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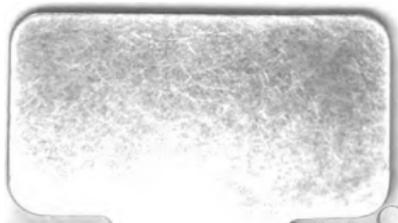
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LETTERS
ON
SUBJECTS OF INTEREST.

SECOND SERIES



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LETTERS

ON

SUBJECTS OF INTEREST.

By J. B. S.



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LETTERS ON SUBJECTS OF INTEREST.

Sunrise and Sunset, the Eternal and the Temporal.

ANOTHER year opens on us. The past has been one of abundant mercy, as is proved by the one fact that the Lord is increasingly precious to us. He is the Sun of the one eternal day, and the more He is before the heart, the better and the easier do we accept the falling shadows on man's life here. He is before us as the Sun rising. On His side every joy and every tie is abiding and perennial; on our side it is a sunset, everything is gradually yielding up its vigour and beauty, though as the rising sun engages our hearts, the *ignis fatuus* of our sunset is eclipsed.

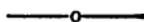
It is an unequalled moment to our souls when the Lord Jesus, the Sun of the never-ending day, is the light of our hearts, and the set-off for the evening shades of our own life. The circle of His radiancy, in its diameter, reaches down to the utmost line of our fading life, and up to the excellent glory; so that, once within this circle, there is darkness nowhere; death is abolished. We are then Simeons (see Luke ii.); the sun of nature going down, holding as it were in our feeble arms of failing strength the Lord Jesus; our eye fixed on Him, and connecting the great future with Him, we let the past, with all its chequered hopes and

sorrows, glide away. "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." When the eye is diverted from the rising Sun, it is beset by either the hopes or the fears of the setting one. But when it is steadily and immovably fixed on Jesus, like Stephen, when he looked up into heaven, then the halo around Him embraces us,—includes us in its blessed circle, and distances the darkness or the sparks of our own kindling, on our own side. We come up to Jordan to see the ark of the covenant where the waters of death were, and practically to find that there is nothing between us and the heavenly land. The eye must be turned to the east and not to the west. I mean that when the eye turns to what is sinking below the horizon, there is either fear, or an attempt to retain the retiring light; but when it is simply and continuously set on the Lord, the light of His presence is above the brightness of the sun (all created life and power); and we know we have it because we are blind to things here because of the glory of that light.

Everything depends on the way the eye is turned. There are the two lights—the fading or closing one, and the opening or eternal one. When the eye turns to the former, the varied distortions which haunt the twilight are conjured up before the mind; but when it is fixed on the latter, the encircling wave of light encloses us, and we see in beautiful outline the eternal realities. The sunflower has but one sun, and to this it turns all day long, with an expanding heart: the sun has always a message for it, a ray to strengthen, to cheer, and to beautify; and thus as your eye is

consciously set on Christ, so will you not only know that the efforts or the pretensions of man are eclipsed, but that every moment there is a message from Him to your heart by the Holy Spirit, conveying to you the love and thought of His heart about you. You are not only in the presence chamber, where all is light and perfection, but the greater than Joseph assures your heart that you are His Benjamin. .

May each of us enter on the new year as real Sun-flowers, with the eye of the heart unfolded to Christ; and receiving from Him the gentle, exquisite, and invigorating influence of His own presence. There must be jealousy of heart that the eye turn not to any rival, for then we commit two evils; we forsake Him the Fountain of living waters, and hew out to ourselves cisterns which hold no water. Let our motto for the year be "Seek those things which are above where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God."



The Difference of being a Guest with Christ and being United to Him.

WHAT is the difference between one in the company of Christ and one who is united to Him? It is evident that the latter includes the former; but the former, as we see even in the case of John leaning on the bosom of Jesus, does not include the latter. If I sit under His shadow, I have great delight, and His fruit is sweet to my taste *while I am there*; but if this scene changes, I have no certain link with the happy scene which I have

left. The sense of past enjoyment is not a link, it may be assured to me by the word, but I require to be there again in order to be conscious of my right to be there. Now if I am united to Christ I am secured in everything that I have enjoyed, whether I am in the scene of enjoyment or not. "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." The sense of being united to Him by the Spirit comforts and sustains my heart in a much greater way than the double portion of Elijah's spirit and his mantle cheered and helped Elisha when a lonely one in the wilderness.

No nearness of company could acquaint me with the wondrous unfoldings of the Spirit to me when I am in conscious union with Christ. How could any mere guest comprehend that word, "In that day ye shall know [be conscious] that I am in my Father and ye in me and I in you?" No experience could surpass this; and it can, through the Spirit by whom it is made known, exist in any scene. No one without a divine nature could appreciate the perfectness of Christ, or enjoy His company, but it is evident that the enjoyment cannot be but where He is who affords it; and hence, however capable I may be of enjoying it, if I am not in the scene where He is, there can be no enjoyment; whereas, if I am united to Him by the Spirit, I am conscious of being in Him and He in me; and therefore, though not in the scene of enjoyment actually, yet I possess the One who makes the scene so enjoyable. I am not only a guest, but I am *owner* in Christ. A guest necessarily only enjoys while he is a guest. The owner is owner wherever he is.

The order as it appears to me is, first, a guest,

and this we see (Rev. iii.) is of a twofold character. Christ sups with me, enters into my circumstances, as He says to Zaccheus, "Make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide at *thine house*." He first meets us in every variety of circumstance on our own side, and next, we sup with Him. We pass into the circle of His things. We are emphatically His guests. We are conscious of untold benefits in His company. But the next thing is, and it is an immense advance, that we are united to Him; and the more we have gained by and appreciated His company, the more do we comprehend the vastness of the favour of union with Him; and it is consequent on union, abiding in Him, that we are disciples, and bring forth much fruit. The power of the absent Elijah is with Elisha though he be a lonely one down here. It is not that Elisha has been only a favoured guest, he has *received* of his spirit and the mantle that fell upon him, and he returns to the scene where Elijah is not, in all his power; fruitful and vigorous, though the one who connects him with all the glory of God, is no longer here. Thus the heir and owner possesses all that the guest enjoys, and he loses not the sense of possession, though he is not in the place of possession; but because he is in the spirit of the owner, he acts in the power and character of the owner, where his title is either unacknowledged or refused. There may be bright seasons of enjoyment to the guest, but there is no enjoyment when he is not a guest, if he be not consciously united to Christ, the Source and owner of all, neither can there be true service as a disciple and friend to Him down here, where He is disowned and refused.

Standing and State.

THERE is a phraseology now, such as "being occupied with Christ," and expressions of that kind, which proposes to give Him full prominence, but which is denied in practice. It is deemed only orthodox now to speak so, but I feel we must insist that the external should bear the marks of the internal; and that others should be able to judge of the occupation of the heart from the expression or fashion in which we appear. The truths of scripture are received and treated too much as information. The mind sees and enjoys them as something incomparably fine and beautiful, but there is lacking the sense that every fresh ray of light is really lost or useless unless it makes its way through the pitcher; that is, unless the vessel is so controlled and coloured by it, that there is manifestly more likeness to Christ, and increasing growing up unto the measure of the stature of His fulness.

There must be standing to produce state, but if the state which is suited to the standing be not preserved, Satan's great aim is attained—even to prove the nullity of the truth of God, and that there can be the admission and profession of standing, without anything characteristic of it. Satan cares not what truth a man holds, provided he retains the character and principles of the world, and this really does more damage than ignorance of standing. The misfortune with many is, being content with a success at their first start, and being so elated by it that they are not set on going forward.

In this day of knowledge souls readily accept

the standing, and think too little of the state which must accompany the standing. To counteract this tendency there must be prayer, and beginning at home with oneself. "Every sacrifice shall be salted with salt."

Although Jacob had reached the right standing in the land (Gen. xxxii.), yet he must go through a night of wrestling, he must be subdued before God, crippled and powerless, and then, at his wit's end, he exclaims, "I will not let thee go until thou bless me." There must be this struggle with God, this breaking down of one's own will and strength, in the presence of God, before there is simple dependence on Him, or confidence. The more thoroughly I am shattered, and made nothing before Him, the more confidence have I in Him that He must and will bless me. Here it is that the soul learns the state which suits the standing; but many a one who has accepted the standing is almost confounded when he is brought into the night of wrestling. This night is to introduce you into a new day, with a new name—Christ's day really, and Christ's name. It is quite right to see and to accept the standing in which God in His grace sets us; but the higher your standing, the higher your state must be, and the more you must be broken down to enter on, or be suited for your standing. I have no doubt the night of wrestling takes many a one by surprise; they have rested more on the truth of their standing, than on Him who sets us there, and is making us like Himself, *because* we are there. Hence, "that Christ may dwell in our hearts," is the prayer (Eph. iii.) when we have been set in Him in heaven. (Eph. i.) If I have learnt in the dreary night of wrestling that

God can break me down, and that my confidence is in Him, who answers by assuring my heart of the name and power of Christ, I am in a new name, and a new power; I must not only see the standing, but I must come near to the One who sets me there. The danger with us is resting short of increased nearness to Christ, because of the high standing which, through Him, we are set in, and which we see. In the night of wrestling my flesh is broken down, and my confidence in Him is so answered that I enter on a new day with a new name—Christ. I have no doubt that many are disappointed that after hearing with delight, and receiving their standing as the truth of God, they are not more affected by it. The reason of this is, that they rest too much in the standing, and have not gathered the first fruits, and put them into a basket; that they have not acquainted themselves more with Christ; have not drawn nearer to Him, and recognized Him as the only One to keep them in it. There is a felt want, with the acceptance of the truth, because the soul is not nearer to Christ, for if it were, it would have found that no flesh could glory there; and there it would have acquired a fresh vigour from Himself, adequate to sustain one in the near standing which had been revealed. The open firmament is the standing of a bird; but what use would be that standing if it had not wings? But wings must grow. The prodigal son is not told to come to the feast until he had the new clothes on, he not only hears of the standing, but he is given a state to suit it. The kiss does not give him a state—it tells him of the Father's heart, but he replies, "I am not worthy." He is near enough to feel this, and then it is that he

receives his new clothes, fit for his Father's presence, which is the very highest standing, and higher than he had prescribed for himself. What is the good of a man being ennobled, made a prince of, if he feels he has gained no moral or sensible acquisition by it? This is the disappointment which souls feel without being able to account for it, and they are subjected to nights of wrestling, because they have rested in their grand titles, instead of in the means of supporting their titles, which is dependence on, and ever deepening acquaintance with, the One who has conferred them.



Devotedness is not Exploit.

It is a very blessed thing when the heart can be without distraction. "Caring for the things of the Lord, how she may please the Lord;" the one occupation and the one motive then comprise her life, caring for the things of the Lord, and this that she may please the Lord. The heart devoted to Him without any distraction, nothing even lawfully claiming one's time or diverting one's thoughts from Him, caring only for the things of the Lord, having no other things to interest one, but devoted to them, because they are His—and all to please Him. The shepherd's dog will lay himself down beside the coat of his master, and remain there for hours; he will endure cold and hunger, but leave the coat he will not, till he to whom it belongs returns to claim it. He cares for his master's things, and all his thought is to please his master. It may not appear to be much, but the fact that it is his master's is quite enough. It is not a question

whether it is the most useful service. If a hare or a deer passed by, the faithful dog would not leave the coat. No thought of how much better it would be to the master to have a hare or a deer can divert the dog from his charge. The hare or the deer may pass by within his grasp, but he will not desert the coat, he clings to that which is his master's in his absence. This is what is so much wanted in this day. There is not that simple devotedness of heart which cares for the things of the Lord because they are His, and with the full sense that they are His, as the dog knows his master's coat. Nothing could persuade the dog that the coat was not his master's, and be it a good one or the reverse, the one charm of it is that it is his master's, and all his other feelings and interests are in abeyance to his caring for it. Many an earnest one now is looking more for a hare or a deer; that is, to do some great exploit, something that one thinks *must* draw forth the commendation of the Lord than that interest of heart only known to him who possesses it; which leads one to know what is really His, and, because His, to endure everything in order to tend or care for it. The dog knows his master's coat by scent. The devoted man knows the things of the Lord by intimacy with Him. Intimate affection always knows what belongs, what is peculiar to the loved one, and it cares for it to please Him. The more suffering in the case, the more the heart enjoys the motive which makes it care; and hence it is not that it cares where there is no suffering, but it is more bent on the care as the suffering increases. For example, the dog in shelter or on a bright day would not be as conscious of the devotion that was in him to his

master as he would be on a dark wintry night when the robber might attempt to steal away his charge. How finely in the latter case does his devotion to his master come out! Just so, the heart that knows Christ's things and has been entrusted with any part of them as a charge from Himself, enjoys itself in its devotion as the suffering in caring for it increases. It is told of a traveller in a great desert, exhausted from want of water, and at length having reached it, he supplied the company before himself, though he was the first to come up to it. This is the devotedness to Christ's things that becomes us, enduring loss and privation ourselves in order that we may save others; not seeking to distinguish ourselves, or to obtain a reputation for our services as a known one. Women are especially favoured in having this service, they can visit and tend in a way men cannot. To our Lord they ministered, like Abigail to David when Nabal would not. It is, the more one thinks of it, an incomparable service, that the Lord's things should be one's care here; things one has learnt in intimacy with Himself, that they are His and that He would have us to care for them; and we do so heartily, because it will please Him.

You will remark that it is the one thus thoroughly devoted to Christ who always has an ear for the greatest and highest thing you can tell him of Christ. The taste is for everything of Christ, that is the ruling taste (passion if you like). The ambitious man could not get too much power; the covetous man could not get too much money; the spiritual man could not hear anything too great or too high of his place with Christ. The more

thoroughly devoted I am to Him here, suffering for Him, despised and unknown, in my increasing care for His things, the more does my heart rejoice in the height and perfection which belong to me in Him outside this scene. The one who is pre-occupied with any kind of religious distinction here is proportionally indifferent to the heights of perfection in the coming kingdom; but the one who is mole-like, toiling on here with the one single cheer, even to care for the Master's things in order to please Him, always turns to the future, and knows truly that Christ in Him is the hope of glory. Be devoted, and do not offer to the Lord that which costs you nothing.

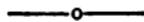


The Three Characteristics of Devotedness in a Woman.

THE character of Anna the prophetess, is a very interesting and instructive one. She has the three marks of a devoted woman. She departed not from the temple; she adhered with devoted affection to the circle of God's interests on earth; she clung to it with unswerving zeal. If this mark be not first or chief, no subsequent zeal or labour can conduce to the purpose of God at the time, but is at best zeal without knowledge; for it is expended in maintaining something which is not the purpose of God, or the sphere of His action. If I am working outside the divine sphere I may be laborious enough like Peter going a fishing, but I am really doing nothing to subserve the interests of Christ; and all my labour is in vain.

I am not redeeming the time, I am expending my strength for that which does not profit. I cannot be in the divine sphere without the power of God, and everything, even the least which is done therein, is of God and well-pleasing to Him. The effort of the enemy, through the flesh, which is not subject to God, would always lead us outside this sphere; and though the toil or personal suffering may be greater, yet it is a serving of self. The first thing then with Anna was that she departed not from the temple, and thus is it with every prophet or prophetess now; there must be no departing from the sacred precincts of the present circle of God's interests. The second characteristic is, she served night and day (in darkness and brightness) with fastings and prayers; there was self-abnegation, and dependence on God. These two must always go together morally. Dependence, without self-denial, is only turning to God for your own benefit. The one who is really dependent on God is the greatest faster with regard to the flesh; for the latter is at enmity to God, and if I am dependent on God, and independent of myself, then Satan has no ground of attack. This characteristic describes the state of soul of one who is faithfully abiding within the holy ground, in which is the testimony of God. The third characteristic is double sided; one side is toward God and the other toward the people of God. She gave praise unto the Lord, and spoke of Him to all that looked for redemption in Israel. This is the active service, so to speak; and it follows, is consequent on the former. The more the heart is filled with praise to the Lord, the more is there an increased interest for His people. What valuable

laborious service did this pious woman perform? What interesting occupation she had! no unseemly notoriety, no unwomanly publicity, but here and there as she found any who looked for redemption in Jerusalem, to them she spake of Him for whom they looked. Her service was like fresh light and air visiting the inhabitants of a prison, not thinking of itself, but imparting comfort while offering its services. Surely Annas are much wanted in this day. The service inside when true, leads to the service outside, and each is in its own order; that is, the external service is characterized by the internal service of the heart. I am sure that a woman, an Anna, receives a very different thing in the presence of the Lord in her soul, from a Paul or a Timothy. The inside gift must determine the nature and order of the outside duty or service. The male and female birds, though brought up in the same nest, have very diverse duties when they have to serve and tend the younger ones. The principle is simple: as I receive so do I impart; and if you really receive the living water, it will flow out as the Lord may order. The more thorough the heart is, the more it looks for and values what is highest, even though it may be far from it.



The Manifestation of the Life of Jesus in Our Body.

I HAVE been thinking of the difference between the new birth and the manifestation of the life of Jesus in the body. I think the tendency is to satisfy the conscience with the fact of new birth, without being set on the manifestation of the life of Jesus in the

body. The new man is the jewel and the body the casket, but the purpose of the apostle was, that the casket should bear on its surface the beauties of the jewel—of the treasure. I feel people often rest satisfied or rather try to borrow satisfaction from the known and assured fact of possessing the diamond, and the mere fact of possession is their comfort, and they enjoy a meeting, or waiting on the Lord according to the amount of the brilliancy in which it shines, that is, the joyful consciousness of their possession. Now if this be the habit and the conscience has been taught to submit, then there will be indifference to the external manifestation of the treasure. The pleasures of the flesh and of the mind will get a place without offence to the conscience. It is from this that the saying has arisen, “Religion is a thing within, you must not parade it.” How many who would not go to the extent of these statements yet really give way to the practice which results from it.

It ought not to satisfy my conscience that I am the Lord's, however true and happy I may be in my relationship through grace ; but that if I am dead in His cross, I am now to be bodily the exemplification of the life which He lived on earth. Everything in the mind and in the flesh is to be suppressed according to His will. This is sanctification. Every bud and leaf of the crab tree is to be rubbed off, not suffered to grow, though they may be very like those of the apple tree. So that the question is, not whether they are good or bad, but whether they are of the crab tree or of the apple tree. I am to make no excuse for myself because of temperament, or education, or position ; because the more there is to be overcome, the greater the vigour of life in

overcoming it, and hence the greater gain. The greatest victory has the greatest prize. I believe the reason why the saint does not feel the incongruity between his own words and thoughts and habits, and Christ's, is that he has not been enough with Him to see the difference. We see in 2 Corinthians iii. that there is the beholding Him first, before there is the carrying about the dying of Him. As I see Him in glory, I am transformed into the same image. It is not a mere quality I imbibe, but it is a personal state, life in its development in Christ in glory. It is not merely that I possess the diamond, but I am invested with a new man which after God is created in righteousness and the holiness of truth. I cannot suffer the old man to continue unrebuked and uncrucified as I am consciously invested with the moral tastes of the new man, and then it is that I carry about in my body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus may be made manifest in the body. There is a sense within of the nature of the leaf that ought to be visible, and there is no true answer to the inner existence, unless there be a conformation in sentiment and manner answering to it, and it is wounded if there be not this practical answer.

The gardener is not satisfied without a certain colour in the flower ; and the rarer it is, the more careful is he that the true tints should be expressed ; and if they are not, he does not say that there is no life in the flower, but that it has not the sun suitably to extract the proper tints.

Thus two things are necessary ; first, I must know the true tints, and these I can only know by seeing them in their perfection in Christ. There is no use in a country gardener trying for the tints of a

flower which he has never seen in blossom, which is the case if they be rare tints. A common gardener is satisfied with any that are new and pleasing ; but their being new or pleasing does not make them like the original. Well then the gardener must know the original first. You must know Christ in His moral beauty before you can know the tints and touches of Him which you would manifest in your body. And the next thing is that you cannot put up with anything inferior to the original. The cherubim were wrought in needlework on the veil : Christ in the most minute way set forth the attributes of God. Let us not say, This is the flower which is natural to this corner of the garden, this is my habit, it is natural to me to say and think and do after this and that fashion. But now my garden is to bear the rarest flowers. I have seen the originals, I have buds and slips of each of them planted in me, and now I cannot suffer any of the old habits and tastes, even be they flowers, or make any excuse for them if they appear, any more than a gardener would suffer a nettle to grow beside a tulip. It is not only that the Master will be dissatisfied, but one who is in His mind could not endure to see weeds where the beautiful flowers of self-control and patience and forbearance should grow. One must be much impressed within with the perfect original, in order to be duly and heartily repugnant to everything that is not in keeping with the perfections of Christ. As our joy and delight in the original increase, there will be in each of us more bearing about of the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our body ; and thus the casket will answer to the diamond.

