

LETTERS
ON
SUBJECTS OF INTEREST

By J. B. S.

THIRD SERIES.

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LETTERS ON SUBJECTS OF INTEREST.

Prayer and the Life of Faith.

I do not dictate to God in presenting my difficulties or trials to Him, I do more as Hezekiah did, when he spread the letter before the Lord. I do not mean that we should omit detailing our troubles to the Lord; that, of course, must be done. "Make known *all* your requests;" and the more minute I am in detailing, the more confidence have I in His interest in me. I am minute, because I feel I require His care and succour as much in the smallest detail as in the largest; and we all know that the smallest feather contributes, or expresses, more love and comfort than the strong quills, though the latter are very necessary. But having minutely spread all my trials before Him, whether they be with relation to myself peculiarly, or in connection with the church; I, according to my faith, leave it to Him to act for me, according to His own pleasure, *assured* that He will. I cannot tell how He will act; and it is more than probable, if my faith be simple, He will surprise me in the way He will act. It was a surprise to Peter, the way he got out of prison. It was a surprise to Joseph. God answers many prayers even according to their wording, when there is little faith;

and often it is the answers which have reminded us that we had prayed. But when I have prayed in faith, I repose in God. I do not know how He will act, but this I am sure of—He will make bare His arm, and make me know that He has most surely acted for my advantage and blessing.

Another thing, and one most important in this life of faith: it is like life itself, it must never stop—I must be ever going on. You never can have faith really if you are not living by it; that is, doing everything in faith; going to the meeting in faith, going to the market in faith, going to visit in faith, reading in faith, everything in faith. Faith is the only power to bear us over the difficulties and dangers of the way. It is our steed; we are not in our race, unless we are borne on by faith; faith for the little things as well as for the greatest. May we each abound in it more and more.

Guidance. I.

I FEEL that in matters for which you seek guidance, it is not so much praying for direction that one needs, as getting near the Lord; and the nearer you are to Him, the clearer will everything appear; for you will remark, that the thing most on your mind is the one most subjected to the test at such a time; and the proof of your reality is the way you stand clear of it; so that you can look at it, not as one under the power of it; but as one so satisfied with the Lord, that you are able to accept His counsel whatever it be. When we ask for guidance

about a matter in which we are too much engrossed, or which is in a way necessary to us, we are not free enough to receive His mind. The heart is like a sheet of paper, all written over with our own desires.

Nothing is really necessary for us but Christ ; and when we are simply happy in Him, we are ready for any counsel which He may give us. He orders for us here in the wilderness, because it is a wilderness, and we are needy in it ; but we best understand His orders when we are first satisfied in His fulness. When I am very happy in Him, outside of what I need here, I am sure, as I walk in faith, to be kept from what would be a hindrance to my communion with Him ; because I am in the fresh sense of what He is, and therefore quickly alive to what is not suited to Him.

I think the only way of truly judging about anything simply natural is, whether it causes any reserve between the Lord and me ; and it is evident that it is only in proportion as I know and cultivate nearness to Him, that I can be alive to the thing which would interfere with it. A thing which would be felt by one very near, would not be felt at all by one at a distance.

The great end and value of waiting on the Lord is to ascertain His mind, and when I have learned it, to act upon it. If, after I have ascertained His mind, I do not act on it, I lose the certainty of His mind, and make myself a centre, instead of walking in the path marked out for me. I make my knowledge merely contemplative, and not practical, and my own health of soul suffers.

Coincidences buoy up the natural mind, and we must take care that they do not supersede faith, though they may sometimes confirm faith. The Lord bless and keep you learning how to abound, and how to be abased; the former is the harder of the two.

Guidance. II.

As to guidance, the first thing to settle is the direction, or line, in which you wish to be guided. Is it for prosperity and happiness here, or is it in Christ's path, however suffering that may be?

Generally, guidance is sought for one's own advantage. I do not doubt the Lord helps the waiting soul that does not rise higher, but this is guidance simply for one's own gain. I consider guidance to be for the Lord's sake, when He leads me as His servant, and this I can only arrive at by acting as He would act were He in my place and circumstances. Of course, if I *knew* how He would act were He in my place, all would be settled.

