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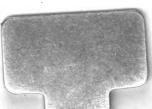




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LETTERS on Subjects of Interest.

FIRST SERIES.

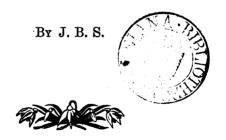


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LETTERS

ON

SUBJECTS OF INTEREST.



London:

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PREFACE.

THE contents of the following pages, it need hardly be said, were not originally intended for publication, but were preserved as extracts from the Writer's correspondence.

Many, having found help from the perusal of some of the letters in manuscript, have expressed desire that a collection should be printed, as calculated to meet the difficulties of individual souls in their onward path. By permission of the Writer, the letters having been revised by him, this has now been done, with the earnest desire that they may prove a blessing to the Lord's little ones, in strengthening and building them up in His faith and fear, to His praise and glory.

LONDON, July, 1873.

LETTERS ON SUBJECTS OF INTEREST.

Devotedness to Christ:-Twofold.

I THINK we little comprehend what Bethany was to the Lord. He was not only at home there because they rested in His love, but because He was understood. Mary does two things most pleasing to Him. She sits at His feet, hearing His word, and she anoints Him for the burying. The one shows that she appreciates His mind what He had to unfold; the other, that the most fragrant thing in her possession goes into the tomb with Him. This is devotedness of a double kind:—it is on the one hand to receive only from Him; to have no thought, no mind, but His; on the other, to declare plainly that what would most distinguish me in nature, I pass over to Him who has died here. It fills the house of Bethany with fragrance. What living one is worthy of it, if the One who has revealed the Father has died out of the scene? No doubt the knowledge of His mind enabled Mary to confide in Him in the hour of sorrow (John xi.); and then she not only knows what His mind is, but she proves what He Himself is, when there was nothing to afford one ray of light; and this prepares her for anointing His body for the burying (John xii.). Thus the first part of devotedness,

-sitting at His feet, hearing His word, choosing the best part (Luke x.), leads to the proving of it all in His practical sympathy, so that it is not only His mind that is revealed to me, but I know how He meets me, and consoles me in scene of death. Then follows the second part of devotedness, viz., to resign to Christ in death that which would lend distinction to myself. Now unless these traits exist, there will be a defect in the character which is so pleasing to the Lord. I might be like Peter; truly desiring to know the mind of the Lord, when he beckoned to John to ask Him who it should be who should betray Him; and afterwards unwisely zealous when he cut off the ear of the highpriest's servant. Here there were apparently the two parts of devotedness in Peter; but we see when the pressure came—when the Lord was friendless and surrounded by foes, Peter had not the stay which one who had sat at His feet would have experienced at such a moment. If I have chosen the best part,-if I have sought Him for His own sake,—I am sure to find and to know Him in my need and sorrow; for it is there I Everything here loses its charm, prove Him. because He is not here. Everything valued here is surrendered to embalm a Christ dead to this scene.

The wind and the waves test the stability of the house, whether the foundation has been laid deep in the rock; and if the house does not stand the test, it cannot fulfil the purpose of a devoted heart. If I am without sympathy in my trials, I become hardened by them, like the bark of an old tree; but if I have known the sympathy of Christ

which is perfect, instead of having a hard exterior, I grow a soft and beautiful moss, though my nature be as the granite rock. Thus there is personal evidence of real, full devotedness. The one wholly devoted to Christ receives so from Him, that the very vicissitudes which harden another, only make him soft and gracious. In my trials I prove Him; and I show my devotedness to Him by the easy way I express Him in my ways to suffering man down here. The moss tells that I have received, and that I have nothing but what I have received. The thick bark indicates the effort to preserve something of one's own.

The Home of the Heart.

What rest and satisfaction the heart finds when simply enjoying Christ! It is the sense of ease and rest that one feels when in the same room with a known and valued friend. It is not so much what passes, as the feeling of resource, and the absence of all fear or care as to anything around or within, like the lamb, unmoved by the approaching dog which alarms the other sheep, because it is beside its mother. It is the consciousness of being under the shelter of His wing; not merely as saving one from what is outside, but still more as assuring one of what His love is. The strong quills preserve you from what is outside, but the nearer you are to Him the more you enjoy the down, and not merely the quills of the wing. This is the home,—the place of rest, and of true cultivation of everything good and great. It is the home that really forms every one. The homeless one must be more or less the heartless one. There are homeless rich as well as homeless poor; for abundance of other things does not make up for the want of a home.

Home with Christ is a wondrous home; and when this is known, outdoor work of every kind really only contributes to the comfort of the home. The one who makes the home everything, is before the heart in every labour, as the result of all the wise woman's work (Prov. xxxi.) is that "her husband is known in the gates." The gleaning of Ruth is carried to the home of Naomi, and there the day's toil finds its recompense in the acceptance which it receives from Naomi. Thus the disciples returned and told the Lord all they had done (Mark vi. 7-30). Toiling without a home may have large results, but there is never heart enjoyment in connection with them. The results are satisfaction, like gold to the miser; but there is not the increase of friendship with Christ, which they, if simply referred to Him, would produce. It makes a great difference whether I am toiling for the gain,—the mere results of toil-or in order that the fruits of it may contribute to His pleasure in whom is the home and rest of my heart. In the latter case the results are not my object, but are like fragrant and rare flowers, adding to the charm of the home, and sweeter there than they could be anywhere else. Then, as with Ruth in the house of Naomi, the fruit of the day's toil is really enjoyed. There was suffering in acquiring it, but there is enjoyment from it, when at home with Naomi. But

more than this, the character is formed by the home; the miser thinks and talks of his gold; the homeless toiler or gleaner thinks only of the result of his day's work. But the one with a home finds how his heart is increasingly bound up in the sphere where it has rest, as he contributes in any way to please Him who makes it a home. And thus the heart is drawn out, because it finds its own proper food in the very love it clings Love feeds on love, and as it toils for it, it finds its reward in that for which it toils. exercises of the heart are at home, as all the exercises of the hand are abroad; and the heart imparts a character to the hand which can only be returned by the hand, in the improved nature of its work. The heart must have a hand, though there may be a hand without a heart. The heart can only be taught by a heart, and the hand derives its exquisite touches from the heart. The heart learns in the home, and the hand goes out from it to act for the heart; hence, the more you are in your proper home the larger will be your heart, and the better will your hand do whatever it findeth to do. But go from the home as the bee from the hive, and all you gather, gather it with purpose to carry it back from every flower to the hive,—the home of your heart; and thus you will grow in deeper rest and at-homedness with Him who makes every place where He is a blessed home to your heart.

Progress is always Christward.

EVERY progress or growth is followed by some peculiar trial, and the extent of the growth is tested by it. It is not that the progress is annulled, but one is made sensible how entirely it is apart from nature. The trial may floor one, and one may appear for the time vanquished, and the progress may seem to have vanished; but after a time one is found to be as the teiltree whose substance is in it. The tree which had been cut down and left to every eye without a branch, sprouts again with all the vigour of old and strong roots. The time of growth is bright and pleasant, it is summer time; but then winter ensues, and the leaves all disappear, and for a time there is no progress, at least apparently. The trial may be something painful, or it may be something which addresses one's nature, for which one excuses one's self. When it is painful, one seeks if possible to get out of it; but the trial which thoroughly tests us, is the one which addresses our nature, as the green fields addressed Lot's nature; or as the Babylonish garment did Achan's; or as Delilah Samson's, and so on. The question of natural right comes in, and one asserts it, and thus one loses the path of faith, which rests on God only.

Now the reason why this kind of trial is not more felt is that the conscience is not troubled;—the sense of standing on my natural rights saves my conscience from disquietude. Lot might have urged that he had a right to choose any

part of the land. My natural conscience would be troubled if right were not on my side; but it will back me in the assertion of my right to gratify my lawful desires, and thus it balks and hinders me from seeing how I am drawn aside into nature; and my progress in Christ is checked.

Progress is always Christward. The moment I stand for my own rights or the gratification of the most lawful tastes,—for instance, affection or ambition,—that moment I am turned aside from Christ, and my progress must be stayed, because I have become occupied, however amiably, with the man on which the cross must be borne. You may say this is hard,—so did the young ruler, and "he went away sorrowful" (Mark x.).

But now mark the order and manner of restoration. First, one begins to feel, like Lot, that one's ambition has not conduced to one's happiness; "his righteous soul was vexed." What his conscience could sanction as right has brought him into very unhappy associations. Next, he suffers with his new companions, and, finally, he loses all his goods and escapes with his life. Samson loses his eyesight and is imprisoned,—Achan is stoned and perishes with all that he had. When there is real restoration, the root of progress has remained, though the tree may have appeared withered, and the end is, that after suffering grievously in every way, one rejoices in the breaking of the link with one's self. Sinking self into death, we turn to Christ again, like Jonah in the bottom of the sea, -the whale's belly; and then the roots of progress are acted on, and vigorous shoots spring

up. Self has been discovered and judged; growth in Christ recommences; and a dreary winter is succeeded by a very prosperous and luxuriant spring-time.

Position without Power.

THE first difficulty in educating a soul, is to get it to accept its position in Christ, from mere knowledge of forgiveness upward; but after that position has been seen, if it be regarded merely as a title of nobility, there will not be practical power in keeping with the great title. The man is ennobled, but he has no property to support his rank. This is too often the case with saints in the present day. They can talk of their rank in Christ, as some in another day could say, "We have Abraham for our father," our title and nobility are indisputable; but the poverty is so great that it seems to be almost an appendage of nobility. There are many poor nobles now; and there is no question as to their right to be ennobled; the patent of the title is perfectly genuine; but the reason why there is not power or property to support the rank, is, that these ennobled ones are not dependent ones.

If I have been lifted by the hand of another to a high position, I am dependent on that hand for everything, and if I am as powerless as a child myself, it is plain, if I do not depend on the hand that exalted me, I must fall from my position from sheer inability to retain it. I may assert that I am entitled to it, because I have

been elevated through the grace of the Lord; but my support depends on and flows only from the same source and hand that elevated me. The fact is, the greater my elevation, if I have a true sense of the grace and the goodness of Him who elevated me, the more do I depend on Him who has done it; and thus, if the dependence increases, the higher the position, the more abundant will be the power to sustain it. Title to position, without dependence, is poverty. person of high title in poverty is a very sad spectacle. I am not only through grace a king, but I am, because a son, privileged to draw everything from Him who is my life and my portion. Dependence always ensures property; and you will find some Christians who have a little property because they are dependent, though they are ignorant of title, and have consciously no rank at all. I don't excuse them. If they knew the grace of God, they would know that they are ennobled; but it is better to be a rich commoner than a poor noble. There is an eagerness for titles now among saints. The knowledge of high position is very attractive, when the conscience does not feel that there is any exaction from the knowledge of it. Alas! many a wellto-do commoner who daily drew his income from his Lord, has lost his means since he found out that he was a nobleman, because he has lost his dependence.

Israel in the wilderness were commoners, but because of a measure of dependence, they were not poor. In the land they were nobles, and they soon became very poor, because they were not dependent. The church of Ephesus (Rev.

ii. 1) was of the highest rank, and had large property, but she gave up dependence; and with all her titles, she became poor indeed. If saints are dependent on God, they support their rank in Christ; but if not, however assured of their nobility, they can do nothing noble. They are destitute of all Divine resources. Among men nothing is more despicable than a great noble able to do nothing in any way worthy of his high position. Thus it is now-a-days with Christians well taught in truth, who in their lives set forth nothing of the heavenly kingdom; and all because they are holding title without dependence.

The Lord give us to be daily more dependent on Him, drawing supplies from Him, so that everything worthy of our rank may be maintained and expressed. I should rather prove that I was a noble by my ways and acts, than be acknowledged as one by title, and yet be

found deficient in true nobility.

The Power to Acquire the Ways of Christ Here.

THE Scriptures present to me the truth of God, and that truth demonstrated in living ways by the Son of God on earth. He is the truth because He has fully set forth the mind and way of God, in contrast to all the evil and opposition here. Truth has been fully expressed by Him. He has shown what is contrary to God, by presenting in Himself what is worthy of God. The Light has come, and darkness is manifested. It is not a mere demonstration of the

wrong, but an exposure of it in the light of that which is fully right; the evil is shown, but it is shown in contrast with the good. Thus grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. In the perfection of His ways, He set forth everything in its true state: what God is and what man is to God. The Divine perfection manifested in Him exposed the true state of man with reference to God. The will of God was the rule of His life, and as He followed it, He observed a path peculiar to it; hence, that path judged and exposed every one and everything not in it. He was not scrutinizing the course of things here to hit on some line of action, which He could observe; He looked not at things here, but to God, and He walked in them according to His will. He walked independently of everything here. What God would have Him do. be it subjection to His parents, or anything else, etc., entirely and simply ruled Him; and this definite reference to God in everything necessarily led Him into a new and hitherto unknown line here, where every man acted for himself. Christ acting in the midst of evil and contrariety here in this singular and perfect way, described the path which suited God; and hence He exposed the course which man had followed; and thus the true and false were brought into juxtaposition; the truth was manifested, and with it the grace also.

Now it is clear that the path of Christ is our path. He is our life; and as we see where and how He walked, we are in our consciences assured that the only way for us is to walk even as He walked. When we read of Him, when we trace His way here, we are convinced that is the only

course for us-the only true way, and that all the rest has been exposed by Him as false and not of God; and we know that we are of God and the whole world lieth in the wicked one. But conviction that such a course should be mine because it is Christ's, does not give me power to observe it and to walk in it. It is one thing for my conscience to be awakened to the path and ways of Christ, but it is another thing to get power to pursue and carry out what I plainly see enjoined on me as Christ's, and as the fruits of His life; and the latter (the power of life) is not acquired by seeing what flows from the possession of it, but by abiding in Christ who is my life. abide in Him, He abides in me, and I bring forth much fruit. I see in the word the ways and the manner of Christ; I am convinced in my conscience that these are the ways and manners which only become me; but the sense of duty is not the power to perform a duty: the power is only acquired by abiding in Christ-being occupied with Him where He is. The arresting of the conscience is not power, though it produces zeal for what one feels is the only true thing; hence, if I put away conscience concerning my faith, I make shipwreck, and if the truth be accepted conscientiously, there must be unhappiness, or a bad conscience, if it be not carried out.

Christ's ways may be admired and coveted without there being a distinct sense that they are the very ways that I am in truth to walk in. When I have this sense my conscience is awakened; and then, as I know from whence my strength comes, I seek it, that I may accomplish what is plainly the duty of my life. I do not

look at the duties merely, but I look to Him from whence I derive power to fulfil them. The parent bird is never satisfied until the offspring flies and sings like herself; nor does she ever surrender this, the climax and reward too for all her toil and labour; and if the offspring had sense, it would understand the mind and intention of its parent. But the parent does not merely keep before it the grand consummation and reward of all its toil, when its offspring will display itself in its own nature and ability, but it feeds it with suited food, to increase the constitutional vigour, so that the desired end may be obtained; and as it approaches, when the wings have grown, her attentions are still greater, in order to direct the acquired power into the manner and ways which are in accordance with her own nature and ability. To live Christ is the consummation for me here; but I must feed on Christ in order to acquire constitutional vigour, before I can walk as He walked which in His life I am enabled for and called to.

Sin only Learnt in God's Presence.

The difference between learning sin in God's presence and by falling into it is very great. One may feel sin very deeply, because one has committed it, but this never gives one God's sense of what sin is. The Cross of Christ is the measure of sin in the sight of God. Be it great or small sin, as man would speak, that is the distance in which all sin is from Him; and in that distance it is removed and atoned for, and only

there. I personally measure sin as it pains my conscience and deforms me in the sight of God and man. And hence, one sin is greater to me than another; and the sin I commit is therefore necessarily the one I feel about, and my sense of it is according to the state of my conscience. My conscience is active according to my apprehension of God's claims and appointments for me; and departure from His will and insubjection to His word is known to be sin. Sin is lawlessness; but besides this, one's own sensibility is shocked at the moral deformities one falls into.

But all this is only viewing sin as it affects ourselves. And this is not the true measure of it. I must see how it is viewed by God. The terrible distance from God in which sin places one is only learned in the Cross. I can never see what sin is but there; and if I see it there. though I may never have committed any of it, to the knowledge of my conscience, yet I see that the working of the law in my members, is of that sin, which is judged in the Cross, and there only is its measure meted out according to God. Then I get a sense of sin which no amount of personal failure could ever give me. There is no excusing it; no toleration of it. The Cross is God's measure of every bit of it, the least as well as the greatest; and as I see this, I can allow no less a measure of it than His, and I shrink in holiness of nature from the least, as much as I should from the greatest, though the latter would make my conscience more sensible of my personal criminality and of consequent judgment on it here. As a rule, you will find

that those who have committed most sins, have not the deepest sense of sin. They generally have a deep sense of being forgiven, and they occupy themselves with it. Those who have been preserved, though greatly tempted, while fearful of danger, have not only a deeper sense of the grace of God, but also a greater horror of that from which they have escaped; and the reason of this is, that they have learned how great their weakness is, without Divine succour; the very weakness is disclosed by the hand that rescues, and they shrink from the side where the weakness that would have led them down the precipice is, to the grace which rescued them, while allowing them to see their danger. True sense of sin is less concerned with the extent to which it can go, than with its purpose at the start. The latter I can only know in the presence of God; and hence the word, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" If I only condemn myself for what I have committed, I exonerate myself from everything else. The least particle of my will introduces a distance between me and The Cross is the measure of that distance, and in the Cross only is that distance removed and atoned for. And hence, I have God's sense about sin if I am near Him, and a deeper abhorrence, and a more rigid separation from it, than if I had experienced my frailty by committing it. In the latter case I discover the extent which sin could go in me, and I am self-condemned; but I do not see sin as terrible as God sees it, though I see how hideous it has made me. It is not only that I have to see sin atoned for in the Cross, but in order to have a true sense of it, I must be on God's side, and see it at the root in its native wilfulness, and not merely in its fruit, which is the extent to which it can go. In the one case it is God who is before me, and I place my sin, in its true distance from God—the unutterable agony of the Cross. In the other, my own hideousness is before me, and I dwell on the mercy that has met me and saved me. In the former I am occupied with the holy side, and my sense of holiness is divine. In the latter my theme is the grace which can forgive, and the deliverance vouchsafed to me.

The Blessing must be Connected with the Source.

"Knowing what had taken place in her, she came and fell down before Him and told Him all the truth." To insure enjoyment of any blessing conferred, it is necessary to connect it with Christ the source of it. Independence was the ruin of the first man; dependence is the normal characteristic of the new man. The more conscious I am of my gain, the more necessary is it that I should be assured of its continuance and perpetuity. The deepest misery of man is traceable to this, that in proportion to the value he sets on anything, so is his anxiety as to its continuance; and the less apprehension there is of its being lost, the more enjoyment there is in Man in nature cannot connect any favour or blessing with its source; but as to all spiritual blessings, we have the guarantee of their perpetuity in the knowledge of Him from whom

every favour comes. Gifts or acquisitions in themselves only make one unhappy in proportion as they are valued, unless we connect them with Christ, and realize Him as the giver; not only as one able to give, but as one to whom we are brought in the closest relationship, and who imparts to us, in order to qualify us for Himself. If I know His mind about me, I am not only assured of the continuance of the gift: but I also know that it is an expression of His love which passeth knowledge. I enjoy the gift or the acquisition which is unfolded to me in His word, as acquainting me with His heart; and hence my heart, in order to have full rest, seeks His heart, and not the acquisition merely, which is only the expression of it. The very eagerness to acquire, and the extent of the acquisitions. is often followed by a winter of depression, simply because there has been too much occupation with the acquisition, and a losing sight of the source. Gifts and feelings, even spiritual ones. are not sufficient in themselves apart from Christ. the Head, to maintain freshness of joy and vigour in the soul, no more than the action of the heart in the human subject, is enough for healthful consciousness without the head, or seat of feeling. For happy action there must be an unbroken correspondence between the two. Just so, there will not be real enjoyment in the work in us, unless there be conscious union with Christ as the spring, fountain, and giver of it And the more simply and fully this link is maintained the better. The thanksgiving in our hearts to Him imparts, it may be unknown to ourselves, this gain to us, because we therein

acknowledge our dependence on Him, and realize

His love from which all springs.