No Real Strength or Joy from Service except in the Lord's Presence.

How does the vine flourish? Neither wine nor oil can be obtained but through a process of bruising or beating. The finest fruit will not yield wine or oil without this severe process, though many a one, knowing that oil comes from olive berries, and wine from grapes, may think that he has both oil and wine because he has the fruits from which they are obtained. It is quite true that neither oil nor wine could be obtained without the olive fruit and the vine fruit, but after the fruit is gathered there is need of great skill to make it into oil or wine, and not only skill, but patience and attention. Fruit is the result of life, the outward expression of it, but the best acts in themselves will not make the face to shine as oil only does, nor will they gladden the heart as wine does. The acts cannot be done without grace, any more than grapes can grow without health and vigour in the vine; but as grapes are subjected to pressure, after being fully ripe, in order to produce wine, so the best acts—the fruits of grace—must be judged and sifted in the sanctuary, before there is real gladness of heart. Saints often expect the gladness to come from the work. The work is in the field. There Ruth gleaned, but it was at Naomi's home that she really enjoyed the fruit of her toil. It was all handed up to Naomi, and her acceptance of it was the cheer to Ruth. If she was pleased with her gleaning, as doubtless she might be, she was pleased with the grapes, and not the wine. The wine is not found until, as I may say, the grapes have been

bruised into my Lord's cup. Grapes, that is acts, please while we are occupied with them, but they do not gladden the heart; they have nothing of the power of wine—of the joy the heart has while subjecting all its works and ways to Christ, and sharing in that which He extracts.

There is a great difference between the kind of pleasure one has in doing things for the Lord, and the enjoyment the same one may have with Him consequent on, or subsequent to, the doing of the work. Many are satisfied with the grapes, and hence know little of the wine. There is more of grapes than of wine, and you can never store grapes unless you dry them, but you can store wine. Thus it is that one may account for the difference one often sees in workers while they are working, and when their work is over; while working there is a suavity about them, they are fragrant with grapes, and find themselves to be beautiful vines; but in private, in the desert, there is no wine. The vintage is over, and there has been no storing, no filling of the cellar with the joys which are made known after labour in His presence, and they are dull or barren till the grapes come again; whereas the great cheer is, or ought to be, in the wine which is extracted from the grapes. I do not disparage work. It is plain that if there are no grapes there can be no wine, but I fear that often there are grapes without wine. The work is the grapes, but the real strength and joy of the heart as to it, is in the wine extracted from it when I get before the Lord, and see all that is of grace separated from the husk and pulp of nature; then I rejoice in that in which He shares. I have communion with Him about His own interests, and am gladdened by the

wine of His own joy, and not merely by the grapes. I am like the bee that goes forth to gather the honey, but never eats it except in the hive and to the bee there is no place like the hive. I wish there was more work, but I very much wish there was more real enjoyment in the Lord in connection with His interests here on earth. Work should be regarded less with reference to its immediate results, or as to how it may affect this or that person; the great question is, will it, when sifted in His presence, be acceptable to Him? and this acceptability to Him is my reward: "Wherefore we labour that whether present or absent we may be acceptable to him." One does not enough go forth to work in the joy and strength of one who comes out from his home to run his course. Many seem to droop because there are no grapes and are not happy unless they are doing. Doing is right enough in itself, but the order ought to be from happiness to work, and not *to work for* happiness. It is from the inner circle, the hive, the heart where Christ reigns, the only green spot, the fond enclosure—the sanctuary, that one should come forth to work like a giant refreshed with wine. I should not like to stop working because I had not great enjoyment in the Lord: but the quality of one's service depends on the nature of one's rest—and that rest should be like His own, known and enjoyed with Him. I think we have but small ideas of how our outward bears the colour of our inward, and if our inward is not restful, there cannot be a rest-imparting service, however it may be attempted. If I do not make wine, I can have no wine for others. He that makes wine first tastes of it himself.

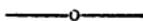
What is your Mission ?

WHY are you set where you are, and why has the Lord told you so much of His mind? Wherefore and for what reason? He has made nothing in vain. The sand on the sea shore is there by His ordering, and it fulfils His decree—Do you? Why has He called you out, and having done so, why has He fixed your habitation at —, and for what purpose? Is a star set in the firmament to be only a creation there, and has it no mission? Have you no mission which you could not have executed without the grace of God? You might have been a most dutiful child, and a most loving sister without grace. The young ruler (Mark x.) kept all the commandments referring simply to man, and the Lord loved him, but he had not the grace in his soul to prefer Christ to *everything* on earth. Now did grace, when he received it, confer no higher mission on him than the one he had fulfilled so well before he received it? What I want you to ask yourself is, Why the Lord, having brought you to Himself, appoints you to be where you are? And what does He expect you to do now more than a good unconverted girl would have done?

Are you a member of Christ in the very scene and premises from which He has been expelled, without any mission or calling entirely distinct and superior to anything which one in nature could discharge? If a tuber were brought from the Tropics, and after much care in planting, it had grown up and was found to be only a potato, what would every one say? Would it not be said, We have plenty of that vegetable here already, there was no need to go so far and expend so much time and

trouble in rearing a plant which already we can bring to quite as great perfection in this country without incurring so much expense and toil? Can it be said of you by *the angels* that you would have been quite as good a daughter or a sister without grace? and that they do not see on you the coat of many colours, the manifold wisdom of God—that is, that the heavenly colours of divine light do not supersede the dingy hue of natural amiability?

I really could not tell you what you ought to do, but I know that a star shines, and I know an exotic is quite different from the indigenous plants of the country, and that if it is not, the owner is greatly disappointed. I believe you have a very serious and responsible position. You are the only one in the sphere in which you move, to whom the Lord has shewn His mind, and what is the path for Him here. Surely if there were a firmament in which there was but one star, that one star would be under a great responsibility to the Creator to fulfil its mission in the sphere which it was appointed to enlighten.



Ever in Armour.

IN our course here the armour must *never* be laid aside. The point in which we have most excelled or triumphed through grace, is the one where we may fail many years after. David began by slaying the Philistine giant; but when he was king and fought against the Philistines, “David waxed faint and Ishbi-benob which was of the sons of the giants . . . being girded with a new sword thought to have slain David.” (2 Sam. xxi. 16.)

The Meribah at the beginning of Moses' history is very different from the Meribah at the end of it. I think Satan is set on casting us down in the point or deed where we have most triumphed through grace ; so that if you know anything in particular, where the Lord has given you power to act for Him in victory over your own nature, there you may look for a continual assault from Satan, in order to undo and counteract what the grace of God has enabled you to do to His praise. Satan never forgets a defeat, and his vengeance is not directed against us so much in general, as with regard to the particular occasions in which he has been defeated.

As a rule God humbles us either in our health, or in our circumstances, before He exalts us ; at least before honour is humility, and this casts us on Him, and prepares us for the favour which He confers ; for if not, there will be a defeat immediately after a success. If Satan has been foiled in one instance, he spoils what he cannot prevent, unless one is sensibly humbled after the victory itself. This was why there was need of the thorn in the flesh to Paul. Jacob was crippled before the blessing, Paul after it. The *before* prepares me for it, the *after* saves me from the malice of Satan. The greater the victory any one has had, the more he needs to be dependent on God to save him from Satan ; because Satan is more set against him, and in the particular point where he has been defeated than against another. Satan is more against Job than other men at the time, and Job's success only exasperated him the more. To make him fail where he had succeeded was the great effort of Satan. I feel this constantly myself, and

the assault comes round just as winters come, and the soul like a tender plant is tried again and again. A dozen winters are not sufficient to test the power of endurance in the plant, but year after year the chilling cold sets in, and the question arises, Will it die or survive? These are the exercises we have to go through; and through mercy the finest summer succeeds the bitterest winter, though it is also true that the coldest winter succeeds the hottest summer.

You may be like David—a king in comparison to what you were in other days, I mean as to progress and power in truth, and yet like him—be in danger of being slain by the giant; or, like Moses, you may be more in the sight of the land than at the beginning of your course and get debarred by failure from entering in; for neither height nor light secures us against the malice of Satan, who seeks to cast us down from our excellency.



Suffering in the Flesh and Suffering for Christ.

I AM sure, and the assurance is helpful, that the way of power and usefulness in the present time is, going out individually to meet the Lord. It is the trimming of the lamps which tests power, and which exposes hollow profession.

Our position is very much like that of the faithful ones in Babylon in a former day; they were in complete separation from all around, but with communications from above; they were wiser than all their enemies, but did not eat of their dainties. There is great moral elevation in this course—refusing the king's meat—the best things here, ab-

negation on the human side in the severest way, but receiving from God the highest and the best; and still further, suffering unto death, in order to maintain the honour and glory of God. The first is the preparation for the second; we have to suffer first in denying ourselves; we are in ourselves to suffer in the flesh, as Peter puts it, before we are able or prepared to suffer for Christ. Then it is, "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye, for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." I remark, though I do not entirely commend it, that those who began by taking the veil as it were, that is, by ascetic separation from the world, eventually became, when in full liberty, the happiest and most devoted saints. I am sure Paul's way, utter blindness to all things here by the power of the glory, is the better way; the heart so captivated, like the queen of Sheba, that there is no more spirit in her; but this, as far as I know, is a very uncommon way. I believe the general way, and a very solid way, is a painful dissatisfaction with everything apart from Christ and a retiring from everything in order to get more of Him. There is often, I admit, too much expected from the surrender, but as the heart reaches Him (and He knows, blessed be His name, the desire working there), the surrender loses its consequence or importance, and though it is insisted on, it is not prominently before the mind, because the Lord Himself is more than a compensation. I believe the Lord tests our love. "Lovest thou me?" is the experience of the soul at some time or other; and again, like David, He provokes our love, by longing for the water of the well of Bethlehem.

There must be first the personal love which de-

nies oneself; in other words, suffering from oneself, before there is the active love, which can endure suffering from others. Ruth surrenders everything for Naomi personally *before* she gleaned in the field to minister to her. My love for the Lord makes its mark first on myself, and my heart likes to have it so, and then everything I have to do with must bear the mark of what has so truly marked me. I influence and reduce everything into the line into which I am directed myself. I am a tree of a particular quality; that quality is personal love to my Lord, and now I make all the elements—air, light, earth and water—co-operate with me in expressing and developing this quality. What a beautiful tree!

May you allow nothing to hinder the growth of this tree of life, for sure I am that nothing short of it will meet the desire of your heart. Sometimes a tree seems to be hindered from the situation in which it is placed; but its vitality is proved as well as tested by the rough breezes, and cold shade to which it is exposed.



Truth has no Power unless I submit to its Demands.

THE truth may be truly received, but it has no power over us unless we connect it with God and in faith are cast on Him about it. That is, it cannot be carried out without God. We may receive it most surely, and yet not be able to carry it out, because we are not cast on God respecting it. Now, the evidence that you are cast on God is that you fast. As you depend on God, you abnegate self. If you turn to human power you

need not fast; if you turn to God you must fast. I feel that this is the reason there is so little practical expression of the truth; the need of grace with the knowledge of truth is not felt. The knowledge of the truth is rightly valued and prized, but there is all the more need of grace to remove and set aside what hinders its expression; otherwise you are a candle under a bed, or under a bushel; and if God goes on giving you truth, and there be an acceptance of it, without a corresponding breaking down of that which would obscure its light and hinder its power as the bed or the bushel, then He will in some very marked way break up the bed or remove the bushel Himself. If you take up your cross daily you will be able to accept death easily.

What I fear is the ready acceptance of truth without the sense of how much that truth will demand, and that the flesh must be surrendered if I am to be an impersonation of that truth. The beauty of the truth, the sweetness of it, is that which is thought of, and not the demand it will make on me naturally; the amount of displacement which it will entail. I find that the most conscientious are the slowest to accept a new truth, simply because they fear not being able to answer to its demands. Of course it is all grace, and if I know grace fully I am not afraid of any truth, but then its import and demands are not overlooked by me. What I desire to promote in my own soul and in others is the sense of the responsibility I am now under, because of the light which God in His mercy has taught me, so that I am not only thinking of the light, but of the imperative necessity that now rests on me to express

the light, and when it is so I am cast on God, and thrown out of myself; and this is really praying and fasting; dependence, and self-denial.

I do not advocate a monastic or sanctimonious manner, but I do a subdued manner, one which evidences the cross being taken up daily. A nun is afraid to laugh or to look at anything lest she should revive her carnal likings; but the real widow, nothing could really interest in the scene from which death has severed her heart, and she accepts everything here in this qualified light. She can receive and use everything cheerfully, but a deep reserve in her heart forbids anything here to touch her heart. This is patience having reached its perfect work, and to be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.



The True Way to Discover my own Deficiency.

It is never useful to dwell on how little I take in, or how little I resemble the truth presented to me. I do not say that this will not come before me, but quite a different effect is produced when I discover my deficiencies from studying the portrait or the person, and when I am looking at the canvas on which I am copying it. In the first case it is the person or portrait that fills my eye, and the more I look at Him, the more I see what has to be acquired, and I am thus occupied with the amount and greatness of what I have to acquire, and not with the littleness of what is in the copy on the canvas. I am studying to be like Him, not inspecting how unlike I am, which is true enough; but this comes out by the deepened sense of the

blessedness and beauty of Him, as I dwell on Him, and I am conscious that the beauty is only and singularly in Him, and not in me, though I desire to have it more than ever; but in order to derive more, I turn, not to my acquisition, where I only discover my deficiencies, but to Him from whom I acquire, and always with the sense of how much I have to acquire; but then with this, I have the stream of supply before me. It is just the difference between a man looking into his purse and seeing only a few coins in it or going into a room full of gold to fill it. While filling it, he knows how empty it was, and as he puts in piece after piece, he feels, I had not this before; but then he is occupied with the supply which meets his deficiency, and not with the deficiency merely. No amount of occupation with the deficiency will remedy it; but on the other hand, the more I use the means for remedying it, the more conscious I am how much I needed it. There is no use in a man dwelling on his thirst, he never relieves it by doing so; he has a very keen and peculiar sense of his thirst while relieving it; but then it is not the thirst that occupies him, but that which relieves it, and the zest with which he swallows the water impresses on him how much he needed it. If I am studying Jesus, I feel how little I am like Him; but all the time I am drinking in more of Him, and my desire or want is satisfied at the very time that I have the sense of its existence.

Occupation with deficiency does not rectify, but occupation with that which rectifies always deepens the sense of deficiency. If I am studying the Lord's path on earth with the eye of my soul on Him in glory, that tells me how unlike Him I am; but

at the same time, I am filling my empty heart with His grace and His mind, and as I do, I am enriched, while I have the sense of how poor I must have been because I require so much; and this always goes on, for I always find myself empty and small when I am alongside of Him.

May He keep us with our eyes more simply set on Himself.



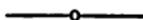
Fresh Grace is Required for Every Fresh Step.

THE leaves of a tree this year are not the same as they were last year; new foliage comes with each succeeding year; the climate, the circumstances are never the same as in the former year. So is it with us as Christians. The Lord's purpose is not to teach us habits, which a continued sameness of circumstance would produce, but the resources of life, and that through a variety, and constant change of circumstances. If the circumstances were the same this year as they were last, the grace which carried one through last year would do for this; but when the circumstances are entirely new and diverse, then the grace must be entirely new and different in its order, to be suitable. Hence the manna was to be gathered every morning before the exigencies of the day occurred, before there was any demand; and that which was gathered was adequate for every demand which could accrue. What a wonderful way to begin the day; with fresh manna, prepared for every fresh and unexpected demand!

Our strength in Christ is not to be measured by the way in which we met any former trial, but by

the way we meet the present one, though the remembrance of a former victory may encourage me as to a present difficulty, as the remembrance of killing the lion and the bear encouraged David when he was about to encounter Goliath. As there is progress, the trials or tryings become greater, but the strength is also greater; and if the strength be greater than the tryings, there is not increased suffering or anxiety, but there is the increased sense of the resources that are in Christ. A tall tree gets more of the storms, but then it is better able to resist and hold its ground than a young one would be if exposed to the same shaking. If you have got over a two-foot fence prepare for a three-foot one, and so on. The tests are greater as we advance. There is often, as we see in young horses, more suffering in taking the first fence than in any succeeding one, if he be kept well in practice. Sometimes one balks and sulks and will not take the fences, and then there is loss; the sense of Christ's power is practically lost to the soul, and there is no use or gain in remembering how I rose above circumstances on a former occasion: indeed if I do recall this, it only convicts me of being worse mounted now than I was then, and this in a Christian means that he is not as simply dependent on Christ now as he was at a former time. The saint's motto is, "Now or never"—a saint or nothing. This schooling in the new life is most interesting. I have to meet new and unexpected fences or hindrances every day, and according as my heart is restful in Christ, I am able to meet them in His strength; and thus I go from strength to strength, till I appear before God in Zion. No rest till I get there. May you

come forth fresh every morning like the sun, rejoicing as a strong man to run the race set before you.



Stages of the Christian Life.

THERE are three stages in the life of a bird, which very closely illustrate those of the Christian's life. At first the little bird only opens its mouth to receive the suited food. Feeding is its one simple occupation. As it thrives, its feathers and wings grow, and as soon as they are fully grown and used another stage of life is entered on—it flies, and then it sings. These three things characterize it. First, acquiring food for itself; the second, acquiring a new motion, which is flying; and then singing. Now it is evident that the second stage cannot be reached unless the first has been enjoyed. Food has been so supplied and appropriated that the wings have grown and been used. A Christian first desires the sincere milk of the word that he may grow thereby, and as he grows, he is conscious of a new power, the power to fly.

When you fly you enter on the second stage. Then you acquire for yourself, you can discriminate. "A spiritual man judgeth all things." Before, some one else had to discriminate for you. Now you can provide for yourself suitably. Flying is now your natural motion, you always move above the earth; you seek the things above, you set your mind on things above, and not on things on the earth. This new power is always heavenward. "He being full of the Holy Ghost looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of

God and Jesus ;” and *then* comes the singing. I believe that no bird sings till it can fly. I am sure that no Christian sings his true note until he can rise up in the power of the Spirit of God to Christ, where Christ is. This stage then is when the senses are exercised to discern good and evil, and there is known power in the Spirit to seek the things above where Christ sitteth ; and then there is singing, which is expressing, in true and full tones, the deep and overflowing satisfaction which the heart enjoys in His presence where there are fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore.

Now comes the third and last stage in the life of a bird, which is building a nest and caring for her young. Her history began in a nest, and now she builds one and nurses a young brood. She brings forth much fruit. But this is the stage of a full-grown bird, and it illustrates the Christian, who having found everything in Christ for himself, can now in true devotedness of heart serve Christ—be His disciple in this scene, and be a blessing to others. “If ye know these things happy are ye if ye do them.” All the love and service rendered to the bird in its early days, it now renders to the objects of its care. As it has received so it bestows. It does nothing but as it has received, and this is true service.

Now this new stage demands a very peculiar manner and way, entirely different from any hitherto known. The bird that flies selects its own food and sings. It is individual—shines as a planet. It testifies of the goodness and favour conferred. It is often brilliant, but it is alone and singular. But when the bird builds a nest, where she may lay her young, her character and habits undergo

a very marked change. She surrenders none of her former power, but instead of contenting herself with her peculiar personal blessing, she now devotes herself to objects outside herself, though they are part of herself—her offspring; and because of all her interest and toil about them, dear to her as her own life. What makes this entire and wonderful change in her is, that she shapes herself always to the good of the objects of her love. You have had your stage of individual blessing and enjoyment; once known, it is yours for ever; but now you must grow in another direction; you must not, when others try and oppose you, retire into the sanctuary of your own heart, and there delight yourself in your possession. No! you must now build a nest for the objects of your care, and you must exercise yourself to turn to account all their need, and make it an occasion for you to disclose your love and care. In the one case when tried, you retire into yourself, like the flower that closes its petals on a cold rough day, and refuses to shed its fragrance when everything is so out of season. In the other, you will be like the hawthorn tree that in the depth of winter hangs out its scarlet berries for the suffering birds, when there is succour nowhere else. This tree, the admiration of all in the gay month of May, comes forth and offers a ready sustenance to the needy. To be the latter, you must be proof against the frost of neglect, and the snows of indifference. You must not think of yourself, but of the need of those to whom you would minister; and this imparts a very distinct character to one.