The real difficulty, then, is to find out how He would act, and this can only be acquired by acquaintance with His mind. The word, in a very distinct way, informs me of His mind; not with reference to some particular instance merely, but what His mind is. It is not so much, for example, what you could make of an oak-tree, but what an oak-tree in its qualities *is*, I get formed in His mind by intelligent study of the word; but it is not simply knowledge,

but the mind of the Lord, which is unfolded in the Bible.

Many read the Bible, and are well informed in textual meanings, who have not acquired the mind of the Lord—that is, how He would act or feel in a given case. Now, if I do not know the Lord's relation, in His own mind, to everything here, I shall study the word ineffectually as to guidance; because I am studying it with reference to a relation which is not correct at the present time.

If I had to act for a king rejected, I should not be guided, were I to act for him as if he were reigning. Plainly, if you do not see Christ's present relation to this scene, supposing you go back to Jesus on the earth, sent to be the Lamb of God, which is as much as the best in systems see, how could you have guidance now according to His mind? If you are truly seeking to act as He would act, you are seeking Him in quite a different relation from that in which He is now; and every step you take for the Lord, even when sanctioned by the word, betrays this great defect; namely, that you are trying to act like Him, in a relation to present things, which was once true, but is not now; and then you would use the sword, like David, or great earthly pomp, like Solomon.

Thus there are three things necessary for guidance: first, that you are obedient, prepared in heart, to act as He would act; secondly, that you understand His present relation to things here; thirdly, that you acquire His mind from the word as a whole; for it is the knowledge of His mind that imparts colour and beauty, like His, to our ways.

The First Lesson of Resurrection Life.

IN Mark viii. the Lord has His own in circumstances to teach them this first lesson of resurrection life. The ship is on the sea, and they have no bread, no resources, and He is with them. The circumstances are just the suited ones for exercising their souls, and leading them into the rest which faith gives, when it sees no one to lean on, and the resource is only in God. They, like ourselves, do not understand the lesson which the Lord would teach them; and they reason among themselves, saying, "It is because we have taken no bread." With us, whether in our private circumstances, or in the church; when we are placed in circumstances where there are no visible resources, the first and great thing which hinders our blessing, and occupies our minds, is the attempt to account for this warning which we do not understand, by blaming ourselves for our want of prudence and foresight. The tendency is to be occupied with the failure, or the want, rather than with Him who, in His mercy, is present, to keep and to satisfy our hearts in Himself, when there are no resources.

Here they are, in the ship, in the sea, without bread; no circumstances could be more resourceless, but He was with them, and He, they have now to learn, was sufficient. This is the large place, the resurrection-ground, the continent of blessing, which gladdened a Simeon, when He had the child Jesus in his arms. It was the shore on which the dying thief landed. It was that spot which Paul knew was "far better" than any here; that unknown land, that in spirit,

every one now must enter on, whether on a death-bed, or in spirit crossing the Jordan. It is, in fact, the landing-place; and this is the first lesson of resurrection life, for it is the soul finding out that it has nothing but Christ, and what He—blessed be His name—is in His sufficiency.

Before we reach this, we may be like the disciples, truly loving Him, and knowing Him as our Saviour; but we have not yet stood outside everything, and found that He is enough for us when there is nothing else. But not only this (for this is only the beginning), we find here how fully He satisfies the heart, and makes up for everything.

If Simeon, or a dying thief, or the martyr Stephen, find Him everything to them, why should *we* wait for the dissolution of the body, and of all here, to learn this full and blessed lesson? Surely Paul did not wait for it till death; but in order to learn it, the teaching figuratively set forth here is necessary. We shrink from being in the ship at sea, with nothing in it but Christ; and yet it is then we learn for the first time His full value. The mercies of a former day tell us who He is, and He recalls them to His disciples, in order that they may understand *who* He is; but He Himself is greater than His mercies; and when we have no resources, we learn *what* He is. I have nothing but Christ; is He sufficient, or not? This is resurrection, and when I have entered on it, I know the power and resources of the life of Christ. No soul can know consciously what Christ is, as to resource, above all the claims of nature, until it has learned this lesson. Abra-