Hence it is in the trials and the vexations here. which appear to be the very contrary to love, that we, in turning to God, are assured of His love. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holv Ghost which He hath given unto us. As we receive from God, so must our dependence on Him consciously increase, and our independence be repudiated. Trials break down the independence, but the dependence must keep pace with every favour received, or the independence of the flesh will supervene, and there will be darkness, because there is not dependence coeval with the acquisition. Light and heat may be found in many substances in nature, but in none, excepting the sun, is there the quality to disengage the essential food of life, the oxygen, from the vegetable world to sustain us, while at the same time imparting the most perfect light and heat. What is light and heat, if life be not sustained to enable me to enjoy it? Just so, if I would enjoy the light and heat of grace, I must connect all with Him, who is the Sun, the centre and source of everything from God unto me. And the more fully I do so, telling Him of His favours, owning His gifts to me, praising Him for the light and truth He imparts to me—the more fully will my soul enjoy all in the unquestioning assurance that they come from Him who gave Himself for me.

Suitability to Christ only produced by His Company.

SATAN'S aim is to hinder souls from finding and enjoying that nearness to Christ which would so establish them in the tastes and wavs and manners of Himself, that they would find everything of man irksome, and only affording an opportunity to express the qualities of that blessed One whose spirit they have imbibed. I am struck in observing how saints delight in listening to details of His love, who know very little what it is to be taught by His presence, the manners, as I may say, suited to His presence. One might greatly enjoy reading of the acts and purposes of a great sovereign, or a great benefactor, and yet know little or nothing of the habits and ways which would suit such an one; and possibly one might find it irksome to be obliged to submit to the peculiar influence which the presence of a great one exerts. The effect of the presence of Christ is piety or godliness-subduedness of heart and mind to the One whose presence is in full sway. When I am reading of or listening to the living acts of the Lord, I necessarily see, as I accept them in faith, that I am an object to Him; but when I am in His company, He is an object to me, and I am, as I enjoy His company, formed by the influence which comes from Him into the same order of things as Himself, so that I not only submit to influence, but I obtain influence. We are changed into the same image from glory to glory. Working, reading, even praying, can

be carried on without the sense of His presence. There may not be in any of these the sense of One so fully and entirely occupying the vision of the soul that not only must all of one's evil self be in abeyance, but at such a moment there is also a real acquisition of new habits and powers which so resist or displace the old ones, that there is growth. Now I find many who after all their reading and learning are not thoroughly satisfied about being His object. If they were really in this great truth, as a necessary consequence, they would not be content without the personal acquaintance, the presence of the One to whom they know they are so dear.

When the company of Christ is fully cultivated, there is ever a growing sense of and ability to discern what suits Him; and however isolated saints may be, they are empowered when thus skilled, to see the path which He would take in the circumstances. The silken thread, the clue to the labyrinth, is in their hands; however great the confusion, they can separate the precious from the vile, and they increase in suitability to Him as they go on. They connect themselves with everything of God, and for God on earth, and by strange and unexpected ways, they are found connected with the brightest and most interesting circle of His interests on earth. If you are not skilled in His tastes, how can you know what suits Him; and you cannot be skilled but as you are in His company.

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The Daily March in the Wilderness.

It is a marching time. There is for us an annual and a daily journey to Canaan, like the earth, which has its annual and its diurnal motion. The former is the course of faith, the latter that of practice. I mean, one takes the circuit, fulfils the journey in faith; and one has in practice to traverse all the road; all the varieties of seasons are to be known to the soul; but we are not to be occupied with the journey, but to be each day prepared for it before the day's march begins. The manna was gathered before the cloud was taken up, which was the signal for them to journey. Your heart is to be stored with Christ before the demands of the march are upon you, but you must be ever ready for the word "March." There is some new experience, some new testing every day almost; at any rate, I think there is seldom a repetition of the same experiences, except in new combinations. suppose with the Israelites that there was a tarrying at one place until the lesson connected with it was learned. They were conducted through the wilderness in order to be, in their biography, a guide to us in our journey through this world, upon whom the ends of the world have come. You are to begin each day with a supply from Christ, which will enable you either to remain in the old halting spot, or to enter on a new one. You pitch at one place, you remove to another; but the point is, that you are not thinking of one or the other; the one thing before you is to be prepared for either. You

must be prepared to march as well as to remain: but if you are prepared to march,-to enter on new circumstances, you must be first proved in prior ones. I don't mean any very remarkable circumstances, but something new, a fresh demand of some kind. It may be the visit of a worldly friend, or an interview with a worldly saint; something apparently small, but so new that it calls forth a new energy in you, and with it a fresh sense of dependence; but of this you may be assured, that if you have gathered the manna, that is, if your soul has been fed with Christ for the day, it is sufficient for the day. The day's provision was given before the day's demands came on. The Lord knows all that is before us, and He reveals Himself, if we seek Him suitably; that is, in accordance with the need in which we shall be placed, whether it be to remain where we are, or to march. By marching I mean entering on new circumstances of some kind or other. If I have begun the day with the Lord, I have the sense of possessing Him, and that is sufficient for all the demands of the day.

What an interesting journey it is! What a tale the earth could tell of its diurnal and annual motion; and surely we can tell a much more interesting and wonderful tale, as we perform our orbits, and are each supplied by Christ in varied ways for all that the path requires. The only strength you have is the strength which Christ has supplied, if He is your only food. In the wilderness there is really no food to nature; and as Christ is the only food, every energy is characterized by Him who is the food and the strength of your soul.

No real Joy in the Lord, except outside Nature.

THE light in which we see ourselves, and in which alone there is any good in seeing ourselves, reveals to us that which hinders us from being what we really are, even children of the light. The light is our true and natural place, and its power is to disclose to us everything unsuited to itself. God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. In the light, we hold the light like the diamond, and are assured that it is our proper element; and it makes manifest everything that is not of itself. It exposes the hindrances which prevent the diamond from being filled with the light. If the clay and crust be removed from the diamond, it will tell its own tale. This the light removes, and then the fruit of it is in all goodness and righteousness and truth.

One great hindrance arises from a very common and sad mistake-namely, seeking joy in the Lord humanly, instead of spiritually. There is such a thing as receiving the word with joy, humanly. Many true-hearted have suffered much here. They did for awhile rejoice without discovering the enmity in them naturally. There was a conviction that God is worthy of all the affections of the heart; and so long as they were not diverted from Him, the conscience was satisfied, and all went on happily, and there seemed to be progress because there was joy; but when something occurred to test the will, either in the loss of what was valued, or anything falling out contrary to their desire, then the enmity came out, and all the joy was gone, and the conscience

became thoroughly dissatisfied. If it had been simply spiritual joy and love for the Lord in the Spirit, His will, whether in affliction, bereavement, or disappointment, while felt as severing one distinctly from nature, and therefore as a Jordan, would at the same time only deepen in the soul the sense of its resources in Christ. the one case, the test, like fire to stubble, carried away in toto that which it tested; while in the other, the gold became more distinctly apparent. When Jonah sat under the gourd, undisturbed and pleased, all was bright, and he was amiable and thankful; but destroy the gourd, and there is wrath and vexation, a disclosure that his resources were really in what pleased himself, and not in God. Now he must find them in God. for the gourd withered.

There are stages in the history of many, like to that of the widow of Sarepta. During the first year of her acquaintance with Elijah, all went on smoothly; it must have been a happy time. The barrel of meal wasted not, nor did the cruse of oil fail; during that period there was no trial to nature, for though the prophet sustained her, it was in natural mercies that the widow's resources lay. But when death comes in, when her only son dies, there is no remembrance of the joys of the past year. Her sin, brought to remembrance, oppresses and overwhelms her broken heart.

There is really no complete deliverance from sin, while what meets nature is the solace of the heart. As with Job, the comforts go first; the ability to enjoy them, next; and lastly, he loses sight of himself in the presence of God. If we

be spiritual, the removal of that which ministers to nature only deepens and increases the spiritual; but if we have drawn our enjoyment from the mercies or expectations here, the break up and scattering of them must needs not only betray the insufficiency of what we had counted on, but it must also expose the innate insubjection and rebellion of our nature to God. So much so, that the once happy one is not only unhappy because of loss, but also because of the evil and wilfulness brought to light, where everything seemed right and orderly before. We can only rise out of this by simply occupying the heart with Christ in glory.

But in another way we may also lose ground. It is said of tithes (Deut. xxvi.), "I have not eaten thereof in my sorrow;" that is to say, nothing due to God has been limited or relinquished because of sorrow. When I make my sorrow an excuse for inattention or slackness in God's service, I am eating the tithes,-His due, His rights. This is a common fault, and one commonly excused, but of great loss to the soul, because God, who alone can comfort those who are cast down, is neglected at the very time when He ought to be the object and rest of the heart. This inattention or slackness will betray itself in everything. Zeal for God's house is dormant, and the very time is lost in which one would secure the needed succour from God, because one turns in on one's self. His service is neglected, and He is unknown when most needed.

There can be no real progress, but as we reach and enjoy Christ outside and apart from the things that are seen; and if I am really there, I am outside that which suits nature. Revive or seek what suits nature, and you can never be in a full clear sense of its end before God.

How could you enjoy nature, and at the same time rejoice that your old man is crucified with Christ. Revive it for the heart, and you revive it for the conscience. Enjoy nature, and you will not be in full peace with God. The Lord lead you to find the rest of your heart in Himself, as you already know that the rest of your conscience is there.

The New State on Earth.

THANKFUL I am to be allowed to greet you at the beginning of another year, as one cleaving to the Lord. You are a tree planted by the waters. The world itself is dreary, but you are planted by the waters, that is, you have supplies of His grace, making known to you the purposes of His love. You are now to grow as a lily, and to cast forth your roots as Lebanon. The supplies are to nurture and strengthen the heart first, as you will see in Jeremiah xvii. 7, 8, and are given to the one "that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." You have trusted, and you are blessed, and you are planted by the rivers of water. Your roots are spreading out by the river, and the blessed effect of this progress in Divine favour will be, that you will not see when heat cometh; when the fierce influences of this world bear down on you; and simply because you are so strengthened by His Spirit in the inner man, which the heat cannot touch; and the evidence of the world's powerlessness to affect you will be the fact that your leaf shall be green. Every expression about you will wear the colour of unimpaired, unhindered life, its activity un-

checked, no fading, no withering.

The one blessed is not without trials here; but the supplies are so great, not only the water (privileges), but the river that never fails, and is exhaustless, that you shall not see when the heat But more than this; if privileges fail, if the ordinary channels of blessings cease or be restrained, if it be a year of drought, you will not be careful, you will be able to rise above it. Your strength will not give way. You shall not cease from yielding fruit. What a beautiful tree! Your green leaf, every little detail of your life, is not to be discoloured by the world and its destructive influences. If the leaf be kept green, the health of the tree is proved. If every expression of my life is in Divine freshness and vigour, there must be inward health and power of constitution. If the leaf loses any of its beauty and colour because of the adverse influences with which I am surrounded in this world, there is evidently a failure somewhere within. I don't recommend you to watch the leaves, but if you see anything like discolouration in the leaves, you will need to look to the river, the fountain of supply. There must be some failure or defect in appropriating the supply, if there be not power to resist the "heat," the power of this world. We are not only to live, but to enjoy life, and we enjoy it as we resist that which would wither and consume us; and we are made conscious of the power of Christ in us, as we are enabled to

hold on in His beauty and freshness against all comers. Now the tree that can keep green under the terrible heat need not fear when there are no supplies here, when it is a year of drought. In passing through this scene, we have to encounter both. There is the heat, the adverse influences bearing down on us, ready to exhaust and wither us up; and there is the drought, the shortness of supply, or rather no supply; for there is really none from the wilderness as such. We drink of the rock that follows us, and that rock is Christ. But yet in spite of all this, we are to be the tree "that shall not cease from yielding fruit." Fruits are acts, positive services; the leaves are the tout ensemble.

The Lord grant that your leaves may be kept green in spite of the heat—the burning influences of this world; the tree yielding fruit in its season, though in a scene where nothing can contribute to it. This is the mission of the serving one; and the recompense is not here, but at the resurrection of the just.

Learning in Solitude.

When a soul is deeply engaged with God and His truth, it necessarily seeks solitude. The very greatness of the occupation, and the engrossment of heart and mind with it, oblige one to stand aside from anything that would distract. There is a continual recurrence to it, and one is detained by it with increasing interest, as the eye lays hold of an object through a telescope or stereoscope. The least shake, or diversion of the sight, and it is

lost again; and the nearer I come to it, the more earnest and intent do I become to grasp what I feel is within my reach. I like to see a soul thus occupied and interested about truth, not diverted from the wondrous and blessed range set before the eye of the soul, but intent on it until it has possessed itself of, or rather has

compassed its varied lines and beauties.

You will find that no one learns truth easily. He who built on the rock was not secure merely because he built on the rock; but he also digged deep. What springs up quickly has no root. The more you understand the nature and scope of the word of God, the more will you see the demand it makes on you, and how unreserved must be your subjection to it; while as you are subject to it, you learn the blessedness and virtues of it, yea, that in keeping of it there is great reward. For this reason bright days must be succeeded by dark ones. The true value of anything is known only when it is wanted. In the dreary and desolate hour to nature, we begin to know the value of the truth communicated to us in the bright day. The learning is at one time, and the proving at another. In fact, we ought to be prepared for the dark hour; so that, though it be dark, there is something so blessed, so suited, pouring its comfort and sustenance on our souls, that, after all, the dark and dreary hour becomes a more really festive time to the heart, because of the virtues of the truth now made known, than the time of its reception, which was so happy and exhilarating. Fuel for our fires may be provided on bright days; but surely there is often rich compensation for the dark days of

December in the cheerful circles formed around the homely fireside. One may eat with an appetite and feel revived: but the sense of life or sustainment from the food in the hour of toil, is a far greater and a better thing. Thus, you have to learn now that the Lord is with you, however great may be the winds and waves; and that He is with you to prove to you now the value of the truth about Himself, which He has heretofore taught you. What we really want is intimacy with Him. I cannot have this intimacy intelligently, without a knowledge of His mind, - of what suits Him. If I were intimate with Him. I could easily and happily do His will; therefore intimacy is the first thing. Martha made serving the first thing: but right serving always flows from a correct acquaintance with His will.

How much there is our souls have to be deepened in every day. I am lost, degraded, but He is my Saviour. The sense of the one deepens the other; the more He is my Saviour, the more I cling to Him; the more I feel I am a lost one, the more I rejoice simply in having a Saviour. The Lord keep you simply looking to Him, accepting the day and the hour He gives, — not longing, not looking, for bright days, but using the day He gives as He gives it. Plants do not dictate to Him what weather He is to send, but they appropriate whatever He does send.

Reading the Psalms from Christ's Side or from Man's Side.

As Christians we first have life ever so faintly, babylike; and we grow in life out of babyhood and on to manhood, as we die here. This world is our moral grave; the only place of possession that we have in it is a grave, as with Abraham (Gen. xviii. 4.) Life is first conferred, and this properly marks the first stage in our history. There are the sorrows and darkness before there is a full clear shining of life as a known possession by the Holy Ghost; and until this is known, I judge that dwelling on the Psalms damages and hinders the soul. When I can read them as one who is really in the life of Jesus, and travelling in company with Him in His experience of the evil and sorrow here, it is quite another thing. There is a great difference morally as to the side from which you enter a trying path or trying circumstances. enters the path of the true Israel from the side where there never was any evil. Israel comes from the side where all the evil and sorrow are, and seeks to reach the side from which Christ comes. Thus, in that sense, it is two meeting at a given point, but coming from opposite directions, and certainly there must be a great moral difference between the feelings of each at the juncture. The one, from a scene of unperturbed holiness enters into the order and state of things in which the godly ones suffer here; the others, like drowning men, are making great efforts to reach firm footing. The one comes into the dark waters in a life preserver, not as being there and trying to escape from them, but going there to succour those who are there, and to lead them on and out of their trials. Christ fully enters into these trials, even as He did when He walked with Mary to

the grave of Lazarus.

Now when you can read the Psalms, and find vourself in them from Christ's side, you are not on the side of the Remnant, seeking to reach Christ's side. The greatness of Christ's service to us in our trials here, is learned experimentally: and though we may learn resurrection, in the way Mary did, yet surely we should know that we had learned Christ as the resurrection, before the trial because of death comes on us. I mean that we should know Him as the Resurrection and the Life, before a bereavement is sent to teach us what He can be to us in it. And this was just what Martha did not know. If I am living Christ in my trials here, I know how Christ raises me out of them. I have gone down to the sea in ships, and have done business in great waters (see Ps. cvii.). I am like a bird which has come from the firmament and dives into the depths of the sea, and I only return more vigorous, through experience, to the scene above. I feel my trials here as a living one feels them,—as Christ feels them; and my fear is not whether I shall escape and enjoy life outside and above them; I am threading my way through a forest, unknown indeed, but where there is a sure way; so that it is not a question with me whether I shall get out of it, but whether I shall follow the only true and divine way in the difficulty; and this way-this path-Christ points out to the

saints in the Psalms. I learn there His tender solicitude lest my eye should be turned from God; and thus I find what Jesus is to me in His own life, in scenes and circumstances natural to my life as man. I am not trying to reach life; but in the power of His Spirit, and in the light of day, I am acquiring a full and fitting idea of how I need what He is to me, in the varieties of sorrow which man's distance from God and perverseness have entailed on him. Christ felt one way about the death of Lazarus; Martha felt quite another way. The true and only divine way is to feel as Christ felt, and Mary is led into this. Christ takes up every trial and sorrow of the Remnant as it is viewed in the eye of God. Man takes up his trial and sorrow as it affects himself. My place is to be in each trial and sorrow, even those which befall me on account of my own perverseness, or governmentally, as Christ would, regarding them with the eye and judgment of God, not merely seeking to get out of them, but exercising myself as to His way, and thus passing through them with God.

The "dying of Jesus" embraces a large experience. Flesh in every place and condition is found wanting, and I in company with Him have the sense of its depravity in the presence of God. I feel that in its will it is deservedly crucified, broken with, and gone in the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. If I am this in myself, I am fit to suffer for Him. "We who live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake." The more I carry about the dying of Jesus, the more I am conscious of the power and resources of His life,

and in His life I can suffer here for Him. Then I am His servant; and it is only as this is reached that there is true service.

Reading the Word Intellectually.

I LOOK to the Lord that your present depression may be only the winter, the precursor of a bright and vigorous spring-time. It is very plain to me that the cause of it is, that your soul has lost simple dependence on Christ, and that believing in Him, which if you had, out of your belly should flow rivers of living water. They cannot flow out, unless they have first flowed in.