In a word, instead of retiring into yourself to find with the Lord a comfort which you have lost

in seeking from others; you seek for nothing from any around, and you come forth always to give. Until one is able to be a giver to every one and a receiver in a begging way from none, one is not safe from expectancy here; that is, there will still be a possibility of reviving links to this scene. But when one is so satisfied in Christ as to be free from self, and able to build a nest—seek the blessing of others—be a hawthorn tree in the dreary winter—such a sense of the superiority of Christ is acquired, that nothing here can captivate the heart; and all the trials and slights only extract more consideration for others; more of the nest; more of the scarlet berry. It is only when the heart is dead as to this world, and filled with Christ in heaven, that it is proof against reviving, and then it is free to be occupied with the interests of Christ here.



**Dependence on God is always accompanied with
Self-denial.**

IN remembering all the way in which we are led, it is good to examine where we have permitted the crab shoot to grow, and which, when not rubbed off in the bud, must be torn down, or eventually sawn off with deep suffering to the tree.

The fact of a place being arduous, is no reason for your taking the initiative in order to find an easier berth. The very arduousness was the needed thing for you, and instead of looking for strength to go on, you looked for a gap through which you might escape, and you found one; and now you find yourself confronted by a greater hedge, and one requiring more mettle or faith to surmount

it. The Lord must exercise souls, and where there is dependence on Him as to purpose, He takes care that there shall be dependence practically too; and hence if we will not learn it when first proposed to us, He gives us a loose rein and easier circumstances, but the test—the difficulty—comes up again. We must learn that our power is in Him, and that in His power we can do all things. I am daily learning that if I am true as to dependence on God, it will be seen by denying myself. That is, there is always less self-consideration, truer self-denial, as one is really more dependent on God. I want less for myself, and think less for myself in every way, as I am more simply cast on God; I am provided for by His hand, and I have fewer wants and less self-thought.

Self may come out in putting too much confidence in others. Every confidence is false and selfish except that which faith in God confers; and as there is confidence in God, there is an easy independence of all others; and one accordingly thinks neither of oneself in relation to others, nor of others in relation to oneself. There is no carefulness to make an impression, no ready sense of what is due to me. It in fact gives one the easy manner of wanting nothing from any one; ready for any one to use, but never expecting to be thought of or remembered because used. We must learn to lend, hoping for nothing. There is a certain honest feeling which expects acknowledgment of services rendered; but when this feeling rules, it has the tendency to make oneself too much the object; and though the feeling is right and true in itself, it brings self into prominence and imparts too much expectation from that which

is not reliable in itself, even nature ; and the only way to check this is by increased dependence on God. Real, full dependence on God imparts such an ease to the soul, and consequently to all one's relations and ways with others, that only as it is learned, can one discover how much was expected and exacted from others, and as it is learned there is increased satisfaction of heart because of reckoning on God ; and one wonders how increasingly little one expects or exacts. The Lord will have us not only to taste of dependence on Himself, but to be proficient in it; and the growths which hinder the fruit buds must be cut away, that the latter may come forth in vigour, and the tree answer to its true character.



The Way of the Satisfied Heart and the Unsatisfied.

THE difference between a satisfied and an unsatisfied, though truly earnest soul, is very marked. The latter betrays self at every opposition ; he is most diligent in acquiring truth, like the bee toiling all day for honey, but with this great zeal there is a peculiar sensitiveness to every obstacle, which, like the bee, he avenges by bitter retort. The sense of that great good which will only satisfy me stimulates me to unceasing energy to acquire it ; but in proportion to my zeal, the more embittered am I with what interferes with me in my pursuit. The bee toiling indefatigably for the sweetest thing inflicts on its opponent the bitterest wound. The desire of the heart to reach the best thing is right and perfect, but because that which satisfies has not been reached, there is no power against the dis-

turber, and this too often exposes the saint to the reproach of being in manner and word the very opposite to his profession and real purpose. The more we are set on reaching Christ the more conscious we are of every character of opposition which baffles and hinders. But because we have not reached Him in power and sufficiency, we too often turn to the flesh for aid. It is very distressing to the earnest toiler after Christ to be betrayed into angry and hasty retort when in any way assailed, but it is well to be able to account for this painful anomaly. Hunting is not enough without roasting; seeking and even acquiring is not sufficient.

Now when I have found Christ for my heart—when He satisfies me, my toil is not so much that of the bee among the flowers as of the bee in the hive; it is less the zeal of the seeker than the zest of the proprietor exploring and delighting in his acquisitions; I am occupied with beholding the glory of the Lord—His beauty—and inquiring into His temple. Such an one is not less sensitive to incongruities and offenders, but he is so assured of his wealth and power, that he feels like a rock on which the waves exert their violence in vain. Practically I am always acquiring more of Christ while here. “I count all things but dung that I may win Him.” I am in one sense the bee among the flowers all day long; but it is a very different thing to acquire with a satisfied heart and with an unsatisfied one. As I have acquired Him—as I know Him and the power of His resurrection, I am in fellowship with His sufferings, and I bear everything as He bore it, and can walk with His unfailing grace and dignity through

every molestation. According as I learn in practice the virtue of Christ, so am I the more occupied with Him, and less occupied with the evil which would hinder me.

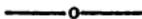
God's Sufficiency learned through Discipline.

IN our course here we have to pass through a two-fold discipline ; the first on ourselves, and the other on that which we value ; and each has, or produces, an effect very peculiar and distinct in itself ; the one is to cast me on God for *help*, the other, to cast me on Him for comfort and rest. In the one, it is His power rather that I turn to, in the other, it is more to abide in His rest. When saints are suffering because of their bodily afflictions they are taught how powerless they are. All flesh is as grass ; there is a sense of the impotence of man when one is languishing under a painful illness, and then it is that the saint turns to God and values His *power*, because all human power is felt to be at an end, and this is a great lesson. Job learned it : " I know [he says] thou canst do everything"—there is no power in me, all is in God. Now this removes the great impediment to faith ; because if I am so reduced and helpless, I cannot do aught but turn to God, as Jonah did when in the bottom of the sea. " *Twice*, [it needs to be repeated] have I heard this, that power belongeth only to God." This is the great groundwork of dependence ; it is the only ground the widow can take in going to the unjust judge (Luke xviii.) ; he had power, she had none. The pressure on her was so complete that she was driven to appeal

to the only one that had power, though he was otherwise most repulsive.

The second kind of discipline is that which I value being removed, and for this I want comfort. If I am friendless, or like Jonah, gourdless, I have no one to comfort me but God. Thus you see whether your suffering is only confined to yourself, or whether it is from the break up of things around, what you have to learn is the sufficiency of God. There is but the one thought with God in disciplining you, namely, to make your trials an opportunity for your heart to learn and discover more of His love, and the resources which are in Him, as He has revealed them to us in His Son, who has come near to us, to acquaint our hearts with both the help and the comfort; and therefore He not only rests us, but He *gives* us rest. In the one it is His power relieving us; in the other, it is Himself imparting the state of rest—the thing itself to us.

May we each learn more fully what He can do, or rather that He can do all things; and may we know, to the exceeding comfort and unspeakable joy of our hearts, that all our springs are in Him.



The Greater the Need, the Greater the Supply.

You cannot have too great a sense of your responsibilities to your family and to others, provided you have at the same time a deeper sense that God careth for you. The failure, as with Moses when his father-in-law suggested to him that “the thing is too heavy for thee” (Exod. xix. 18) is, that we think we are to perform our duty ourselves alone. It is quite true that the duty rests

on you to meet every claim, but if the many claims awaken in your soul a deeper sense of God's care and succour, your very need and pressure become an occasion for acquainting you with the greatness of your resources ; so that the greatness of the need only becomes an opportunity for disclosing the greatness of the supply. It was the vessels to receive the oil which failed with the poor widow (2 Kings iv. 6) and not the oil. The supply only ceases when the need or the place of it no longer exists ; so that need or responsibility, if used as a vessel, is only an occasion or opening for the mercy and goodness of God. A rich man is one who has not a want that he cannot meet. If he never had a want he would not know the use of money. The use of it is learned in spending it, laying it out properly. No one dislikes wants, if he has plenty of means to supply them. There is a known pleasure in using one's means in providing something which is desired—wants often increase with men as means to meet them increase.

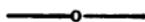
With you, as the pressure or responsibility increases, so do the means to meet it increase, if your heart is simply dependent on God. Our springs are in God. The more you require, the more you take in when you reach the spring. The whole point (if the springs are sufficient for our travelling through the desert) is whether we are *at* the springs. If we are, and if they are inexhaustible, it only remains that we take in abundantly, even like a camel that can take in for eight days ! You would not mind feeling in need, or a desire for help, when there was abundance beside you. The point we all fail in, is not in feeling our inability to discharge our duties fully, but in trying to

journey on through this great sandy desert, without finding or reaching the springs. Let us learn from the birds of the air; they discharge their duties by going in quest of material for the nest first, and then for food. They have nothing of their own. They go and look for it, and they look until they find it, and this is just what you have to do. You feel your responsibilities; well, you have no means or power in yourself to meet them; but, like the parent bird, you go in quest of means; only with this great difference, that the bird does not know where to find it, and you do.

When Mary and Martha felt their powerlessness (John xi. 3) they sent for Jesus. Send for Him to bear you company in your responsibilities; and then your responsibilities will only be occasions for you to know more of His love for you, and of the fertility and greatness of His resources. If you want anything, fly off to Him, and the oftener you fly to Him the more you will get, and the more you will find that the need is a great occasion of blessing, because of the way He meets you in every need. As you *use* His love, you learn what it is. If you use it not, you cannot know what it will or would do for you. Your experience will be, "the more I need the more I get." To the house of Joseph it was said, "Thou art a great people, and therefore the mountain shall be thine." The large family got the large inheritance. Settle with the Lord that He can do everything, and then you will soon come to this, "He doeth all things for me."

May the Lord comfort your heart, and assure it that duties and responsibilities are never to de-

press you, but that the greater they are, and the more you feel them, the more help and property you are entitled to, and therefore the richer you are in grace, because of your need of it.



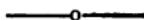
Legality and Spirituality.

THE law addresses a man in the flesh. The life of Christ by the Spirit orders and directs the man in Christ. The former seeks to produce something from the man, subjecting him to this and that exercise in order to produce a given result. The latter, the Spirit of God in me, controls me according to the mind of Christ, and uses this body as a vessel. In case of the one under the law, there is an effort to obtain from the flesh that which is not in it. In the other case, the Spirit is only expressing the desires of the new man, and then demonstrating the qualities of Christ, in spite of the flesh which has not only no sympathy with the Spirit, but on the contrary, has unceasing opposition to it. When I am legal I am trying to answer to the law in my flesh, which at best is weak, even when not opposed; for when I am legal I am only occupied with an attempt to extract something from the flesh and so long as I do this, it is in a way pleasing to the flesh, even though there be many and great penances, because the flesh is *acknowledged* all the time, and the attempt of the legal, is really to educe something good from the flesh.

Now the spiritual man is quite different—he has the taste and the power too to accomplish what he aims at, and he in the Spirit resists and silences the flesh which interferes with him, and there is

actual compensation and success at the same time. There is the sense of acting in the Spirit, and the joy and strength which the Spirit imparts, and though there be mortification to the flesh, there is a sense of positive gain, not in the mortification itself but in the life of Christ, while the flesh is more sensibly set aside, and the body used as a servant. If there be suffering in the flesh, there is known joy in the Spirit. There is not, as in the legalist, depression and excitement alternating according as there is hope or no hope from the process of training, or rather exaction. The spiritual man doubts not the power and good quality of that which he depends on, and he is happy in acting according to the mind of Christ, no matter what waves and currents he may be exposed to. Trying to row a great boat is legality; there may be some progress where there is no opposition, but then all the tugging though very arduous and self-exacting is of no use. Now the spiritual is like a boat worked by steam, and hence it goes everywhere according to the Captain's orders. Tides, currents or winds are not taken into account. Where the legalist is baffled and exercised to no purpose, the spiritual moves on with dignity and purpose, not attempting what is not in him, but answering by the great power in him to the mind of Christ. The legalist is ever thinking of his oar. Everything depends on his stroke. The spiritual attends only to the word of the Master, and by the simple movement of the helm turns to the exact point to which he has been directed. The legalist is ever thinking of his *conduct*. The spiritual is thinking of *Christ* and His word, and seeks strength to walk according to it, and is judged by it, if he does not. You

can always distinguish the legalist from the spiritual by the way each moves about or does any act. The former is thinking of how he is doing it, the latter of the intention of it. The former is thinking of his own manner, the latter of his company, and of how he can serve them. There is moroseness and severity about the former, but a glow of life and victory about the latter.



The Two Edifications—Ministry and Life.

IN Ephesians iv. there are two edifications spoken of; one (ver. 12), connected with the gifts from the Head in heaven; persons are gifted by Him to minister, and through their ministry there is an edifying of the body of Christ; but besides this, there is (ver. 16) that which every joint supplieth; making increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love. Thus there are two edifications; one from without, and the other from within; one through something imparted, the other from the condition produced by what has been imparted. It is the difference between food with air, and constitutional vigour. Food with air is necessary to health and contributes to it, but this is quite distinct from health. The healthier a person is, the more he gains from the best food and air, but the action of health in itself is quite different from the action of food and air. Food and air symbolize the ministry. It is the Lord's blessed way of feeding and refreshing His own on earth; but if the ministry has been effectual, there is another way in which increase or edification is promoted, and that is by the health which the ministry

has produced. The using of the health is that edification which every joint supplieth. Invalids are dependent on food and air for mere existence. They know nothing of the energy of health. Thus it is in some places with the saints, they are too much like invalids, they are dependent on ministry for existence, or at least for the sense of it. If they had health they would exercise the energy in every joint, and there would be edification of the body in itself in the highest expression of health, namely, love. A person in health is not independent of food and air, but he is like a camel in the desert that can carry water for eight days; he has taken in a supply; and the sense of life, in vigour and muscular power, is diffused through the whole body irrespectively of food, and often in bad air. A person in full health values and appropriates food and air better far than an invalid; but the invalid has no power in himself; he has not health, and he is entirely dependent on what is ministered to him. He may be like one in health as to appearance sometimes, but put him to act, and it will be at once seen that he has no power of life. Health that reaches out to every joint, is promoted by the true and just answer of every joint to its proper function in the body. An invalid may sit and listen and feed very well, but the proof or evidence of health is when there is increase bodily in the joy of life, and the highest sentiment, which is love. When a tree comes out in leaves, and blossoms, and fruits, it proves not only that it has been well cultured and nourished, but also that there is vigour in itself, though it was not independent of the culture. Thus, the more health and vigour there is in the saints, the more do they appropriate

the edification from *without*, through the gifts, but the virtue of what is received is proved by the way the body edifies itself from *within*, in its best expression. Love—the nature of God, is the fruition, the result of health, the true glow of life.



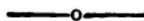
The Duty of a Philadelphian.

THERE can be no real work for Christ if one be not in the path with Him, and the effort to work for Him without being in the path with Him, betrays itself in the character and intention of the work. If I am not in the path with Christ, I must be in the path of man, which be it ever so good, is after all only a human path. It is not of the divine character of the path of the "Son of man who is in heaven," and who in His work has always declared the Father. There is a carnal character about the work instead of a divine character. The mere work may be right in itself, but it cannot be done *for* Christ, if one is not *with* Christ. People insist on the goodness of the work; that may be undeniable. But the question remains, is it carried on in the path with Christ, or in the path with man? If the latter, man can bear me company in it. If the former, man, as man, can find no place in it; and the exclusiveness of Christ marks one, and this of itself is obnoxious to the natural mind.

I believe it is impossible to be a Philadelphian (see Rev. iii.) individually, and to submit to an ecclesiastical position which denies all that should characterize a Philadelphian. The danger is of being in a position avowedly Philadelphian, and yet unexercised and untaught in soul in the moral

status of one. But it would be glaring inconsistency to have learned and accepted the standing of one and then to consent to an ecclesiastical position which would deny it. On the contrary, when I am one, when I purge myself from the corruption of the great house, I seek those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. It is said to be assumption to take the place of Philadelphians ; all I can say is, that if we are not Philadelphians the sooner we learn our lesson the better. If we are the church of God, that is the highest position, and it is greatly to our disgrace if we are not of the faithful remnant. It is only an exceptionable character who adopts an "alias." If I am honest and true I abide by the family name, and if it be a high one, I only labour the more not to tarnish it, but to act worthily of it, especially if the other members of my family have compromised it.

Like Jacob at Peniel I must go to *God's side*, if I would have my name of Israel, a "prince with God," come out in its true strength and value. It is God who has made me great, and as I am near Him, I am sustained in keeping with His greatness. If I turn to my own side I am no match for the flesh and its supports, and I have to compromise my name in order to suit my company.



Storm Without and Rest Within.

It is as we are really cast on God that we are at rest ; we enjoy the peace, but still the storms occur to keep up the dependence ; and not the dependence only, but that lightning of the ship, that fasting, that ignoring the flesh—that silencing of nature

which must be when we truly have to do with God. The storm without and the calm within is our daily exercise and lesson. The storm is so great that flesh and nature are powerless to deal or cope with it; and the calm known only before God, is so apart from the ways and course of nature, that plainly it is in a region of its own; and hence as I am in that region, I am consciously separated and distanced from the one in which the storm rages. Like the dove from the ark, I may venture out, but I soon return again to the shelter of the ark. There is a watery waste without, but there is rest and shelter within. If I value and cling to the rest within, I must bow to, and accept the desolation of everything outside; and this is just where all the exercise is. There may be like the dove a longing to go out if all human hopes are not at an end; but the heart soon finds that there is no rest there, and it returns convinced that there is nothing but one vast waste outside, but that there is a known rest within.

In turning to God we are not sufficiently prepared for the fact of the utter desolation of the flood, the end of all flesh; and that there is no rest and help to be found but in God. I believe there is a hindrance to our prayers because we cannot in heart consent to the drowning of every confidence and desire of the flesh, for this is real fasting; and our dependence on God cannot be absolute while we retain any part of that which is at enmity with Him. Let us not be discouraged, but pray, pray, pray. The thing in which He exercises the heart most, is that in which He most shews His favour.



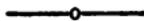
His Heart and His Hand.

Do you seek solace from Christ's sympathy as much as or more than you do from the interference of His hand? Is it His heart or His hand which comforts you most? If He had not come down and walked beside us in all our circumstances down here, He could not have sympathized with us; He could not have made us *feel* His heart for us. He might have stood at a distance and have stretched out His hand as Moses did, when with his rod he smote the waters of the Red sea; but Christ came down here, walked on the waters, and said to Peter, "Come" to where He was. He walked beside Mary going to the grave of Lazarus, and wept as He went. It was His heart He was unfolding in that walk! It was His hand when He called Lazarus out of the grave. If He were to come and relieve you by His *hand* out of every pressure of health or circumstances, and order things for you, you would after all be only a solitary unit in your good health, or with your improved circumstances; but if you are relieved and comforted by His *heart*—His sympathy—you have made an acquaintance with Him personally, and you have all the comfort and cheer of enjoying His company in your dreariness; so that adverse circumstances with Him are better than happy ones without Him. It is better to have His company in the desert, like the disciples, or on the cross, like the thief, than to be a solitary Adam in Paradise. The brightest *things* cannot perfectly relieve the heart. It is His *heart* only that can relieve; and this is known when no other heart could or would know how to draw near and bear one company. Surely company is

better than comforts. It is with sorrow only here that He can sympathize, for there is nothing of God in the joys of man.

It was need at the marriage feast (John ii.) which drew out His hand. Nothing but His hand would suit that, but in the second miracle at Cana, His heart entered into the sorrow of the father; and when He said, "Thy son liveth," the hand of mercy won the heart and faith of the father and of his house.

You must practise yourself in learning His heart; you must learn how He would act in your circumstances, for He is beside you when you are toiling in rowing; and if you become more sensible of His being beside you, and that He Himself has gone through every sorrow that a godly one could endure, you will, as you look for it, find a solace in His sympathy—in His heart, which no interference of His hand could obtain for you. Better for you to be at — wanting the Lord every moment, and finding Him near you every moment, than if you were in the brightest scene, where you could draw on things around for your enjoyment, and where according as you had power in yourself you would be able to appropriate the beauties around you. Seek to learn and to enjoy the interest which Christ takes in you, and you will find that, like the rock to Israel, He follows you, and makes up for your lack, by the streams that gladden the city of God.