ham learned it when he ascended Mount Moriah, prepared in heart to extinguish the only light which cheered his eye on earth; and at no time did his soul enter into, or comprehend, what God is in His own might and majesty, as in that eventful moment. Each step in that solitary ascent only deepened his conviction of the greatness of the God in whom he trusted; and after it, he was prepared for the deeper communications from God. And assuredly, until we have found Christ, not only as our Saviour, saving us from the depths of our ruin and sin; but also as the One on the shore who is enough for us, where there is nothing else; we are not prepared for deeper revelations, for the unfolding of things connected with Christ; because we have not found Him to be the true resource of our hearts. And this, not only in our own individual history, but also in the church, and as His witnesses on earth; for, after all, there is no true standing publicly which has not been learned individually. If I know Christ in my private history as my resource, when there is nothing else, I shall not find it difficult to see that He is enough for me in the church. If He stand by me, all men may forsake me; and I may, like Paul, confront unmoved the most dread tribunal in the world!

To know Him in His sufficiency, apart from everything else, is necessarily at the very beginning of our life in Him. He saves us, and because He lives, we live also; but the moment I know that He is my life fully, it is no longer I, but Christ liveth in me; and hence it is Himself who first meets me. He is the Head whom I am told to hold, and from whom all

nourishment flows; this is what gives strength and character to the soul, and is learned and cultivated by every one who enjoys solitude with Him. If He is not enough for my soul alone with Him, I have not learned that He surpasses all things; nor could I bear to be deprived of everything here, nor to confront it fearlessly. When He is enough, retirement from everything and every one to Himself is full rest and solace to the heart; and the less question there is between Him and me, the more shall I seek to be alone with Him; because there I am prepared for explanation and correction from Him, which I should not have received or noticed in the crowd. If I have wandered from Him, I shall fear being alone with Him; and yet, if I have known what a resource He is to my heart alone, I shall be miserable until I have found myself again alone with Him, and have heard His correction, which restores and invigorates my soul. And as our souls learn this, two things are apparent in our course: one, that we can bear the loss of anything because He is our resource; the other, that we fear not any power which may oppose us, because He is near us.

Blessed Lord Jesus, may our souls grow in the knowledge of Thy worth and excellence!

The Study of Scripture: its Effect.

THE greatness, goodness, and wisdom of God revealed to the soul fills it with adoration, so that everything which makes Him known to me, should call out worship, whatever the occasion

may be. You get the perfect idea of this in the book of Revelation. In heaven, where I am free from all self-occupation, worship bursts forth; and now, when the calmness and rest of His presence is known, even the ordinary things of life call forth worship.

In this connection you will find that reading scripture as a whole, as the revelation of Himself, will give you a grasp of God as He is, which will assist and lead to this worshipping sense. As a rule, I think scripture should be read primarily with the thought that God is making Himself known to me. I ought, as I read the scriptures, to seek to imbibe His mind, communicated to me through a spiritual medium, but in actual human scenes, which vividly present me to myself as if in them, and how God acts and judges with regard to me in them. I am thus learning Him in a *variety* of ways. In the Old Testament I find Him dealing with man as he is; feeble, and hindered by the intervention of any difficulty: sometimes with no water to drink, sometimes too much of it stopping his way. Satan is not so much seen there; but all creation, and man ostensibly hindering any one who is faithful to God on the earth. God shews His own that He is above circumstances, and how He does this is always interesting; but not only this, it also discloses to us His own nature, so that, as we read on, we are getting to know and understand *Him*.

In the New Testament His heart is declared to me by the Son of His love; and I am taught, not merely that He is above circumstances *for* His own; but that He places His own in the

Son of His love above them too. Christ walked above circumstances here, in full rest of heart, in the Father's love. As I read this record, I comprehend the goodness and ways of God; I am in company with His heart, fulfilling its own wondrous will. But not only so, I find that, according to that will which I see accomplished in setting Christ at His own right hand, the church is set in Him, in all the majesty of God's purpose, above every power and hindrance, in the cloudless, unfading blessedness of His presence and home, in that nearness and glory which satisfies His love.

