality. Sickness and suffering are banished by this tree of life. *“There shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away.”* As want is banished, as darkness is unknown, as infirmity is shut out, as anxiety and doubt and fear and dread are far away, so will all bodily and spiritual disease be forever removed.

It is in heaven that there grows the tree which is not only health to heaven, but which brings healing to the nations here below. Heaven is the abode of Jesus, and Jesus is the tree of life. If any man would be healed of the guilt of sin he must look to the eternal merits of the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world, who is now upon the throne of God. If any man would be saved from daily temptation and trial he must look to our Advocate in glory who intercedes for us, and pleads that, when sifted as wheat, our faith may not fail. If any one of us would be saved from spiritual death we must look to Jesus, for He lives at the right hand of the Father, for because He lives we shall live also. *“He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.”* I say that Jesus Christ, my Lord and Master, is in heaven, and is there comparable to a tree planted in the very center of the city: under His broad shadow the redeemed delight to sit, and His leaves as they are wafted down to earth bring health with them. If we would be healed, we must gather those leaves and apply them to the wounds and bruises of our souls, and we shall surely recover.

All the nations are sick. Leaves are provided for their healing, which would be superfluous if they did not: require to be healed. We have in our time heard great talk about discovering pure, unsophisticated tribes, beautiful in native innocence, untainted with the vices of civilization; but it has turned out to be all talk. Travellers have penetrated into the heart of Africa, and the), have found these naked innocents, but they have turned out to be “hateful and hating one another.” Voyagers have landed upon lovely islets of the sea, and found unsophisticated innocents eating each other! They have gone into the backwoods and discovered

*“The poor Indian, whose untutored mind
Sees God in clouds, and hears Him in the wind.”*

But they have found him cunning as a fox and cruel as a wolf. Though Pope tells us that the true God is

*“Father of all in every age,
In every clime adored,
By saint, by savage, and by sage,
Jehovah, Jove, or Lord,”*

yet we find neither sages nor savages so worshipping unless the Gospel has instructed them. No, the savage nations have been found, so morally sick that their customs have shocked humanity, and men have turned from them with horror. Alas, poor human nature, even apart from the many evil inventions of civilization, thy disease is terrible!

Neither have nations been delivered from the dread malady of sin by refinement and culture. They tell us a great deal about the wonderful perfection of the ancient Greeks, and certainly they did understand how to draw the human form, and for delineating physical grace and beauty we cannot rival their sculptors; but when we come to look at the Greek moral form, how graceless and uncomely! The ordinary' morals of a Greek were too horrible to be described[, and when Paul felt it absolutely needful to speak to them he was obliged to write that terrible first: chapter of Romans, which no man can read without: a blush, or close without a sigh that such an indictment was too sadly just. God forbid that the filthiness which the ancients tolerated should ever be revived among us! Their very sages were not clear from unmentionable crimes. The Hindoos and Chinese, those polished nations of modern times, do they excel? Is it not a fact that India reeks with lasciviousness which will not endure to be thought upon? Ah, Lord God, thou knowest! All the nations need healing,

our own among them; if you doubt it, open your eyes and ears. Do not iniquities abound? Are not profanities to be heard in our very streets? Go to the West End and see its fashionable sin, or to the East End and see its more open wickedness; or stay on this side the Thames and mark the degradation of thousands. Evidence overwhelming will come before you to show that our nation needs healing, if you traverse the streets beneath the pale light of the moon, or even pass the doors of those haunts of gaiety which have of late been so enormously multiplied.

There is but one cure for the nations — the leaves of the tree. There grows no healing herb but the one plant of renown. There is one sacred fountain, to wash therein is health, — there is but one, it was opened upon Calvary. There is one great Physician who lays His hands on men and they are restored: there is but one. Those who pretend that their hands can minister salvation, and that drops of water from their fingers can bring regeneration, are accursed. No, there is no balm in Gilead, there is no physician there; the balm is at the Cross, the Physician is at the right hand of God.

Jesus is pictured as a blessed tree whose leaves heal the nations. Now, the point is that the very leaves are healing, from which I gather that the least thing about Christ is healing.

THE WINTER PAST AND GONE.