You put reading in the place of faith in Christ, and no wonder that you are unhappy. It is the mind which is ministered to by the reading. Faith is the work of God in the soul, enabling it to see things as He sees them in the light of His own word. I don't object to reading, far from it; but the word of God itself is profitless, unless it is mixed with faith; and I doubt not that the depression and unhappiness of many earnest souls is traceable to this,—even that the word, however interesting, is not mixed with faith. Nay, more; the more interesting it is, the greater the blank and dearth afterwards, if there has not been faith to appropriate it, and, as I may say, to assimilate it in the soul. The mind is a mere glass, where things are shown and explained to me by the power which holds it in possession. If the flesh has possession of my mind, I shall receive images and impressions of things which suit the flesh. If the Spirit of God holds my

mind, I shall see with the Spirit, and with the understanding also. Ministry, either oral or written, addresses the mind, or one would not have intelligence, as to the truth presented. But then there must not only be intelligence, or the consciousness of understanding, which is a peculiar pleasure to the mind, and may be mistaken for faith: but there must be faith in that which is understood, as of God, and therefore not only of authority, but that which must be part of my being from henceforth: "as new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." The more conscience there is, the less will it endure that there should be intellectual pleasure with the word without faith; because the effect of that is,—I understood so and so to be the way of the Lord, but I have no power to walk in it; and for this simple reason,—the word has not been I believe if there were much mixed with faith. faith, the reading would be small in proportion to the meditation and prayer. In ordinary reading my mind is gratified and exhilarated as it takes it in; and this is the aim of great authors; but in reading the word of God, it is not to arrive at comprehension only but appropriation; I must, if I own it as the Lord's word to me, be conformed to it. I must not only understand it, and rejoice in my intelligence of it. I must yield myself to it. I must be the transcript of it practically. And this is no small matter; this can only be by the power of God's Spirit through faith. The more I yield myself to the word in faith, the more do I know that it is His word; and the more does the Spirit enable me to walk therein. It is the step

according to the word which assures the heart of the faith; and as I maintain the step, and keep therein, I know the succour of the Spirit, and the joy of His presence. I am glad to be ministered unto by any means, but I am not thinking of being ministered unto only; I am seeking how I may respond in my ways and walk to the ministry which I have received. Be assured that if you spent part of the time which you now spend in seeking to acquire relief by reading, in seeking to walk as the word enjoins, (for that is faith, dependence on God), you would find that you had a link with God, and as the assurance of this link increases, so does your joy and rest in Him increase.

Glory and Death.

"THERE was no more spirit in her," is the description given of the queen of Sheba after she had seen all Solomon's wisdom and glory (1 Kings x.) It was not from any want in her own circumstances, for she had come with a very great train,—her spices were a very great store, but the beauty and brilliancy of Solomon's glory so overpowered and captivated her heart, that she lost consciousness of all her own high and royal estate. She was like Paul in the third heaven. when he proved the superiority of Divine things to the things of man. This is a great lesson. It is not that the rude force of evil has blighted the topshoot of our hearts, so that any gleam of real light is eagerly sought by us; but because of association with our Solomon in His own things

which are so infinitely superior to the beauties of nature, that the best are eclipsed in our eyes. If you are the widow that has lost her only son (Luke vii.), you have lost all interest in this world, however bright your other circumstances, -you go through it with the feeling that nothing can repair the blank, and you rejoice to find outside it a gleam of light, and assurance of joy and rest with Christ; but still, if it be only this, you do not know how to displace the things that could attract you if bereavement had not withered your heart. You still may see the things which in a way tantalize you; the grapes are only sour to you because your heart refuses to reach to them. Now, if you are like the queen, you are introduced into a circle of things above, which so captivates you that you are . proof against what is most admirable here; however beautiful they are in themselves, you have seen things above which transcend them beyond measure, so much so that you have no more spirit in you, no more conscious interest in the greatest things here.

The difference between the two practically is this: the one who is a widow here is relieved by gleams of brightness from above, and thus learns to bear up and thread her way through this dark and dreary scene, right up to glory; while the queen sees not only what is superior to the brightest things here, but what will enable her to judge everything, even the most imposing and attractive. She has learned what suits Christ, and she refuses everything of man as unworthy of Him. She begins with refusing herself. She has no more spirit in her. A widow has

suffered from death in this scene, and looks to Christ to cheer and sustain her onward and up-The queen is deadened to this scene because of what she has found outside of it, and therefore is more truly a widow in it. If she had not seen all Solomon's wisdom, she could not have become insensible to all the brightness here. The inclination to enjoy things below has gone, because of the things above, casting everything into the shade. She is not looking for gleams of light and cheer, but the full circle of Solomon's glory so engages her heart that she is dead to the things here. The widow can comfort a widow as she has been comforted herself; but the queen can insist on the insignificance of everything because of her acquaintance with things above, -she can detect the incongruity of everything here, with the mind and purpose of God. If I turn to the glory merely to get rest and comfort, I can put up with a great deal here, nay, with everything that does not touch my heart or my conscience; but if I have been deadened to everything by the superior circle of things above, nothing here suits me, and I find that many a thing which once I had allowed or tolerated with an unupbraiding conscience, I now see to be incongruous and uncongenial to me as formed and influenced by another order of things. The glory of Christ eclipses them, and I am so consciously deadened to them that there is no awakening up former sensations of delight with respect to them. God makes widows of us to make us seek the glory; but, when we are in it, we are so enriched by it that there is no more spirit in us.

Take care of lending yourself to the beauties of nature; if you do, you will have no heart for Solomon and His things. It is only the sphere and order of the glory, and intimacy with Christ in it, which so absorbs the heart, that all of man is really excluded as incongruous, and you become dead to that which has lost its interest; and thus, while a queen in that scene, you are a widow in this.

Faith the greatest Power but easily Checked.

WE cannot take any true step without faith. Faith is reckoning on God where there is nothing visible, and hence outside one's self; and when He tells me in His word: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house," if I accept it as His word to me, surely it effectually worketh, because received in faith. The word of God to me in Christ defines everything. In Him I can say: "Not by bread only, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord, shall man live." Faith is properly in God, and not about this or that particular thing that He says. If I have faith in God, everything He says to me has equal claims on me, and addresses me not with reference to my ability to obey, but with reference to Him who enjoins it. If it be only faith as to a particular thing, it is reducing the word to the level of my power to obey it. The simple inquiry is, What does the Lord tell me to do? If He calls, and I believe in Him, I have power to obey, because I am not resting in anything but in Him

who calls. Surely one should not go beyond one's faith; because if I do, I am trusting myself to something imaginary. But if I hear the Lord calling, and if I obey, looking to Him to sustain me, that is the obedience of faith. Now, plainly, the call comes first, and the faith follows; and hence the first point for us to ascertain is, Does He call; and what is His call? If my eye then be on Him, surely I can walk even on waves to go to Him.

The more I see, the more I am convinced that there is no full and clear comprehension of the mind of Christ but outside of counter influences; and where the counter influences are imperceptible, they are necessarily the more insinuating. The unconscious influence from the associations one is in, is more really pernicious in spoiling the power of the eye than what is open and glaring. Light received by an impaired eye, an evil one, becomes darkness, because it does not impart the right idea about things. The jaundiced eye represents everything yellow. The light is all right, but the eye is affected by an unconscious influence, and the light is darkness; that is, the light, because of the jaundiced eye, is used to represent objects contrary to their natural state, and in quite another colour. Where have you learnt anything from the Lord distinctly, but where every counter influence was inadmissible—in the sacred enclosure of His own presence, where nothing to qualify what He says can exist? There He communicates His mind, and in its strength and beauty it could not be learned elsewhere. Hence, as a rule, the Lord always appears where He expresses His will particularly.

I refer to this in order to show that when you receive His mind truly, you must be outside all other influences; and if you need to be so when receiving His mind, the more you cultivate the separation which this involves, the more intolerable will the order of things be, where influences of all kinds, like vapours, distract or warp you. If the order of things in which you are were of God's appointment, I am sure He would preserve you in them; but if He did, He would give you grace to be distinct from all that is around you, with a body full of light, a really much harder course than simple separation from it altogether. You will remark that in every case when a soul desires to get on, there is something in the way, a stone at the wheel, which must first be removed before there can be onward movement. a great thing to discover the stone at the wheel. It is not half so hard to get out of a rut as to get over the stone which is before the wheel. The machinery may be all complete, the power to work it all in order, but there is an impediment just where the movement must begin, and until this is removed there can be none. Achan was the stone at the wheel to Israel. Abraham's father was the stone before his wheel. Self in various ways comes in as a stone, and the more imperceptibly it is placed before the wheel, the longer and the more vexatiously are we tried by it. The Lord lead you out of ruts and over all impediments, in order that you may be fully for Him here—a martyr. In Scripture there is but one word for witness and for martyr.

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Admiration of Truth.

If to the natural mind the scenery of the earth or the movement of the heavenly bodies is gratifying and interesting, how much more must the counsels of God, set forth in order, gratify and elate it when under spiritual control; but while this is the case, the mere contemplation and admiration, of them does not impart faith; and if there be not faith to see everything in relation to God; that is, if Christ be not the object and resource of the heart, there will be a tendency to vaingloriousness because of the extent of scenery presented, without the strength which faith imparts to connect all with Christ, and not with one's self. "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect,"—that is, grown up out of the flesh. If Christ dwells—domiciles in the heart by faith, every bit of the divine field of vision not only imparts true gratification and elation to the inner man, but establishes its personality. Everything seen is linked with Him; and when this is the case, the more that one is kept conversant with the scenery of one's own sphere the better, for thus we are built up in our high position in Christ. Again, it is not by the delight I have in surveying truth that I prove my faith, but in the commonest things here. Christ be the light and object to faith, then in the most minute details down here the power of Christ will be manifested. The Lord Himself comes down from the glory on the mount (Matt. xvi.), and forthwith with perfect ease and reliance on God, pays the taxes, as I may say, familiarly.

The demands of the scene here test the reality of my link with the great Eternal One there. If I am fretful or nervous, or anxious about things here, it is evident that I have not had as much of Christ as I thought I had when I traversed with delight the course of His counsels in their glorious order. I must test my acquisitions (see Rom. v. 1-5) by the trials or tribulation here. Thus we read in James: "The trying of your faith worketh patience." I discover by my inability to meet an imposition or a vexation in the spirit of Christ, my lack of Christ to that extent. And hence, every one has some known trial by which they can test their spiritual state. Nay, it is a kind of thermometer. The proof of your rest in Christ, and of your confidence in the warmth and constancy of His love, is the way in which you are sensibly delivered from being a prey to either fear or pain because of things here. Many find reprieve from the corrodings of unrest in service of various kinds, because during the activity of the service they are not sensibly disquieted (I don't speak now of conscience trials, but of what is more Marah, the trials of circumstances); and thus they deceive themselves, for an unconquered trial is always an accumulating trial; but once conquered it is never again the same. Scenery, that is to say a survey of truth, is good and helpful for the eye of faith, but Christ must be its light; and the more the eye sees, the more will the heart and conscience be subjected to testing to establish the reality of our abiding in Christ, and to keep us clear of the intrusion of the flesh.

Perfection, the aim of Divine Love.

MUCH is contained in the Lord's words to Peter, "Lovest thou me?" to promote devotedness.

Love is the highest attribute of God and the most enjoyable activity. In loving the Lord we are loving One who first loved us; in fact, there could not be love otherwise, because in order to love God we must know Him. How could we love what we do not know? In loving the Lord we love one who in no way checks our love, but, on the contrary, draws it out, and it increases in proportion as we know Him. Love, as we say, must have an ideal; that is, it has a standard to which its object must come up in order to satisfy it, though among men it is too often that they only fancy it comes up to it. But true love is not an activity which could view with indifference the state of its object. With man, therefore, it is an advantage that love is blind. But with God the activity of His love puts away in the Cross of His Son the entire offending thing,—that is, He righteously in judgment gets rid of our condition which is painful to His love, and hence we are "graced" in the Beloved; His love has nothing to check it, it can flow out and on as it likes. It is not that He loves us in spite of our faults, but He can rest in His love; there is nothing in us (because in Christ we are entirely new before Him) to offend Him any more. What a complete satisfaction to His love! and evincing at the same time the exactitude and inexorability of His righteousness. Lessen the righteousness and you lessen the love. The love cannot allow anything in me that would be below

the Divine standard, for the standard of the one who loves is always that which is perfect in his eves: and hence with God, the standard is Himself. We in our love are obliged to tolerate and excuse, because even in our ideas of perfection we must make allowance for imperfection, or we must condemn ourselves or be dishonest. God commends His love to us while we were yet sinners. He from His own side in judgment removes every atom of the offending thing, so that we now, in the life of His Son, may make our boast in God, through Him by whom we have received the reconciliation. Everything has been removed by His love, that we may go to Him and make our boast in Him on the happiest terms, and there the love surrounds us, and nothing can separate us from it (see Rom. viii. 35-39). In my flesh there is plenty to pain His love; but He has judged it from His side for ever, and I am called to do so as I love Him. "All things work together for good to them that love Him." If I love Him, I love what suits Him; I am not surprised to see judgment on everything unsuited to Him. See the opening of Deuteronomy xi.: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and keep His charge;" and in 1 Corinthians ii.: "Eye hath not seen nor ear . what God has prepared for them that love Him." I love His perfection; for, after all, the thing to satisfy love is that the object is according to its standard of perfection. Hence the Lord shall see the travail of His soul and be satisfied; and He will present us to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or anv such thing, but holy and without blemish.

Now, the more we love the Lord, the more are our souls filled with His perfection. Nothing there can ever check the sensibilities of our love; and the more we love Him, the less we can bear that which is unsuited to Him, and the more do we labour to conform everything to His mind and to seek that which will please Him; this imparts the greatest charm to devotedness, and is its reward. The delight of love, as seen in the eagle, is to lead her offspring into the same power as herself; and this is the way of Divine love, not only in its nature but in its ability. This is the nature of Christ's love for us, and eventually it will reach its aim, for we shall be perfectly like Him. Hence, as we love Him, we seek that all who belong to Him should be here like Him. If we have learned in any little measure to fly, we take the place of the eagle-mother and encourage the young bird to fly. This is the delight of love, and this is devotedness of the highest order; while the satisfaction of love is, that there is nothing in its object to check it, but that it is according to its standard of perfection.

The Higher we are with Christ the Safer we are here.

I THINK you are right as to the distinction between the Lord's presence to two or three (Matt. xviii.), and His manifestation to the one keeping His word (John xiv.); though to both, His presence would supply whatever He knew each needed from His presence. You see we all need

something or gain something from the presence of one on whom we are dependent, whether for care, counsel, or service of any kind. He, blessed be His name, is equal for any and all. He supplies all, but to each distinctly as each requires.

I am greatly impressed with the conviction, that unless one keeps in the highest place,—near Him (a barn-door fowl, however high the perch, always goes to the top round), we shall neither be equal for the difficulties of the day,—able to steer our way through the maze and confusion, nor be preserved ourselves from the influence it would exert over us. We must overcome the darkness with light; and if we do not overcome it, it will swamp us. It is not that we can go partly with it and still be light. The principles are completely antagonistic. If this were clearly seen, saints could not expect or attempt to go on, in any degree, on the world's level.

The Lord's rejection, accepted by Him in Matthew xxii., tells you the moral state of the world, and of man when He closes His ministry. In the first place, they were under Cæsar, instead of being under the true King of Israel. Secondly, they denied the resurrection, as men practically do now. Thirdly, man asks what is the commandment, instead of looking to God for mercy as a lost one. These were the three religious elements of the world, when the world of Psalm cx. reached the ear of our blessed Lord; and surely these principles are as active this day as they were in that day. As a saint, I am not under Cæsar but under Christ (the dues to Cæsar is quite another thing. I do not

count them as my property. It is here looked at religiously, not in a temporal way), and as Christ's, I am looking for the resurrection, as the vindication of all that God is in His grace and power. The Lord is rejected, and has sat down, until His enemies are made His footstool: and I am either with Him above all these religious elements, or I am coalescing with that which is against Him. If I follow Him I am light, overcoming the darkness, and I am myself preserved in the very separation which the light imposes on me. I take part with Him, I am of His spirit. I find things here as He left themthe world as unwilling to accept me when I am like Him, as it was to accept Him; opposing, hindering, baffling me, as it did Him. And seeing that it is in order that we should represent Him here during His absence, He has left us here; how imperative it is that I should walk in His steps, and expect only to know His joy as my feet fall into His very footprints.

Saints take up so little the idea that they are to live Christ, not merely to belong to Him. He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. We are now members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. People ought to be able to say, there is a part of Christ, not partly of Christ; and it ought to be the joy of our hearts to occupy this place, as no doubt it is when we in any little measure occupy it. Who knows the delight and balmy invigoration of any climate who has not been in it; and who can speak of its virtues and value but the one who has lived there and experienced it for himself? If we do not rise to Christ's level we must be in the level of His

enemies. The levels are very distinct and remote, too, from one another; and the only way to get power to rise above the low level, is by asserting in faith, because it is truth, that we do belong to the high level; and thus when in faith we accept our true place, God, in His grace makes us to be in power, what is true respecting us in His purpose. If we accept the low, we hinder faith; and there is no rising to the place which in truth belongs to us, because there is no faith in us respecting it. When faith begins to work, it says the low level is not my place; and there is no rest till faith lands us in the high level which is my place.

Learning the Lord's Mind as well as Correction from the Word.

THE moment a conscience is restored or revived. it necessarily must ask, "What would the Lord have me to do?" and I think I find daily that the more lively my conscience is, the more dependent I am on His word; for I feel that I have no counsel nor power of judgment, but as I get it from Him. God, as the source and fountain of all wisdom, is thus the more and more impressed on me; and as I cultivate the habit. the grace which led to the habit makes me know that it is but natural to the new man to do so, What I desire so much for souls, and what I watch for, or rather seek to watch for, is this applying to the word not merely for guidance about some individual difficulty (I see there is a good deal of this latter, which is often selfishness, in a

way); but what I desire for myself and for others, is to cultivate the Lord's mind and counsel, for the simple peculiar satisfaction of being in any degree in the same mind with Him. I don't speak now of any subject in particular, or any Scripture in particular; but for the word to be studied so that I may have wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. I find if I am not kept up in intelligence, I cannot walk with Him in His "How can two walk together unless purposes. they be agreed?" Nay, more; if I am not in His mind, I shall be reducing His sayings and thoughts, which have reference to a deeper thing and purpose, to the level where I am, and where I can understand them. There were things which the Lord could not communicate, nor could His disciples receive, until the Holy Ghost came.

It is astomishing how saints will listen to the unfolding of high truth which many of them do not understand, and yet get good from it; but if you were to catechise each separately, you would find that they had only taken in bits which suited vacancies, so to speak, in their souls, and that they were so far edified; while those who feed on the truth so unfolded, are led by the unfolding, into communion with the Lord with regard to the truth.

One is ready to be distressed at times because there is not more practical christian life now; but there cannot be high practical life if there be not enlarged communion with the Lord. By communion I mean common mind. If I am walking with a mind in concert with the Lord, I must be in practical christian life; but I cannot be in close concert with the mind of the Lord, unless I get some idea of His inner counsels and purposes,—those which lie next His heart. Now if I have got hold of these, I have got hold of high truth, and in the right way. It is not merely the knowledge of the high truth, but the place and interest which it holds in the mind of Him who is the object of my heart, and, through His grace, my companion through this evil scene.

The Death of Christ the Door to Himself either in Heaven or on Earth.

As to the death of Christ being the point of separation from the world, and that only through which we can walk in it—Christ in His death bore all the judgment which lay on me. a word, He suffered for everything; for judgment is on everything. His Cross is that through which by Him all things are alone reconcileable to God; whether things in heaven or things on earth, all in me contrary to God is judged there; and through it only, am I reconciled to God. It is not from my sins merely, but from everything under judgment, that the Cross frees me. People will admit that nothing but the Cross could free them from their sins, and place them in reconciliation with God; but everything here is under judgment, and there is no other way for everything else to be reconciled, but in the same way as I,—a sinner—have been.