There is no fear of your getting too full of scripture; for where there is faithfulness, God will place you in circumstances where you will learn practically the truth of Himself which verbally He has committed to you; so that it becomes your *verbatim* saying of Him from your own experience.

The study and apprehension of God's ways as a whole, impart a breadth and strength to the mind. It enables it to embrace, and, in a degree like the sun, to control all lower things, pressing them into their order and subjection to Him. You may cheer your spirit with detached portions of His word; but you do not acquire that breadth and volume, in the power of which you can reduce everything into its place before God, unless you in some degree possess the comprehensive view, which the apprehension of Him, in a *variety* of ways and places, imparts.

Follow Thou Me.

THE great desire of our Lord is that we should follow Him, and the true heart is never fully happy nor right, except when following Him. Our joy, usefulness, and growth depend on our following Him. Could anything so fully delight you as following Him in His path and ways through this evil world? The faithful spaniel knows no greater pleasure than following his master, however arduous and perilous the journey. In following, it is not the greatness of my zeal, or the extent of my work; but am I in the path that He went? If I know He has gone this way, I follow. I consider not what I have to encounter; my sole desire is to ascertain the way He went; and then, regardless of consequences, not thinking of them, I follow Him.

If there be any shade of reserve between Him and me, I cannot follow Him. When I follow Him, I am in unclouded intimacy with Him. It is a great incentive to me that He desires it; as the master's whistle to the spaniel, so is His voice to me. My heart desires it more than anything. See how our blessed Lord secured it with regard to Peter. (Luke v.) Peter was zealous, using his time and means in the Lord's service, and subject to His word, but he was not yet following Him. This was produced in a very remarkable way. Peter was toiling for fish. The Lord gave them to him in great abundance. For the first time in the light of His presence, Peter learned that though sinful, the Lord was better to him than the fish; *then* it was he left all and followed Him. That was

his start. Then he tasted for the first time, what it was to find the Lord superior to every natural thing. But he had not yet learnt fully to follow Him.

I first find, like Peter, that when I am sensibly unfit for the Lord, He clears me of all fear. His love is perfected with me; but I require, subsequent to this, like Peter, to discern the worthlessness of self, where naturally I am most confident in myself. Hence when the same Peter avows that he will follow the Lord to death, the Lord informs him that he would first deny Him. Who can estimate the sting of sorrow in the heart which had tasted of the unparalleled joy of following the Lord, to feel that in any way, by word or deed, I should deny Him. But Peter will get the desire of his soul, blessed be God; and though he goes a-fishing again (John xxi.), his heart through grace *must* find its object. The Lord, after they had dined, washed Peter's feet, by exposing the self-confidence which had led to the break between them; and having commissioned him to feed His sheep, His lambs, sure evidence now that his heart is true to Him—He says "Follow thou me."

The Lord give you to know the present and eternal sweetness and delight to His heart, and to your own, in following Him.

Our Value to Christ.

THE Lord has prayed that you should be kept from the evil here, but not that you should be taken out of the world. He delights in leaving us here for Himself, as well as to be a cheer to

one another. There is nothing more encouraging than to be assured of the interest, and I might say consequence, we are to the Lord. You may feel you are very small and of little use; but when you turn to Him as to His thought of you, He says, "I am glorified in you." Can anything promote purpose of heart in you to answer to His mind more than knowing that He makes so much of what you consider so little, and rightly so, when we think how much He deserves.

The very fact that being here for Him is a pleasure to Him; and that as we blossom, and bud, and bring forth fruit, He is glorified, urges us to be more and more according to His mind. If I am only a daisy in a garden, and I know the owner of the garden prizes me very much, and likes to have me in his garden, and comes to see after me every day, and confers on me continually, like the shining of the sun, some special mark of his favour, don't you think that the little daisy will not be thinking of its littleness or uselessness, but of the unaccountable care, interest and appreciation of the owner of the garden? He thinks of you, and He cannot love little. How the heart of the daisy, if it had one, would expand as it caught the approaching footsteps, in the daily visits of the owner. They say flowers do not open out into full bloom on a cold sunless day, but when the sun invites them, they expand into their greatest brilliancy; and thus the more you are assured in heart that you are to be left here for His glory, and that His delight is in you, the more will you be encouraged, and stirred up too, to be to Him what He esteems you to be. It is not so much what

one does, or what one is, but what one is *to Him*; and not to Him only, but to His own here. Can anything conduce more to render my stay in this scene happy and cheerful, however enfeebled in health, or tried in circumstances, than the simple fact that staying here, I can please my Lord, and be in fellowship with His interests in His people? And again, nothing can more promote zeal and earnestness in me to answer to this love, than the very assurance of the estimate I am held in by Him, however I may think myself unworthy of it.