Life Above and Death Here.

THIS is to you, I doubt not, the widow losing her only son. Saints cannot be persuaded that they

must learn death here after they have learned life in Christ in heaven. They think it is enough to have known that they were dead by nature, and that through faith in Christ they are alive in Him; but they are slow to see and to accept that now alive in Him, they must practically find death in that out of which He has saved them. Being dead, we are quickened together with Christ; and in order to know the perfection of this new life, it is necessary that we should have no links to the life here—to feel what it is to go, as it were, to our own funeral. Either I die to everything, or everything dies to me. “We who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake.” I see that when souls begin to get on, and to apply their hearts to the word of God, as they progress, they are taught death on their own side, in proportion as they taste of life on Christ’s side.

I do hope, and it will be joy to my heart, to see you come out very brightly from this dark valley. Accept death in the valley; but *insist* on it, at the same time, that life is yours on the hill. Say to yourself, It is all death here, but it is *all* life outside in Christ. This will make you to expect nothing here; but to expect and receive too everything in Christ. If everything is dead outside of Christ, and everything of life is only in Christ, then Christ is everything to the heart; and this is just the thing you have to learn, in this the saddest hour of your life; but the midnight is the hour for Him to shew Himself—the “fourth watch”—the depth of the night; He is *beside* you, and if you know what He is doing, you will find Him the living One in His own bright glory, where the waves of sorrow and the darkness of death have almost overwhelmed

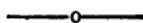
you. I long to see you bright. No one can be bright until he comes out of his own grave, as it were; and it is when we accept death fully, that we know fully the joy of resurrection.



Life out of Death.

“THE Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.” He has brought death very near to you all, and where you feel it very much. To you who remain, it has but one voice, and that is to walk with Him through the valley of sorrow to the morning of resurrection. He is the resurrection and the life. One never realizes the full virtue of life but in death. There is the death of judgment because of our sins. The conscience when awakened passes through that death, and Jesus Christ through grace is the light of life. But there is the death to the heart also, which comes often very far on in one’s history and this may be in various ways, but it must be in a way that we feel it. We could hardly tell ourselves where it might happen. The Lord only knows where death is unknown to us, and where we require to enter into it. If you learn death to your heart, you will find in Christ quite a new and wondrous portion—your conscience not only relieved of its burden and at peace with God, but now, your heart stricken down by the death of a loved one at your very side, can learn what it is to have the living One for your resource and compensation, in all His superior and abounding tenderness and love. It is the time for learning the reality of His love and interest. Joy is the time for my friend to enjoy me, sorrow

is the time for me to learn and know the value of my friend. You never perhaps so needed heart company before. Death threatens *all* ties when it rudely breaks one, and that one of the nearest, but this is the moment for you to find a light in the darkness, and to know the companionship of the Man of Sorrows, never realized before. You hide your head in sorrow, the whole sky is darkened, every eye sees the gloom without, and yet this is the moment for your heart to find in Jesus a resource and a satisfaction which you have never known before. A friend in need is a friend indeed. No one else can come near enough to you. The dignity of sorrow forbids the intrusion of any, but the One who can truly sympathize. He can, and He leads you into deep waters in order that your heart may require Him, and having found Him, you may learn His value and worth in a way entirely new to you and in a way never to be forgotten.



The Way Christ is Known in Bereavement.

THE one who for many years has been walking beside you, as a fellow-heir of the grace of life, is now no more with you, and you have to journey on more solitary, and yet needing more care and company every day. You have to feel the need in order that you may look for and enjoy the way in which He will meet it. The more really desolate any one is here, the more will such an one find in Christ, if the heart truly turns to Him. He in His discipline allows the blank, not that you should sorrow and pine because of it, but in order that He

may occupy it Himself. He has removed a partial and a transitory comfort, in order that He might fill the empty space with what is perfect and eternal. He often gives us in the human friend the mould of what He would be to us as the perfect and enduring one. As a mould is used to form the gold and the silver into shapes and figures approved by the owner, so does the Lord teach us that our dearest friend is only, in comparison, a mould for Himself; and as the mould is made only of earth, so is there as great a contrast between the human friend and the Lord Himself as between the earthen vessel and the gold. You would not complain of the mould being broken and no more at your service if you were in possession of Christ as the One who had been only using the mould to bring Himself into that very peculiar nearness to you which the mould expressed. All that was really good in the mould was of Christ—the real attractiveness of it was derived from Christ. Very near you, very useful to you, and very dear to you—but a greater than the mould is here and beside you, and you in spirit are called by Him to enjoy His divine preciousness without any mixture, failure, or cessation. I know you must feel it a very lonely time, but every gourd in time must come down, that the full beauty of Christ may satisfy and delight our hearts. May this be your experience richly.



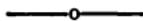
Learning through Suffering.

How varied and peculiar are the shadows of death to which we are subjected, and each one is intended

to be the occasion of our learning some new and deeper lesson of what He who is the life, is to us. As we are placed in the one, so do we learn the other in contrast. Life and the loveliness of Christ are learned while the contrast here serves as a foil for them.

The life and manner of Christ are manifested to me by the Spirit of God according to the nature of the death darkness in which I am here. Paul was a prisoner, John was an exile, when the manifestations and revelations of Christ were vouchsafed to them, and to each one in keeping with the living tomb in which they were immured. The suffering is like the black board in a school-room, in which the characters of some new proportion are written in white. The suffering is only to close the natural side, the natural eye, in order that there may be divine vision, and that the single eye may see clearly and fully some new or hitherto unknown beauty in Christ. You must shut the eye of nature in order that there may be a single eye to see and to take in any new lesson of Him, the perfect One.

We may feel the dreariness of the tomb or the chill of the dreary time of sickness and sorrow, but when we can like Jacob rest through it all—make a pillow of the cold stone—it is then that the Lord causes a light to shine in the darkness, and we rejoice more, and our gladness is more than when corn and wine and oil increased.



Exercises of the Wilderness.

THE variety of exercises to which we are subjected in our journey through the wilderness is very interesting.

when we go through them with the Lord. They are not often what we might have predicted for ourselves, but they are the suited ones to deepen the work of grace, or to sever us from what would interfere with it; and as we are exercised by the trial, we find out, or at any rate reach the intention of it, even though often we could not define it to any one, or to ourselves. In the exercise we are brought near the Lord, and there the needed grace is acquired. The hindrance is checked, and while it is checked, the heart is drawn to the Lord, and the feature which He would impart is produced in us. The checking or breaking away of the old leaf is not enough, it is only preliminary to the other, namely, the gift of a new one. It is not enough that the gourd should perish. Its perishing really only makes place for Christ, but this is acquisition in the stead of the loss; and many are conscious of losing the old leaf, who do not apply themselves to the Lord to obtain the new one, that is, the feature of Himself which He would substitute for the old one which has been cut off. And this makes tribulation an occasion for joy, because when I come near Him, widowed of what meets me as man, He shews me what especially suits me in Himself, and I find a compensation in Him, the perfect Man—the Son of God—for the lost leaf, or broken branch of the poor weak man here. I grow in knowledge and in possession too, of the one perfect One, and this is an unspeakable charm to the heart; because He lives I live also, and the joy of the Lord is my strength—“My joy is fulfilled in them.” What a picture on earth to see one Man threading His way through all the defilement and labyrinth of this world, well pleasing to God, and His delight.

always. It attracts the heart beyond anything ever seen by, or shewn to man on earth.

The Order in which the Heart Learns Christ.

THE real good in any ministry is in the measure in which it feeds the heart with Christ. He is the Sun to give light and heat, and the greater the extent of surface presented to Him the more He confers. There is more capacity to take in, and this capacity is increased as the heart is occupied with Him.

The heart is first *won*, and this deepens as it learns His love in humiliation. "He loved me and gave Himself for me." Secondly, it is *satisfied* because united to Him, and in association with Him where He is. The heart captivated by an object could never be at rest until it was united to the one who had won it, and for satisfaction it must be where He is—there is no company otherwise. The first desire of a true heart, as with the woman in Luke vii., is to seek the presence of the Saviour, to be in personal nearness to Him. With the bride in Canticles, whenever He is present, all is bright, but there is no satisfaction; there is true affection, and often deep delight, but there cannot be satisfaction until the heart is in assured union and association with its object. Thirdly, after satisfaction comes an entirely new occupation. All before related chiefly to oneself. The heart is won, and the heart is satisfied; now the occupation will be *studying* Him—seeking to be suitable to Him. Many try to be suitable to Him in order to satisfy their hearts, but

then there is a legality about the effort, and it bears the mark of seeking to make oneself the object rather than Him.

Now after my heart is satisfied, I sit down before the Lord and study His mind, and from that study I adopt habits and ways, and enter on work in order to please Him. All the previous gains of the heart are increased by each new one; that is, I am more won by Christ as I am satisfied by Him, and I am more won and satisfied as I study Him. And then I learn sanctification *in His company*. "For their sakes I sanctify myself." As I am sanctified I am ornamented, and it is the adorned one that is properly qualified to be the serving one, which is the last thing. "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her." The serving one deepens in all the preceding gains. He is more won, more satisfied, more suitable as he is more serving.

The action of love, like Jonathan's for David, is always to seek the company, the presence of the one loved, and then to express itself by making much of the object, and little of self. The answer to the sinner is, "Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace." This is the confirmation given to the sinner in his first acquaintance—personal acquaintance with the Saviour. The saint has that love deepened, and he has besides, union and association; and then he is satisfied. This is the most blessed point to reach. Love really cannot think of anything until it is quite sure of its object; then when at rest about itself, it studies the mind and heart of the object.

I do not come to Christ as to my fellow, attracting Him by something in me—I have nothing

to bring to Him, and He won me when I was in the most unattractive state; hence I must be well assured of the constancy of His heart, and of my association with Him far removed from the depth of misery I was in, before I can think whether I could be anything or could do anything to please Him; for I have nothing of myself, and it is only in His company that I acquire tastes and habits which answer to His mind.



Dependence Learned in Two Ways.

I DARE say the Lord has a distinct purpose in allowing you to be placed in so many new circumstances, that you are to be emptied from vessel to vessel. A person in nature gets used to one set of circumstances, but really in grace there is a novelty in every step of the way; and it is because one does not so realize this novelty as to seek help from the Lord continuously, that He has sometimes to change us to an order of things entirely new to us. There is ever a danger to settle on ourselves, to seek ease for ourselves. When things are easy and pleasant about us, we begin to think that we are an object of consideration, and that things are thus ordered by God because we are so, and this leads one to consider for oneself. It is true that each of us is an object of consideration to the Lord, but it depends on Him as to the way He may express His consideration. The Jew was an object to God *on the earth* and it was expressed in an earthly way; but the saint now, though he be a greater object, is considered for with reference to things above, and if I expect consideration in an

earthly way, I am not in the mind of God whose object I am. If I am expecting Him to think of and order for me after an earthly way, I have not learned how He really does consider for me, and consequently He has to disturb my attempts to settle here. Then I become like a bird which when its nest is rifled or swept away, flies away, and fears to dwell near the scene of its sorrow; the wing is its only comfort and resource.

Job was greatly distressed because his nest was so entirely dismantled, and he felt that he had done nothing to deserve it; but in the long run he learned, not only that he was not entitled to anything, but that he was one to be abhorred; and how could he expect anything for what he abhorred? But then it was that he knew what it was to be entirely cast on God. When he abhorred himself he had no one to turn to but God, and this is dependence. When one has learned that there is no one else but God to rest on, there is dependence, because then I know like David how God thinks of me; and this produces confidence in Him. This John knew when leaning on Jesus' breast. Then I am like one coming down here, knowing that I have shelter under His wing above and a sure retreat; in the other case, it is that there is not a stick left of the old nest here, and one's only resource is to fly away and be at rest. The one, is the dove of the ark that returns to its known place of rest; the other, is learning to be a dove and crying out for its wings to fly away.

If you know what it is to dwell in the secret place of the Most High, you will abide under the shadow of the Almighty, and your visits to this scene will be with the intuition and clear knowledge of

the way back to heaven. If not, storms will beset you until the earthly nest be quite scattered away, so that you will fear to build here, and your only hope will be in flying away, for you have a dove's nature, and there can be no rest for the sole of your foot *here*. Thus we see these two dependencies; one, the better, is because I know what I have above, and I only come on a visit here. The other, because I have nothing here, and therefore I *seek* what is above. We all learn mostly in the latter way, but having reached the retreat above even in this lower way, and having tasted of being with our Solomon there, we can then enter on the better and higher thing, and come here only as a visitor. In the one, I am but an emigrant, or a swallow, seeking a suited house; in the other, I am a carrier pigeon, coming with messages from my Lord, to the needy ones of this sorrowful scene. I hope you will be a carrier pigeon, and be able to tell me that you seek nothing here, not because you have seen your nest blown away by a hurricane, but because you enjoy so much above that you could not dwell here.



Sanctification through His Ways and through His Word.

I DO not think that the order of suffering indicates the exercise one is subjected to in it; we all are so differently exercised by the same kind of sufferings. Hence it is the exercise which really indicates the object or need of the suffering. Farmers would tell you, wind for a lamb, rain for a calf, and sun for a foal. The exercises from each of these in-

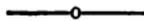
fluences is needed by each, and though one is quite different from the other, the same effects are produced. The results are brought about by very different agents ; but the object of it all is to produce strength, and a better development of life. Chastening is to effect this ; holiness is the standard ; “ that we might be partakers of his holiness.” “ The knowledge of the holy is understanding.” We are divinely intelligent, that is, we have reached the highest point of intelligence when we are holy ; “ perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.” It is “ the path that no fowl knoweth, which the vulture’s eye hath not seen.”

I do not think that we are sufficiently interested in the subject of sanctification and how it is produced. The Father’s chastening is to this end. Christ’s present ministry is to this end, but He effects it by the word, from the place in which He is as the sanctified One ; so that everything affecting us in the old creation, and every word connecting us with the new creation should all tend to this great consummation. The action of both these processes is very interesting ; one detaching us by a dying process from everything here, and in us, which would hinder holiness, and the other by the living word leading our hearts intelligently into the mind and ways of Christ who is not here, but who has sanctified Himself that we might be sanctified truthwise, that is, not only by the truth but bearing the colour of it.

I think the washing by the word and the sanctifying by the word differ in this—the former is effected when the mind and conscience are diverted from things here to Christ; the latter when we are in association with Him after the order of His

sanctification, or what the word produces; that is its own proper atmosphere (it imparts an oxygen of its own); there is no sense of the beautiful and perfect apart from purity, and divine purity is necessarily holiness: that is, distinct separation from evil—where evil is. Thus everything great and intelligent is connected with holiness. There is something wonderful in knowing oneself in this school, graduating into the highest intelligence, and into all that is beautiful and perfect; everything that acts on me, wind, rain, or heat, and every whisper of the still small voice that sounds in me is to educate me in the path which to faith is distinct and plain, and most blessed, but unknown to the cleverest and sharpest intellect of the mere creature.

May you learn your lessons every day. You have only two books to learn from; one is, how His *ways* act on you; the other, how His *words* act in you. May you be an attentive scholar, and may you rejoice His heart in the fruits of your education to the glory of His name.



Fruit-bearing.

THE maturity of the plant is the great matter, for there is no fruit without maturity. It is a study both interesting and inscrutable how the variety of seasons and temperatures contribute to the maturity of plants. The gardener cannot alter the seasons, but he does all he can to remove every obstacle in the way of maturity, for his eye is on the happy consummation, and like the husbandman he has long patience for it. He looks for *fruit*.

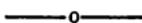
What is a garden without fruit? What does a gardener toil for unless for fruit?

The first thing for one who is for Christ here, is to be a *disciple*, and the mark of a disciple is not that he is alive and happy, but that he bears much fruit. Fruit is action resulting from abiding in Christ. It is life so matured that it expresses itself, but necessarily the expression is in keeping with that in which it is matured. For instance, a pear-tree is alive, but when its life is matured it bears ripe pears, and this is fruit. We live in Christ, and as His life is expressed in or by us there is fruit. You might be visiting the poor all day and giving away all you had, and there might be no fruit in any of it; and you might be sitting alone, and there might be fruit in the way your heart was going out in prayer for the Lord's interests. The first lesson in bearing fruit, and without which there is never any, is that "without me ye can do nothing." It must come from abiding in Him. He leads me into the activity that pleases Him, and then I am a disciple—a scholar of His; not yet a friend, which is the next step, nor a witness which is the highest. (See John xv.) A gardener is not satisfied that a pear-tree should do very well and bear much fruit one year—he is disappointed unless it does so *every* year. A saint has a great advantage over a plant, for he knows not only the desire of the gardener, but he knows also the mind and heart of the Master for whom and from whom he may draw everything to please Him. You cannot awaken in a plant a desire to bear fruit. If it prosper it will, but in a saint in whom is once awakened the desire to bear fruit, to be His disciple, there is a turning to the Lord,

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there is a daily growing and cleaving to Him in order that he might not be in His garden as a pear-tree with leaves and blossoms only, but that acts in keeping with His own mind might be done by him.

We are each a peculiar specimen of grace ; if you or I fail there is no second specimen to fill our place. The plant is there, but it has failed, and there is no filling up the blank, until the plant answer to the end for which it was placed in the garden. What I want is to promote in you the desire to be a disciple, to find yourself a channel through which the life of Jesus may be expressed, amid all the thorns and wild briars of this evil scene. " Holding forth the word of life that I may rejoice in the day of Christ." Oh ! to be able to invite the Lord to " come into His garden to eat of His pleasant fruits."



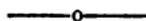
Remembering Egypt.

THE path is one of faith, and faith sees nothing here. It sees neither the easy thing nor the difficult ; neither the famine nor the green fields of Sodom. Abraham gave up his faith when he saw the famine, and Lot was outside faith when he saw the green fields of Sodom. Whenever the things around us influence us or govern us, we are not in faith ; and when faith ceases there is no more real energy. A righteous soul will be vexed by the things around, but there is no actual deliverance. There is always in our course an opportunity for returning ; it is allowed in order to test the faith and to assure the heart, when tested, that the faith which enabled one

to step forth perhaps years ago, is as fresh in its energy as it was then. Now this opportunity to return occurs with remembering or calling to mind the country from whence they came out. Faith is really lost when there is not a looking to God to carry one on to His own city, and then thoughts and memories of the land of which Babel is the city come into the mind and pave the way for returning. One reverts to the tastes and habits suited to the Chaldean territory before one accepts the opportunity to return, and once the tastes and habits or the memories of the old country are entertained by the mind, one is morally fit for the place which answers to them; just as a prince who adopts the manners of a clown will find himself at home ere long in the haunts of a clown. With a saint it is either faith, or calling to mind the country from whence he came out; when it is faith, there is always progress, and the sense of power overcoming the *present* things: there are energetic activities even though the obstacles are not visible. I remember hearing of a near-sighted sportsman who could not account for the sudden and continual bounds the horse was making in the hunting field. He did not see the obstructions over which his horse was carrying him, whenever they opposed him in his course. This is just what faith does, it is even more energetic when there are oppositions than when not, and the whole being is made sensible of its power. There is the glow and animation of a well-exercised strength.

The softest furs grow in the coldest climes, the exterior is indicative of how the inward energy provides a defence against the atmospheric antagonism.

If memories of the land of Chaldea are awakened, if tastes once repressed or refused are revived, the heart has gone back to the world, and the feet are waiting or ready for the opportunity to follow. The memories may not shew themselves much or distinctly at first; the absence of the energy of faith is the first sign of decline. The external appearance indicates that there is a verging to Babylon, instead of there being a tighter girdle to face the foe, and a firmer step to encounter the roughness of the wilderness. Every one has a weak point, and all the evil associations and the checks in our course have been occasioned by yielding ourselves to the society where it was fostered; and sooner or later, unless we continue in faith, the memory of the world will be awakened, and then there is danger and loss too until the memory has been refused, and the stern active life of faith which looks for nothing here, be resumed.



Care of the Body.

THERE is a wide difference between self-indulgence, which whatever form it takes is a hidden and deeply working evil, and care of the body; and yet we often confound them: in attending to the latter, we may fall into the former; while, on the other hand, in seeking to avoid self-indulgence, there may be culpable neglect of the body. We are never right about anything unless we begin with Christ, and having begun with Him we keep up with our beginning as a river does with its source.