AND now, last of all, the time is coming to us all, when we shall lie upon our dying beds. Oh, long-expected day, hasten and come! The best thing a Christian can do is to die, and be with Christ, which is far better. Well, when we shall lie upon our beds panting out our life we shall remember that then the winter is past for ever. No more now of this world's trials and troubles;. “*The 'rain is over and gone*”; no more stormy doubts, no more dark days of affliction. “*The flowers appear on the earth.*” Christ is giving to the dying saint some of the foretastes of heaven; the angels are throwing over the walls some of the flowers of Paradise. We have come to the land of Beulah, we sit down in bed; of spices, and can almost see the celestial city on the hill-tops, on the other side of the narrow stream of death. “*The time of the singing of the birds is come*”; angelic songs are heard in the sick-chamber. The heart sings too, and midnight melodies cheer the quiet entrance of the grave. “*Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.*” Those are sweet birds which sing in the groves by the side of the river Jordan. Now it is that “*the voice of the turtle is heard in our land*”; calm, peaceful, and quiet, the soul rests in the consciousness that there is no condemnation to him that is in Christ Jesus. Now does “*the fig tree put forth her green figs*”; the first fruits of heaven are plucked and eaten while we are on earth. Now do the very vines of heaven give forth a smell that can be perceived by love. Look forward to your death, ye that are believers in Christ, with great joy. Expect it as your spring-tide of life, the time when your real summer shall come, and your winter shall be over for ever.

*“One distant glimpse my eager passion fires!
 Jesus! to Thee my longing soul aspires!
 When shall I hear Thy voice: divinely say,
 'Rise up, my love, my fair' one, come away;
 Come meet thy Savior bright and glorious,
 O'er sin and death and hell victorious;?”*

HARVEST TIME.

“IS IT NOT WHEAT HARVEST TO-DAY?”

1 SAMUEL 12:17

(This was the first printed Sermon by C. H. Spurgeon.)

I SHALL not notice the connection; but I shall simply' take these words as a motto; and my sermon will be founded upon a harvest field. [shall rather use the harvest for my text than any passage that I find here. “Is it not wheat harvest to-day?” I suppose the dwellers in cities think less of times and seasons than dwellers in the country. Men who were born, trained up, nourished and nurtured among corn-fields, harvests, sowings, and reapings, are more likely to notice such things than you who are always engaged in mercantile pursuits, and think less of these things than rustics do. But [suppose if it: is almost necessary that you should less regard the harvest than others, it ought not to be carried to too great an extent. Let us not be forgetful of times and seasons. There is much to be learned from them, and I would refresh your memories by a harvest field. What a wondrous temple this world is; for in truth it is a temple of God's building wherein men ought to worship Him. What a wonderous temple it is to a mind spiritually enlightened, which can bring to bear upon it the resources of intellect, and the illuminations of God's Holy Spirit! There is not a single flower in it that does not teach us a lesson, there is not a single wave, or blast of thunder, that has not some lesson to teach to us, the sons of men. This world is a great temple, and as, if you walk in an Egyptian temple, you know that every mark and every figure in the temple has a meaning, so when you walk this world you must believe that everything about you has a meaning. It is no fanciful idea that there are “*sermons* in ;stones”; for there really are sermons in stones, and this world is intended to teach us by everything that we see. Happy is the man who only has the mind, and has the spirit to get these lessons from Nature. Flowers, what are they? They are but the thoughts of God solidified, God's beautiful thoughts put into shape. Storms, what are they? They are God's terrible thoughts written out that we may read them. Thunders, what are they? They are God's powerful

emotions just opened out that men may hear them. The world is just the materializing of Godthoughts for the world is a thought in God's eye. He made it first from a thought that came from His own mighty mind, and everything in the majestic temple that He has made, has a meaning.

In this temple there are four evangelists. As we have four great evangelists in the Bible, so there are four evangelists in Nature; and these are the four evangelists of the seasons — spring, summer, autumn, winter.