If everything here will be reconciled through the Cross, it is evident that everything needed reconciliation: and no reconciliation could be effected but through the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which "the world is crucified unto me. and I unto the world." This is our boast: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is evident that the apostle is not here speaking of his sins; he is speaking of all the things under judgment, and he is glorying before God in his own position through it; not grieving that he has to give up the world, or trying to keep as much of it as he can without losing the peace of his conscience; but glorying that he is absolutely severed from it all through the Cross of Christ,-the world crucified to him and he to the world. If you felt that judgment was on everything, you would like to be relieved from everything. You know what relief it is to you to have the Cross between you and your sins,—to know that in God's sight it is so. You would not revert to your sins. You would not, if you could, neutralize the efficacy of the Cross, and return to your sins. You rejoice that it has for ever severed you from them in God's sight. You glory in it, and rightly so; you cannot do so too much, for it is God's doing, and you glorify Him as you exult in and enjoy it.

Now if you could feel about everything in the world as you do about your sins, you would rejoice that by the same Cross, "by Him, I say," you are crucified to the world and the world to you; as it is through it only, in Him, there is reconciliation for everything in heaven or on earth. This determines the question at once between what is of man's will and what is

Divine. Everything connected with the first Adam's fallen state, or with which he was connected, is judged in the death of Christ. All the old things stand on one side of His death; all the new things on the other side. When His life has reached me, or I have reached it, and everything according to God, am I sorry then to lose any of the things judged in His death? Nay, I am rejoiced, when loval in heart to Him, to find that at the same moment and by the same act, I am freed from my sins, and from all around me which is not of God, and under judgment. Everything not reconciled through the Cross, by Him who bore it, is under judgment. How cheering to my heart to realize that I am, through the Cross of Christ, entirely out of it; and "the life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." It is Christ living in me doing His will in every position.

I hope you will see all that the Cross embraces; and thus that the death of Christ separates me from everything here unto Him. His death opens a way for me out of everything here. I remember Him in His death and I announce it till He comes. What else does the scene tell me of? It required His death to effect reconciliation for me, and for everything I see. Could the very earth be reconciled without His death? We know it could not. Can I look at it, and admire it, without recalling the price of reconciliation,—or rather, is not the price of reconciliation the label to faith on every article on earth? His death is the only suitable association, solemn and momentous as it is, that you can have on

earth. Everything else that you see, and yourself, alas! REQUIRED IT. You are in the place and scene of it, and you ought to be delighting that it has severed you in God's sight absolutely from it, and that in the new man you are apart from the scene. Though you are actually in it, your only association with it is His death; for if you had not His death, how should you find a place of escape from it! Hence it (the death) becomes the true and most grateful remembrance of your heart about Him while you are on the earth. You cannot see Him, or be as He was on earth, but through His death. His death is the doorway to Himself. You must remember Him here as having ended everything against God of the first man, and brought in everything according to the mind of God. Is it not simple,—is it not wonderful? If you go into the haunts of men, it must be as seeking for the silver pieces, and you must go there as a widow of this world; not as a worldling; but as Christ, sweeping the house, and seeking diligently for the silver piece.

May you drink in of the resources which are in Christ, and thus find yourself independent of natural ones. Mercy and peace be with you.

Self viewed from my own side and from Christ's side.

If I am occupied with myself, it must be either with my bad or with my good. Now if I am conscientious, and the more so I am, the occupation will be with my bad, and in a peculiar and a

fatal way. Occupation with my bad engrosses more than with my good. There is, at all times, very little in my good; but in my bad there are the windings, the accounting for this thing, the vexation for that; the way I was tempted, how I yielded; the shame, the contrition, the purpose to amend,—each doing its part, like a professed company of dramatis personæ. And thus I am engrossed with self, and my conscience cannot reprove me for it, because I do so avowedly to condemn myself; but the fact of its being an engrossment, and of the most exhausting nature to both heart and mind, should warn us sedulously to avoid it. One looks at and pores over one's prostrate self, horror-stricken, and yet provoked to look the more by that which deepens the pain. What good,—what gain is there from this engagement? None whatever, when it engrosses and occupies the mind, as it will exclusively, with visions of one's-self, which de facto constitute self as an absorbing object by which your heart is crowded and your mind wasted. When this kind of self-occupation possesses one, it is not simply evil which is before you,—it is yourself placed before your own tribunal; and there is the prosecution and the defence; and though the verdict is always against you, there is in all this that which only occupies you more with self.

But if I see myself as Christ sees me, I am—because He is light which removes, not law which exacts—made to feel that whatever is seen is necessarily excluded, if not of Him; for the good of light is to expose things as they are, and hence a very different action goes on if I see myself in the light. I am sensible of the high and

blessed deliverance vouchsafed to me. Christ is made more precious to me than ever. My heart turns to Him, rests in Him, dwells in Him, more fixedly than ever, because I see what He is as well as what I am; and it is by Him who exposes me that I know that I am set free from everything exposed. As one feels the smallest atom in one's eye, so do I feel my least evils before Him. But He shows me where it is; and seeing it, it is gone,—it is refused and condemned, and I am liberated, and I rejoice in Him. I know the righteousness of God to forgive and to cleanse me better than ever. When in the light, I never see evil. but in order to remove it. In the other case, it is seeing and exploring, and deepening one's mind in all the tortuous workings of one's self: seeking exculpation, but only partially or occasionally finding any. When I see with the Lord, I see without any questioning; but as I see, I am relieved by Him, and He therefore engages my heart more deeply than ever. Myself fades in the distance; and I delight to dwell in and abide with Him, who, as I follow, is to me the light of life.

What Prepares me for Action.

Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, and our daily course is to be simply the expression of Him as He was here. It is not to be premeditation how we shall act on a given occasion, but seeking to have Him so dwelling at home in our hearts by faith, that we may act in our small circumstances as He has acted in opening out the

path for us. When we premeditate how we shall act, it is our reputation which is before us; but when we are filled with His company, and the influence of it, we bear ourselves acceptably to His Spirit in those we have to do with, and there is conscious consolation from the affections of Christ awakened by intercourse and communion; and when we meet with enmity and opposition, then there is a fuller sense of refuge in Him: "He is a strong tower, the righteous fleeth into it and is safe."

There is something very grand in the daily history of a saint. He knows nothing of the peculiar tactics of the foe for the day; he cannot in a balloon, as in modern warfare, survey the disposition of the enemy's forces; but without knowing from what quarter the attack may come, he is to be ready on every side, and he goes forth like the sun to run his course, resisting all evil, and contributing good on every hand; and he is well qualified to do so, if abiding in Christ. He is not watching the enemy to see what he must provide, but he is cultivating the company of Christ in his heart by faith, and then he is prepared for every assault. The company of the One most loved and valued is the only military exercise for him. It is when the heart most fully enjoys itself that the hand is most skilful to shelter a friend or confound a foe, because the strength of Him who is at home in my heart, is ministered through me according as the demand is made. Are you premeditating how you will act, going through drill and sword exercise in order to be up to the mark? or are you entertaining Christ as a guest in your heart, and therefore

provided with His grace on every side? What a difference! In the one case, you are satisfying your heart in its deepest enjoyments, because occupied with the Guest that commands the fullest circle of them; in the other, you are in a state of suspense, at best occupied with the demand which is made on you, rather than with the strength of Him who would enable you to meet all demands.

Each a peculiar Plant in a peculiar Spot.

When we consider that each of us is a plant of the Lord, and not one like another as to leaf or flower, the plantation is most interesting; and though there is no similarity in the circumstances or in the duties of any one, yet the health and vigour of each is hindered or promoted by the state of any of the rest, for we are members one of another. You are a plant of the Lord, set by Him in His plantation on earth, to have a certain leaf and blossom and fruit. He knows where He has set you, and He takes into account all the adverse influences which bear on you. He puts the plant where it can best set forth the beauty He has given it! He knows the amount of frost and wind and sun which suits it. We are in the new nature exotics, but we are placed in circumstances the best suited to neutralize the adverse influences of which in our own nature we are so susceptible. As the plant of the Lord you are an exotic, and there is no other plant like you. He has only the one specimen of each, but while this is so, and this new plant is not in its own climate and

air, and your old nature is at home here, and is fostered and promoted according as it can use and enjoy the things here; yet the circumstances you are placed in are the most favourable and the best adapted for spiritual growth. For the plant there is really nothing here, everything hinders it; and yet the place and trials which form your circumstances, however painful, are the most suited to promote growth, because the Lord knows the only spot in His plantation where you can or could grow according to His intention. I think it is a great thing to be assured that I am not only a peculiar plant but that I am planted in a peculiar spot; and that if I don't express the virtues and qualities of the exotic there, that I could do so less in any other circumstances. Bad health, for instance, is a very rough wind; but this the gardener sees necessary, in order to remove some of the vapours which would hang about the valley of the old nature, and thus retard and obscure the expressions of the exotic.

But there is another good from rough winds, even,—that the plant, according to its vitality, really increases in strength on the very side in which it is most assailed. The vapours go, and the plant takes advantage of the relief, and declares its energy; I mean that it is not only the wind from the outside, but the power from the inside; so that when the wind tears away the ivy from the tree, the tree insists that it must not be embarrassed by the ivy again. The wind is as the cannon to make the breach, but then the soldier, sword in hand, enters it and is victor. You will at once see that there must

be concert with the wind (the trial and pressure of circumstances, all to break down the flesh), and the power within. When any breach is made, then self-denial is required to turn to good account that which God has effected by chastening. This I feel the most difficult, and also the most deeply interesting action in our histories. There are the rough winds and the frost without; and there is the energy of the exotic within, seeking to occupy the place of the flesh which has been broken down. is what I may call the following up a victory. But besides this, the very scene in which I am set becomes an opportunity for me to prove by refusing it, the strength of the power within, and I receive an hundred-fold more for what I surrender. Thus, whatever our circumstances may be, dark or bright, they are really the most favourable and the most adapted for growth; and this is an immense comfort. If they be sorrowful circumstances which break down the flesh, the field is claimed by the Spirit. If bright ones, seductive to the flesh, as Egypt was to Moses, they are to be surrendered that Christ may be the full joy of the heart.

If I say it delights my heart to see you growing as one of His plants (of which there is not another, and therefore commanding and insuring a special interest), how much more is it to Him who has chosen you. How beautiful in the eyes of the angels to see one singular and rare plant resisting the wind and every adverse influence, and setting forth the beauties of Christ in your appointed spot on earth.

· The First Lessons of the Newly-born.

It was very grateful to me to hear that the Lord had revealed Himself to your soul. Fallen man could know nothing of God; that is, he could not be in any degree before Him without feeling that he is a sinner and morally unfit for God. Adam and Eve, without the commission of any moral guilt, felt this the moment they encountered the presence of the Lord God, and therefore they hid themselves behind the trees of the garden. Now, up to this, though they had some sense of departure from innocence, this sense they were able to satisfy by making themselves aprons,—teaching us that man may quiet his sensibility of evil with regard to his fellow-man; but the moment he has to do with . God, really and distinctly, his efforts are quite of another order,-efforts which only prove that he is resourceless, for he flies and hides. It would be impossible for a fallen man to be otherwise in the presence of God; and therefore if a man does not feel he is a sinner, the only conclusion is that he never was in the presence of God. As the voice of God followed Adam to his hidingplace, so does that of His Spirit now with each of And as with Adam, the conference that he shrunk from ended in faith in God; so now every one—the greatest sinner—who is drawn to Christ in the light, will always know, like the woman of Samaria, that the result of it, as to her, is eternal life.

God is revealed now by His Son, and the entrance into His presence is known by the light

there; as Christ says: "I am the light of the world." Now this light has a twofold effect on What was dimly foreshadowed with Adam, though with the most blessed result, is fully declared to us. The light makes manifest our unsuitableness for it, but the more this is seen. the more is its great power known; for there the value of the blood of the Son of God in cleansing from all sin is most deeply appropriated. If the light enters your soul faintly, disclosing to you very little of your natural alienation and unsuitableness for God, you will know still of its greater action, which is declaring to you the perfectness of your cleansing before God from all sin. The quickened soul is kept in healthy consciousness of the light by the word,—the washing of water by the word. God is light; and you will find that nothing will deepen the two actions of light in your soul so much as reading His word. In reading the Scriptures, you will find how man's nature, with its principle of evil, is exposed and condemned by the word of God. And, on the other hand, your soul will be confirmed by every line of it more and more in the depth and greatness of His love and purpose toward you. Make the word your study, and your mind will take the colour of it and the power of it. Nothing so effective for silencing doubts, correcting false imaginations, and establishing the mind, as the word of God. May the light of His own presence be always your refuge and rest, and may the peace of it rest and remain with you.

Nature woos an Ideal. The Spirit satisfies the Heart with Christ.

Your conscience is never happy but as you act up to the faith of your soul. Your faith is assured that there is nothing like the presence and society of Christ for full, unbounded, heart satisfaction. Your conscience is disturbed when you waver from this faith, and make trial of other things to fill your cup, -"the wild gourds," which only bring death into the pot (see 2 Kings iv). Why, with such an assured conviction of the fulness that is in Christ, do you turn to other things, as if you could derive from them any of that rest which you know is in Christ, and though you are aware you have suffered in your spirit in consequence? I believe that it arises from your not distinguishing clearly between your spiritual and natural affections. The things of the Spirit of God are spiritually discerned; you are not sufficiently convinced that you must retire from the spiritual, by which you can only discern what is of Christ or have communion with Him, when the natural absorbs your attention. You don't fear the natural enough. The natural may not be wrong, but it diverts you from that line in which only you can enjoy the Lord. You love Him, and you have an admiration for Him; but what is the fact, as any disquietude or attraction will disclose to you? You know you have lost the comfort and support of His presence. Your conscience, as well as the void that is in your heart, tells you so. Now if you had no confidence in nature, two things would be the result: one,

that you would fear and deprecate the natural, which diverts from the spiritual; and, secondly, you would not be exposed to the defeats from which you now suffer because you trust yourself too much. Natural affection seems harmless enough until it encounters an order of things which suit it better than what has yet been presented to it. Many a one loved Jesus with a true child's love, until his nature found out that there were other things which would suit his nature far better. What makes natural attachments so binding and unchangeable, is simply because one has only to do with nature, and one does not find in nature any one else so answering to one's own ideal. Now with the Lord, though the natural may own admiration of Him, yet when that which is of nature simply, with power to engage or attract it, offers, it strengthens nature in itself, and in that line which suits it; and, as this is the case, the Lord is felt as more unsuited, and in a little time oppressive, so that the conscience becomes troubled because of the forgetfulness of - Him and the eager promotion of that which has displaced Him. The Lord has taught you very distinctly that you must place no confidence in your natural ideal; and He bars and checks it on every side, while He has given you to taste of the true in Himself; and He would therefore use everything around you to promote your enlarged acquaintance with Himself:—the only One for the new man, because the perfect One. Nature cannot reach this perfect One; it seeks its ideal, and cannot go beyond it. He checks this, as I have said, and gives you that which checks

your nature, in order that you may in spirit enjoy Himself, and find that He can fill your heart and soul. When once you learn that this can be only in the Spirit, you will have attained a great height; for then you will fear nature, not only because it is the flesh, but because it would divert you from the deep, overflowing, blessedness known to your soul in Christ Jesus. The more your natural affections are denied, the "manifold more" will be given to you in Himself, even in the present time.

May the Lord lead you into His own joy, so

that from Himself your cup may run over.

Dependence on God, not on Mercies.

CHRISTIANS often depend on God while leaning on some mercy of His hand to them, as children walk by the assistance of go-carts. To walk without any seen thing to lean on, is a new and peculiar path; and as a child pauses and fears ere he attempts it, though desiring it, and glad when he has succeeded in ever so small a way,—so with us; we see we ought to depend on God, we feel we may, we pause, we fear, we attempt, we succeed, we are glad! God's sufficiency is The first time a child known to our souls. walks by himself must be a never-forgotten moment; that is, though the mere beginning may have been forgotten, the fact and nature of the act is known to him all his life long; and if it be interrupted, either by accident or infirmity, he feels it sadly. When we have learned to walk in simple dependence on God, we never could

substitute anything else for it. If failure, or infirmity (loss of communion), deprive us of it for a season, there must be always an effort in our new nature to return to an order of strength so normal and natural to us as of God. The Lord comfort your heart much, and teach you daily how to practise walking in dependence on Himself without any subsidy or aid. Accustom yourself not to look for it. Try to walk with ever so small steps in simple rest on Him, making known to Him all your heart. You may rest assured that the reason why our machinery is so often or ever out of working order, or dragging heavily, is because there is some pressure on our hearts which we have not disposed of. You must dispose of every pressure to God, or it will clog the wheels, and the whole of you be out of gear. Unburden everything to Him; dispose of every pressure to Him, and the peace of God through Christ Jesus shall keep your heart and mind.

The Saint an Exotic.

A SAINT is an exotic here, and as a vine-branch is to yield that which gladdens the heart of God and man. There is really no soil for the vine here now; consequently there is no vine, but as we through the Spirit are abiding in Christ, and He in us; and so we are Christ here. It is not that we are the vine ostensibly, but we have and maintain the virtues of Christ who is absent. We are to live Him here during His absence; but we are exotics, for our Head is not here, though we are here for our Head, and we act like Him

here. We are true to Him, and His love is known to us, and we continue in it, and our joy is full, because we are living Him where He is not; as the Apostle says,—"To me to live is Christ." We are exotics, but we are here to represent and bear testimony to One who is absent; consequently, it is not ourselves we are thinking of or any one else, but the One who is everything to us, even Christ, whom we are seeking to personate where He is no longer, because He has been rejected by His once "own" from the world. The exotic longs, and in a measure pines for its own clime, for there truly and fully it would be developed; but being here, where everything is adverse to it, and for Him from whom all is derived, He by His Spirit sustains and supplies the energy of His own life to us down here. We can thus brave all that is against us, and maintain true constitutional vigour, and ability, too, to manifest the rarity and value of the grace and Divine power which has made us exotics, and thus set forth, to the praise and glory of Christ, His name to a world which has not comprehended His beauty. I cannot surrender my nature as an exotic. It is as an exotic that I set forth Christ. The more I am one, the more I repel the adverse moral influences bearing upon me; and the more I set forth that which makes an exotic admirable or of advantage. It is as I am Christ here, that I am really useful to others. The more I am Him, the more I exhibit what is the grace of God to man, the more the Father is glorified, and the more vigorous am I myself in my own heart; for because of the active energy of Divine life in me, I

am in the healthy tone of constitutional strength. The more exotic you are, the more useful you are, the truer witness for Christ, and the healthier and the happier you are; because, like one exercising one's self in frosty weather, you have the fresh glow of the virtue and power of life. Be an exotic wherever you are, be it in the queen's palace or in the humble cottage. Let each eye see that you are an exotic, that you maintain the life of Jesus amid everything that is adverse to it.

Love gives Character to Gifts, not Gifts to Love.

GIFTS speak to me of the love which gives them The love is not lessened because their character. it is expressed. It has spoken by its gifts, and they speak to me of it, but not to give me the idea that it has entirely expressed itself, like the silkworm conferring its gift and not surviving; nay, rather they assure me that it lives, and that it is in thought eternal and unalterable. This is Divine love, it expresses itself by the greatness of its gifts; but it never lessens or diminishes its energy or thought of me because it has given so much. It remains rich in its own enjoyment in giving, and in my joy in possessing. The gift expresses to me the nature of the thought, but it is the thought which gives the highest character to the gift; and this remains for me to fall back on and enjoy, even if the gift perishes. We don't keep sufficiently in mind the thought that there is in God respecting us. We are

pleased and gratified with His gifts, and, to a certain extent, we feel that it is from His love that they come; but His thought, and the interest in us from which they spring, do not engage our hearts as much as the expressions themselves. He rejoices to give. I seek to study the love He has for me, and I see what and how He would tell me of His thought about me on a low level; but the more spiritual and heavenly His gifts, the more I learn of His interest about me on the highest level. Invalid children receive from their parents indulgences and toys which stronger and happier ones do not require. I think many children of God do not study the love of their Father; they seek only what they think suits themselves. They consult not His thought and interest about them. Whatever they like they are thankful for, but they do not at all know the thought of His heart about them. They form an idea of His love from the gifts or acts, instead of knowing that His love gives a character to the gifts or acts. greatest gift that He confers now, is affording us ability and opportunity for serving Christ; and the nearer we are to Him, and the better we know His love, the more shall we admit this, and seek this as the happiest and fullest expression of His love for us. Blessed be His name, we are made for His glory; and He in His own blessed way is making each of us a CERTAIN not a random stone in the temple which is growing unto the Lord.