The Lord grant you to be so assured in heart of His interest in you, that daily you may more and more answer to His pleasure, and not be in any way cast down because you can apparently do so little. The fragrance of His name is a crown of glory to the greatest invalid. The Lord delight your heart in His unfailing love for you, and bless you in every way.

Summer and Winter.

In my judgment the Lord's way with you is the natural one; I mean by natural, that it is according to divine order. There are two ways in which He deals with souls. Out of the depths of sorrow or sickness leading into light, or *after* a season of special brightness leading one into the desert. The latter is the way in which He has dealt with you. You had a bright summer before this long and dreary winter set in; but this is the natural way; and unless the winter follows summer, there will be no real strength in the growths of summer.

It was thus with Abraham after he had seen the star-lit sky, and had by faith apprehended the evidence of things not seen; he was subjected to a deep sleep and horror of great darkness. And so it was with Saul of Tarsus. After his stay in Paradise he was assaulted in a new and most painful way, marking the contrast of the two scenes; and thus, I apprehend, it has been with you.

The Lord first revealed to you the excellence and beauty of His presence and sphere; and then He subjected you to a deep painful sense of your own feebleness, in order that you might know that His gift to you was entirely independent of and apart from anything in yourself, nay, in spite of it. If, like a Jonah, you had learnt the delight out of the depths, you would be true and devoted, but not with a broken or subject will; you would still require the experience of the loss of the gourd, a further learning. But when you have learnt the Lord's side first, and then are set to learn your own side, you come forth delighting in Christ because yourself is entirely in contrast. Learning the good out of the effects of evil is too much of the nature of simple relief, and you must be subjected to great darkness again, as Jonah was in the matter of the gourd, in order that you may prove where your resources are. In the one case, you are subjected to the contrast in order to enhance the perfection made known to you; and in the other, you are introduced into the contrast from relief.

I mean that here lies the difference between those who are subjected to darkness, the prac-

tical death here, *after* knowing Christ in glory, and those who are Jonah-like, led to see Him out of the depths.

If I am right in my opinion, you ought to come forth now counting everything loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. You had learnt joyfully of His beauty before ; now, in contrast, you have seen the weakness and unprofitableness of yourself, and of everything ; the *best* of you is as nothing, and He is everything.

This I trust will be the happy and effectual result of your late time of trial.

The Lord greatly bless and comfort you, and raise you up to live Christ, as superior to everything of yourself.

Be Prepared for the Winter.

To fill any post really for God you must not expect it to be all happiness, though you will have the light and cheer of His countenance, even though the sun by day, and the frost by night, may try you on the human side. To find things pleasant is not the right expectation. To please the Lord is our summum-bonum, and as we do, we are happier in pleasing Him than in pleasing ourselves.

A path when first entered on may be more liked, and better accepted than when the novelty of it has worn off. It is not the man who puts on the armour, but the one who puts it off, who is to boast. It has been said, "the things that we try are made the trial of us." I have found that often it is easy to *enter* on any service, but that the continued application to it, under every

circumstance, however adverse, tests severely the purpose, as well as the grace in my heart. Consequently, as a rule, it is better to begin in sorrow and exercise of heart. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy," is the divine principle for all service and success here; the evening before the morning, for then there must be faith to begin with. I begin with God and reach Jehovah-Jireh, "In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen." You have begun in the summer. Be like the ant now and gather up strength for the winter, for it *must* come; though to a wise ant it will be really no winter, but rather a time when, well sheltered from the cold, it can enjoy the acquisitions of a more favoured season. I believe in perpetual favour with God, but I do not believe in unbroken sunshine here. On the contrary, "we who live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake." I say this that you may not think it strange when the collar which you have rightly accepted becomes trying or difficult to you; for surely if it be service it must be so; the servant must be more or less a sufferer.