Now if we begin with the sense of the body

being the Lord's, we shall order and care for it with reference to Him. If I am honest in saying that it is His, I am not righteous if I do not preserve it for Him as His property. To please self would be to depart from my source ; to please Him would always maintain my connection with my source, and I should flow on in the channel which He had appointed for me, useful on the right hand and on the left, and continuous in usefulness.

I do not think or see that the Lord makes weak bodies strong ones, but when there is a real sense of the claim that He has on the body, there will be a watchful care not to subject it to any tax beyond what the Lord might require, and in every way to keep it fit and ready for use. In self-indulgence there is often a neglect of the body for some temporary gratification, and an overweening consideration for it at another time. I feel there is nothing in which we more betray our insubjection to the Lord than in the way the body is treated ; over-driven or over-taxed at one time to obtain some pleasure or profit, and again nursed and considered as if there were nothing else to be considered for either by oneself or others. Our ways are not even. I believe the weakly body might be so tended that it would not be unable to flow on in the appointed channel. When a river ceases to flow there is a loss to the locality, and when the body is unable to act, one's proper services are stopped. There is no doubt that we require to be weakened in our bodies by sickness at times, but weakness is no hindrance to God's power ; unruliness is. I remark that in 1 Corinthians where it is the *unruliness* of the flesh which is the subject, then the death of Christ is pressed—

Christ crucified, no flesh to glory in His presence. But in 2 Corinthians where it is the *weakness* of man, even death, which is before the mind, there it is to be the bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus that the life of Jesus may be manifest in the body.

I feel that we have not sufficiently regarded the body as the only medium now in which to set forth the life of Jesus; and that the body, which in nature expressed all our vanity and tempers, should now express the beauty and grace of Christ, is to me most wonderful and admirable. Nay, there is not a grace which appears in our bodies now, transient though it be, which shall not be established in perennial lustre at the judgment-seat of Christ; so that it is not only that we have rendered to our Lord what was His own, which is but simple righteousness on our part, but in every way that we do so, we ensure a positive gain for ourselves. Any care or discipline which will enable the river to flow on freshly every day (how beautiful to see the streams of life flowing from weak beings like us, but such is His grace) is right and proper; nay, our duty; but it must be ever remembered that the one object is that the river may flow on unhinderedly. If I look at Christ in His death, there is no place for me to glory but in Him, and if I feel myself in death, which is the lowest point of weakness, my relief and my strength is seeing Him in glory; and as I see Him, being transformed into the same image.

He that is Spiritual judgeth all things.

ONE may be godly and devoted, and yet not

spiritual. I am godly when I have the sense of God's presence and am influenced by it;—devoted as I surrender what I have. The one is as it were *on* me, the other *from* me. The spiritual sees things as they are seen of God; everything in his circle or circumstances is discerned, as it really is in God's sight. It is not that things at a distance are made plain to you as if seen through a telescope, for instance as you get light on scripture through a teacher. The spiritual man sees not only accurately, but he sees each thing in its true relation one to another. His power is like that of the microscope, and he has a ready adeptness in distinguishing between things which outwardly are alike, but which differ as to size and importance.

If I am spiritual I see the machinery by which certain well-known sounds or acts are produced. Many a one hears the clock announcing the hours of the day who knows nothing of the wheels and springs which produce the sound. In the same way an event comes to maturity. Every one may hear of the event, but every one does not see the course and influence by which it was produced. The spiritual man knows that like produces like, and therefore he sees the things that are natural which must end naturally, while he is discerned of no man. He can distinguish between two things in which there is the least difference; he can choose his own time and the best opportunity for everything. He is both godly and devoted. He would not cast pearls before swine, he would not unnecessarily provoke opposition. The spiritual man does not seek for bad but for good. All that is not good he rejects, but he seeks only what suits God. It is not that he studies the various activities around

him, he has affinity with all that is of God, and from everything else he separates with a distinct judgment; hence he is insulated from everything around him.

The creature, that is, the creature as set there of God, he always respects, but the way it is perverted and diverted from God he repudiates and avoids. As the value of the fox-hound depends on its power and quick-scentedness to discover and follow the game, so is the power of the spiritual man to pursue that which is of Christ, and Christ only, and he acquires growth and power as he proceeds.



How to maintain Moral Superiority.

It is the way we act in old things, things in which we were once at home, or rather the way in which they affect us, that discloses the nature and amount of change in us and the power to maintain the newness of life. To be really and fully a new person in old circumstances and ruled by a new power is the acme and joy of the new life—it is the Spirit's work, the walk of Christ here. To suit our company and in principle to say, "Let us have but one purse," is what the world calls manners, but no one or no thing is so really esteemed or admired as that which preserves its identity inviolably; and the more uncommon or unique its type, the more it commands respectful attention, as it braves every influence, and maintains its peculiarity. An exotic is admired and valued, and the more truly it grows here like what it would be in the tropics, or elsewhere, the more it attracts attention and is commended—the beauty and peculiarity of the plant

are acknowledged, whereas if the lily of the Nile would, in order to be at home with the lilies here, become a common iris or flag (as they are called in the country) who would be attracted by it, or who would commend it?

There is really nothing which commands so much reverence as moral superiority. Man in his conscience knows that he has lost God, and hence has lost the superiority once belonging to him, for we were made for God. Now through grace we are new—renewed in knowledge after the image of Him who hath created him; and as we maintain this image, not in figure or imitation, but by a new man—renewed in knowledge, that is, intelligence of our new being, so are we exotics of the most wonderful order, and whether it be owned or not, we command the profoundest respect. Dives does not own or acknowledge Lazarus but he observed him, and in his heart took note of him, and testified of his worth and excellence in the day of visitation. I believe it is the exquisite moulding and conformation of Christ, the new Man, as it is presented in its true temperament and habits, which arrests souls, and wins them too, far more than the concession or the connivance to the inferior man which one is by nature, as are all men. To be a lily among the flags is really the way to arrest and convince the flags of the beauty and greatness of the lily, not by the lily dwindling down into a flag. With a saint his joy and his strength are consolidated as he maintains his exotic character, and if he cannot, he had better avoid all association with what will only lower him to the level of nature, and strip him of the unique beauty which belongs to the new man.

The Divine Standard.

IN a way I am glad that you seem to yourself not to be able to grasp what you appreciate, because it shews that you see the greatness of your calling, and this must always impart to us the sense of how little we are up to it. You must not give up the calling because you feel that practically you are below it. To retain a good conscience with a low walk is Christendom's theology; and the tendency even of believers is to lower the standard, in order to meet the walk. Hence there is no progress; the conscience is preserved, but on a low level. The danger on the other side is of holding truth without being exercised in conscience as to the maintenance of it. The former leads to a low but conscientious walk; the latter, to an open break down—"shipwreck;" because conscience is preserved in the former, but not in the latter.

The true way is to accept the divine standard in all its integrity, and to insist on the conscience holding to it wholly, and to nothing but it. This will no doubt give the sense of how little we have attained; but if it does, it only exercises the heart to be led on, and to win Christ. If I have not a divine standard, there can be no progress, though I may feel quite conscientious. The quietness of my conscience is more the result of having reached a human standard, than that of one who would suffer the loss of all things to win Christ. In the latter case the conscience is good and true, not because it has *reached* the divine standard, but because it is conscious of that alone being its *aim*; and when it is so, every step is progress. An eagle knows more of the power of the sun than we do,

because he gets nearer to it, his eye can bear the light, and he sees better as he approaches the source of light; he gains by every advance. Even when the optic nerve is weak, as with elderly people, the more perfect the light, the better they see. In the same way the very height and greatness of the divine standard is a help to me; as I approach it I gain, because my standard—Christ, is the source of power, and light, and of all blessing.

You may say, I cannot always walk in a light above the brightness of the sun. Saul became blind naturally because of the glory of that light. Did he therefore refuse it, or say it was too high for him? No, but he found that the more he turned to it, and was occupied with Christ in it, the better was he morally fitted to bear it, because he was transformed into the same image. Would you lower the standard to a *hand lamp*, which could only shew you your way on a dark night pointing out the safe path, and warning you of mud and ruts? You might indeed get home safely, but then you would have seen little on the way, nothing, save what concerned your own safety: no beautiful scenery, none of the endless wonders of what eye hath not seen; none of the charms which the most brilliant light displays are known to you; for that light really makes you possessor of the things which it reveals to you. Nothing contributes to us as light does. The man who never sees any thing but that on which his eye at first rested in childhood has (no matter how much he has read) a very imperfect idea of everything. Nothing in ordinary life tends more to improve the taste and to correct self-consequence than seeing

things and people greater than ourselves. The man who is content with the hand lamp (to speak figuratively) thinks only of himself, lives in his own circle; his own exploits and thoughts are his sun, moon, and stars, and he revolves in this circuit day after day; he makes no progress, his centre is himself. But the one who owns no lesser light than that which is above the brightness of the sun, has a range and circuit before him that is boundless; and instead of being occupied with himself, he is engrossed with Him who enables him to enter on this great tour, and introduces him into so fresh a circle of wonders, that he himself is as nothing in the midst of it.

Lower the standard, and you make man the greatest thing before the mind; maintain the divine standard,—which is Christ, and you yourself will be lost in your contemplation of Him and in delight of heart with Him. Your selfishness will be corrected and repudiated, and you will daily more and more enjoy the new and wondrous association in which you are set, and will be daily more at home there, and more a stranger anywhere else.

May it indeed be so with us. I would rather bungle and blunder with the sun as my standard of light, than never make a false step with the hand lamp.



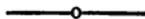
Vicissitudes, their use and object.

THE power to bear vicissitudes is the greatest proof of the possession of divine power, because that alone is as strong in one set of circumstances as it is in another. Men are considered strong

when they have exercised themselves and have been drilled into a special force by practice and experience; and this is always more or less necessary for a saint; for though he possesses divine power, and that power is as strong in one set of circumstances as in another, still the awkwardness or the unskilfulness of the vessel has to be overcome, by subjecting it to practice;—making it quickly form from right to left, and from left to right, according as the enemy is in force. Hence vicissitudes are necessary for us while in this tabernacle. There is the camp life;—the field practice—and the daily drill. Without the Spirit of God and a new nature one could not have any divine power. The power is always the same, but the extent to which we are governed by it is shewn by our being able to behave ourselves with as much facility and skill in new circumstances as in old ones. When we get used to a routine, the force of habit carries us through what would be most trying to others, possibly of more real power; just because our nature has been drilled into a particular groove. Now we must learn to sling with the right hand and with the left, and in order to teach us this, we are emptied from vessel to vessel; we are rapidly passed from one circle to another, in order to make us quite plastic,—quite subject to the will of God; and wherein we are not, to expose the working of the will, and to shew us that the order and decorum in which we behaved ourselves in one set of circumstances and where we may have gained great reputation, had become habitual to us, and was not after all the work of grace, but the effect of habit.

The reason why we fail in new and unexpected

circumstances is, that we too readily accept our success in the old, as true evidence of our power ; and we rest in this, and in a measure plume ourselves on our ability. Peter had courageously struck off the ear of the high priest's servant just prior to his denying the Lord because of fear. The greatest apparent courage gave place to the most abject fear. There was really no divine power in either case. If the Lord be my criterion I shall not when I appear to succeed commend myself because others commend me, for I must see and own before Him how defective all is, though every one may commend ; and then when all are against me, I know I can turn to Him in whom only I confided when all were approving. He only is my strength and support by day or by night, and as He is, His passing me rapidly from one set of circumstances to another, is only to prove to my heart the elasticity and extent of my resources in Himself, and these are perhaps most used when I appear to man most awkward and most unskilled, simply because there is nothing in myself to trust to ; and then it is that one can say, "I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."



The Inner Circle the first to be overcome.

THE proof of the real value and force of life—the life of Christ in us—is the way and manner in which it resists the opposition of the flesh, and not only how it resists, but how it expresses itself in place of that which it has resisted. I have a new nature, its instinct and standard is Christ ; He is

my life, and the only measure for my walk. The Spirit of God is the power to enable me to act according to my new nature, both as to its instinct and standard. Now if I were in heaven there would be no check to this new life; there would be perennial sunshine and everlasting verdure; but here, on the contrary, everything is adverse to it, because the flesh is enmity against God, and this is in myself and in everyone around me. I am here like a diver in a diving-bell, everything around me, the very element I am dwelling in, is fatal to me unless I can resist it; and I must not only resist it, but I must express an action in it, quite new, and unknown to that which opposes me. It is not enough for the diver to exist under water, but he must also *act* there. A saint now has not only to know that he is safe in Christ, that his life is hid in Him and that he is at home with Him above, but he is set *here* to shew forth the virtues of Him who hath called him out of darkness into His marvellous light; and hence everything of the flesh in himself, and in every one whom he comes in contact with, becomes a trying of his grace. If he meets flesh with flesh, he is vanquished; if he overcomes it, he glorifies Christ. There may be great or little foes, but whatever they be, they are the enemies to whom we are not to yield; and each of us has his own foes to resist, and not only, as I said, to resist, but to set forth in place of and in contrast to that which he has resisted, the way and manner of Christ.

Now, the first opposition you meet is in yourself, and then in everybody else; it is the force of the flesh; you are called on to repel it, and if you cannot repel that force, you can repel none. Hence

private life is the beginning of the campaign. If you cannot run with the footmen what will you do with the horsemen? The contrarieties begin at home, or more properly they begin first within. If you cannot resist them in the inner circle, how can you face the outer one? But they *are* to be resisted, and they are the force which you are called on to resist, and to set Christ on the ground which they once occupied. It will not do for you to say, "This is unreasonable." Doubtless it is; the enemy, the flesh in yourself or in any one else can never do anything that is not unreasonable to Christ. But you must meet it quite another way; you must say, here is one of the "seven nations," the Canaanites whom I have to expel; I must not give him any quarter, I must resist him and set up in his place the Israel of God. If you complain of your foes, either the inward or the outward ones, your strength is less than theirs, you are unwittingly making Christ inferior to them, or else you are thinking of yourself as still in the old man! The matter is simple and there is great gain in it. I am not merely to find fault with my enemies—the carnality in myself and in others; I am simply to resist them in the grace of Christ, and to set up, on the ruins of the foe, the beauty and comeliness of Christ.

When the fir-tree forests in Canada die off, there succeeds without any interference on the part of man, a full plantation of oak and ash. One order has died off and another order has succeeded in its place. Thus must it be with you. You begin in private life, which is the closest circle to yourself. You refuse the old plantation there, and you supplant it with entirely new growths; and as you

do this in the inner and home circle, you are preparing for still greater victories in the outer circle. Having learned on the parade ground how to use your weapons, you will find that they are mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and everything that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

Self-negation : what is it ?

“TAKE up thy cross *daily* and follow me.” Every day is to be a day of self-abnegation, but also a day of following Jesus, walking here as He walked. This does not consist in vexing or over-taxing oneself, as if there were any inherent virtue in bodily exercise, but in refusing everything in us which interferes with our following the Lord. To follow the Lord in every detail, and not to follow one’s own will, is the only true rule or course. If one were simply following the Lord and avoiding self-will, one would find that the body would not be unduly taxed, or uncared for, and there would be less suffering to mind and body, than in serving the world. Not but that there is bodily suffering in service, but that is an honour and not an evidence of neglect. The Lord cares for the body; His word is, “Come apart and rest awhile.” He provides for the exigence of the day before the day comes, as He provided the manna for Israel before the sun was up. He knoweth our frame. He does not require that I should exert myself beyond my strength, but that I should use my strength for Him and not for myself.

This is self-negation; not overtaking the strength, or vexing the creature, but devoting it to another instead of to oneself. And as there is surrender of what one naturally might use in order to distinguish or set off oneself, a fragrance will fill the house, as it filled the house at Bethany. Neither the Pharisee nor the Judas will approve of this personal devotedness to Christ, but still the fragrance is there.

Fragrance is within the compass or reach of the youngest in Christ, and the most retired. It is the property of flowers from the lily of the valley to the rose of Sharon, and it is also the property of ripe fruit. It is the peculiar delicate appeal that arrests and charms one, without insinuating any claim to attention, and which while contributing, is unobtrusive and unofficious as the air which is the medium of its communication. It is dispensed to all impartially, and each one's share depends on self. Self-denying devotion to the Lord produces this. Giving up what I naturally would like to expend on myself fills the house with this fragrance. There may be the fragrance of flowers or that of ripe fruit. When the winter is past and the rain over and gone, the flowers appear, the time of the singing of birds is come, the fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Both flowers and the ripe fruit have the one common property. But for the fragrance of fruit there must be maturity which all have not attained to, while that of the flower is within the reach of all and any. The lily grows in the valleys among thorns. In the multitude of atomic contributions it forms an atmosphere of its own. The fig-tree and the vine

bear their fruits. Special deeds are performed by them, their works are fragrant. Fragrance crowns the ripe fruit. For fruit there must be a tree, an amount of woody fibre and stamina; one cannot be practitioner until one has been fitted for it; you must receive before you confer. You must be out of the nest and have learnt to fly, before you can build a nest and serve others. But as the lily of the valley you may fill a circle with fragrance before the tender grape gives a good smell. You may not have the ripe fruit, but you may always be the lily. The more simply devoted you are to Him who is worthy of all devotion, the more fragrance there will be in all your ways, for it will be manifest that you are not seeking yourself, not wincing because your rights are invaded, or that you are not as much cared for as you are entitled to be; but that there is only one governing thought of your life about everything, and that is, how you may distinguish Him who fills every blank in your heart, and lights it up with unfading joy.

How to study Christ.

IN order to study Christ two things are necessary: first, the eye must be on Him in spirit, and secondly, the ear must be open to, and occupied with His word, the gospel narrative especially. The gospels are the foundation of the testimony to Him, as He said to the twelve, "Ye also shall bear witness, for ye have been with me from the beginning." It will not do to have the ear open to the word, or the account of our Lord's ways and mind on earth, unless we have our eyes fixed on

Him where He is. There is no union but with the ascended Christ, and your power here flows from your being united to Him there. And unless this sense of union be preserved, you will not be in power to act. A child must have power to act first before you can point out to it what course or manner it should adopt. Now if you only have the receptive ear as to what you are to do; that is, if you are studying the gospels without having your eye on Christ above, and consequently without a fresh sense of the power of action, the consequence will be that though you will know how He acted, you will never be able to act so yourself. You will be like a child looking at a picture-book, where the most interesting and useful activities are presented, unable to practise them. The child may tell from his picture-book how many steps are necessary for an active person in this thing or that, but he cannot do one of them himself. But how different it is when the same child has power to act and walk; the picture-book is then a pattern to him to follow, and the steps are those which he can practise day by day.

If on the other hand the eye only is used, and the ear remains inactive; that is, if I only think of union with Him above and do not study His ways here, then, though there is a sense of power, there is no direction given to it. I am like a locomotive without rails; or a child with power to walk but without any instruction. In the one case it is knowledge of how a great many things should be done, but inability to do any of them; while in the other, it is ability to act, but entire ignorance as to how the power to act is to be employed. It is only in the combination of both that there can be a true study

of Christ, and conformity to Him. The eye of the soul must be open to see Him by faith, and the ear must be open and receptive to learn of His ways and walk here.

Double Ruin of Man and its consequences.

I HAVE been very much interested in seeing the two ways in which man is ruined, and in which he has to be surrendered by us. First, he is under judgment because of sin. Nothing can save him out of that, but God's Son dying in his stead. Now every saint in the present day knows this in some measure; but the other is peculiar to this interval and involves a great deal. It is that man has refused Jesus, the Son of God, life and place here, and you must therefore make your election whether you will hold to the man who refused life and place to Jesus, or to Jesus who was thus refused and whom the Father has called to His right hand. I must first see Jesus coming to *my* side to get me out of my state,—the state of judgment; but I must go to His side if I would deprecate and disavow the man who denied Him life and place.

If, as a saint, I see the first and not the second, I am indeed relieved from judgment through grace; but I am not in the joy or position before God which identification with Him confers on me. I must, so to speak, choose my man, I cannot have both now. In the millennium this will not be the case, because Jesus will reign, but the saints on earth then will have no identification with His side. But now He has not only come to

our side, and conferred on man from Himself ; but He relieves the saint from the state he is in, and connects him with the greatness of His own state, because by the Spirit we are united to Him. If I only see Him coming down to die for man, or even rising again, I know that I am safe from judgment, that I can go on with the man here, but if I see truly that He has been rejected by man I see that I must make choice between Christ and the man who would not have Christ. If Christ had reigned I should have been saved to live under His rule and care ; but as He has been rejected here, and set at God's right hand in glory, I am through God's grace united to Him where He has been accepted, and I am dead to the man who rejected Him.