Some of His gifts are with the intent that I should feel their insufficiency, like a ship full of fish to Peter, and he in the presence of God, a sinner (Luke v.). His gifts are cypher to my

own heart. I read them as I know His love. Another may attempt to read them, but no one can know the true meaning of the gifts of any one who loves you, but one who knows the nature and thought of the love. The same gifts may be given to a dozen, and yet speak quite differently to each.

No Service nor Moral Weight without Separation.

When we find ourselves in such a position as this, namely, with a better conscience and more respect for the truth of God than what is professed by those around us—it is important to see, and seeing, to maintain, the line of conduct in word and deed which will preserve one's own conscience from declension, and also maintain that moral influence which such a position requires. A Nazarite defiled his head if he suddenly touched a dead bone. The real difficulty in intercourse with unseparated saints, as with the world, is to maintain reserve; that is, not to blend with them; not to allow them to think that my tastes run in the same line as theirs do. I hang my harp on the willows. I can in one sense do anything to please them, but never as pleasure to myself. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning." If you are amused; if your humour blends, you are powerless, you are as one of them. You have so far lost weight, because you have lost the spirit of a serving one and are pleasing yourself. I don't want to make your life a

burden—far otherwise; for you will find that the moment you sink to their moral level, you expose yourself to their power to make you feel your position; but while you preserve for your own conscience' sake, for their sake, and for the Lord's sake, reserve, as I term it, that is, not lending yourself to their invitations whether intellectual or common, you are on ground above them; they will never trespass on you except for service,—and service of the better kind, too; and you are always, through the grace keeping you, ready and prepared to serve them in every way. I know you will be sorely solicited, and your natural temperament will desire to yield to the current which is carrying all around you with it. Of course I don't want you to be morose,—that would be unnatural; but I do want you ever to remember that you are a servant—and that in the highest sense; which makes it the more imperative that you should not at any moment be induced by blandishment, or any solicitation on the part of those around you, to overlook your position, where all depends on the amount of moral influence with which you carry yourself. Your nature often may long for a fling which is natural and pleasant to it; but as you have accepted the place you are in, I am sure your desire and prayer is that you may fill it according to the mind of the Lord, and thus serve Him.

May He guide, help, and cheer you, as His servant, and then all will be well.

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The good of Unsuited Circumstances.

When we speak of everything being suited to us, we necessarily make ourselves the ones to be considered, and that according to our own judgment. It is God's judgment,—our Father's judgment, -that we have to do with; and hence the very position we think least suited to us is the one where He knows we shall best learn that knowledge of His grace of which we are still ignorant. In circumstances which are easy to us, and suited to us, there is not the same order of exercise or of dependence on God which there must be if we walk with God in circumstances disagreeable and naturally trying to us. How can I get on in the latter, unless I am freshly invigorated at every juncture. I am kept in a constant state of dependence; like a man swimming, I must move on and strike out, or in a little while go down. The entire question with us ought to be, Am I in the place and circumstances approved of and designed for me by my Father? As to ability to continue therein, He will surely supply it if I am where He would have me to be. And more than this, it is there that I learn the power of His grace to me. God is not now making smooth and easy places for us. is, on the contrary, leading us into difficult ones, and then teaching us that we are to rise above them,—to be masters of the occasion. man was brought nigh to God in His Son, He did make smooth places for His people; but now being in Christ, He shows His favour in enabling us to rise above things,—to be superior

to them, because we are in the strength of Christ. Be assured it is a far more signal instance of your Father's favour towards you, as a servant of His Son on earth, to place you in circumstances unsuited to you where the grace of Christ may be known by you, making you master of them, than if He placed you in a nice little sphere where naturally you could swing round like a ship at anchor in a dock. Would you learn the power of Christ, or would you recline only under the shade of a gourd? If you are in your right place (difficulties and disagreeables are no evidence that it is not your right place) you must conquer in it; that is, you must not only give satisfaction to all therein, but you must justify God in your own triumphant and thankful spirit before Him. Marah is not marah,—it is sweet. Widowhood, indeed, but not widowhood which pines and mopes, but which is accepted, and which the heart accepts, as alone suited to it here.

Recovery through the Valley of Achor.

What is divine is never lost; it may be covered with the plaster of this world, but whatever has been written on the fleshy tables of the heart will never be effaced. You will certainly sing again as in the days of your youth, but then you must be brought to the valley of Achor. Achor is sorrow; it is morally the death of all that which turned away the heart from God, and this can take place without actual bereavement here. It is renunciation in sorrow. It is

a condemning to death the natural attractions which stole the heart away from the bright line in which God had set it; and this is known by the consciousness the heart has of returning to where it had left off. Like one long absent from a loved home returning to it, or the hound returning to the lost scent which delights and commands all the energies of his existence. There is a sense of renewed connection with the light once enjoyed and the path once trodden; and there is the selfcondemnation and repudiation of the imaginary pleasures which had diverted one from it. There must be in some way a discovering of the worthlessness of everything, to set one in the path of life with God. This Peter learned when everything was favourable to him in this scene (Luke v.). Christ in the ship, he doing His will, blessed with abundance of fish; but all these could not meet the need of his soul in the presence of God, and hence the One who did meet it, who thus proved His superiority over everything gratifying to a man, commanded and secured all the heart of Peter. "He brought his ship to land, left all, and followed Him." It is not an easy thing; it is, on the contrary, the moment of death, and therefore Achor, because then one denounces as vain all that has caused the heart to swerve. One must either see the net or find out that it is a net. "Vain is the net set in the sight of the one on wing," (I believe is the better reading of that passage.) If we see the net, we are not taken in it; but if we are taken in it, (and this is the way most common with us,) we are drawn away by the false glitter of the present thing; and then we are often, like the lion in the net,

unable to extricate ourselves, and dependent on the wearing of circumstances, like that of the nibbling of the mouse to cut the knots. It is very gracious of the Lord when He gives desires after Himself in the soul; for surely, somehow or other they will be satisfied.

Praying for Others.

As to your question about praying for others, and the experience or gain which we derive from doing so, even though our prayers are not answered,—I have asked myself as to it more than once.

In the first place, praying for others can only flow from a heart at rest about itself, and knowing in itself the value of the desires which it expresses for another. I could not be true or happy in praying otherwise. Secondly; if I am praying for another, according to the will of God, and in concert with the Spirit, I am in fellowship with the Spirit. It is not a question whether my prayer is successful. I have been in company with the Spirit of Christ in the prayer, and my own soul is invigorated, by the very passage of His thought through my mind. cannot have a divine desire for another awakened in me, but by His Spirit; and being awakened there, I am sensible, on account of it, of the strength and blessedness in Him whose desire is passing through my heart and mind; and this spiritual desire will be accomplished according to God; that is, according to His mind, not after man's judgment. Therefore when a spiritual desire is awakened and occupies your heart, touching any of His people, you are not only invigorated by this stream of divine thought passing through you, but you may rest assured that God will effectuate it in some way, though in a way manifestly of Himself. I should not keep a list of people to pray for, but I am thankful when I remember any, as I believe and feel my Lord thinks of them. What good is there in anything else here? May we abound therein, and we should if the Lord were our strength—the armour on. See Ephesians vi. 10–18.

Present Confession of Sins and the Judgmentseat.

THE answer to your question about our sins now confessed being brought before the judgmentseat of Christ, is, I apprehend, that they will be brought out there. Our confessing them now shows that we are in the light partially, which then fully will lay all bare. Our forgiveness now, -that is our sense of it, and consequent rest of spirit, is, according to our confession,-the depth and sincerity of it. But in that day not only is the sin set forth, in order to show the grace of God, but also to make manifest to us how we have missed our own blessing by our waywardness. Now, the more comprehensive our confession, the more full and blessed our sense of forgiveness, and of the righteousness of God in which He can forgive us, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. In that day it is not for forgiveness at all, but to display to us His justice though we are under grace. Everything is brought out. We are manifested before the throne of Christ; the whole history of His grace toward us is set forth, and of course the whole of our conduct is also set forth; what we may not have understood therefore in our history is now explained; and where we have failed to see our own conduct in its true light, as seen by Him, and therefore with only a partial confession; or where it has not been seen at all, and therefore with no distinct confession: for sometimes I suppose we get, if I may say, a general indemnity from the Lord, when the heart does not condemn. We reach Him by faith; but I am sure there is not full power or full nearness to Him, except as there is a conscientious apprehension of the works of the flesh which cause a distance between Him and us, and which He, by His word addressed to us, would wash away. There is a difference between the forgiveness which gives rest to the conscience, and the washing and wiping which assures the heart that there is not a shade of distance between the Lord and it. Peter exemplifies this when he sees the Lord after His resurrection. His conscience is relieved by it, but it is not until after the dinner (John xxi.), the moment of social nearness, and the subsequent converse with Him, that Peter is restored to full confidence, and all sense of distance removed.

At the judgment-seat all comes out in its history; and it is both wonderful and necessary in order to present to us a full account of the way and manner of God's grace; and also His holiness, in letting us suffer loss when we have

slighted it by walking in the flesh, and not in the Spirit of Christ in which, in His grace, He had set us.

We need Guidance to suit our object, not to find one.

As to guidance, I believe it would be in proportion as Christ is simply our object. Guidance itself is very often our object. We are more anxious to ascertain the best way to go, in order that we may not suffer from mistakes, than simply because we desire nothing but to be near Christ and in communion with Him as the one object of our hearts. We know very well that when we have any commanding object naturally, we don't want to be guided to it. We have it. A mother knows that her child is her object. She does not want guidance as to that. She may require guidance as to the best way of caring for the child; but because her object is very distinct, she quickly adopts whatever promises to be the best for it. She has no doubt about the object, her only difficulty is what would suit it best; and whatever she adopts, she adopts with simple and unequivocal reference to her object. Consequently, if she knows what suits it, she never needs guidance. Thus, if Christ be my object, so distinctly and unequivocally that He stands out always before me, I need no guidance to find or to secure Him: my only difficulty is, to do everything suited to Him. I have no doubt as to my object, my only question is what suits my object. When I know this, all is

easy and happy; and certain it is, that when He is our object without any question, there is no great difficulty, with the word in our hands, and the Spirit of God in us, in determining what suits Him.

Supposing for a moment that we adopt a wrong course, and yet have adopted it believing it would suit Him, it is not because we judged that it would be a wise course, for then our own conduct would be our object; but supposing we have adopted it, simply and solely because we had judged that it would suit our object, what is the consequence when we are thus mistaken? It is this: that, before very long, we find out our mistake, and see that it is unsuitable. The mistake in such a case is not that we have allowed another object to control us, but the course we are pursuing, as suited to Christ, is found in practice to be unsuitable. In such a case we have taken counsel from our own minds; and we have not sufficiently and closely studied His mind.

It is here where some truly devoted souls fail very much. There is no doubt of their personal attachment to Him; but they consult and acquire from their own minds and taste how they are to please Him. This is what Martha did, instead of studying His mind to see what would please Him. Sometimes my own love for Him may be my object; but the more distinctly He is my object, the more constantly and closely am I found with Him, imbibing His mind as He has revealed it. And thus from association with Him, and the fulness of His communications, I am convinced that I can never, in any other way, discover what will suit Him.

If Christ were our one commanding object, how difficulties and questions would be solved; and if, like the Bride in Canticles, we lost sight of Him for a moment, as soon as He was unquestionably our object, and proved to be so, the right line would open to us again, as to her; and we should have all the guidance we desired—even pleasing Him, in company with Himself.

Guidance as to Secular Business.

How should I know that I was guided of God, to any particular place, in order to pursue my

trade or calling?

First, I must ascertain that I am simply free to go anywhere for the express purpose of pursuing my calling. I mean, that I am not, so to speak, previously engaged as Christ's servant on earth. In such a case, I am not at liberty to choose any place but for His service. Ephesus was an excellent place for Paul's business; and Thessalonica was, on the contrary, a very indifferent one; and vet Paul, as Christ's servant, must not remain at Ephesus, and he must remain at Thessalonica. This point being settled, the next is, that I am going, dependent on God, and not on what man may promise me. It is an assurance in my soul of His hand being with me. I am not looking for help or promises from man to assure me. I may get them afterwards, to confirm me that I am in the right path; but the first and simple thing is the assurance that my Father marks the way for me to go here, instead of there. I may see nothing to favour me, and

much to discourage me; but faith is not surprised by a "famine," that is, nothing to see; it relies on God, and God effects His own will in me in the end. There are certain things which, as I may say, belong to faith. If I am choosing any place in faith, I do not choose one above my present means; for, if I am dependent on God, I do not go into debt. I know that He can preserve the barrel of meal from wasting. If I am in faith, I do not, to use a common phrase, make an appearance. I am real in everything, because I am dependent on God. Like Ruth, I can afford to glean in the field on a hot summer's day, because I know in whom I have believed, and that I am in the right way.

Again. I do not attempt to do what I am not able to do, seeing that to act on the motto, "Fortune favours the brave," is simply natural. Bravery is not faith, and yet faith is brave; but it never leads a man to assume to do what he is

not qualified to do well.

But again,—If I am acting in faith, I am sure to be diligent, earnest, and ready to learn. The very dependence I have on God provokes me to patient, laborious attention to that which I believe He has ordained for me as my labour for my daily bread down here. The more the faith, the more the endurance in the face of the most irksome and trying difficulties. I think, too, that if I am appointed by Christ in His grace to serve Him, that God will balk me wherever I go in pursuit of my business, until I make His service paramount. If I earn wages, I shall only earn them to "put them in a bag with holes." If I choose for myself and go into the

world to become prosperous and rich, He will upset my cup some day, and teach my heart that Beersheba is to be preferred to Rehoboth. (See Gen. xxvi. 22, 32.)

The Lord's purpose in His dealings with us.

Surely the Lord's discipline must be a subject at this time of peculiar interest to yourself. If I look on the One who 'administers' the discipline, instead of dwelling on the irksomeness of the discipline to me, I cannot fail to derive a satisfaction from the discipline, even when present, which is only faintly represented by the different feelings you have towards your doctor, and the rigorous treatment which he sees it necessary to subject you to. You never allow any of the irksomeness of the treatment you are going through to suggest in your mind the slightest idea of unkindness with regard to him. You never confound the doctor, personally, with the pain or disagreeableness of the process which he prescribes, and insists on, as necessary to re-establish your health; and yet any benefit you derive from the treatment, you at once ascribe to him, and eagerly and thankfully award to him the credit of it. You feel (as you have confidence in him) that he has prescribed a certain course for you, because he desires to restore you to health; and you submit to this course without losing a particle of your confidence in or regard for him, however painful and irksome it may be; and when you derive any benefit from it, you connect it with his purpose in placing you under the treatment; and you are full of commendation of him, even for the mode which he adopted, though one of much pain and suffering.

Thus ought we to view divine discipline. know not what is the matter with us. does; and we may rest assured that He is subjecting us to the treatment which will confirm us in health; and therefore we ought to submit; seeking to reach the improvement desired by Him, and never confounding the suffering of the process with the purpose in His mind, but entering into the purpose, and being in fellowship with it apart from the process. We know that the process is necessary; and, however painful, it does not engage our minds in connection with Him, but in connection with His purpose in subjecting us to it. Hence, any and every gain from it to us causes us to revert more distinctly to His purpose, and demands of us to submit the more implicitly and carefully to the treatment imposed on us. I connect none of the painfulness with Him, but eagerly and happily I connect all the gain with Him, and the purpose of His love towards me. Divine health is fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, for that is the natural vigour of eternal life. If I am gaining by discipline, I am more in divine health, and so I do not murmur at the discipline or at Him who imposes it; I am occupied with the gain, and I praise Him for it.

May the Lord bless you, and perfect in you His own gracious purpose; and strengthen your heart to devote yourself without reserve to His service. May He cheer, help, and speedily restore you, for His own service in this evil day.

The New Man and the Suffering Body.

I have been struck lately with the distinctness with which the new man declares itself in the sickness and suffering of the old,—the body. health and prosperity this distinction is not so clearly apprehended. In a way they seem one; but when sickness or affliction supervene, then the new man becomes distinctly known as having nothing to do in itself with the sickness or the affliction, though the body in which it is, suffers. On the contrary, if the link to Christ be simply maintained, it has a clearer and a fuller sense how entirely free it is, in its nature and life, from the sufferings of the old man; and how really in--dependent the one is of the things which are so essential and necessary to the other. And this is very helpful, because it imparts a conscious strength and personality to the new man, which enables the sufferer not only to bear his suffering better, but even when his sufferings are removed, to give a prominence to the inner man which he had not done before. Thus sickness and affliction help to rid us of that which interferes with our spiritual growth, for, as the outer man perisheth, the inner man is renewed day by day. And hence we often find that the greatest sufferers have the most joy in the Lord; and that, as dissolution approaches, there is a more decided sense of ability to dispense with that which is perishing, and thus an abundant entrance is ministered.

How blessed to feel in one's self such a positive link in nature and life to Christ, that to pass away from all here would only consummate that

which is the source of real enjoyment here in the midst of suffering; and that the blessed Lord who is ministering help to us in our infirmities here, from the highest heavens, is the One whom we shall be with, without any need of this kind any more. What a peculiar sense of rest and enjoyment it gives one to taste even a little of the happiness of living with Him, for there it is that He sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied. Now all enjoyment without a consciousness of His enjoyment and satisfaction must be feeble and flickering; but when we can regard ours, as the fruit and reflection of His, as the moon borrows its light from the sun, we turn to His always to brighten our own.

May He be so fully and vividly before your soul, that your heart may make its boast in Him all

the day long.

Testing confirms Faith and ensures Rest.

I AM glad to be able in some measure to be in company with you in your exercises before the Lord. I believe we have very little idea of the gain of an exercise. It is the trying of faith: faith must be put to the test, for the rest which is obtained through faith in His presence, instead of being confirmed by circumstances,—the things around us,—is checked by our own conjectures about them, until the faith has been tested; and then everything confirms it, and assures us of God's hand ordering for us. The gain of this exercise is that it makes God my single object. When I am not walking in faith,

I am in some way making myself my object; but faith casts me on Him, and it is only as I make sure of Him, for this is faith, that I am assured in heart, and consequently restful, that He careth for me. The gain is not that I eventually get helped and delivered, but that I have learned the deep, the never-to-be-forgotten lesson, that I may trust Him and cast all my care upon Him.

You will find that it is the truth you give your fullest assent to which is the one most tested. The truth is the unfolding of God's grace to me in His Son. It tells me that I am so and so in Him, and faith through the Spirit leads me to accept it. To make this acceptance sure and unmixed is the end of the testing. The more I am tested, the more established am I in the truth. It is more precious than gold that perisheth. If I really believe the truth, I ought not to fear the testing. If I fear the testing, it is evident that I am not very satisfied with the goodness of Moses is more tried about the possibility of bringing the people of Israel out of Egypt, than about any other thing in his history that we know of; David was more tried about the kingdom; Paul about the Church; and surely no truth had each accepted with more assurance and purpose than the one about which each respectively was most tried and tested. When I have faith, the Lord is before me and not myself. I see what suits Him in the circumstances in which I am placed; and I always determine for Him, not thinking how my determination may affect myself. This is the action of faith; and I find in the end that I have done wisely for myself, for He cares for me; and if I seek Him

really, it could not be any loss to me. the contrary, all things are added unto me. It would be impossible to care for and determine everything for the good and benefit of the head of a house, and not to find that in doing so I had secured the best for every member of the family. Thus it is when I walk in faith and make Him paramount; for really I have no rest or support elsewhere; and as I do, I choose in every instance for Him, and this ultimately is sure to be the best for myself, because I am of Him, and nothing can be done for Him to my injury or loss, but entirely the reverse. Thus by the testing the truth is confirmed; and I am, because of faith, more faithful-more closely and simply walking with Him, and accepting and pursuing that which He, my only confidence, would accept and acknowledge. If I accepted any other, I should throw myself out of the rest which I have in Him.