First comes spring, and what .says it? We look, and we behold that by the magic touch of spring, insects which seemed to, be dead begin to awaken, and :seeds that were buried in the dust begin to lift up their radiant forms. What says spring? It utters its voice, it says to man, “Though thou sleepest thou shalt rise again; there is a world in which in a more glorious state thou shalt exist; thou art but a seed now, and thou shalt be buried in the dust, and in ;a little while thou shalt arise.” Spring utters that part of its evangel. Then comes summer. Summer says to man, “Behold the goodness of a merciful Creator; ' He makes His sun to shine on the evil and on the good,' He sprinkleth the earth with flowers, He scattereth it with those gems of creation, He maketh it blossom like Eden, and bring forth like the garden of the Lord.” Summer utters that; then comes autumn. 'We shall hear its message. It passes, and forth comes winter, crowned with a coronal of ice, and it tells us that there are times of trouble for man; it points to the fruits that we have stored up in autumn, and it: says to us, “Man, take heed that thou store up something for thyself; something against the day of wrath; lay up for thyself the fruits of autumn, that thou mayest be able to feed on them in winter.” And when the old year expires its death-knell tells us that man must die; and when the year has finished its evangelistic mission, there comes another to preach the same lesson again.

We are about to let autumn preach. One of these four evangelists comes forth, and it says, “Is it not wheat harvest to-day?” We are about to take the harvest into consideration in order to learn something from it. May God's most blessed Spirit help His feeble dust and ashes to preach the unsearchable riches of God to your souls' profit!

We shall talk of three joyful harvests and of three sorrowful harvests.

First, we shall speak of three joyful harvests that there will be.

The first joyful harvest that I will mention is the harvest of the field which Samuel alluded to when he said, “Is it not wheat harvest to-day?” We

cannot forget the harvest of the field. It is not meet that these things should be forgotten; we ought not to let the fields be covered with corn, and to have their treasures stored away in the barns, and all the while to remain forgetful of God's mercy. Ingratitude, that worst of ills, is one of those vipers which makes its nest in the heart of man, and the adder never can be slain until Divine grace comes there and sprinkles the blood of the cross upon man's heart. All vipers die when the blood of Christ is upon them. Let me just lead you for a moment to a harvest field. You shall see there a most luxuriant harvest, the heavy ears bending down almost to touch the ground, as much as to say, "From the ground I came, I owe myself to the ground, to that I bow my head," just as the good Christian does when he is full of years. He holds his head down the more fruit he has upon him. You see the stalks with their heads hanging down, because they are ripe. And it is; goodly and precious to see these things.

Now just suppose the contrary. If this year the ears had been blighted and withered; if they had been like the second ears that Pharaoh saw, very lean and very scanty, what would have become of us? In peace we might have speculated on large supplies from Russia to make up the deficiency; now, in times of war, (Referring to the war in the Crimea.) when nothing can come, what would become of us? We may conjecture, we may imagine, 'but I do not know that we are able to come to the truth; we can only say, blessed be God, we have not yet to reckon on what would have 'been; 'but God seeing one door closed has opened another. Seeing that we might not get supplies from those rich fields; in the South of Russia, He has opened another door in our own land. "Thou art my own favored island," says He; "I have loved thee, England, with a special love, thou art My favored one, and 'the enemy shall not crush thee; and lest thou shouldst starve, because provisions are cut off, I will give thee thy barns full at home, and thy fields shall be covered, that thou mayst laugh thine enemy to scorn, and say to him, ' Thou thought thou couldst starve us and make us afraid; but He who feeds the ravens has fed His people, and has not deserted His favored land.'" There is not one person who is uninterested in this matter. Some say the poor ought to be thankful that there is abundance of bread. So ought the rich. There is nothing which happens to one member of society which does not affect all. The ranks lean upon one another; if there is scarcity in the lower ranks, it falls upon the next, and the next, and even the Queen upon her throne feels in some degree the scarcity when God is pleased to send it. It affects all men. Let none say, "Whatever

the price of corn may be, I can live ;” but rather bless God who has given you more than enough. Your prayer ought to be, “Give us this day our daily bread”; and remember that whatever wealth you have, you must attribute your daily mercies as much to God as if you lived from hand to mouth; and sometimes that is a blessed way of living — when God gives His children the hand basket portion, instead of sending it in a mass. Bless God that He has sent an abundant harvest! Oh, fearful one, lift up thy head! and thou discontented one, be abashed! and let thy discontent no more be known! The Jews always had a feast of the tabernacles when the harvest time came. In the, country they always have a “harvest home,” and why should not we? I want you all to have one. Rejoice! rejoice! rejoice! for the harvest is come — “Is it not wheat harvest to-day?” Poor desponding soul; let all your doubts and fears be gone. “Thy bread shall be given thee; and thy water' shall be sure.” That is one joyful harvest.