I only exhort you to endure hardness and to be stedfast as much in the trying day as in the pleasing day; for we are ever subject to the attacks of the flesh, and we can only be conquerors as we walk in the Spirit.

Christ my Life.

THE more I, as a partaker of the life of Christ, enter on the new path opened to me, the more must I know, not only that He has opened the way, but also that every stage of it is unknown

to me, unless He leads me into it; and according as I see Him in it, I see that He has borne the judgment on me, which was death; and having done so, He, according to the Father's will, connects me with His life, a life entirely new to me; and yet now, through grace, my life. But I know nothing of the position and power into which this life will lead me: and I must learn all from Him who is our Head as well as Life.

If I ever lose sight of Him I know not where my life would lead me; for it is not life in me apart from Him, but He Himself is my life; therefore I need always to see Him, a real Man in the power of His life; and as I see His position and power, I at once see the position and power to which my life through Him reaches.

If I lose sight of Him, I lose sight of the Man Christ Jesus in the power of life, who is the source of life, and the witness of its power. I have no independent place. When I lose the sense of my connection with Him, I lose sense of the power and position of life, because I am not holding the Head. I have still the instincts of life; but if I cannot see Him in the power in which I may even desire to be, I cannot reach it, for He is the source of power; and my warrant as to assurance to my heart, of my right to occupy and enjoy His place with Him. He is "the beginning of the creation of God," and it is only as I see Him Head of this new race, Firstborn among many brethren, that I am able to see, understand, and receive a clear sense of, what I am in Him.

Wherever I see Him, I get a sense of power; for I realise that in Him I am there too.

If I, once a lost prodigal, want to know the measure of my acceptance with God, He alone defines it for me. It is only as I know what He is to God in glory that I can in any degree truly estimate my own acceptance. Had He my sin laid on Him? How is He now accepted? For as He is now accepted, so am I; and therefore it is the gospel of the glory of Christ. Try for your own acceptance, and it will always be a dubious and imperfect thing. Get to understand His, and your soul will be enlarged into all the fulness and blessedness not only of His, but of your own, because you are in Him.

If I want to hold fast my profession as a heavenly man, it is by knowing that He has passed into the heavens. I have not passed there myself yet, but I am, in the joy of faith, in the reality of it when I see Him there, having surmounted everything; not merely Caleb like, exhorting me to go up, but from the utmost height assuring my soul of His success for me.

Do I want to know the power of resurrection? It is as I see Him raised up that I apprehend or realise myself in it. The more I apprehend Him in it, the more I naturally connect myself with Him therein as Source of life and Head, to whom I am united by the Holy Ghost as a member of His body. Do I think of the judgments coming? It is as I see the keys of hades and of death in His hand that I, even though the beloved disciple, am delivered from fear; and if I would pursue my race in patience, doing the will of God, I must be looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith.

If the Holy Ghost would fill Stephen's soul

with glory, He shews Him Jesus in the opened heavens. It is ever the same. Whenever the soul gets a glimpse of Him, difficulty vanishes, because I know that He is my Lord and my Life, and the sense of union and identity with Him transports me over all obstacles, whatever they may have been. They are not seen because my eye is occupied with Him who is above them all.

May we know more abundantly through the Spirit now our Lord's place and power respecting every difficulty, or trial, or emergency down here; and may we so carefully and constantly watch for Him, when in any way pressed, that we may see where He is; and be assured that if we get a glimpse of Him our own deliverance in Him will be realised.

Weaning.

It is grateful to me to write to any one who feels the raging of the storm, and is at the same time seeking to find, and finding shelter in the Lord.

What can we say? Does He not know us? Does He not remember our frame? We often think He does not. The time of weaning is often one of great suffering to the soul, but a necessary time. No soul learns truly to be independent of infant helps until it is weaned. It is surprising how many nurses we have, and it is just in proportion as we attain strength to get on without any of them that our age or advance in life is determined.