Tribulation deepens.

It is often necessary, and profitable too, after seasons of instruction, that we should be subjected to tribulation. The winter is needed to allow the growths of spring and summer to harden through patience or endurance; "for ye have need of patience (or endurance), that after ye have done the will of God ye might receive the promise." Endurance is learned in the winter, to harden the growths which have been acquired in easier times, and we must let patience have its perfect work.

You can endure if you have the truth within, for the circumstances which demand endurance only invigorate and call forth the virtues of the truth. Our ability to endure is the measure of our strength in quality as well as extent. One horse will carry a heavier load, but at a slower pace than another who will surpass the former, by a quicker pace. Both are needed at times: and the ability of each is measured by the different order of endurance. God puts the load on us suited to the ability, or order of ability, which He, through grace confers on us; and I know the nature of the endurance required of me, from the nature of the burden imposed on me; whether I am to go slow like the waggonhorse under the lumber of life here, like the Merarites (Levites), with the weighty temporalities; or to go more quickly with a lighter load. As speed increases, power is lost; that is, it is spent in the speed, and not in bearing a greater weight. What would have sustained a greater weight is spent in the speed in which the lesser weight is borne; so that while the fleeter horse seems to carry less than the waggon-horse, the latter does no more than the former; and what is more, neither could do what the other does; and the waggon-horse, of the two, would find it more difficult to do the work of his fleeter brother, than the fleeter one the work of the waggon-horse. The real point for me is to bear well the load appointed for me, and in the pace appointed for me; and as I do, the virtue of the grace in me is brought out, and I am strengthened to bear what I know I have borne. I have learned what is the power of grace in myself. I

have endured, and the growths acquired in summer, now hardened, come in their turn, to blossom and bud and bring forth fruit.

Sickness and Sorrow.

I no not think that bodily suffering weans the heart from the present scene to the same extent as sorrow does. Bodily suffering engrosses one's own personal attention so much, one feels so helpless, and there is such a constant effort to remedy it, and every indulgence is excused on the plea of consideration for one's weakness. But in sorrow, where for instance it is on account of the sufferings or death of one very dear to us, and which is indeed the cloud by day, we grow into the sense that we are in the valley of the shadow of death. When we are suffering in our bodies there is a longing to get well; a continued resistance to the suffering, so that we are taught how helpless we are; but in sorrow on account of another, everything around has lost its interest for us. bodily suffering there is vexation because one is unable to enjoy or to do the things which others do. But in sorrow everything has lost its enjoyment, there is a dark shadow on everything; hence sorrow softens and mellows in a way that bodily suffering does not. In sorrow the heart retires from everything and everybody, and if then His rod and His staff do comfort me, I am not only cut off in sadness and affliction from the present scene, but at the very moment when all is a blank here, when one has descended to the depths, I find Him beside me who makes known

His heart to me where no one else could reach It is then one is really softened, because the heart knows in its saddest moments the love of Christ; and hence, instead of being vexed or soured, you come out of it, or rather have learned in your sorrow the greatest love; so that where the greatest darkness was, the greatest light has sprung up. The moment of the deepest depression is not only marked with an Ebenezer, but there your heart will turn from henceforth as the moment of its deepest joy in the knowledge of His love. In sickness, it is mere relief, or His power and goodness one learns and looks for; but in sorrow, where there is nothing to cheer here, He comes in and makes known to the heart the greatest cheer; so that the saddest moment connected with earth becomes the happiest moment, because of His presence where there is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore. You will easily trace the effect of each on souls. In one, there is the knowledge of His hand and His power, they are receptive, and often dependent. In the other, in addition, the heart refuses to bind itself to any thing again here. It has gone through the pains of death; it is not hardened, but it has received the greatest expansion through the heart of Christ which reached it in its widowhood.

The Father's Discipline.

WE must know what it is to be delivered unto death in some way or another; the sense of the perishing of the outer man must be deepened in us. Wherever the roots most extend, and where

natural energy would most work, there death must come in the more. Every trial is, I believe, to correct a budding of the crab-tree,—the old life. Nothing shows or testifies so much the Father's interest about us as the way He uses circumstances to detach us from things which He in His own holiness is apart from; and hence, wherever there is a root or a tendency going out into the world, or nature which is the world in miniature, He allows some one or something to vex and hurt us in that rootlet in order to teach us how to draw in, and that there is danger there. was a growth there, and it should have been mortified; and if we have not done so, we suffer through the very thing we had not repressed, and we are made aware that there was a growth where we had not perceived it ourselves. How many things try and annoy us all day which are not really for Christ's sake! All these when carried to God are solved by the simple fact that they were necessary, as intimating to us that there was some proud flesh which required the caustic; and not only this, but while personally painful to us the very trial corroborates in our hearts the depth and constancy of His love and care for us.

The Father's discipline, through circumstances here, is to me one of the most wonderful displays of the Father's love. Physiologists tell us that the presence of pain is an indication that there is something wrong with the constitution, and that measures should be taken to remove it, in order that the vitality be not hindered; for the tendency of the heart is to direct its energies to the suffering part, and thus weaken itself, while increasing

the inflammation where there is disorganization. Now with the Christian it is just the contrary; wherever there is pain (unless for Christ's sake) there is quick flesh, and the pain or suffering is allowed in order to warn one of the flesh and to check it by the very suffering. It is a blessed thing to walk consciously in the assurance of being so fully watched over. Many look for favours from God, in their daily circumstances, who do not observe the way He takes to wean them from things here. They like to interpret His providences as if they were thereby given leave to bind their hearts to His mercies here; but the more closely and spiritually you follow the Lord's ways with you, the more you will find that it is to Himself He would bind you; and that His ordering for you here, is either to sever you from attachments in this scene, or to set you free from distractions, in order that there should be no interruption to your enjoyment of Himself. The more I know the desire of the Father's heart to associate me with His Son now, according to His own love in the scene of eternal brightness, the more am I prepared and expecting that He will remove every hindrance to my practical enjoyment of it; and if I am enjoying it, I shall soon be able to solve satisfactorily to myself His ways and arrangements for me here as a citizen of heaven; whereas if I am trying to see how He considers for me here as a citizen of this world, I shall be continually disappointed and confused. What a different thing it is to walk here, as one kept dressed and fit for heaven, and only as one receiving rain and sunshine.

The Lord give us to be so assured in heart of His desire to have us with Himself, and in Himself, that we may view and measure everything as it tends to promote the end and aim of His love.

Following the Lord.

I TRUST with a real desire to help you a little, I am induced to review the difficulties which surround the path of a saint, ready, eager, and determined to follow the Lord wholly. If I did not regard you among the latter class, I could not with any confidence expect that what I am about to set before you could reach you or address your heart with any helpful effect. The first thing I have to press on myself, and on you, is what following the Lord wholly means and involves. I believe the soul simply and wholly following the Lord, starts with Him as its life, and assures itself that it has none else; that it is alone with Him, and the Lord is with it thus alone. The interests of the Lord, the saints, etc., come in as associated with the Lord; but for the heart there is an eminent, commanding, known singularity: "The Lord is One, and His name One," "I am Jesus" stands out preeminently; the greater the crowd of associations, or associates, proper to Him, the more distinctly and peculiarly He stands out before the soul earnest in following Him, and it cannot follow Him if it be otherwise. If I do not know, not only in my heart, but in my intelligence, that my Beloved is superior in His power and manifested beauty to all others, and this especially, whenever, or wherever He is seen,

amid the dearest objects of His heart, in the circle of all His glories, or when entirely alone, then I am not true or able to follow the Lord wholly. If a mariner mistake one star for another, it is evident he does not know his guiding star, and he is not following it. The heart that knows anything of following the Lord wholly, has acquired a sense of what He is which none of His interests or concerns can rival or bear resemblance to. Like the holy anointing oil, or the holy perfume, there must not and there cannot be, successfully, an attempt to make anything like unto it.

Now this consciousness of following Him is not known unless there be an unclouded intimacy with Him; and this cannot be maintained, but as I know how He, by the ministry of His word, washes my feet and wipes them, separating me virtually by the power of it from the defilement here which would cause any distance between Him and me. The greater the love, the less the true heart can suffer any shade of distance or reserve to arise between it and the Lord. there be any, the following Him must necessarily be suspended. Service for Christ may not cease. but the sense of the nearness to Him which following Him implies, is lost, because even a shade of distance or reserve necessarily distracts the true heart, which knows its own place in nearness to Him, and nothing else will really suit or satisfy This distance must be removed before the following Him known to the heart can be resumed. Peter can cast himself out of the ship to go to Jesus (John xxi). There may be full confidence in Christ's forgiving love where there is still a distance or reserve (as with Peter) which checks the heart and disqualifies it for the nearness which. as I have already said, following implies. I have dwelt long on this point because I think that it is here that saints first part company with the Lord. I desire much that you whom the Lord has led out of late, so Ittai-like (see 2 Sam. xv. 19-22), may, though youngest, help on the oldest by your simple, earnest, unequivocal following of the Lord. If you fail here you will be bewildered by the zeal and usefulness of many around you. If your heart is true to Christ, the zeal and usefulness of others will be grateful to you so far as they subserve to Christ's interests. May you and all others who are now following the Lord with purpose of heart, be kept from the snares all around-patient, humble, devoted, waiting on Him; and through His grace, helping and contributing strength to all His people on earth, to the joy of His heart.

The Word the Chart; Christ the Compass.

Some seem to me only to have drifted on to the true ground, instead of toiling and rowing and encountering every adverse wind to reach the port plainly indicated on the chart. There is necessarily a great difference between the two; the one who has only drifted into the right port, knows not what to do, and is simply a waiter on Providence; the other consults his chart and bears for the known port again, more skilful than ever in encountering currents, tides, shoals, and all the intricacies of the coast. To be a mariner

in these days, who knows the port, the spot where our Lord would have us anchor, where there is only safe anchorage, is a great matter. The sea rages fiercely and the winds are boisterous, and hence there must be good seamanship, a clear distinct knowledge of the chart, and the eye always corrected by the compass. The compass will always maintain its own point, no matter how the ship goes. The skilful mariner knows that he must follow what it indicates; the Spirit always points to Christ, and once the soul has learned that He is the attractive point, all other things, like the points of the compass, will fall into order in relation to Him: and when He is thus the known controlling power of attraction, it is wonderful how the Scriptures (the chart) are plain to us and we see our course. There is a great mistake in the present day into which some real ones have fallen, unknown to themselves, and it is simply this,—trying to find the port and anchorage without the compass. They are, I admit, students of the chart. They look for guidance from the word, as they would from a law-book; they know certain points apparently well, but they have not yet seen where they are in relation to them, and this is simply because they have no compass. They have not found Christ by the Holy Ghost as the one sole attractive point which determines every other point. They are occupied with many points, instead of being sensibly controlled by One, and then finding all others in relation to Him. The knowledge of relation comprises all true knowledge. If you know how you are related to anything, and it to you, you

are wise. I remark that souls never get on. who make points their study and their object; though any one who is simply taken up with Christ will in a surprising way be able to. solve points. The word too has interest for the one who is sensibly controlled by Christ, which it cannot have for a mere student; simply for this reason,—that it discloses Him. If I cannot by faith connect benefits with the person who confers them, I am dependent on answers tomy faith; whereas if the person who confersthem is before me, according as I know Him, there is an unfaltering guarantee of every benefit, because I have One greater than the benefits. themselves. When Christ is not the guarantee to faith, there is always a tendency to look for something on the earth. One looks for things. visible-mercies, blessings on the work, etc., to confirm and corroborate one's faith, instead of resting in Him in whom we are rooted and built up. When He is fully before me, when the needleturns to Him, everything and every person fall into their true place—true, because they are now in relation to Him who is Head over all things to the Church. What else is real or true? It is poor work to try and arrange a room of confusion in the dark; but let in the light of the sun, and then if one knows what is right, all is easy. A good servant knows how his master would like to have the room arranged. If he tries to arrange it in the dark, as many a one does, he is losing his time. Even if he knows his master's mind, he does not know whether he is arranging rightly or not; he is at least only doing his best, -and bad is the best. There is a hardness and a

laxity incongruously manifested together in those who maintain only points like law-points; whereas when Christ is the only controlling power, there is the force of life shaping itself to every conceiveable state; inflexibly maintaining truth and holiness, but with a wondrous elasticity insinuating itself into every space, like the air, all-pervading; and though in great weight, yet so evenly balanced, so suitably applied, that there is nothing oppressive, but all is simple, genuine service.

The Responsibility of Membership of the body of Christ.

I STUDY to enter more into the great responsibilities which devolve on us as members of the body of Christ. Can we at all estimate the quality and grandeur of our position as of His body here on earth? We are not simply disciples, or saved ones. It is not with us as with God's people heretofore, separate from all other people, receiving from God and worshipping Him, as men in the flesh. Such was the moral economy in Old Testament times; but how different to be Christ's body on the earth, for as such, it is not merely that I have received even the highest favours from Christ. but I am of Christ. It is quite possible for me to have received great favours from Him, and yet not to be in this inconceiveably close union with Him, which a member of His body involves. As a member of His body, I am part of Himself, and I am, because of my calling, required to

do everything suited to Him, as He would do it. There is a great difference between being a recipient of the greatest favours, and being a member of the body of One who can confer the greatest favours. A recipient might be like a guest in the house of a great king—every good thing in the house conferred on him, but all the time he must feel that he had no living link to the king. He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit; I am made to know that I am of Him, which no saint ever felt before the Church period. Everything conferred on a saint before, though it all necessarily drew out his heart in thanksgiving to God, never made him more than individually exalted. The man was exalted by the favours, but he had no sense of greatness, beyond the Now a saint's highest glory is, that he is not merely in the house of the great King, but one with Him, and therefore connected with all His glory. We all in some measure see this as future; but what I feel is, that we so little set forth here on earth that we are in this wonderful relationship to Christ We are of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones; and it ought to be a matter of deeper interest to us to carry out and maintain the identification with Him, while we are where He is rejected and refused, than it will be to display it in the age to come, where there will be no one to deny Him, or to refuse Him His title. believe that if each of us felt individually the dignity and gravity of our calling here as a member of Christ's body on earth, we should without effort, make other things secondary to it. If one of our greatest friends had been

expelled out of this world, and we heard that we could keep alive his body and thus maintain communication with him by simple devotedness to him, how reproachable it would be if we never in any measure contributed to its resuscitation, wonderful phenomenon as it would be. But now it is still more wonderful: we are made His members—His body on earth; and wherever two or three are, there ought to be, and if there were faithfulness, would be, an expression of His body. What higher dignity, office, or duty on earth can I have than that which a member of Christ's body involves? And wherever I am on the face of the globe, if I am walking faithfully, I am helping and invigorating the whole body of Christ on earth; but if I am walking in wrong, and grieving the Spirit, my consciousness of union is weakened, and I am hindering the whole body.

I may have natural duties here, but they only determine my sphere and locality, not my purpose. To be a member of Christ's body on earth, is my highest dignity, my glory, and duty. But God orders whether I am to do garrison duty, or field duty, or house duty. Wherever I am, I am of the royal corps, and I maintain that I am one of it; no matter whether in camp or at depôt, whether a father or child or servant; the post where I am set has really nothing to do with my commission in the royal corps; only to acquit myself honourably in the post assigned to me. He is not a good soldier who cannot maintain his duty unless he is allowed to choose the post which he thinks easiest. The general sends me, and places me where he thinks best, and if I am a true

soldier, I am not thinking of my circumstances, that is of my post, but how to acquit myself best in my post. He is a bad soldier who thinks more of his post than of his duty as a soldier. This some Christians do, they think more of their family duties than of their duties to Him of whose body they are members on earth.

The Hindrance surmounted prepares one for Service.

I AM cheered by your letter on account of the grace given you of God. I need not tell you that I have looked to the Lord for your blessing at this juncture, for I am assured that one's aftercourse is greatly determined by the manner and power of one's exit and deliverance from a false religion (the more difficult to escape from the nearer it approaches to the true), but according to the difficulty encountered, it imparts a character and a strength to the one who has escaped, if effected in faith. That which has most burdened you and stood in your way, if overcome, must necessarily be the point you are strongest in; for there has been your greatest victory, and speaking naturally, heroes connect their names with their greatest victories. But we should look at these victories in another light. They not only form the disciple, but (as in the case of Saul of Tarsus, who was after he was delivered the most unswerving and effectual exposer of the Jews' religion,—the very thing which had especially hindered him,) the hindrance prepares one, and even defines for one, a line of service. It is on the same principle as "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." True, it would be the higher way to see and avoid everything false, but it is seldom that we learn this way. We are carried away by the effect of various influences in a corrupt state of things, and the consequence is, that fort after fort has to be reduced before we are on the true and safe ground. But then we have learnt war, and are skilful to help others passing through the same sort of difficulties. is plain to me that if one has been led by faith to overcome the difficulties, especially difficulties to the conscience, that the nature of the difficulties impart a character to one's after-life and testimony. According to the power of faith at the start, so is the course. I do not mean that there is no advance from the start, but I mean that if you have been detained and kept back by the best thing in religion up to this, if you are now on the true ground, you will be a more effective exposer of the pretension you have escaped from, than one who had only escaped from a mere The triumph of faith imparts to you a power and a colour in accordance with the difficulty overcome, so that you are now most valiant where you have been most ensuared. Out of the eater comes forth meat. This is the case where there has been faith, so that where the faith has worked, there will be testimony. If you have acted in faith you have had nothing to see around, but you will always from henceforth find that this same faith is like the reserve in the bank (as David recalls how he slew a lion and a bear), even a guarantee that you cannot fail, for God in

whom you trust cannot fail, and it is to Him and for Him you have acted; and you hold on though every one around you fails and gives up. I am sure your trials and exercises have been deep and sore, and they are not over yet, but in faith all is sure, and pre-eminently, incipium belli dimidium facti. Your difficulties and trials are nothing if you have faith, for then God is before your soul, and not any of them, and He will assuredly prove-Himself to you.

Rest in Christ before Service for Him.

THERE are two lines of exercise which must engagethe heart of every one true to Christ. The first is rest in Himself; the next, service for Him. The tendency is to put the second first, or rather to engage in it, in order to attain the first. And I believe that this is attended with the worst consequences. It is legality, unknown, and so cloaked that it is not easy to detect it. I do not deny that there is joy in bearing fruit which is the true service (see John xv.); but I think if you watch your own soul, you will agree with me that serving in order to be happier in Christ, tends tolegality, and the work done is the source of the happiness and not simply Christ Himself. In John xiv. I learn what Christ is to me, and there is no service enjoined there beyond obedience, as the proof of love. If I love I obev. Mary Magdalene (John xx.) is an example of one whose heart was so true to Christ, that apostles or angels could not divert her from Him; but as soon as she had seen Him, her heart was satisfied. His calling her by name was everything,—a personal, individual link. What can surpass it! She was so controlled by Him of whom her heart was full, that she obeyed Him (ver. 18), even at the sacrifice and loss of His visible presence, because

a truly loving one could do nothing else.