Is it comfort in a scene of death or entrance into a scene of life ?

DEATH gives a great reality to everything, it leads the soul into another region,—Christ's region, where life only is. The vanity of all nature is exposed, one breathes as it were on the other side of death, and even if it be but for a moment, that moment is to us of great advantage, for the sense of being where Christ is, in His life, is one that never can be imitated or erased from the soul. Mary tasted of life, I doubt not, as the Lord walked beside her on their way to the sepulchre, but she tasted of it as a comfort to her on her own side, where the wrench occurred, rather than as placing her on Christ's side in heaven, where all is life and perennial bliss. We generally look for comfort on our side, and when it is vouchsafed to us, we are

assured that we have One who feels for us in our sorrow; the bereavement is mitigated and assuaged by the sense that Jesus comes *nearer* to us, and though we are desolate here, He makes amends, and repairs the blank by manifesting His concern for us; but this is still our side. It is a necessary comfort, but it only relieves and sustains in a scene of sadness and death. It is "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land," a refuge from the tempest, but I am still consciously in the land of tempest. It is Christ's wing let down to shelter me *where I am*, it is a power and solace which meets me while I am still in the home of sorrow. I am comforted indeed, but as one in a deep dark dungeon would be comforted by the presence of a known friend who has light, and everything to cheer one; but the more this friend and his cheer were known, the more dreadful would be the thought of his leaving. The scene is not altered, I am comforted in it by the *presence* of this great friend, but I am still connected with the scene of sorrow, and any improvement in it would materially interest me. I am only sheltered in it; if the storm were to subside, I could renew my links with it, though I have gained one thing of great value, and that is, that I have found out how Christ can shelter me, and compensate me for all loss in it.

But if the wrench of death here has led to my entering consciously into the scene where *He is*, how differently everything here is seen! I am then not sheltered only, but I have in spirit got home, and *such* a home! where everything lovely, and every loved one, have their place for ever. When it is thus with me, my great bereavement is

only the hinge on which the door into heaven turned, and by it I have entered and found my place there in Christ, and now I can walk in this scene in cheer of spirit, and vigour of heart, because I am "at home" outside it, and though sheltered in it, I never seek improvement in it, because I am no longer of it but of the scene where Christ dwells.



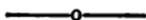
Nothing gained without Labour.

NOTHING is accomplished without loss and suffering; not that it is the loss and suffering which produce the effect, but if there be not toil and suffering, there is no depth in the work. What is "easily got, is easily gone." The truth that seems plain and conclusive beyond all question, and that there is no difficulty in accepting, tries us to the very quick when we really adopt it. There is no sympathy in our nature with it, and yet it seemed so plain and self evident, that we reckoned on following it out as easily as one would directions as to one's way through a forest or town. We find as we are really on Christ's path—the way of truth, that the power which draws us on, meets with resistance at every step, and that we are like a dog setting his fore feet against the course his master calls on him to follow in, or like the boy's paper kite, flying upward by being pulled against the wind. The greater the wind, and the greater the pull, the higher we go. But then the resistance is great, and herein is the toil, and the suffering. The more truly we are on the path of life, the more we shall find that there is no co-operation:

but resistance in every bit of our nature ; but if we yield like the paper kite to the pull, the very resistance only deepens the work in us and we rise. We often think that we can fly without any difficulty ; that is, we see through grace, the path so plainly that we cannot suppose that either oneself or others can be so dull and sluggish as not to enter on it. But we soon find that we have either to bury the dead, or to bid them farewell who are at home in our house, and it is no small thing to break away and be superior to either or both these claims of nature. Hence the man who feels they are there ;—that the wind is against him, the more he does so, and yet gives himself to the hand that pulls, the more he ascends. The more I feel how contrary all nature is, the very best of it, so that the one whom the Lord loved must bear his cross if he would follow Him (Mark x.) the more I bear about me the dying of Jesus. I am not surprised that there is not more of the life of Jesus manifested in us because there is so little of the dying of Jesus.

A man may have got new and beautiful furniture for his house, but there is no place for it, unless the old furniture is cast out ; and however he may *admire* the new he will have toil and suffering in casting out the old ; but as it is cast out and room made for the new, he finds that there is great profit. We must expect nothing without labour ; it is said of Epaphras, “labouring fervently in prayer.” There is no getting on in any one without toil and suffering, but every bit of the old furniture which you cast out to make room for a new article, only makes you more earnest to move more of the heavy articles, in order to make

room for all the unpacked, and as yet unused valuables, which are still only in store; so do not be discouraged, but labour on, and labour on, for in all labour there is profit.



A Home above, and a Grave here.

THERE are two things which constitute a saint's happiness according as they are known *simultaneously*. The one is, that he has a home and life outside of this scene; the other, that he has a grave and dies in this scene. If I have not a home, —a retreat, known to my soul in heaven, and an assured sense that Christ is my life there, I must, like the raven, though once in the ark, seek for something to solace me here. The real reason why I find it hard that my only possession here should be a grave, is that I have not an abiding sense of a home in heaven, of enjoying life there in all its wondrous perennial virtues, and delights. If I do not walk in the truth, the path of wisdom, I am made to encounter rebuffs and rebukes in order to force me into the way, which is the one of pleasantness and peace. The truth is, we have a home in heaven and Christ is our life there; and if this be not simply enjoyed, there will be an attempt to modify the desolation here, and an inability to interpret the varied inroads which death makes on us. It is plain that if I have a home and life outside of this scene, I cannot have either in it, and consequently as I enjoy by faith the one, I see that it is only consistent that there should be neither here, and I become a Caleb, and find a throne at Hebron, where my father Abraham had only a

grave! There is death before quickening though we through Christ enjoy the quickening before we die morally, but it is as we die, that we are confirmed in life. The proof that I enjoy my home and life in heaven is shewn in the way that I accept the grave here. If I am walking by faith, nothing visible will suit me, for the visible comes not within the domain of faith. A man who has emigrated and has found a new home, and happy association, does not lament that the sea rolls between him and his former domicile of sorrow and privation; but if his satisfaction in the new home flags, he will sigh for the old. So it is with the saint; when his faith and enjoyment in his home above wane, like Israel in the wilderness, he remembers and longs for the choice things of Egypt.

Every growth begins in summer, and the stronger it grows in summer, the better it is prepared for the winter. The defect with souls is, not that they bear the winter so badly, but that they have enjoyed the summer so little. They have not made their own of the season and clime which is suited for them, and without which there is no growth, so they are not prepared for the winter; and there is an effort to assuage the bitterness of winter when it comes, instead of having, like the ant, prepared in summer for the trials of winter. The growth is in summer—the endurance is in winter. Summer is my home and my life-time, winter is the testing time. If I have known the bright happy sunshine of summer, I am invigorated and ready for the dark bleak days of winter. Fine days in winter add really nothing to my growth. It is when winter is past and the rain

over and gone, that the flowers appear and the singing of birds is heard. It is the one who does not know that the summer is his only season,—his only time for growth and fruitfulness, that pines for mild weather in winter. There will be a double defect in the soul unless it sees by faith on the one hand the perfection of the home and life in heaven, and on the other, the universal desolation here because of the rejection of God's Son who is our life in heaven.

Properly you are the dove who has found a retreat in the ark, and from thence you can fly out and survey the wave of death rolling over the earth, and accepting it, return again to the ark, and to the hand that is stretched out to receive you to the retreat which He has formed for you.



The Body full of Light.

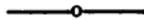
Two things went together in the wilderness for Israel, and they never are disunited now, though saints often think that they are. The two things were guidance and food—the cloud, and the manna; now the Lord Himself is both guidance and food to us, and we cannot have one without the other; hence, “if the eye be simple the whole body is full of light.” The subject of light is fully opened out in Luke xi. The Lord himself is the light which God has lighted; the elements of the light are moral, and are set forth by Jonah and Solomon, who typify Christ in His sufferings and in His glory. This is the way in which He has been manifested; He is the light, who coming into the world is the light of every man. There is light

nowhere else. The component parts of the light are presented on the one hand by Jonah, the suffering one, and on the other by Solomon, the glorious one. If you have an eye (*divine nature*), you take in the light. Nothing can take in light but an eye; the best ear that was ever possessed could not take in light. The eye is the only organ which can, and hence if your eye is simple,—occupied with the light, the body is entirely coloured by it, and there is no part dark. You are not a witness of the light until you are conquered or controlled personally by it.

In the gospels I see how grace practically leads me; in the epistles I see my standing in Christ before God; hence in the latter I am assumed to be dead, in the former I am taught the process by which I realize my death. If I am really dead I have no part dark, but while there is a dark part there is a hindrance to the full efficacy of the light in making me a witness of it. In Luke xii. 35 we get our proper attitude, “loins girt and lights,—candles burning” (our eyes are the candles of our bodies), “and we ourselves like unto men who wait for their Lord.” Then the body is luminous; the eye of the soul has fed on Christ in His sufferings and glory, and accordingly its course here is simply in keeping with His mind. If my soul is feeding on Christ, I am practically filling the place here which is pleasing to Him; and this is all the guidance I need; for it is the end of all guidance. He only is before me, I see nothing to interest me here, nothing to attract me but Himself, and what is of Him; and hence, every attitude and relation I fall into must be in keeping with the only light I have, and with reference to it. How He would

like this move or that move becomes easily determined by me, if I see nothing or no one but Himself, and if what *suits* Him is thus the simple desire of my heart; and if so, that is, if one is thus simply occupied with Him, it is wonderful how easily and without effort one does this or that, and goes here or there according to His mind and pleasure. Naturally our own selves fill our eyes, and hence we go here and there and do this or that to please ourselves. If I were in a dark street where there were many dangers and many attractions, how anxious and troubled I should be until light had come in. And if the light pointed out distinctly the good of the one, and the evil of the other, I should have very little difficulty in choosing my way. "He that doeth evil hateth the light, but he that doeth truth cometh to the light that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God." The reptile flees from the light, the guileless bird welcomes and enjoys it, springing into life and activity because of its presence. We must be exercised; Christ is light, all else is darkness. He suits the bird (which illustrates the new man in faith); all the rest, the darkness, is the element for the reptile! If your eye takes in Christ—the light—in this world it must be as Jonah and Solomon; that is, in suffering and glory.

May the Lord engage our hearts so simply with Himself that we may enter on no step or act but as it suits Him; *His own eye* leading us in it.



The gathering time and the storing time.

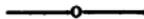
WHEN we are well, and able to go about, the varieties of life carry us on in a wonderful way.

The varieties of life are like flowers to a bee. You may have observed how a bee is occupied, now with one flower, now with another. It tries every flower. In some it finds no honey, and it flies off to another ; but it appears to try every one. The interest is unremitting, time never hangs heavy on the busy bee. Thus in your daily routine of life, you have various things to engage and to interest you, and though you do not find in each honey, that is, real profit,—something to carry back to the hive of your heart—I dare say you never feel that time is a burden. But it is very different now, when you are obliged to stay quietly all day in your room, where the flowers or interests are very few, and there is little or no variety. But such a time as this is necessary. The storing time is as necessary for the bee as the gathering time, for how otherwise could the cells in the honeycomb be made? There must be the monotony of building the storehouses as well as the exciting, ever new and endless variety of acquiring stores.

When we walk with the Lord in the ever changing phases of life, we acquire stores ; if we have conscience, we *seek* for stores like the bee, and we learn many and new thoughts of Jesus who is now our manna ; but these are only the stores ; we require besides to retire into the secret of our hearts, and there in meditation with the Lord to see that we have *storehouses* for our stores.

It is in seasons like that which you are now passing through, that one finds out whether one really has stores or not. If there be no storehouses, the stores cannot be preserved, but if there be, the stores are there, and they will be forthcoming in the winter—in the day of loneliness. And not

only so, but, unlike the bees' stores the more your stores are used, the more they will increase, and the larger will be the storehouses, because the larger the place Christ gets in our hearts, the more will He be there. Thus I trust this little retirement, this drawing aside into the desert, may be a very happy season for your soul, and that when I see you, you will be like a hive ready to swarm, so full of life and of honey.



Bodily Weakness and the Sympathy of Christ.

As a rule the weaker a person is in himself the more he is occupied with himself; his weakness seems to claim it, but this is only a proof of his weakness. Strength is seen in the possessor of it, by the way he governs himself naturally—does what he likes with himself. In weakness, a man naturally yields to himself in everything. Saints with weak bodies claiming attention, and receiving it, are in danger of being over-occupied with their infirmity. I do not say that you are; but I am musing as to the course of treatment which would tend to preserve you from being so; and which would, besides, make the weakness of the vessel an opportunity for setting forth the excellency of the treasure in it. It is a very interesting question how a saint who suffers from bodily weakness can turn it to good account, and escape self-occupation. The weakness is there, and *felt* to be there, and it is intended that it should be felt; but it is to be turned to good account. The moment the weakness is felt as trial *because* it hinders my progress, the door has been opened for turning it to account. If

I am looking at it, as an *excuse* for stagnation, I am under it; but when I feel that it hinders me, and that I have a strength and purpose in me, which is checked and limited by my bodily weakness, then I am ready for the sympathy of Christ, and I get it. Now, when I get His sympathy I find and learn two things; one, that the all-powerful One understands my weakness, in a true sense weeps with me, has full consideration for me, puts Himself on a level with me; but in such a way that it is not my weakness that is now before me, but what He is who has come alongside of me. And now I find another thing; I am occupied with the Mighty One who has thus come beside me in my weakness and I am diverted from my weakness to consider and note Him. I become like the little blade just emerging from the earth, coming from the darkness of the death-chamber into the new and wide sphere of this horizon. The weakness is lost sight of, as the little bird loses sight of the narrow limits of the shell, when its eyes first rest on the careful mother which has nursed it into maturity, and *she* now becomes the object of attraction as well as the source of comfort. Weakness draws out the Lord's sympathy and He meets one in it so effectually, that one is no longer occupied with the thing that He comes to sympathize about, but with Himself,—an object as new, and as wide, and as beautiful as this upper sphere is to the young blade, or as the parent bird is to the little one just emancipated. Generally in bodily weakness, or in other weaknesses, we like the sympathy of our fellows and they harp on the one strain, actually augmenting the weakness and hindering progress. But when we know the Lord's sympathy

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there is a sensible relief, not from the weakness, but because of the new kind of occupation which has arisen out of, or through the weakness, even occupation with Himself. And then His interests become your interests; the blade becomes first an ear then the full corn in the ear. Although unable to go about, your heart is with His people, and so in company with His servants in their work that you are really above your infirmity. You are borne along in the Spirit's current, although you are in a weak helpless body, not able to endure one day's fatigue.



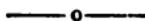
How would an Out-of-Tune Meeting affect the Spiritual?

YOUR question is—How would the spiritual be affected by the meeting being out of tune?

I believe the nearer you are to the Lord, the more would you feel every disturbance in the meeting; but at the same time you would be more restful in Him who is perfect, and above it all. If you lose your comfort because of the want of harmony in the meeting, it is to the meeting you are looking for comfort, and when it comes not, you only add to it by your fretfulness and disappointment. You expected some help or cheer from the meeting; there is disturbance, and you are disturbed, and you thus increase the disorder, because you feel the disturbance only on account of your own loss; whereas, if you are near the Lord, though you will be conscious of the smallest disorder, you are dependent on Him, and therefore

you have a warmth in yourself which cannot be chilled by the atmosphere of the room. If you come to the meeting suitably, you come to communicate; you are happy in the Lord, and, as a member of the body, you naturally come to contribute to its general good. If there be disturbance, the more healthy you are, the more you feel it, but you do not add to it; on the contrary, by your health you actually check the spread of it. You rest in the Lord, and know Him afresh, as "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land," you see the storm, while you are under the shelter of His presence.

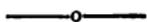
It is a very interesting and important question, because its answer accounts for the different ways in which different saints view the same meeting. The spiritual one will feel the discord of the meeting, because he is so sensible of what suits the Lord, from being under the cover of His wing, and the more he is in the secret place of the Almighty, the more he feels and sees what is not in keeping with it; but while he is very sensitive, he only gets closer under the wing, though he sings not, because there is a storm! He is like the lamb that cleaves closely to its mother's side, when there is any noise or alarm of danger, more sure of its place and protection, though at the same time aware of the presence of trial; while the one who is disturbed, is like the lamb that has sought pasture at a distance from its dam, and which, when the danger arises, increases the panic and disorder by its own perturbation.



“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding.”

THERE is a positive and a negative action enjoined in this verse: the one, trusting in the Lord with all your affections; and the other, not leaning on your own mind or its suggestions—your heart trusting in the Lord, and your mind not trusting in itself. It is very interesting to note the difference in practice which this counsel produces. When my affections lead me to trust in the Lord, I am gratifying my deepest feelings; for the Lord occupies my heart; in Him every resource and benefit is laid up for me, and He delights to give. When you trust in the Lord with all your heart, mere difficulties or sorrows, instead of causing distress, become opportunities for your knowing better His unequalled power and care for you. The moment a difficulty occurs, the heart turns to its resource, as a bird to its wing. If you lean on your own understanding, when a strait occurs, or when any claim is made on you, you begin to *think* how you can extricate yourself from it, and you are as one pumping at an empty well for water with which you want immediately to extinguish a fire, and after all your toil you never succeed. When you trust in the Lord, want is your passport to Him—your draft on His heart, which is a bank of treasures of every kind, whereat you are enriched and satisfied whenever you apply, until, from habit, you are never happy or at home anywhere else. You are restful, and never without resource. If, on the other hand, you lean on your own understanding, you will be anxious and devising, watching the effect of your sayings and doings, as

a chemist watches the result of his various combinations, and yet, with all your toil, you are never able to produce the thing required. In the one case you can cheerfully answer every claim, because it causes you to apply where unbounded wealth is placed at your disposal; in the other, you are made to feel, the oftener you try, how inadequate and insufficient is anything of your own devising to allay or to repair the moral disturbances ever occurring, where God and man are at a distance, and man and his fellow at variance.



Perfection alone can satisfy the true taste and the true heart.

Two things always go together—the desire to know more of the Lord, and the sense of how little one has attained to it. The first shews that there is true and active spiritual taste; the second, that there is a true and vivid perception of what is to be attained to. The apostle could say to the last, “I count all things but dung that *I may win Christ.*” If one with much spiritual taste could reach to all that he desires, there would be an end to progress—for it would either be, that perfection could be attained in an imperfect state of things, which is incongruous, or there would be satisfaction with imperfection. Eden was enough to satisfy a man in innocence, but he lost the state to which it was suited when he fell, and now the man who is restored to God’s presence in righteousness by His own Son, no attainment can satisfy, if his spiritual taste be true, but complete conformity to

Him, which cannot be till He is manifested ; then we *shall* be conformed unto the image of His Son.

Among men a refined taste is formed by cultivating it and gratifying it, and the more it is gratified, the more it is increased ; so that the more refined a man is in nature, the less satisfied he must be, because he is really in every way inconsistent with his creation. He is deceived and carried away, because he is pursuing a shadow. The man of the world is like a merchant who traverses sea and land to obtain every precious thing, and through them to secure a home and a satisfaction for his heart—his search is endless, and he never succeeds. The saint has a home where everything is perfect, and where he is fully satisfied, but his duty calls him away from home, and he contrasts everything here with his home. He is a stranger here on a foreign mission. The merchant goes everywhere, seeking something to form a home. The stranger is here only to do a service ; but then, because he is a merchant by nature, he is always tried and tested by any attempt to induce him to make light of his home, by seeking to find one here. The more he is in spirit in his own home, the more he sees the perfection of Christ, in which he will enjoy perfection—the more does he desire to be like Him, and the less is he satisfied with any attainment he has made of being like Him, or of possessing Him. To satisfy the true taste, there must be perfect surroundings. To give true energy and character, and to satisfy the affections, there must be a perfect object ; and there *is* one—*Christ*—who is the mark or goal for which we forsake all here. Both will be obtained when He comes, and for this we wait.

The merchant by nature is through grace transformed into a stranger, sent here from heaven ; he has to ignore all his old tastes and pursuits, and instead of seeking here and there, and everywhere, for something to improve his condition, he studies to make known the new order of things into which he has been introduced, and his only regret is, how little able he is to bear witness to them, because he is himself so little versed in them.



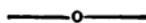
If you minister to the natural, you cannot have the spiritual.