Now, the second joyful harvest is the harvest of every Christian. In one sense the Christian is the seed, in another he is a sower. In one sense he is a seed sown by God which is to grow, and ripen, and germinate till the great harvest time. In another sense, every Christian is a sower sent into the world to sow good seed, and to sow good seed only. I do not say that Christian men never sow any other seed than good seed. Sometimes in unguarded moments, they take garlic into their hands instead of wheat; and we may sow tares instead of corn. Christians sometimes make mistakes, and God sometimes suffers His people to fall, so that they sow sins; but the Christian never reaps; his sins; Christ reaps them for him. He often has to have a decoction made of the bitter leaves of sin, but he never reaps the fruit of it. Christ has borne the punishment. Yet bear in mind, if you and I sin against God, God will take our sin and He will get an essence from it that will be bitter to our taste; though He does not make us eat the fruits, yet still He will make us grieve and sorrow over our crimes. But the Christian, as I have said:, should be employed in sowing good seed, and as such he shall have a glorious harvest.

In some sense or other the Christian must be sowing seed. If God calls him to the ministry, he is a seed sower; if God calls him to the Sabbath-school, he is a seed sower; whatever his office, he is a sower of seed. I sow seed broadcast all over this immense field; I cannot tell where my seed goes. Some are like barren ground, and they object to the seed that I sow. Let: them. I have no objection that any man should do so. I am only responsible to God, whose servant I am. There are others, and my seed falls upon them

and brings forth a little fruit, but by-and-by, when the sun is up, because of persecution, they wither away and they die. But I hope there are many who are like the good ground that God has prepared, and when I scatter the seed abroad it falls on good ground and brings forth fruit to an abundant harvest. Ah! the minister has a joyful harvest, even in this world, when he sees souls converted. I have had a harvest time when I have led the sheep, down to the washing of Baptism, when I have seen God's people coming out from the mass of the world, and telling what the Lord has done for their souls — when God's children are edified and built up it is worth living for, and worth dying ten thousand deaths for to be the means of saving one soul. What a joyful harvest it is when God gives us converted ones by tens and hundreds, and “adds to His church abundantly such as shall be saved.” Now I am like a farmer just at this; season of the year. I have got a good deal of wheat down, and I want to set it into the barn, for fear the rain comes and spoils it. I believe I have got a great many, but they will persist in standing out in the field. I want to get them into the barns. They are good people, but they do not like to make a profession and join the church. [want to get them. into my Master's granary, and to see Christians added to the church. I see some holding down their heads and saying, “*He* means me.” So I do. You ought before this to have joined' Christ's church; and unless you are fit to be gathered into Christ's little garner here on earth, you have no right to anticipate being gathered into that great garner which is in heaven.

Every Christian has his harvest. The Sabbath-school teacher has his harvest. He goes and he toils and ploughs very stony ground often, but he shall have his harvest. Oh, poor laboring Sabbath-school teacher, hast thou seen no fruit yet? Dost thou say, “Who hath believed our report,, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” Cheer up, thou dost labor in a good cause, there must be some to do thy work. Hast thou seen no children converted? Well, fear not, you cannot expect to see the seed spring up very early, but remember —

*“Though seed lie buried long in dust,
It shan't deceive your hope,
The precious grain can never be lost,
For God insures the crop.”*

Go on sowing still, and thou shalt have a harvest when thou shalt see children converted. I have known some Sabbath. school teachers who could count a dozen, or twenty, or thirty children who have one after

another come to join the church and know the Lord Jesus Christ. But if you should not live to see it on earth, remember you are only accountable for your labor and not for your success. Sow still, toil on! "Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it again after many days," for God will not allow His word to be wasted; "It shall not return unto Him void, it shall accomplish that which He pleases." But: there is a poor mother who has been often sad. She has got a son or a daughter, and she has been always praying that God might convert their souls. Mother, thy son is an ungainly boy still; he grieves thy heart; still the hot tears scald thy cheeks on account of him.. And thou, father, thou hast reprov'd him often; he is a wayward son, and he is still running the downward road. Cease not to pray! Oh, my brethren and sisters, who are parents, you shall have a harvest.