I think deep personal joy in Christ is a very quiet and unexpressed thing. I believe where there is great fervour of expression there is not much depth, though there be real conviction. Where there is much demonstration, it is rather discovery than home, personal enjoyment. Very little demonstration or rapture do we exhibit to our most beloved friends when we are at home with one another. When we meet after an absence, then there is rapture; but this is evidence that there has been absence. Alas! we are often absent from our Lord; but surely the rapture felt at regaining His presence is lower than the restful enjoyment of His personal nearness. Let us, then, not make rapture everything, but rise from it to the deep rest and occupation of communion with Him. It is from this communion that service ought to flow, for it is only in it that I know my Master's mind. It is not the hardest working servant in a household who is the most confidential. A confidential servant is the highest servant. I am willing to clean shoes if no other work be allotted me; but I should like so to clean them that my master could trust me with his mind.

The saint is never to think himself safe from the evil in the world. No doubt, by faith he is kept from the evil; but then he must not shut his eyes to the form which evil takes in his time,

as if he were safe from it. The reverse is the fact; for any evil working in the world finds its way into the hearts of the saints in a refined specious way. Sensationalism is one of the means by which Satan is blinding the minds of the people of the world in this day,—be it the novel, the concert, or the stage, it is mental intoxication. Was there none of it at the revival meetings? Is there not a leaven of it now? And should not souls see that their rapture or delight is not that in which the flesh takes part, but on the contrary, that which ignores the flesh, because we are in the Spirit, where the flesh has no place?

Service to Christ, and Serving Him in Earthly Duties.

THE Lord very definitely describes what service is, when He says, "If any man serve me, let him follow me" (John xii.). The word "serve" there is the same as that used for serve in the earlier part of the chapter with reference to Martha. It is quite a different word for service in Colossians iii., etc. The true way to correct an idea is to see simply how the Scripture presents the truth, and then if the statement challenged does not agree with it, it must be refused. Service to Christ has a very wide range. It is doing something as to Christ. If any man serve me let him follow me. Whenever I follow Christ, I am serving Him; but I never can follow Him but in death to myself, for that is the connection of the verse in John xii. 26. A Christian is one endowed with grace—a new man; he is called to walk here for a little time where Christ is not, but to walk here for Him as His follower; this is his calling; the top-shoot, the leader of his whole being and course. This is the simple duty of every member of Christ. To every one there is given a gift of grace. Pre-eminently he is to live Christ. The leading-shoot is that which determines the height, growth, and value of the tree. But in order to conduce to this leadingshoot and to the full flourishing of the tree, there are collateral branches which have their value and importance in contributing to the growth and value of the tree of which the leading-shoot is the pioneer and exemplar. The leading-shoot for me is following Christ; but I may require many collateral duties and labours to contribute to the comely and effectual carrying out of my purpose of heart in following Him. For instance, being a domestic man is not the leading-shoot, but it may be a very valuable branch or collateral duty, qualifying me, as in the case of a bishop, for carrying out my leading idea, viz., service to Christ; and if I fail in that branch, I necessarily hinder the growth and value of the tree, and retard the progress of the leading-shoot. But it is a mistake to make the wife or the children the leading-shoot. It is the school in the wilderness; the scholar that gets on likes his lessons; but lessons are not service, though they be auxiliary to service. The lessons are needed, and if they are unheeded, the service will be damaged.

Again: Being a slave, in itself is not service, though as such, I am, as Christ's slave, honouring Him and showing Him forth under the most trying circumstances. Service is not the fact of being a slave or of being a good one; but the fact of acting for Christ in the position in which, by God's providence, I am set. Thus I should not become either a slave or a husband to find a sphere of service, but I may find either duty a very useful auxiliary to me in serving Him, and the claims on me would give opportunity for the expression of the grace of Christ, which would be service; but the mere duties themselves would not be service. I am to serve Christ through the duties—the branches, but the branches are not the leading-shoot; and I repeat that the leading-shoot can never be attained but through self-denial, though I am prepared and better formed for it by the collateral duties. beautiful tree grows systematically; the leadingshoot surpasses the branches, but is not outside of them, as if independent of them. Nay, it is dependent on them for its own vigour, and unchecked by them, it contributes to them and they to it. They mutually support one another; but service to Christ must work higher than nature and superior to it, though the natural duties may fit one for doing so in a more comely way, and afford opportunity too for service, which is always above nature.

The Wilderness and Canaan.

We are told in Deuteronomy viii. to remember all the way which the Lord thy God hath led thee these forty years; and their journeys, according to their goings out, are written by Moses (see

Numbers xxxiii.). They pitched at last by Jordan (ver. 49); all the dealings of the way, whether bright or dark, or both, go to teach one great lesson, namely, dependence on God. "Man shall not live by bread only, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord shall This was the word quoted by our Lord when tempted by Satan. He knew nothing but dependence—dependence according to the will of God expressed in His word; but if dependence on God was learnt by the vicissitudes of the way, as soon as dependence was learnt, Jordan was also reached; so that while my heart rests in dependence on God, I am crossing the last barrier between the wilderness and Canaan. I am not only dependent on God for His word and mind about everything; -but myself, that which hinders me and bars my entrance into the scene of light and joy in His presence, is at the same time dead. Jordan is properly the death of myself. The dealings of God in the wilderness have taught me dependence on God according to His word; but as soon as I have reached the sure and blessed way to go through the wilderness, I find I am in spirit so over Jordan that I am not in the wilderness but in Canaan; that is, when I am perfectly qualified to walk in the wilderness, because of dependence on God, I am lifted out of the wilderness, because I am over Jordan and in the land. When I am entirely fit to travel through the wilderness, I am not sensibly there, but across the Jordan in heaven in spirit. We are not morally prepared to cross the Jordan until we are perfectly fit to walk in the wilderness. I am not able to die entirely to myself until I have learned full and entire confidence in God. One may try to get into Canaan, but the way is through Jordan; and though one might try to die to everything here, yet it would be a poor thing, even if it could be accomplished, without, at the same time, unqualified confidence in God. When I am most fit to stay here I am most fit to go there, and the barrier which self rears up disappears. The water of Jordan is but touched, and all the barrier disappears. For we are dead with Christ and it is real to faith.

The new thing is planted within us and it is surrounded by a hard shell—our own flesh. Now there are two forces at work to liberate the new man from the dense obdurate shell,-the one within, and the other without. The one without. is the circumstances through which we are passing; the one within, is the desire or effort of the new man, or as the apostle terms it, the inner man, to obtain relief. The outer things cause the inner man to turn to God and to wait only on Him; and when this is complete, we are dead, the shell is broken. It is said that it is the young bird that pecks the shell from within in order to gain its liberty; but we know that the mother bird also assists it by breaking the shell from the outside. Now, dependence on God is that which gives power to the inner man to burst from its prison; and the trials or dealings by the way are only the occasions for drawing out this dependence. We all, in some way or other, suffer from the shell; but once we know that it is the shell that hampers us, we seek the power that will enable us to break through. Some, like oysters, will not give up their shells till they are penetrated by death; but when we know what the shell is, we are not satisfied until it is fully broken. In this tabernacle we groan, being burdened, and the Lord tries us in one way and another; but there is no bitterness in the trial, once we see that the Lord is only doing from without what is in co-operation with His own life within, namely, to free us from the pressure of the shell. Dependence on God enables us to break it from within like the young bird.

May we accept with thankfulness His mercy in breaking it from without, which is really only helping the desires of His own Spirit within us.

The Race and the Rest.

Our history is properly written in double columns, -the one recounting the wilderness journey, and the other our heavenly progress. In the former we are learning dependence, in the latter it is pos-In the one I am learning Christ as the manna; how He sustains and succours me. walk and steps on earth, all and each indicate to me how He will sustain me here. When He putteth forth His own sheep He goeth before them. We are not called to any path here where Christ cannot sustain us, and He affords us the same grace which sustained Himself in our circumstances. He set him on His own beast. blessed Son of God has traversed the human pathway, depositing manna as small as coriander-seed all along, and on every side, to meet the smallest as well as the greatest trials by the way. Never was our pathway trodden by such a One before.

He has not only traversed it, but He has surmounted every difficulty therein, bequeathing to us the fragrance and power of His grace to conduct us along the same. Every rose has its manna on it, and every thorn too; so that we are preserved from the snare of the one and from the pain of the other. Hence, our journey here is called a race, we are sustained to run, and in dependence too, because there is nothing to rest in; so that as we grow in dependence, we run the better; but dependence is the great lesson of the wilderness.

The other side of our history is heavenly progress, it is with Christ Himself where He is. Your growth in power and joy is as you are occupied with Him. The first-fruits is in heaven; the heir is there; and as I am consciously united to Him there, though not actually in possession, I enjoy Him who is the possessor; and hence the Spirit who unites me to Him is the earnest of the inheritance. There, there is no need, no thorn; it is all rest, it is not as He was in my path here, but as He is in Himself in His own peculiar blessedness that I learn Him. There it is rest—here it is a race; and I am to come forth from there as a strong man to run a race. There I know Him as my treasure better than the best thing here; and hence, though needing His succour all along the road here, yet I am giving up even the good things here, in order that I may freely and fully know Him as my gain,—that I may win Christ. In the race I am sustained by the manna; but as I enjoy Christ in heaven, the rose is eclipsed and the thorn is forgotten. If I drop the weight in order to run, I relinquish all that I have here; for where my treasure is there will my heart be also.

need here calls out my dependence on Him; but His riches in glory give me independence here. As milestones mark the road, so do the wells of His mercy mark the stages here in the valley of the shadow of death. But we traverse it as those who know what it is to lie down in green pastures, and to be led by still waters. You are the racer and the rester. As the one, you are dependent on Him; as the other, you are independent of everything here, because so consciously enriched in and by Him. May you abound in both.

The Brightest Day succeeds the Darkest Night.

Some receive the knowledge of forgiveness without much sense of sin, and their appreciation of Christ as Saviour is proportionately feeble. He that is forgiven much, the same loveth much. There may be the sense of forgiveness, with but little sense of needing it. The evening was not a dark one, and the morning is not a very bright one, although it may be a happy one.

If you have gone on in the world and its ways, wounding your conscience by sin and folly, before your conversion; the Saviour, if you are really separated to Him through grace, is loved by you in proportion as you feel your escape from your sins, and the judgment that impended over you. But then your love for Him is with reference to your former course. I think a great deal depends on the exercise of conscience and the nature of it which we pass through, before conversion or before we get peace. Some have tried to be

good, and having failed in their efforts (having been trained under the law) they delight in Christ not only as the Saviour, but as their righteousness, the answer to everything which their souls need before God. I see again some who have gone against their conscience, and have done wicked things; when convicted, they for the most part are occupied with the grace which has delivered such wretched sinners. The one has not been able to satisfy his conscience though making every effort to do so; the other has openly and violently run counter to his conscience.

Then there is a third class who, Isaac-like, have a quiet easy life, and have little exercise of conscience, because walking according to the approved order of things in which they have been brought Grace presents a Saviour and forgiveness to them, and they have the sense of rest and peace with God, unknown to them before; but they had not much felt the need of it. This latter class are like the widow of Sarepta; they enjoy their quietude until some great link to this scene is broken, and then they learn their natural unfitness for God; then the sufficiency of Christ above and out of death is known to the soul, and it is as it were a new conversion, and a devotedness follows unknown to the other classes, unless they have learned the evil of their nature as well as relief from its evils. The one who has learned the evil of his nature before God, will be far more devoted than the one who has only known pardon for the sins of his nature. The latter may be more enthusiastic in His love to the Saviour, but it is because of what He has done for him. The one who has found Him as his in the presence of God outside and apart from the old man, will rejoice in what He is to him, and Christ is his gain. The one who has found Him as his righteousness before God, grows in the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. The first evening may not be the darkest. The widow of Sarepta's was not; but the dark one came, and the bright morning followed. We have many evenings and many mornings. To my mind the sense of Christ is greater when He is known in preserving from an evil, rather than in rescuing from it. I think some natures, as Peter's, will not bow without an actual fall: others submit and humble themselves when they reach only the brink; and others are subdued when they see the precipice from which His strong arm saves them. I think with every evening the foundation is enlarged and deepened; and hence, as one gets on, the Cross and all that has been effected thereon gets a fuller and clearer place in the soul; but this must ever be with the sense of being united in glory to Him who was there; all is futile if this latter be not known, for there is no guarantee otherwise for anything.

The Nipping and the Budding.

In the millennium every saint will flourish like a tree planted by the rivers of waters, everything he doeth shall prosper. How beautiful to see a man every way prospering, and every leaf and movement expressive of beauty and vigour: that is what man will be, as man, in the millennium. The saint now is, on the contrary, to be the ex-

pression of the heavenly Man,—to bear leaves and fruit such as Christ bore, but unknown and unnoticeable here among men. The most beautiful ornaments cannot be seen in the dark. The leaves and fruit of the heavenly plant can only be seen by those who have heavenly eyes. But the trying part is, the more I am the heavenly tree, the less do I bear the leaves and fruit of the earthly tree. The leaves of the latter wither, or are blighted, as the leaves of the former are seeking and asserting their place; and this accounts for much of the chilling weather and frosts which affect the saint now in his journey. The leaves of the two trees cannot grow together. We feel the nipping of the leaves of the old tree, but we ought to look then for the budding and blossoming of the new one. It would be a poor thing to endure the nipping of the one without the budding of the other; but if you have the budding, you ought not to sorrow because you are a sufferer from the nipping.

It is most interesting and instructive, the different kinds of nipping the saints are subjected to. I believe it is, as a rule, the one which is the most trying to them—the one which naturally they feel most. Job says, "That which I greatly feared is come upon me." When there is a fear, then there is still vitality; and there death must supervene—the nipping must come. But when I come fully to lose sight of myself in abhorrence before God, and because of Christ, I am assured that if every leaf withered, I have a portion in Him which will not only endure but surpass everything here, and that it will grow every day more and more in its own perfect

blessedness: then death has been entered into, and I have a grave here; and then if the leaves or mercies of this scene surround me, I have been so introduced into and delighted, nay, satisfied with what is entirely outside, that they are but garnishing to my table, fringe to my dress, the hyssop on the wall to the cedar of Lebanon. God does not grudge us the hyssop, when He has given us the cedar; but if we are making too much of the hyssop, He removes it, that we may exclusively turn our attention to the cedar. trust that the fragrance and beauty of the cedar may so fill your heart, that everything which would come in between you and Him may be quickly and fully refused, and that you may have increased power from Him to raise you above the trials of the way, and thus prove His virtue in your very infirmities.

The Difficulty indicates the Supply at hand.

I am convinced that the way we act in the race is the correlative to the sight we have of Christ where He is. If you look at the difficulty or barrier to be overcome in the race, you will never surmount it! But if you keep your eye on Christ you may run at it (as many riders do at a wall or fence) with your eyes shut, only to open them to see yourself safely over. He knows where I am, and He knows the path He Himself has taken in a like difficulty; we ought to have no difficulties but those which oppose and hinder the workings of His grace in us. Well; my eye is on Him, I know I am united to Him; as His I

move on, and a path unknown to men,—unseen by men, is disclosed to me; the clue is given to me; I have the secret; I escape to where no one can follow me. The divine path,—His own path, is opened out to me. If I look at it as a man, it seems like a trackless forest, an untrodden desert; but as I look to Him, I am led on step by step, so that the once threatening obstacles become a wall to me on my right hand and on my left. I am assured more and more that I am a member of Christ, linked absolutely to Him; and I am looking for my own proper life which is His, to support me and declare itself where I am set; and it does as He would do in the circumstances. Every tree or flower is in accordance with the climate in which it grows; and so the climate of heaven produces its own growths, and the fruits also in the season. Man's industry attempts to accomplish on earth naturally what is perfect for us spiritually from Christ in heaven. The commercial effort is to supply the commodities of all countries in each; thus the good of the whole earth may be enjoyed in any part of it, according to the need at the time. For the winter, wool and animal food; for the summer, cotton and fruits. Now when the eye is on Christ, be it winter or summer with us, we obtain the supply suited to the need of the new man, and answering to it—as wool and animal food for cold, and cotton and fruits for heat, answer to the need of the body. The nature of the supply is according to the need. mistake often is, that we offer goods, right in themselves but not suited for the time; winter goods when it is summer time, or summer goodswhen it is winter. Hence mere stores will not do. It must be the constant importation of the needed article, the fruit in its season, and in the season for it. "The leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." The difficulty is the demand for the suited importation.

May your harbour be full of cargoes, only to discharge the vessel containing the needed article. All this comes from the eye being set

on Christ. All supplies are there.

You will be greatly enriched as your soul

knows the riches of Christ.

The Desert and the Home.

WE are often surprised, if not stunned, at the dark and desolate ways through which He leads us, but they are but the boundary line between the place that would detain us from Him, and the region of light and joy in Himself; and if it be terrible and almost overwhelming to nature to cross this line, the very sorrow and suffering endured in crossing it warns us from ever thinking of retracing our steps. The desert landthe land of death, is in our rear; the land of light and life for ever in His presence is before us. If we press on, there is increased cheer and support; if we linger or look back, the darkness petrifies the heart. All depends then on our pressing on and occupying the refuge—the home we have with Christ. If we have fled from a scene of sorrow and death, and have found shelter and security in the home of a beloved friend, are we satisfied to find ourselves just within the

Surely not: we can indeed draw the breath of relief there, but it is as we get at home there,—as we find our liberty and our rest there. that we put on the garments of praise in exchange for the spirit of heaviness; and the deep sorrow and desolation that are behind only cause us to cleave more to the place of deliverance and joy to which we have come. Thus the earthquake -the break up of everything dear to us in this world of death and sorrow, has a double benefit. It prepares us to find refuge and relief in Christ; and then as we are occupied with Him and learn His worth, we are warned and deterred from leaving Him by remembrance of the very desolation which first made room for Him; and the more we are entirely alone with Him, the more do we discover that He not only can fill every blank, but that there are surpassing resources in Him which the heart fears to lose for an instant. If you stand only at the threshold of the relief, your soul will at best know but alternations; one time the sorrow will beset you, and at another the light and joy of Christ's presence will cheer you; but if you pass on confidingly into His presence, and abide there, and find your rest there, two things will be more apparent to you every day: one, that you are getting more deeply acquainted with the resources in Christ; and the other, that you are at a greater distance from the world and the scene where there is nothing for you but a grave and the sorrow which surrounds it.

The Lord lead you on triumphantly as one now walking with Himself, and thus happy here for Himself.

Winter Time—the Test of Growth.

In our journey here we pass through every season: the spring and the summer, but also the winter and the autumn. The winter tests the growth of summer. The tree that endures the winter best, is the one that will bud best in spring. In the winter, the sap-the power of life, is concentrated; everything without checks the expression of it, and there is hindrance on every side because of the inclemency; and this effects, as there is vigour in the plant, consolidation which forms stamina for future exertion and growth. Thus in trial and sorrow, there is everything checking and blighting outside and around, but this is the time that one more fully reaches and ascertains the real power within,—what the resources really are, independently of all outward and perishable things; and as this power is assured and possessed, so will there be increased ability to bud and blossom and bring forth fruit when the trials are over and gone.

The Lord sees it necessary at times to subject His people to temporary eclipses of the natural sun, i.e.,—the blessings which suit us naturally, in order that they should ascertain the measure and value of what He is in Himself; because it is as we know the latter that we enter into and know the joys of heaven. Here our God does for us and Christ does in us, for we are in Him; but there we shall not need anything to be done for us or in us, but what He is Himself will occupy and satisfy our hearts. The winter here is a temporary death, all encouragement to life is suspended, there is nothing to induce one to look

around, or to bind one to this scene; and then it is one discovers the real amount of one's resources in Christ, and the actual extent of one's satisfaction in a purely human condition. During the eclipse there is nothing but Christ; and if He be known in His preciousness, the eclipse—the winter, becomes a time when the most blessed acquirements are made. How differently one would address one's self to the journey if one had experienced truly the loss of every green thing here, but at the same time were compensated for it all in the company of Christ. It would be as if one had died and had reached heaven and entered into its joys with the Lord, and had returned here again for another spring and summer and autumn. How wondrously would such an one bud and blossom and bring forth fruit! May you know much of this blessed acquirement in these dark and wintry days; and may the Lord be able to say of you, "I have come into my gar-den and have eaten of my pleasant fruits."