You are not to be surprised or discouraged because you find your flesh opposing you in seeking after the Lord. The more you minister to the flesh, even in a common, that is, in a natural way, even reading about natural things, or talking about them, the more will it intrude when you do not want it, or rather when you do not wish to be disturbed by it, and when you consider it an intruder. If you would be free from the flesh when praying, &c., you must be careful not to encourage it at other times. People often think that they can do with the flesh what they can do with their clothes, that is, wear them and change them when they like ; they think they can give their minds and thoughts to the things that please the flesh, and then in a few moments get rid of it, as one would a dress, and put on quite a different one, to come into the presence of the Lord. The flesh once encouraged, once allowed to be about you as a dress, is not so easily put off, even though you

may most truly desire to be fit for the presence of the Lord, and to be happy there. This is in principle making the best of both worlds, and it cannot be. It must be either Christ who died for man, or the man by whom Christ was crucified. It is when you desire to enjoy the presence of Christ that you first discover that you have been cultivating a hindrance to it. You have been drinking old wine, you have been wearing natural clothes, and pleasing yourself; and then when you seek the Lord, all these things, which have previously engrossed you, are like a mob refusing you leave to pass the way you desire. It is a good sign when you feel this mob, because it shews that you are not content with being absent from the Lord, but yet, on the other hand, it shews that you have been tampering with the enemy, instead of refusing all his offers, so as to be ready dressed at any moment for the presence of the Lord. The more and the longer we are away from the Lord, the less we feel it, and the less we are conscious of the mob which hinders and depresses us. The more we wear common every-day clothes, and like them, the less do we care for state robes. We are not aware of our defects until we come in contact with that which is vastly superior. Many a one thinks that he dresses very well until he comes to town, and then he sees how shabby he is; he did not feel his shabbiness before. Thus it is with you; while you are happy and satisfied in your intercourse with those around you, your dress is in your own eyes nice enough; but when you would enjoy the Lord's presence, you find that you have been fostering and surrounding yourself with things that will get no place there, and then you find it no

easy matter to change your dress, and put on quite a different one.

The only way to secure constant joy in the Lord's presence, that is, to be so dressed as to be unhindered there, is to seek His *pleasure* in the commonest details of our lives, not seeking anything for ourselves, but the things that are pleasing in His sight. (1 John iii. 22.) "Enoch, before his translation, had this testimony, that he *pleased* God." Study to please the Lord, and thus you rebuke the tendency in your own heart to please yourself, you keep off the common garments of the flesh, and you increase your taste for the dress that suits the Lord's presence, which is simply a devoted heart.



Conscience and Spiritual Taste.

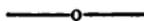
THE plant called "hen and chickens" is a very beautiful illustration of the new man—Christ and His brethren. The stem and large central flower is the parent plant, and growing out of the stem all around are small blossoms, alike in colour, and material to the central one, and differing only in size. The colour always indicates the material, and morally the outside must be in keeping with the power within. The flaw outside intimates that there is a flaw within. Hence the tongue is the tell-tale of every one. "If a man offend not with his tongue he is a perfect man." "I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress." Our great study should be to increase the treasure within, for, according as I am a mirror, I reflect Christ in His glory—that is, in the moral order which is suited

to, and emanating from, God. There it is that my spiritual tastes are formed, and there they are fed, but I have to maintain—to be an epistle here of what is written on me *there*. I find no help from my body, but it is an earthen vessel, that the excellency of the power may be of God. I acquire the tastes there, and I seek to express and maintain them here. It is not merely conscience judging whether I am up to the word or light made known to me; but spiritual taste is much more—it is nature. My taste is formed in glory, and there it is nurtured and strengthened, and as it is, so do I find *nothing* here in keeping with my taste. Association with the Son of man, the One most perfect, and in every way the most beautiful, develops my new nature, which is the same as His. Where He is, is my home—there I feed and rest; but here, on earth, I am learning to set aside in death everything in me which hinders the life of Jesus. Now, if I have only conscience, and if I hear much truth, or see much light, I am ever judging myself as to the extent in which I have received it. Conscience never imparts. It is like a registrar, which keeps an account of all the changes of condition, or a pedometer, that only goes as you move, and therefore records how much you have walked, and how much you have not. It occupies you with your condition. Now, on the other hand, taste is ever set on finding something to suit itself. The blessed Lord walked about the earth—His own estate—looking for everything in it which could suit His taste. He required no registrar, no action of conscience, but He found but little here for His taste, and He continued in heaven, though manifestly on the earth. He was the “Son of man that

is in heaven." I do not for a moment say that *we* can go on without the conscience—it is quite right that the registrar should take note of the changes of condition, but this of itself would never advance us. Where the taste is the primary thing, then the conscience only warns or intimates to us that the taste has not been, as I may say, consulted. You can discern a person's taste by the company he seeks. If you seek company below what your conscience approves of, your tastes are low, and you will sink—the dead are there; but if you seek the company morally superior to you, your tastes are good, and you will be helped and strengthened, even though you may feel your own inferiority. Conscience tells me that I am deficient, but it does not help; it is like pain in the body, which warns me of something wrong, but it does not relieve, though it suggests the need of relief. Conscience tells me I need spiritual food, or any kind of means, but it never supplies them. The source of supply, then, is the greater thing, and it is there that the capacity to hold and enjoy the supply is acquired, because there the taste is developed.

As I cultivate divine taste, I am occupied with good, and the more I am so, the stricter becomes my conscience to record the changes of condition. How different the experiences, "My soul thirsteth after thee," and "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" In the former I am occupied with Him who satisfies me; my taste has found its object; and my conscience is good, because I have not offended against it. But when I am watching what the conscience records, I am occupied with the *results* of life, and not with the power to support it, and this always depresses. The sun penetrates a very

small way into the ground, and if I go to the ground to measure its power, I shall be disappointed; but if I keep near it, I enjoy all its warmth and brightness.



School—the best Place for Learning.

THE circumstances in which we learn most are those which most expose our weakness.

As a rule, we are placed in circumstances which demand that which we are most defective in. We are set in such and such circumstances, not because we can fill them, or behave in them, better than any one else, but, on the contrary, because we need to be invigorated by grace in the defects which they are fitted to expose. They disclose to us *where* we need grace, so that constantly we are failing where we are expected to excel. We are put there to cast us on the Lord, and to teach us that we can do nothing. If we could excel there, we should glory in our own success, but when we find that we are placed in the very circumstances that, perhaps, more than any others expose our weakness, we then see that we have no hope of being able to stand or succeed, unless we obtain grace to do so. I am not placed in the circumstances where I could excel most, but I am placed in those in which I can best know my need of grace, and best learn dependence. If I could get on without grace, I should grow elated with myself, but when I find that unless the Lord is at my right hand I shall fail, then I am humbled as to myself, but I am also deepened in dependence, which the demand of my circumstances has, in a

way, forced on me ; and having learned the blessing of dependence, instead of regretting the circumstances which made it necessary to seek help, I am the more cheered and encouraged to go on in them.

For learning or service everyone is placed where there is demand on him. The boy at school is not in the easy circumstances of home or the playground. The horse in harness is not in the easy circumstances of being in the stable or at grass. Nor are the teacher and the coachman in the circumstances where they can relax and enjoy themselves, but where they are tested, and where, unless they have quality, they are rejected or dismissed. The circumstances we are placed in are the ones in which we can best learn, and be most useful. It is not because we have nothing to learn or nothing to do for others. If we had nothing to learn, there would be no difficulty in the lessons required of us every day. The fact that there is difficulty in them proves that we are not proficient, and that it is necessary that we should be subjected to circumstances which disclose to us what we require to learn, or to draw from us what we can render. Your weakness is exposed that you may acquire strength, and having received of the Lord, you will then be called on to render unto others—to comfort others, as you have been comforted of God; so that, whether learner or servant, you are always set in circumstances where there is exaction, and not ease. If the learner were to keep at the same lesson always he might feel his difficulty over, but so would his *learning* be over. If the horse remains at grass always, he is still a horse, but he is of no use to any one. Are you learning? Are you useful? When-

ever you are either, you will find that you are in *exacting* circumstances, and therefore not those where you are most at home and most at your ease, but the more you turn them to profit, the more you are learning of grace, and the more useful you are in sharing what you have acquired. You look too much for "home," and for being at grass; school and harness are not before you as your daily exercise; if they were, you would find that exactions were the very things that put you in a position to learn more, and to serve better.

The Lord lead you to see that He places you where you are to learn and to serve, and that, unless you receive grace to meet your circumstances, they must expose your weakness.



Light is to emancipate, not only to enlighten.

WHEN any one has been immured for any length of time in a dark cavern, and the way of escape has been in vain looked for, the first harbinger in the shape of a ray of light is greeted with a delight which is hardly surpassed by that which accompanies full emancipation. In the ray there is conveyed the promise and earnest of full deliverance. But while it imparts this cheering sense, it does so, not that the immured one may rest in it, but that he may *use* it, and follow its track, until he reaches the happy consummation of which it predicts. So must it be with you. You must *use* the blessed ray of light which has visited your soul to get quite clear of the cavern of depression; and if you follow the ray to its *source*, even Christ in glory, you will get clear of it, and you will never

more return to the cavern, but you will occupy yourself with Him from whom the ray comes. You are not clear of the cavern if you still feel that it is so near you that you can speak of it. Souls may be in the cavern, either without light, or with light. In the former case the cavern hopelessly occupies them, but it is the one continued sameness of gloom ; but in the latter case, though there is the assured hope of extrication, they are not free from the darkness, because the light has not been used to effect its full purpose. Here many souls suffer. They talk (or what is nearly as bad, think) of their experiences—of the difference between their state now and when there was no light at all. It is just what a convalescent patient does. He talks or thinks of what he can do to-day, which he could not have done three weeks since. A man in health thinks of what he will do, or is doing, and does not contrast it with the past. His mind and energies are taken up with the sphere which commands his attention. He *uses* his health, but does not think of it. I trust the Lord has given you a ray of light from Himself, and you are cheered ; but what I desire now is, that you may so fully follow it to its source, as to feel that you have left the cavern (like bad health) a long way behind, and that, unlike Lot's wife, you *will not look behind*, but with more than an eagle pinion soar onward and upward to Christ Himself.

If you see the cavern you have not got very far from it, or you are looking back—both most dangerous to the soul. *Go on* with the Lord, and you will be bright and restful, and the cavern will never even haunt you.



Sins after Conversion.

“WHAT becomes of the sins which we commit since new birth—since we became Christians?”

I am not surprised at your question, or that it should be an anxious one to you: nay rather, I am glad that it is an anxious one, for it shews that you desire to maintain a good conscience before God. I think very often that saints, while professing to know more than your question supposes, in reality know not its answer and sometimes seek not its answer, for they allow time or happy seasons to wear out the remembrance of the evil that had wounded their conscience. I think it an all-important subject, and one on which the strength and comeliness of our walk depends.

When I, in the midst of my sins, believe in Christ, God, because He can do so justly, justifies me. He has established righteousness through Christ. God is now just to justify, as He was just before to condemn. The Son came forth to do the Father's will—the will of God, and thus to give a righteous warrant for the expression of God's love, which though it existed, could not have been expressed before there was righteousness for God to act on; not only righteousness for me, but righteousness through which God could express His heart to me—a lost one in my misery—now awakened like the thief on the cross, to believe on His Son. I look by faith on Him, by whom the righteousness is declared, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood. I am accepted in the Beloved, not because I am righteous, but because God is just, to accept me in the Beloved, who enabled Him in righteous-

ness to meet me,—a sinner believing in Him who effected it, and through whom I am the righteousness of God in Him. The righteousness is on God's side and effected for God. Faith in Christ in me reckons me with Him who effected it, and thereby I am in the very righteousness in which God is now just to justify and accept me. It is a righteousness suiting God, who can receive His prodigal Son. I, believing in Christ, am through grace, accepted,—made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. The thief on the cross believed in Christ, and though very ignorant that did not set him any lower than the place which God in His love had provided for him. His sins were gone and he was to be with Christ that day in the third heaven, enjoying the love of the Father in all its greatness. He had much to learn and to know of Christ when he got there; the way and manner by which all difficulties to his reaching such a height were removed; how Christ had by one offering perfected them that are sanctified,—all this must have been learned after he was in the third heaven, for surely it was not learned on this side; just as Moses and Elias doubtless learned more perfectly of Christ's decease on the Mount of transfiguration than they had ever done before. All this shews, that being introduced by Christ, into the place which the Father's heart desired for us, we learn how fully Christ has secured our title to be there. The blood was sprinkled seven times on the mercy-seat ("propitiation" same word) in the holiest of all, and it is in the holiest of all that I am most fully assured of my title to be there, and that in God's sight (not mine so much, though I there see it as He sees it) the blood of

Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin. It is a discovery on my part, and not anything of the nature of a performance; I discover the greatness of my title where I am most in the result of what Christ accomplished. When I am nearest to God;—when I have reached the point where Christ according to the love of God has travailed to bring me—even to the Father—in Himself,—then do I best know how fully entitled I am to be there; the very nearness increases the sense of title.

Now, supposing I sin. I lose the sense of my place,—this given place of nearness to God. I remember I had a place there. I have sinned, and I have lost it. I seek restoration. The word of God exposes and convicts me. Where do I look? Who is before God? What is the revelation to me now having to do with God and knowing Him? Why that I have a great high priest passed into the heavens,—Jesus the Son of God. Christ is my link to God, He effected all for God. He is my Advocate, or Paraclete, or Patron, with the Father: I see Him there as the Righteous One, by whom I have been brought nigh to God; by whom I have found myself in the wealthy place before God. I see Him there; He presents me before God, holy, unblamable, unrebukable, when in faith; but not without confession of the evil by which I have lost the enjoyment of my high place. When I confess, I admit the sin for which Christ was God's sacrifice to put away all sin, and mine too. I write this sin on myself before God and according to the terms of my confession,—the larger the characters in which I write it, the greater my sense of exoneration. Why? Because
 “ God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and

to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." I discover in another and a more distinct way how God has established righteousness in Christ. I am enlarged in my soul to a sense of the ground on which He can exonerate me because I confess the guilt which God has already judged in His own Son; and through whom He is just to justify me so that after real restoration, I am stronger than ever in His grace: and if it be otherwise, the restoration is not genuine. I discover what the grace of God is to me practically in myself, even as the thief knew it in its effects.

To prevent Lameness.

THERE are two educational processes which must go on simultaneously, or there will be lameness; "the legs of the lame are not equal;" one is very slowly learnt, the other, very readily; but there is no real, permanent progress unless they go on together. One is self-mortification. This will be admitted as necessary by every class of Christians from the least to the greatest, and saints in general adopt it in some form or other. This in its full sense is extermination and not acquisition, though in most minds there is a latent thought that if the bad were mortified, the good would spring up in its place, as when an old crooked oak is cut down, a nice straight promising one springs up. Now this really only exposes where the lameness is, because if there be in the flesh no good thing, excision or mortification cannot improve it, or make room for an improved state; for there is nothing good in it. Hence, this it is that shews how neces-

sary it is in order to prevent lameness, that one should know where advancement or growth can be acquired, and this is the other leg. It is by beholding Christ in glory that the new man is increased, "transformed into the same image from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord." Now it is more difficult to lead souls to see and to obtain this second leg, than the first, and yet the imperfect way they obtain the first hinders them from seeking the other, or really being able to use the one which they assume to have.

But there is another danger; as soon as the soul sees the point of transformation there is the danger that he will become satisfied, and think that everything is in it, as once he may have thought that everything was in self-crucifixion. Now without a doubt the hobbling is worse when the second is supposed to be enough than when the first satisfied one. The one occupied with glory and omitting self-mortification is like a beautiful flower in a broken pot on the roadway. There is an air of fine sentiments, great appreciation of the beautiful, and reception of everything sublime, but such a one is like the man of mere learning who is not able to reduce what has been gained in education to any practical purpose. Surely if I am growing and developing in the highest nature, I ought to be ready to dispense with and refuse the nature that is adverse and prenicious.

Some might be stronger in the point of self-mortification if they had never known that of transformation; they are interested and captivated with the beauties of the glory, but too passive with respect to the vessel: the flower pot is

allowed to be in any state it likes. We must mortify practically and absolutely, not merely submit to it because it is providentially ordered, but we must *initiate* it. A man who studies self-denial and does not see the side of transformation is one who makes everything of the flower pot, but has nothing but a daisy or some ordinary flower in it, although he passes better in the public eye. But how beautiful when there is a beautiful flower in a suited pot, and the pot kept, by self-control and self-denial, fit for the rare plant which is daily developing and expanding in loveliness to the praise of Him who planted it, and who nurtures and cherishes it.



No growth or learning without Exercise.

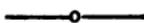
THERE is no growing without exercise; you would not expect to learn to write without pains and assiduity. We learn truth either *because* of our need, or for our need. In the latter case the need has not yet come, but in either case there can be no real learning but through suffering and exercise. The mistake with many saints in the present day is that they think because they can describe a truth, that therefore they have learned it. When a truth is really accepted, the conscience demands that there should be accordance with it. No one can teach well what he has not had much trouble in learning. The exercise in learning acquaints one with the care and attention which are required in order to be a proficient. You cannot teach writing unless you can tell what hinders and what facilitates good writing, and to know this

you must have passed through these exercises; "the sixpence you make wears like steel."

But besides this there must be *adding* (see 2 Pet. i.) or there is not vital power. It is easier to add when there is already some measure of any virtue, but it is the more necessary when there is a deficiency, and the Lord's ministry is always directed to the deficiency in order that there may be symmetry. Whatever we have most of is what we really most desire, and often what we have least of we are most satisfied with, just because we do not know enough of it to know its value. Many a one knows a language who could not teach it, he has never studied the grammar, though ordinarily he may speak good grammar. The danger in the present day is that so many can adopt and speak the language of divine truth, though it be quite a different one to his mother tongue, without passing through the exercise which would acquaint him with the exactions which it makes on one who truly learns it; and this alone qualifies for teaching it.

Divine truth is the life of Jesus and not a mere theory, and one must know it in life, in order to present it in life. Trying to act out what I see and hear, imparts to me great blessing as to every truth. I find it touches me on *every* point, and as I have said, where I have gained most already, I am glad to gain more, for I appreciate it better; but where I am most defective, there is most exercise of conscience, but not the same readiness to receive or adopt. I am to be always like one practising at the piano, not the tunes I know best but the ones at which I am most unskilful, and the more skilful I become at them, the better musi-

cian am I in every other, or for any other. You must practise, you must take pains. The deep ponderings of the middle ages though with less light, surpass the shallow platitudes of the present day with so much light. There is no depth where there has not been deep exercise, and the thought which has come from deep exercise, like the notes of the well-practised musician, has a tone and a mellowness about it, which tells of the long journey it has taken before being presented to the public. Any measure of gift is like *taste*; where you have most taste is where you never can accomplish anything quite to your satisfaction.



“Take heed how ye hear.”

WHEN light first breaks in on the soul, it is sweet to it, to the new nature. It is the work of God; but in order to promote it, and to enjoy what the light confers, I must practically prefer it to everything else. If I do not give it first place and absolute attention, it remains inactive, like a light in a dark lantern; hence it is said, “take heed *how* ye hear.” If you have had a glimpse of the unsearchable riches of Christ, have you been diverted by it from other things which claimed your attention and interest, or have you gone on as usual? Can you sit and talk as usual, dress as usual, read the books you used to read? In a word, though you have tasted of something great, has it no peculiar effect on you? Has it produced no marked alteration in your feelings about things? If not, it really does not control you, and this is the secret why you do not advance. If it (the

knowledge of Christ) controlled you, in spite of yourself, and without perceiving it, you would retire daily more and more from *usual* things, because more and more engrossed with the Lord. You would not make any arrangements to break away from this thing or that thing, but in seeking to know more of Christ, like a bird ascending to the sky, you would leave earthly things behind. The sky and air would be more beautiful to you as you ascended, and the things you had separated from would not be accounted of. What is the good of things if they are not used? and as you use them you must distance yourself from the lower associations. If you will not break from the common, you will never enjoy the "uncommon." It is here where so many are detained. They wish for wings—they admire flying, but the moment they find that flying will distance them from old haunts and old tastes, they are content to hop, and not to fly; they are sluggards, they "desire and have nothing." The fact is, the more we grow up in the knowledge of Christ, the more we must separate from everything that is contrary to Him. The babe in Christ can mix with those, and can do things with impunity which would make the father miserable. Spiritual sensitiveness increases with growth. The babe can endure an atmosphere which would be insupportable to a young man. It is the contrary way with the new creation and with the old. In the latter the young require the most attention and care and delicate nursing, but in the new, it is as there is growth that one must be increasingly watchful of every incongruity, because the organization is so high and holy that the more it is developed, the more it is necessary to ward off

everything that would grieve and hinder it. When fruit trees are in blossom that is the most precarious time, and the moment they are nearest having fruit, is the one in which they must be best sheltered from ungenial weather, far more so than at any other period of their existence. You have thought you could enjoy the "uncommon" and yet retain the "usual," but you cannot. In proportion as you hold to the one you weaken the other.