There was a boy once, a very sinful child, who hearkened not to the counsel of his parents; but his mother prayed for him, and now he stands to preach to this congregation every Sabbath. And when his mother thinks of her first-born preaching the Gospel, she reaps a glorious harvest that makes her a glad woman. Now, fathers and mothers, such may be your case. However bad your children are at present, still press toward the throne of grace, and you shall have a harvest. What thinkest thou, mother, wouldst thou not rejoice to see thy son a minister of the Gospel; thy daughter teaching and assisting in the cause of God? God will not suffer thee to pray, and thy prayers be unheeded.

Young man, thy mother has been wrestling for thee a long time, and she has not won thy soul yet. What thinkest thou? Thou defraudest thy mother of her harvest! If she had a little patch of ground, hard by her cottage, where she had sown some wheat, wouldst thou go and burn it? If she had a choice flower in her garden, wouldst thou go and trample it under foot? Thou art going on in the ways of the reprobate, thou art defrauding thy father and thy mother of their harvest. Perhaps there are some parents who are weeping over their sons and daughters, who are hardened and unconverted. God, turn their hearts! for bitter is the doom of that man who goes to hell over the road that is washed by his mother's tears, stumbles over his father's reproofs, and tramples on those things which God has put in his way — his mother's prayers and his father's sighs. God help that man who dares to do such a thing as that! And it is wondrous grace if He does help him.

You shall have a harvest, whatever you are doing. I trust you are all doing something. If I cannot mention what your peculiar engagement is, I trust you are all serving God in some way; and you shall assuredly have a harvest wherever you are scattering your seed. But suppose the worst — if you should never live to see the harvest in this world, you shall have a harvest when you get to heaven. If you live and die a disappointed man in this world, you shall not be disappointed in the next. I think how surprised some of God's people will be when they get to heaven. They will see their Master, and He will give them a crown. “*Lord, what is that crown for?*” “*That crown is because thou didst give a .cup of cold water to one of My disciples.*” “*What! a crown for a cup of cold water?*” “*Yes,*” says the Master,” that is how I pay My servants. First I give them grace to give that cup of water, and then, having given them grace, I give them a crown.” “*Wonders of grace to God belong.*” He that soweth liberally, shall reap liberally; and he that soweth grudgingly shall reap sparingly. Ah, if there could be grief ;in heaven, I think it would be the grief of some Christians who had sown so very little. After all, how little the most of us ever sow. I know I sow but very little compared with what I might. How little any of you sow. Just add up how much you give. to God in the year. I am afraid it would not come to a farthing per cent. Remember you reap according to what you sow. Oh, my friends, what surprise some of you will feel when God pays you for sowing one single grain. The soil of heaven is rich in the extreme. If a farmer had such ground as there is in heaven, he would say, “*I must sow a great many acres of land*”; and so let us strive, for the more we sow, the more shall we reap in heaven. Yet remember it is all of grace and not of debt.

Now, beloved, I must very hastily mention the third joyful harvest. We have had the harvest of the field, and the harvest of the Christian. We are now to have another, and that is the harvest of Christ.

Christ had His sowing times. What bitter sowing times were they! Christ was one who went out bearing precious seed. Oh, I picture Christ sowing the world. He sowed it with tears; He sowed it with drops of blood; F[e :sowed it with sighs; He sowed it with agony of heart; and at last He sowed Himself in the ground, to be the: seed of at glorious crop. What a sowing time His was! He sowed in tears, in poverty, in sympathy, in grief, in agony, in woes, in suffering, and in death. He shall have a harvest, too. Blessings on His name, Jehovah swears it; the everlasting predestination of the Almighty has settled that Christ shall have a harvest. He has sown and

He shall reap; He has scattered and He shall win His prize. "He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days; and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands.." My friends, Christ has begun to reap His harvest. Yea, every soul that is converted is part of His reward; every one who comes to the Lord is a part of it. Every soul that is brought out of the miry clay and set on the King's highway, is a part of Christ's crop. But He is going to reap more yet. There is; another harvest coming in the latter day when He shall reap armfuls at a time, and gather the sheaves into His garner. Now men come to Christ in ones and twos and threes; but then they shall come in flocks, so that the church shall say, "Who are these that come, in as doves to their windows?"