I believe that, except very few, each of us is

going through a process of weaning; and what is it for? Simply that in our given strength we may be able to depend on God without the supports which betoken our personal feebleness. The suffering in weaning arises from the deprivation of something with which we connected the blessings of life, and this evidently may occur in many ways. Satan thought Job could not be weaned, for he said, "Touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." But Job *was* weaned. The soul is weaned when it worships God and prays for others. I cannot worship unless my soul be occupied with God. I cannot pray for others if I am occupied with myself, and the loss of any of my channels of comfort.

God *must* wean us. Oh, what days and nights of bitter soul-tears we shed when the soul is being weaned from some long enjoyed mercy. Is it that our God would not indulge us? Is it that He who gave His Son for us would deny us anything? No, but He must wean us, or we shall never know what it is to depend on Him apart from any human or natural intervention. Paul, no doubt, often spoke of having no confidence in the flesh, but it was in the prison at Rome that he was entirely weaned.

God's love can only display itself in its own greatness. If I have learnt the righteousness on which it is based, I shall better understand how much it must correct and subdue in me before it can enjoy itself with me.

If I judge myself in the light of His love I must see how much I need weaning.

Walking in the Light.

As to your question about communion and walking in communion, I think it is quite possible to have had communion with God as to a certain part of His purpose and grace, and to have made no progress from *it*; and yet it was true communion as far as it went, and one might even revert to it as a known moment of power and enjoyment. I think a soul may have a true sense of the value of the blood in the sight of God, and can always refer to that moment with delight and assured blessing; but when he *has* to revert to it for present cheer, this in itself proves that he is not in present communion; for if he were, he would connect the past with the present, like the source of a stream, which only widens and deepens as it proceeds; the first drop swelling with every fresh acquisition, but still the present part of the stream imparting a force, and a source of power and blessing, which the first drop could not alone. If I have to revert to the first drop, in order to prove that I have tasted of water in the desert, I am not *walking* in the light, or in communion with the Lord. I only refer to a moment when I was true to my calling, and had in the light a sense in my soul of enjoying a certain blessing. It was according to God's mind, and in that mind I was for the moment; and such is the impression that it has made on me that I always revert to it, proving that I had never known any other like it.

Now there may be, and is, a great distinctness about the first drop to a parched soul in the weary land; but then the era which began with

this distinct taste is to be *continued*, not merely as a taste of water, but a stream of endless blessing, which communion with God necessarily is; for in all His counsels and interests I find increasing strength and cheer.

I do not doubt that many have had a taste, but I fear there are many who comfort themselves by the past taste instead of being daily invigorated in the deep full stream of His love and purposes which can only be known in His own region—namely, the light. This is *our* only proper region too, and hence when we walk according to it we go on in concert with the mind and thoughts of God; and in our onward course and journeying we find ourselves increasingly in company with His interests and counsels; and through grace we are formed in keeping with His mind, not reverting to past gleams of light, however great their value, for cheer or assurance, but shining more and more unto the perfect day.

Seasoned with Salt.

EVERY sacrifice shall be salted with salt. The practical characteristic of a sacrifice is salt. It checks the tendency to decomposition in everything here. Wherever self is surrendered, then one, through grace, imposes a check on the expression of the flesh in others. Thus the speech is "seasoned with salt." You always check the working of the flesh by salt whenever you are really a sacrifice. Whenever you promote, or feed the susceptibilities of man's nature, you are not salt; and then you are not a sacri-

vice. When you only repress your feelings, then you are not a sacrifice, because you are not salted with salt. You are only like a tree in winter; the sap has retired into the heart of the tree; but when the spring, the seasonable opportunity comes, it flows forth in full force; it is not sacrificed; and you cannot check others wholesomely, when you are not sacrificially corrected yourself. If, when the seasonable opportunity, or the congenial company, causes the tastes or feelings, once cultivated and cherished, to revive; then they are not surrendered, and you would really foster and feed them in another, provided there was nothing in the atmosphere to check the unfolding; instead of evincing that there is the power of salt in you, in the very things which formerly you cultivated; and that not only had you repressed them, but that you so sacrificed them, that now in their place you have a moral power, to prevent the same in others from being injurious.