Death is most felt where it is hardest to die.

I SEE so many now-a-days who are not entering the harbour fully freighted, and all because they are not cultivating the activities of life while in this death period, and the ruling passion is strong in death. If one has not died, death is before one, and the greatest death would necessarily be where one would most like to live, and where that is, the ruling passion is. No one is really dead while the ruling passion is yet alive, because it is there that death must first be felt, and where there is the greatest buoyancy and tenacity of life. Whatever of yourself you try most to spare, is that which is your strongest hold on life, and hence you will find that in all God's ways with us, He cuts at the root of that particular passion or prepossession which we especially desire to spare. One is mortified, another disappointed, a third is in sorrow. Why? Because the working of the natural life was most active in the quarter in which it is checked, and there death is most felt. It is often admitted that we have died with Christ by those

who are not at all willing to be so dead as to be only a mere vessel for Christ's use,—to accept death to everything of nature's life. This is carrying about in our body the dying of Jesus.

If any one will study and review the history and manner of God's ways with him from the first, he will see that God has always been subjecting him to blisters where they most rise, because there they are most wanted. There must be inflammation or the blister would not rise, and the blister is really to draw the inflammation to the surface. If there were no inflammation the blister would be harmless and painless. What a life of mortification Jacob had! At last he worships, leaning on the top of his staff, having nothing at all here, and he a worshipper, and thus he has an abundant entrance. If he had studied the ways of the Lord with him, he could not but have noticed the vexed feelings which he had when things were so ordered for him. Wherever I am vexed,—mortified, *there* there is quick flesh. I may have sorrow besides, which is a very different thing. If I am vexed, my self-love is touched. When I have sorrow, it is because I have lost something dear to me. In the one case I am made little of, in the other I am bereaved. In the one, I consider I do not get my due, and in the other I have lost what was really mine. The discipline or the mode of dying with respect to each is therefore widely different and the effect different too. In the one case it is what I am to myself that I feel, and in the other what others are to me. The discipline in the first case is always to reduce the sense of my self-importance, and the irritation, like that of a blister, though it does not of itself remove the malady, yet

shews the seat of it ; and one who is walking with the Lord in the light, must see that his vexation proceeds from wounded pride ; whereas in the other case, it is not vexation because of my self-importance, but sorrow because of the importance of others to me, and in the discipline of losing them, I learn that Christ has not been enough for me, and I learn too where death is necessary for me, in order that I may be *simply* a vessel for Christ. The end of the discipline in either case is that we may so accept death as not to give way to either vexation or sorrow, but be wholly for Christ.



The Heart satisfied.

“DELIGHT thyself in the Lord and He will give thee the desires of thine heart.” According as the Lord is the object of your delight, the desires of your heart will be answered. There is no answer to them, no satisfaction, until the Lord is the object of your delight. When He is, then the heart finds everything to satisfy it. If every treasure or gain you could wish for were stored in some fort or castle, your first work would be to possess the fort, and the next to explore and enjoy all the treasures in it. If I delight in the Lord, I possess Him. Love possesses what it delights in, even when there is no return. How much more when there is ! His love begets ours, though it is always in advance of ours, and passes knowledge. The mistake with some is the attempt to satisfy the heart with the things which answer to the desires of the heart. First one thing and then another is sought after and even possessed, for instance “peace,” and the

assurance of glory, and other distinct and special blessings, but the heart is not satisfied because many other things are wanting, and where there is want there is not satisfaction. There is no real satisfaction until everything is complete and without break or interruption. The heart seeks where it may rest in a sphere where everything is very good. The divine nature cannot be satisfied with anything short of this. The unsatisfied state of the natural heart tells how it has departed from God. The way with us is that we often seek and obtain some particular good, and the very enjoyment of it makes us feel more the absence of things which suit it, so that the possession of the good thing awakens the sense of the imperfection of the rest, just as one would feel if part of one's dress were excellent and new, but the rest old and worn. Every saint through grace obtains and possesses some of the treasures of the kingdom, but these beautiful and rare things only cast in the shade the common things around, and the heart feels that instead of being satisfied, it is ruffled by the contrasts which intrude and beset it. In fact it is the treasures that have been sought, and not the fort where they all are stored in permanency and in order, and where there is no disturbance nor incongruity, but everything abundant and appropriate; "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Where everything is perfect and beautiful, and everything timely and suitable, where without discrepancy or contrast, each is contributing its beauty and excellence, to add to and set off the other, this is the scene where the heart is satisfied, and this is only found in the Lord, and only secured by delighting in Him who is the centre

and source of all, where all is divine order and divine permanency. One perfection or even many do not satisfy the heart; one perfect One with every perfection *does* satisfy it, but it is not the perfections I am to seek, but the Perfect One—not the fruits in the garden, but the garden itself; and there I sit under His shadow with great delight and His fruit is sweet to my taste. If the garden be mine, if I possess Christ, I possess not fruits nor treasures only, but I possess Him in whom they are in fulness, and every desire of my heart is met at one and the same moment, in unfading light and eternal perfection.



Peace with God, and the Peace of God with me.

THERE are two states which must exist at one and the same time in order to ensure happy and steady walk. The one is peace with God; the other, the peace of God with me. In the first, my heart so rests in God's satisfaction in the work of His Son on the cross, that it is His satisfaction which I share.

I cannot reach up to or measure the satisfaction of God, or know fully how He was glorified in the way Christ answered to all the holiness of God; but as I taste of His satisfaction, I know why He can kiss me in my rags, and receive me into His house and home; so that my conscience is not only satisfied about my sins, but I am lost in the satisfaction of God, who can and does receive me according to His love in righteousness. It is then that I have peace with God; there is not an element to disturb; God has freed me through Christ from every

atom of the offending thing ; He has done it according to His own nature, that He might receive me to Himself according to His love.

His satisfaction is proved in the resurrection of Christ, and I trust in it, and not in the satisfaction of my own conscience about my sins ; and then and there I have peace with God. This is one state ; and if this state be not preserved, there will be no surmounting the pressure of nature, or the general atmosphere around. In this state you are like the cedar tree, with nature and purpose to rise in height above everything : its course is always upward, for in that direction is its growth. The heart at peace with God always finds that its course is upward, and its retreat and home above, and to this end all its strength and energy tend ; and unless you are strong and matured in peace with God, you will not be able to seek His peace in your circumstances, which is the other state.

Now this additional state—God's peace keeping my heart and mind through Christ Jesus—is not enjoyed unless I have learnt confidence in God, and can open all my heart to Him, and let Him see in detail the good and the sorrowful in my heart. It requires much confidence to do this ; to empty out all the furniture of the heart to God, praising Him for the good parts (there is nothing good except what is of Himself), and calling His attention to the broken ones. It is then that the peace of God keeps the heart and mind through Christ Jesus. The greatest wonder is, that one like you or me should be kept, in the midst of the most vexing elements, in the same state as the blessed God is on His throne, and it is the greatest favour that God could confer on any one on earth. Surely it passeth

all understanding; and then it is you are not only a cedar tree, but everything you do or touch, every bit of furniture in your heart, is made of cedar wood and bears its fragrance.

In peace with God, you soar to the heavens, and then having made known all your requests to God, you have His peace imparting its wondrous value to you in everything here. In the power of life the cedar tree rises to its true place; but it is *through death* that its wood is available for furniture; for use it must be cut down and seasoned. Thus it must be with you, as to these two states. In the power of the Spirit of life you rise to your appointed home; you are always reaching upward; the door is thrown open; you have boldness to enter into the holiest of all; nothing lower is your place. But as to your circumstances here, the more dead you are, the better will be the wood for use, and the more will you be a vessel fit for the Master's use. It is death in this scene, and life in Christ outside of it.

The Lord grant that each of us may know more of these two states; and if the Lord detains you here for another year in the wilderness, may you be deeply and largely acquainted with this double blessing.



Isolation.—No. 1.

I BELIEVE that the Lord in a very peculiar way makes up to one for the privation of not assembling together, when it has been caused by circumstances beyond our control; still it is a privation. I think there is an evident distinction between being hin-

dered by the chastening of the Lord, or by the power of the world. It is distinct mercy when one is not hindered ; but when one is hindered, either by chastening or by an adverse power, there is an exercise of soul and heart accordingly.

If it be by chastening, the word, as we hear it, is directed to the removal or washing away of that in us which required it. If it be by the power of the world, the Lord manifests Himself, and encourages and consoles us by His presence. This latter is properly isolation—the only good isolation, and the Lord turns it to the best account.

Paul in prison, or John at Patmos, are both isolated by the power of man ; but the place and time of isolation were used of God to impart to them the deepest purposes of His mind, and I doubt not the nature of the isolation, indicated the line of truth which was committed to each. One was an exile ; the other, a prisoner ; and neither of them could by any means escape from the isolation to which they were subjected.

There is another isolation still more painful, and one which was experienced by the Apostle Paul before the Roman tribunal, as he says, “all men (meaning saints) forsook me.” They left him to shift for himself. It was dangerous to be identified with him ; but he adds, “The Lord stood by me.” Now this proves that if the isolation is imposed on one, the Lord does make up for it in a very distinct way by His own presence. But I could not call it imposed if I could free myself. Daniel thrown into the lions’ den is an isolation that is imposed, for he could not escape from it, and the Lord is peculiarly with him ; he would have preferred Jerusalem, but he could not get there, and

hence in the lions' den he is better off than if he were at Jerusalem.

Nothing but the Lord's chastening, or coercion from man, ought ever to induce me to abstain from the circle of divine blessing on earth. But if the isolation be imposed either way, I believe that the lessons taught then are most peculiar, and not the mere lessons, but the manner and way of His love and interest as never known otherwise.

In the isolation of chastening, He comes as the Physician to *cure*. The physician who cures always endears himself to his patient. He probes the heart maladies, and ministers the word of cure. In the isolation from coercion, it is as though you were in prison, and then He comes to you, and in the lonely limits of the prison chamber, He is your companion, not to make you indifferent to liberty, but to acquaint you with the compensation of His presence, and to interest your heart in His own interests, in a scene at once so dark and so dreary. His gentleness makes me great. No one is really softened—divinely so, except the one who has learned the sympathy of Christ. Paul seems to me to have acquired this softness in the prison.

An isolation where no one around is of a like mind, as a child in a worldly family, I consider imposed; and according as it is really and truly accepted, the Lord manifests Himself; and then it is that the heart studies, and learns His features, as you see with the bride in Canticles. It learns to have but the one study, and the more it studies the more it is interested in the study. The eye is not satisfied with seeing. You are in a picture gallery, hung from ceiling to floor on every side with portraits of the one person; but in different circum-

stances and different aspects; all private, only visible to yourself, only belonging to you in isolation, and the compensation for it; never to make you indifferent to your liberty, but on the contrary to fit you for using it to more advantage when it is given to you.

Isolation.—No. 2.

WHEN in isolation through coercion, over which I have no control, there is a time of special blessing. Duties may be of this order of coercion. I think solitude most necessary and profitable, and as there must be rest in sleep for the body or the mind which is much exercised, so there must be much meditation in solitude, for the one much occupied in acquiring. Where the acquiring is small, the retirement can be small. There is little to ruminate on, when there has been little taken in. To be a clean animal there was to be both the chewing of the cud, and dividing of the hoof; there must be rumination after feeding, and feet to practise.

I regret that there is so little meditation. I believe that one really fed by the Lord, is never satisfied until he goes over what has fed him before the Lord, and finds in His presence how adapted it is. I am sure that after a meeting, when there has been blessing, the desire is to get away and be alone with the Lord; there is a fear of losing it, unless, or until one has reviewed it before Him.

If you are prevented from attending a meeting by any kind of service to the Lord, you lose nothing, but on the contrary, you have your reward.

“Strive Lawfully.”

“NO ONE is crowned unless he strives lawfully.” It is not every one who enters on the conflict, and who earnestly, with every energy, desires to win ; who really receives the chaplet, in testimony of his success.

Of course the first thing is prowess or heart, emboldening one to enter the lists. The racer must have the mettle ; it must be his nature to run, and without this quality, this mettle, that is, heart or faith, there is no use entering the field, for without it there can be no prospect of success. There must first be the intrepid steed or the spirited wrestler. Without mettle you are neither a racer nor a wrestler. It is this which makes the difference between a waggon horse and a race horse or courser. The latter has nerve or liking for the race. Without this there is no use attempting to run or wrestle. But after you are assured of the inherent abilities of the courser, and are convinced of his endurance, there is another thing, and that is the *training*—the readiness and skill to obey and observe every rule.

This ability to observe and to submit to every rule is acquired by habit or training, and thus it is that the race or conflict is conducted “lawfully,” according to the rules : and this I may call a right application of your strength.

The mettle, the high-toned nerve, the great power of execution, are all forfeited and lost if there be not this second power, to apply what is so valuable at the given time, and on the needed occasion, and if many a one cannot enter on the race because he has not the step or the heart to

run ; if it be sad to see how few are able to enter the lists, it is still more sad to see one with much ability forfeiting everything because unable to apply the strength to the tests of the race-course. If a horse can jump a wall five feet high, but will balk and sulk at a common country fence, his strength and ability are all forfeited, because he will cower at common things, and yet prove his powers in brilliant performances not so common. Just so with the saint ; it is not enough to be endowed with the best qualities : of course if one is not, there can be no ability to take the lead ; but unless these qualities do duty in the daily wear and tear of life, there is not a striving lawfully, according to what is consistent with God's order ; anything else is illegal.

Now the saint is not only to have the qualities for the race or the conflict, but he must by habit or training have his powers so in hand, that he refuses nothing. He is as ready to prove his strength in connection with the commonest detail of daily life, because it is "lawful," as with something which makes a more singular impression. In a word, to "strive lawfully" one must not shy at or decline a single trial of strength set in our course ; because in the race, failing at any of the trials, or avoiding anything which is in the course, is departing from it ; and then there is no crowning, no reaching the summit ; and not only this, but one is thrown back, hindered, and grieved at failure, and there is far more suffering on account of failure, than there would have been if the test were submitted to with the grace possessed.

How different when one gracefully meets every hillock and fence with the same ease and pur-

pose, and exhibits in one's own person, the beautiful versatility and force of grace, which enables one to meet everything, great and small, in the way Christ did. This is to be not only a courser of remarkable power, but one so well-trained that each resistance is met with ease and dignity, and a charity which imparts grace to whatever demands it.

The Divine Idea of Beauty.

EVERY real beauty is of divine order. Every thing in creation was made by the Son to meet and please the mind of the Father as known to Him. You cannot understand beauty but as you understand the order and relation in which things were placed in their origin. God saw everything and behold it was very good. It is the harmony in the order which is beauty; there might be order, as there is in a regiment or a mill, and yet no beauty. It is the appropriateness of each thing to its fellow on every side which constitutes beauty. The harmony in the order of colours in creation is the beauty of colour. Beauty is not in a thing which is right and suited on one-side, while the other side is neglected and uncared for. A man has properly four sides; the first to God, the second, to himself; the third, to his relative duties; and the fourth to man.

Now there is not beauty unless there be harmony in the order in which each is attended to and observed. It is not beautiful for a man to be reading his Bible when he ought to answer the bell rung by his master; it is not beautiful for a man to take

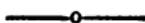
such care of himself that he will not put himself out of the way to go to a meeting, or to be in good time; it is not beautiful to be very attentive to the wants of the poor, but to neglect home duties. Beauty consists in doing everything at the right time, and in the right measure, so that I do not overlook one side, or one claim, while attending to another. This was the beauty of the Lord; no one was neglected, and every side was fully attended to.

The sun is beautiful; it sheds its light on every side; it is not partial in itself, for it is the position of the earth which determines the measure imparted to each part; it is in itself beautiful. A tree grows round, and if it be benignly acted on, will present itself the same on every side. The blessed Lord could accept His place on the holy mount from God, and He could come down from it and provide means in His poverty to pay the tribute money, as if one were as natural to Him as the other. This was beautiful; but man saw no beauty in Him. You must have an eye for the beautiful or you will never discover it. Here it is where we all fail, we have not the divine idea as to what is beautiful. One saint is devoted, but neglects his family; another is the slave of his family, but too indifferent about other sides. Everyone has his own standard of beauty; every eye forms a beauty, and this is in keeping with what each most admires though he may have none of it himself. Light-haired people generally like dark-haired, and *vice versa*; the talkative, the silent; the sanguine, the cautious; it is admiring in another instead of sedulously cultivating in oneself, so that there should be no deficiency on any side.

We all as saints are set in separate and distinct

spheres and we are fit, if grace rules us, to fill our appointed sphere, like a star in the sky. One may be a forest tree and appointed to grow in the forest; another, a shrub appointed to grow in the garden. Each is beautiful when each fills the appointed duty; either trying to be the other would not be in any way beautiful. Doing what I am appointed to do evenly, happily, and continuously is beautiful. What makes any of us deficient in practice is not so much want of power to do a thing, as having little sense of what is divinely beautiful. We are like children who prefer some glittering pebble to the most beautiful portrait, and we betray a vitiated taste, in the eagerness with which some trifle is sought after and commended. Whatever a person commends and admires, that is what is beautiful to him, and generally he tries to be what he admires.

The more the Lord is my study, the more shall I in every way give evidence of the fact, by cultivating in myself His beauty, which was perfect in the eye of God, but unseen and unknown to man; and as I am like Him, so will it be evident that I admire Him.



Coming from the Home.

My desire for you is, that you should know what it is not only to go to the Lord, as the retreat and home of your heart, but to come from Him. I think you are well versed in going to Him, but the coming from Him, bearing His stamp, though consequent on the first, is yet different from it. It is easier to live in one's home, than in one's busi-

ness. There is a greater tax on one's life, and its powers, in business and toil, than in the easy leisure of home. And this is just the difference between the corn of the land, and the manna. The former is the life of Christ in heaven, where all is one unbroken scene of light and perfection, while the latter, the manna, is the life of Christ as He walked on earth where everything is adverse; where there is a continued strain, and exaction: no home, but toil; toil all the working hours. I find many saints, like young retrievers, are ready to go hunting, before they have been taught; that is to say,—many try to *live* Christ, before they have lived *on* Christ, and the difficulty for a teacher is to lead them to Christ *where He is*. They are ready enough, like the young hounds, to run here and there for game, before they have learned the right way of searching for it. Now you have learned what it is to go into heaven and feed on Christ there, to eat of the corn of the land, where all is exquisite stillness, and restful enjoyment; but though you know much of the exercise which only the manna can meet, yet here your growth will be. I do not mean now in answering to the ordinary details of life; surely that will be included; but the purpose and the power to come from the Lord like a giant refreshed with wine, or as the sun to run his course, would give a very distinct and enlarged scope to everything within your compass. A tree growing, and a tree bearing fruit, present very different aspects. In the former it is advancing,—ever ascending upward. In the latter, the progress or fruit is pendent,—turned downwards, soliciting as it were, the owner to pluck it, and be gratified. You go up for yourself, and you come down

for the Lord. Everything is bright and encouraging as you ascend,—as you enter your proper home. I am rejoiced that you know what are the endearments of that eternal rest; but then it is what you have learned there, (for there your love for the Lord is satisfied and confirmed), that you have to express here, where there is one continued and opposition, where your greatest friend is your armour bearer.

The more I am at home above, the less do I expect to find any home here. But this is not the only point: the more you are furnished from above the more are you in fellowship with Christ's sufferings here; I might be for ever seeking rest, away from the fogs of this world, or like a prisoner in a dark cell, admiring and detained by every ray of light which had struggled into the dreary chamber. I might most truly desire the company of the Lord in my circumstances, but this is a long way off from walking beside Him in His circumstances. If so be that we suffer *with* Him; and this is death. I do not think we sympathise with Him until we have learned His sympathy in death. The desire for His company is long before. But I must know His company with me, not in my judicial death, from which His blood has released me; but in the pressure and desolation of death here which His company alone can assuage. It is consequent on this, that I can have fellowship with His sufferings,—really gird myself for a path of death;—not for myself; *that* I have gone through already, but for Him, whose company I enjoy where He is. I must come into the scene full of what He is to me, in my home, before I can be for Him here; the leaf not withering, and the tree not ceasing to yield fruit, for the good and comfort of others.

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