There shall be a greater harvest time when time shall be no more. Turn to the 14th chapter of Revelation and 13th verse — "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them." They do not go before them and win them heaven. "And I looked and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in Thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for Thee to reap; for' the harvest of the earth is ripe. And He that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped." That was Christ's harvest. Observe but one particular. When Christ comes to reap His field, He comes with a crown on. Oh! see that Crowned Reaper on His throne! There are the nations gathered together.

*"They come, they come, the ransom'd tribes,
W here'er they rest or roam;
They heard His voice in distant lands,
And hastened to their home."*

There they stand, one great army before God. Then comes the Crowned Reaper from His throne; He takes His sharp sickle, and see Him reap sheaf after sheaf, and He carries them up to the heavenly garner. [Let us ask the question of ourselves, whether we shall be among the reaped ones — the wheat of the Lord.

Notice again, that there was first a harvest, and then a vintage. The harvest is the righteous; the vintage is the wicked. When the wicked are gathered,

an angel gathers them; but Christ will not trust an angel to reap the righteous. "He that sat on the throne, thrust in His sickle." Oh, my soul, when thou comest to die, Christ will Himself come after thee; when thou art to be cut down, He that sits upon the throne will cut thee down with a very sharp sickle, in order that He may do it as easily as possible. He will be the reaper Himself; no reaper will be allowed to gather Christ's saints in, but Christ the King of saints. Oh, will it: not be a joyful harvest when all the chosen race, every one of them, shall be gathered in? There is a little shrivelled grain of wheat there, that has been growing somewhere on the headland, and that will be there. There are a great many who have been hanging down their heads, heavy with grain, and they will be there too. They will all be gathered in.

*"His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of His sheep;
All that His heavenly' Father gave
His hands securely keep."*

But now we are obliged to turn to the three sad harvests. Alas! alas; the world was once like an Eolian harp; every wind that blew upon it gave forth melody; now the strings are all unstrung and they are full of discord, so that when we have the strains of joy, we must have the deep bass of grief to come after it.

The first sad harvest is the harvest of death. We are all living, and what for? For the grave. I have sometimes sat me down, and had a reverie like this. I have thought: Man, what is he? He grows, he grows, till he comes to his prime, and when he is forty-five, if God spare him, perhaps he has then gained the prime of life. What does he do then? He continues where he is a little while, and then he goes down the hill: and if he keeps on living, what is it for? To die. But there are many chances to one, as the world has it, that he will not live to be seventy. He dies very early. Do not we all live to die? But none shall die till they are ripe. Death never reaps his corn green, he never cuts his corn till it is ripe. The wicked die, but they are always ripe for hell when they die; the righteous die, but they are always ripe for heaven when they die. "That poor thief there who had not believed in Jesus, perhaps an hour before he died — he was as ripe as a seventy years' saint. The saint is always ready for glory whenever death, the reaper, comes, and the wicked are always ripe for hell whenever God pleases to send for them. Oh, that great reaper; he sweeps through the earth, and mows his hundreds and thousands down! It is all still; death makes no

noise about his movements, and he treads with velvet footfall over the earth — that ceaseless mower, none can resist him. He is irresistible, and he mows, and mows, and cuts them down. Sometimes he stops and whets his scythe; he {lips his scythe in blood, and then he mows us down with war; then he takes his whetstone of cholera, and mows down more than ever. Still he cries, “More! more! more!” Ceaseless that work keeps on! Wondrous mower! Wondrous reaper! Oh, when thou comest to reap me, I cannot resist thee; for I must fall like others — when thou comest I shall have nothing to say to thee. Like a blade of corn I must stand motionless; and thou must cut me down! But, oh! may I be prepared for thy scythe! May the Lord stand by me, and comfort me, and cheer me; and may I find that death is an angel of life — -that death is the portal of heaven; that it is the outward porch of the great temple of eternity; that it is the vestibule of glory!