Purpose of Heart to please the Lord.

It is the purpose which, like the leading-shoot to the spruce-fir tree, will determine and insure the harmonious growth of all the rest;—even every other duty which, like branches to a well-furnished tree, attach to you on every side. This purpose obtains force and stability from the fact that the love of the saints proceeds from love to Himself. "Lovest thou Me?" "feed my sheep." But more than this, I know His love to myself before I am

the expression of it to others; and my expression necessarily always comes short of what I know; but yet it is in the toil and occupation of expressing it, that I deepen in the sense of His love to myself which works in me this toil and interest for others. Hence not only is it said, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them;" but it is added, in John xv., "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love." Here it is acting for Him; and where the acting is simply for Him, there will be obedience to His injunctions. Devotedness cares only to please Him, it is not occupied with exploits; and this trait you find especially exemplified in women in the Scriptures. The women ministered to Him, they stood by His cross, they prepared spices, they watched, they saw Him in resurrection. They occupy the place of personal devotedness; as some one has said—they have more affection, men more energy. I believe they fill a place in service which men never can render; and when the Lord is working, you will always find the women are helpers in a marked way. They are like the soft feathers to the quill; they are not the masons, they do not build, but no stone is comfortably in its place where there has been lacking the cementing ministry in which women are unequalled. I see servants remarkably helped or otherwise by the women connected with their work. Paul knew their value. But if they leave their place, they spoil everything. They put the soft feathers assumptively in the place of the strong pinion, the cement in the place of stone,—everything is misplaced; and like a man thinking his hands would be more useful if employed to carry him as his feet, he diverts them from their true usefulness and degrades himself to a beast.

How blessed to have no interest but His, and then surely, the eye being on Him, each will fill his proper place. Deborah will give the first place to Barak, but Barak will not go without Deborah. The Lord give you to supply, as He calls, the down to the quill; so that His people may mount up on eagles' wings, well-feathered and powerful.

Previous Influence colours our Service.

. I ALWAYS find that the course we take up at a juncture is in keeping with the influence we have allowed to rule us previous to the demand for any distinct action. We may fully intend to act rightly, but our previous course may have so unfitted us for acting rightly, that at the critical moment, though with the best intentions, we have not the power to act in accordance with them. Samson had never given up the intention of being a Nazarite and an adversary to the Philistines; but having yielded to influence and opened his mind to his company, he had no power to act against them, because they belonged to the line of things to which he had yielded in secret, and consequently had accepted. I cannot accept, and immediately after refuse. "Noman having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new; for he saith the old is better." When I have accepted any influence for myself, I cannot act on that which surrounds me without first acting on myself,—that is judging myself. If this could be done it would

leave me without a conscience; I should be acting on the circle outside of me, while my own inner circle is untouched and skipped over. the armour in Ephesians vi. is defensive and personal first before it is aggressive. Samson's hair must begin to grow again before he gets any renewed strength against the Philistines. Where one's self, i.e. the inner circle, is unjudged and unsubdued, one cannot expect to have power with I must take the beam out of my own eye, before I attempt to take the mote out of my brother's eye. I may, like Samson, honestly attempt to act as I have acted heretofore; there may be purpose and will to do so, but in the attempt I shall be confounded, and my weakness exposed.

Our Father's Purpose.

How beautiful and wondrous are the ways of our God with us when we once begin to see the purpose of His heart regarding us! We see a natural parent toiling and planning to get his children in the order and condition of life here which he thinks the best suited to his means and ability. Now, when we see that there is this purpose in the heart of God respecting us, His children, what may we not expect as to the order and condition of life which He thinks best? Who can describe or measure that? It is not what I think best. If I were to think most extravagantly, could I in any measure reach up to what He thinks the best? And when I see that He is leading me to the enjoyment of this His purpose,

I have the key to every dealing and every movement of His hand. He has no doubt of being able to effect His purpose as a natural parent often has; but He wants to make us conscious of His purpose, and to lead us into the enjoyment of it. Our Father, as it were, longs to see us in His house, enjoying His purpose now accomplished in His Son our Saviour; and when He finds any unwillingness in our hearts to go there, He weans us from the things that stop the way. A child is not weaned in a minute, and it may go through a great deal of suffering before it is weaned, but it is all the healthier and stronger when the weaning is fully over. The desire of the Father's heart is that we should have such a sense of being with His Son in glory, that we should feel as if everything here for the moment had all lost its claim and hold on us; and then, after this temporary death, this weaning, we should return again to the place of death, assured in heart and mind of the purpose of our God for

He is only conducting us through this world to the zenith of His own delight, and the purpose of His love for us; He passes us through all the seasons here, and the winter, the most trying one, is the most helpful, if we are really cast on Him in it. Then the real measure of our dependence on Him is ascertained, and also the extent of our resources in Him; and we make acquisitions in Him which we never make at any other time. All our growth and fruits depend on our winters, or rather on how we pass through them. The more we can rest in Him, the more we are independent of everything outside of Him at such a time, the

more vigour we really possess; and the better we get over the winter, be it ever so severe. If I am independent of the winter, it is evident that I have mastered it, and not it me; and if I have done so, through the power of Christ, I am relieved though in no human way. Peter is delivered from prison in a superhuman way; but first he could lay him down and take his rest, though enduring a very trying winter, because the Lord sustained him.

Within and Without.

DEEP and true work must always begin within; though it is not half as showy as when it begins without. When it begins without, the manner and tone are all regulated by a certain approved form; and the pupil appears as he progresses, nice, orderly, and devout. The Friends, as a sect, afford the best specimen of this order,—they speak advisedly and act cautiously; but they are really like consumptive people, all their colour is in their cheeks, and life within is failing. No doubt the one cast in a mould, as clay is to make a brick, is, as a rule, the acceptable one, and the one who steers, easily and with commendation through the rivers of ordinary life. They are successful in smooth waters, but if they drift into the sea, and the waves arise, all their acquired dignity vanishes, like stiffening from muslin in the rain. Their order and self-government are all outside, there is no sovereign power within, whose sway has been extending to the extreme confines, and which when any incursion or trial befalls any part, even

the most uncultivated and most unsubdued, sends forthwith a direct force to its support, repels the enemy, and fortifies it against future attack. do not approve of the unprotected state of the outlying provinces, or the way they expose themselves to attack; but I say that in the end they will be better governed under a strong central power, than when they were left to militiamen making a great appearance by their exercises and accoutrements. Many of your provinces and mine have been exposed to attack, and we have had to learn to fortify them by the grace given us. Christ, the wisdom of God and the power of God, has been and is the Sovereign: but we also require that His rule should extend to the utmost confines of our whole being; and thank God it is more effectual in the end than if we had been cast in some mould which every one would commend. We are not moulded, we are hammered; and every one knows that the latter on iron even is the most enduring. afraid of the educated mould, but this makes me the more careful that we should be truly and fully hammered into the will and manner of our Sovereign. Don't excuse the wildness, insubjection, or carelessness of any of the provinces—any of your acts or utterances, but let the controlling and modulating of them proceed from Him who rules on the throne of your heart; and don't make little of the exposures which take place in the most distant parts of your kingdom: any defects in the extreme provinces, like want of animation in the extremities of the body, always indicate feebleness of life in the heart, and medical men thus form an opinion of the state of health.

way that we do the least things really indicates to us the extent and scope of Christ's rule in our If the extreme provinces be well managed from within, all must be in vigour. Christ imparts the beauty and strength of Himself to every approved act; whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we do all to the glory of God. If I am occupied with the mere act, I am affected; -affectation is occupation with one's own acts. and therefore with the effort to obtain approval; but if I am occupied with the Object and Lord of my heart, I do the thing to please Him, and the one most grateful to my heart because it pleases Him. May you so yield yourself in heart and purpose to Him, for it is with the humble and contrite heart He dwells that in every little thing there may be the evidence and colour of the great central power, and therefore far superior to the artificial flower which never has any perfume.

No place for the Flesh in the Gospel.

THERE must be something radically wrong in the way souls have received Christ, to allow of a course, apparently devoted, which is so contrary to His mind; and I believe that a great deal of such a course can be traced to some defect in their first apprehensions of Christ,—I mean as to their acceptance, and the nature of it. The one who knows that the light which, through grace, has shone in on his soul, is from the glory, and the ministration of righteousness from that sphere now, as there was under the law a ministration

of death from the same sphere, must stand before God, and in the world, with very distinct impressions. He has to do with Christ-his life, in a scene which engrosses and satisfies his heart; and according as he is engaged with it (as he values it, he will be engaged with it), he is transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. Now as this transformation takes place, it is evident, because it is of the Spirit, that flesh is more and more distanced and refused; and not only this, but one is made independent of the things which minister to the flesh; and so much so, that it is the dying of Jesus that one now carries about, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in the body. There cannot be this independence of the flesh and what pleases it otherwise.

Habakkuk is independent of the comforts of the flesh,—what ministers to it. Stephen is able to go a step farther and to endure the greatest sufferings, as if indifferent to them; but Paul does not know whether he is in the body, or out of the body. Now every thing which sanctions or in any way enlists the flesh, always feeds and promotes it; and in religious things, when there is ministering to it through the senses or the feelings, one often imagines that there has been spiritual joy or gain; but it will be found that it is not so, from the fact that one is not more independent of the things which minister to the flesh. The attempt to enlist the senses and move the feelings, is, I believe, fraught with real hindrance and grief to the Spirit of God; and while it gratifies for the time, it imparts no real power, and souls are as dependent as ever on

the things which minister to their old and avowedly renounced nature. Besides, it is a desperate snare of the adversary, for they are deceived by the counterfeit, and thereby lose the real thing. The real thing could not countenance the flesh in any form, for it is of the Spirit, and the flesh and the Spirit are contrary the one to the other. Souls cannot get power over the flesh, unless they realize their new and wondrous position in Christ, entirely out of the reach of the flesh, of death, and of judgment; and in the Spirit, through faith, in a new order of existence, even association with Christ, the eternal Son of God, in a new sphere and with new interests according to His mind.

Be first what you would do.

Ir is quite possible for the word to reach the heart, and even to interest one very much, as the seed which fell on the rock (Luke viii.), and yet for no real power to be there. The Spirit of God is careful on this subject to show the difference between receiving the word humanly and divinely. "Our gospel came not to you in word (or sense) only, but in power (the power of action) and in the Holy Ghost." The latter was wanting to the soils Nos. 1, 2, and 3. No. 4—the good ground-only had it. I believe one's practice is the measure of the truth one has received in the Holy Ghost. You are an exponent of that by which you are controlled, and you like to be so. "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." The expression in action is the

grand result,—the life of Jesus manifested in the body, which is "full of light, with no part dark." It is thus that the Father is glorified. It is not only what is in my heart, but what is the effect in my body. The works, James compares to the

spirit of the natural body (Jas. ii. 26).

We are to exhibit in our bodies the colour and beauty of the truth committed to us. The act indicates the power. The external in everything indicates the internal. Let a man ape as much as he likes, or study to represent himself in a light not genuine, only give him time, and he is sure to betray himself. The effort to express any quality in action, is of itself indicative that the quality does not exist. The quality ought to be expressed, but it cannot be expressed unless possessed, and the attempt at expression without possession is affectation; it is an effort to exhibit a right thing without the power.

Hence we should seek not so much to do, as to be. You may remark in your prayers whether you are praying to be, or praying to do. You may say, "But it is right to do." I admit it; but the question is, How do I get strength to do? I reply, By first being. As I depend, as I draw, on the power of Christ, as I am Christ, I am enabled to act Him. It is a great thing to do, but I cannot do until I am first qualified. A child attempts to be a man, and the desire is right; but he must go through many an exercise and many a lesson, before he can act as a man. The effect of over-education in the present day, both in the church and in the world, is to lead the young into the idea that they are qualified to do anything that their seniors do,

and it is simply burlesque. I don't at all want to weaken the desire to do. The "friends" of Christ do (John xv. 14); but I say, if I am only seeking to do, I am occupied with my doings; and I am like a tree over-weighted with leaves and wood, and no fruit. If Christ is living in me, I cannot but express Him; but I am making no effort to do so. The deeper anything is in our hearts, the less we care to let others see it, but because of its depth and power it tells of itself, as it is said, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." I believe, if I am studying to be, that as I am of Christ, I shall do with ease and cheerfulness, and not with any of the reluctance which the one trying to do constantly evinces. Every one can see what is natural and easy to a person and what is not; and we all know that that which is done with ease is generally done with skill. This is a doing day in one sense; that is, there is a great deal of activity towards others, but there is very little of the life of Jesus manifested in the body, which is an action that expresses Him with regard to every one, as He walked here; and it imparts a colour and a tone to every duty and occupation of life.

The Effect of Beholding the Glory.

What is the practical effect of looking on the glory of the Lord with unveiled face? We must bear in mind that the Apostle is here (2 Cor. iii.) contrasting the difference between the ministration of death and the ministration of righteousness. The glory in the former necessarily consumed, because it only appeared with a claim on man, who is unable to meet it. Righteousness not being established, the glory could not freely express itself, though Moses in his face bore marks of its transforming power. On account of man's condition, it was fearful on Mount Sinai in its bearing on man, unrighteous as he was; yet no one could be in it without partaking of its moral supremacy, and therefore Moses' face bore distinct traces of its blessed power. refused even to gaze on the effects of it on Moses' face. Man naturally shrinks, when seeking to maintain his own righteousness, from admiration or due appreciation of the transforming power of God; and therefore Israel, in asking Moses to put a veil on his face, only declared the moral distance of their hearts from God, and therefore the veil is transferred to their hearts. But now, says the Apostle, there is a wonderful contrast. It is now the ministration of righteousness from the glory of God, for it was so announced in Luke ii. The Son of God is come to establish righteousness from the same glory, from which had come only the demand or claim of it; and, therefore, if the glory had the power to produce such effects on the face of Moses, when man in his then condition could not look at it, how much more now, when it is a ministration of righteousness? and hence the Apostle declares that we use much boldness; and looking on the Lord with unveiled face, we are transformed into the same image from glory to glory. It effects a moral transformation into its own likeness. Humbling as it is to admit it, I believe any association with that which is morally superior to us must have this effect on us more or less. If we descend to inferior associations, we deprave our better tendencies; but if we are occupied with moral superiority, we always adopt; it is not that we improve, but according to the superiority with which we associate, we adopt a new manner of acting, instead of only improving an existing one; and as the way of God is unique and morally supreme, we, as we are conversant with it, adopt its characteristics and qualities, so that we are really in the process of transformation, and not of mere improvement, because it is new, and hitherto quite unknown to us.

Now the traces of this moral transformation which takes place when we are looking on the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ, may be easily noticed. How differently does it make us regard the same things, so that when we feel them most, we are often, through this wondrous power, most above them in spirit. The contrast in the way in which we estimate circumstances when in the glory in spirit, and when out of it, is just the contrast which we find in the mind of the Psalmist (Ps. lxxiii.), when outside the sanctuary (ver. 1-16), and when inside it (ver. 17-28). The same painful question occupied him in both cases, but he was a different man as to feeling and judgment in each. The light of the glory and Jesus in it, so transformed Stephen that he was practically superior to the deadly violence spent upon him, though certainly deeply affected for those who perpetrated it, for one trace of the moral effect of the glory is a

greater sensitiveness to evil, but a marked and sensible elevation above it.

It is, alas! but slowly that souls enter into the counsel of God in His grace to us, or see that it is a manifestation of His own heart in the person of His only-begotten Son from the centre of the glory; that the grace which has reached us has its origin in the glory,—belongs to it, so to speak. When I understand its origin, I must understand its destination, or rather its association; and when I find myself in this association, through the grace of God, thus manifested to me, I am looking on the glory of the Lord. Seeing Christ in glory made Paul blind as man, but he never lost the remembrance of it in his soul, and therefore he called it the "mark" toward which he pressed throughout his whole course.

May we be practically more like Him, our eye full of the glory of the Lord, and He ever before us, supplying to us power over our difficulties, and our hearts abounding in praise to Him who has blessed us with such a rich salvation.

As I Abhor myself before God, I Confide in Him.

It is a great thing to be able to rest in unquestioning assurance on the love of God, when all the surroundings are against us. This was Job's trial. When prosperity and health are bestowed, it is easy to recognise the hand of God, and to mark His favour, taking the present mercies as

so many proofs of His love and care. That was Job's state at the first. But a sad reverse came. His prosperity was gone, and his health was very grievously impaired. Was God changed because there were no proofs—no indications of His love? Could God change? If He had loved Job in prosperity, surely He did not change in adversity. Why then this great reverse? Simply because of the love that God bore him, and His desire that he might learn two things which are learnt at one and the same time. One is, that when we get near God we find out, like Job, that instead of deserving favours, we abhor ourselves. If I abhor myself, I could not expect favour for what I abhor; but at the same moment that I abhor myself, I have a deeper and fuller sense that I may depend on God. What a blessed state my soul gets into from this twofold lesson! I abhor myself, but I depend on God; for I cannot depend on myself. Self is turned from as abhorrent, and God fills my heart as the only One to rest in. Hence when Job prayed (prayer is active dependence), God turned his captivity. It is a moment par excellence when I denounce myself as no longer tolerable. The bondwoman and her son must be cast out; but at the same time I find, like Peter, One whom I can rest in, and I shelter myself in the folds of His eternal perfection. The troubler (self) is gone, and the Son of the Father is the ark of my soul and the home of my heart. Every trial is only to lead our souls to this happy consummation — even to be done with one's self in one's own judgment before God, but at the same time to be deepened in confidence in God. In fact, the one cannot be without the other. I have to learn that I am not suited in the best of my nature for God. Job was the model of amiability, and amiable people often get the most breaking down, to teach them that before God they are abhorrent; but when I see myself thus, in the same light in which I see it, I see the One who is perfect, who causes the contrast; and in Him I rest, and confide, and glory. May this indeed be richly your experience.

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8 And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and pure; for the fine linen is the righteousnessesk of the

saints. And he says to me, Write,
Blessed [are] they who are called to the supper of the marriage of the Lamb. And he says to me,
These are the true words of God.
And I fell before his feet to do

'him homage. And he says to me, See [thou do it] not. I am thy fellow-bondsman, and [the fellowbondsman] of thy brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Do homage to God. For the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus.

And I saw the heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and one sitting on it, called I Faithful and True, and he judges and makes warin righteousness. And his eyes [were] a flame of fire, and upon

his head many diadems, having a name " written which no one knew 13 but himself, and clothed with a

garment dipped in blood; and his name is called The Word of God.

14 And the armies which [are] in the heaven followed him upon white horses, clad in white, pure, fine

a sharp two-edged sword, that with it he might smite the nations; and he shall shepherd them with an iron rod; and he treads the wine-press of the fury of the

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kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against him that sat upon the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and the false prophet that [was] with him. who wrought the signs before him by which he deceived them that received the mark of the beast. and those that worship P his image. Alive were both cast into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone; and the rest were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which goes out of his mouth; and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

XX. And I saw an angel descending from the heaven, having the key of the abyss, and a great

In Hebrew the plural of acts expressing a quality is used for the abstract quality itself. This may be the case, by analogy, here. See Psalm xi. 7, where in Hebrew it is 'rightcousnesses,' but it is actual, not imputed.

' 'Called' is a doubtful reading, some

m Some add 'as.'

. Some have here 'having names written

and a name written which,' &c. N, which is very incorrect in the Apocalypse, and nowhere a very carefully written MS, is quite without sense here. It has merely 'a name knew but himself.'

I do not say 'had received' here, because then the deceiving would come after the receiving, which is not the sense here.

P Or 'do homage to.'

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