There is a second sad harvest, and that is the harvest that the wicked man has to reap. Thus saith the voice of inspiration, “*Whatsoever* a man soweth that shall he also reap.” Now, there is a harvest that every wicked man has to reap in this world. No man ever sins against his *body* without reaping a harvest for it. The young man says, “I have sinned with impunity.” Stay, thou young man! go there to that hospital, and see the beings writhing in their disease. See that staggering, bloated wretch, and I tell thee, stay thy hand! lest thou become like him. Wisdom bids thee stop; for thy steps lead down to hell. If thou “*enterest* into the house of the strange women,” thou shalt reap a harvest. There is a harvest that every man reaps if he sins against his *fellows*. The man who sins against his fellow creature shall reap a harvest. Some men walk through the world like knights with spurs on their heels, and think they may tread on whom they please; but they shall find their mistake. He who sins against others, sins against himself; that is Nature,. It is a law in Nature that a man cannot hurt his fellows without hurting himself. Now you who cause grief to other's minds, do not think the grief will end there; you will have to reap a harvest even here. Again, a man cannot sin against his *estate* without reaping the effects of it. The miserly wretch who hoards up his gold, he sins against his gold. It becomes cankered, and from those golden sovereigns he. will have to reap a harvest; yes, that miserly wretch, sitting up at night, and straining his weary eyes to count his gold, that man reaps his harvest. And so does the young spendthrift, He will reap his harvest when all his treasure is exhausted. It is said of the Prodigal, that “no man gave unto him “ — none of those that he

used to entertain — and so the prodigal shall find it. No man shall give anything unto him. Ah! but the worst harvest will be that of those who sin against the *church of Christ*. I would not that a man should sin against his body; I would not that a man should sin against his estate; I would not that a man should sin against his fellows; but, most of all, I would not have him touch Christ's church. He that touches one of God's people, touches the apple of His eye. When I have read of some people finding fault with the servants of the Lord, I have thought within myself, “*I would not do so.*” It is the greatest insult to a man to speak ill of his children. You speak ill of God's children, and you will be rewarded for it in everlasting punishment. There is not a single one of God's family' whom God does not love, and if you touch one of them, He will have vengeance on you. Nothing puts a man on his mettle like touching his children; and if you touch God's church, you will have the direst vengeance of all. The hottest flames of hell are for those who touch God's children. Go on, sinner, laugh at religion if thou pleasest; but know that it is the blackest of sin in all the catalogue of crime. God will forgive anything sooner than that; and though that is not unpardonable, yet if unrepented of, it will meet the greatest punishment. God cannot bear that His elect should be touched, and if you do so, it is the greatest crime you can commit.

The third sad harvest is the harvest of Almighty wrath, when the wicked at last are gathered in. In the 14th chapter of Revelation, you will see that God commanded the angel to gather the grapes, and they were all put into the wine-press together, and after that the angel came and trod them down until the blood ran out, so that it was up to the horses' bridles for the space of one hundred and twenty miles. Wonder-filled figure to express the wrath of God! Suppose, then, some great wine-press in which our bodies are put like grapes; and suppose some mighty giant comes and treads us all under foot; that is the idea — that the wicked shall be cast together, and an angel shall crush them under foot until the blood runs out up to the horses' bridles. May God grant of His sovereign mercy that you and I may never reap such a harvest as that; that God may never reap us in that fearful harvest; but that rather we may be written amongst the saints of the Lord!

You shall have a harvest in due season if you faint not. Sow on, brother; sow on, sister; and in due time thou shalt reap an abundant harvest. Let me tell you one thing, if the seed thou hast sown a long while has never come up; I was told once: “When you sow seeds in your garden, put them in a little water over-night, they will grow all the better for it.” So, if thou

hast been sowing thy seed, put them in tears; and it will make thy seed germinate the better. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." Steep your seed in tears, and then put it into the ground, and you shall reap in joy. No bird can devour that seed; no bird can hold it in its mouth. No worm can eat it; for worms never eat seeds that are sown in tears. Go thy way, and when thou weepst most, then it is that thou sowest best. When most cast down, thou art doing best. If thou comest to the prayer-meeting and hast not a word to say, keep on praying, do not give it up, for thou often prayest best when thou thinkest thou prayest worst. Go on, and in due season, by God's mighty grace, you shall reap if you faint not.