Repression and sacrifice are very different. The former is winter-time. You are reserved, you are a fountain sealed, a spring shut up. In repression there is a curb imposed, but no gain. In sacrifice there is a gain; that which was once an obstacle is turned to a gain by sacrifice. It is not only the crab-tree interdicted from budding, but now, grafted with the new stock, it yields the sweetest fruit.

In repression you are checked, but your heart is sad because of the dreary cold; but in sacrifice you have laid all upon the altar, and you can exercise a preservative power towards others in the very thing where you have failed yourself.

“When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren,” is your experience. You are not occupied with curbing yourself, but you bring forth fruit pleasing to the Lord, and excellent for His people.

It is not now with you, “I have had this feeling, and I repress it;” but, “I have had this feeling, and I sacrifice, I repudiate it;” and the consequence is, that the influence you exert on others is the self-renunciation which you have proved yourself.

“My Peace.”

CHRIST'S peace in this scene was a wonderful thing. I note there are two truths which, as they are known, impart to us this peace. The first is seeing Him by faith in the *place* where He is, where He has prepared a place for us. In a place of evil and sorrow like this, it is an immense lever, lifting us above these influences, to be assured that the One who loved us, and gave Himself for us on the earth, has prepared a place for us in heaven, and that He is in the place that He has prepared. It throws the heart peculiarly into concert with the holiest and brightest scenes (as with one's home), because the delight of the heart is there, and everything suited to it is in the place. If He, the object for the heart, were not there, the heart would not be there; and if the surroundings were not holy and beautiful, there would be suffering from even our personal appreciation of Him, and not unbroken enjoyment of His presence.

To enjoy His society, there must be nothing

to distract or interrupt. I enjoy His love here, but partially, where so many things arise every minute to interrupt me, be they evil or sorrow, or natural pleasure. I may not be much attracted, but yet I am interrupted. The heart is not restful until it is associated with its object in the place where not only there is no interruption, but where everything is consonant with the mind of the object. Surroundings are necessary, not merely for comfort's sake, but that there might be nothing to make one anxious or disquieted. You seek it with your friend; you draw round the fire in the winter evening; the cold is excluded, the lamp is lighted; the darkness forbidden, the door is closed. There is thus no interruption. The seclusion suits you, and the sense of home is known to the heart.

You must say to your heart, amid the din of strife here, and the chaos of everything morally, "I see my Saviour where He is, and where He has a place for me;" this gives the heart superiority over *this* place; and thus you are so far in Christ's peace.

The other truth is, that He manifests Himself to us in this place of evil and sorrow. This gives strength to the heart, as the former gives repose to it. You require both strength and repose in order to be in His path here. When He manifests Himself—a wonderful favour—you feel as if He were beside you. "The Lord stood with me!" What could ruffle me when He, as a great tower, is beside me? "The righteous runneth into it, and is safe."

You have the greatest and most loving companion where you are the weakest, and can

really do nothing ; and you follow Him by faith where He has prepared a place for you, where you have nothing to do but to enjoy His company, without check or hindrance.

If you would know that He has a place for you in the Father's house, believe in Him.

If you would that He should manifest Himself to you, keep His words ; and thus you arrive at His peace. Your roots are in heaven, but your branches are on earth. There is nothing to check the roots ; and here He is "the cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night." When the roots are in heaven, the branches are sure to be according to His word ; and hence He manifestly protects and fosters what is His own, and for Himself.

May His peace abound to you ; may your companionship with Him, and His companionship with you, be well known to your heart.

Entering a New Path.

EVERYTHING depends on the way great eras of our lives are entered on. The germ of faith will outlive the sternest winds and roughest seas. We enter on them enthusiastically or stoically. Nature or disposition may have much to do with our external manner ; but it is faith in God which stands the wear of years, and the sorrows of life. I do not propose to you to anticipate trial, or deprecate in you expectations of happy days here ; quite the contrary ; but I say that that which will outlive all anticipation, and all enjoyments, is the way in which you reckon on God, when entering on the new path. You are

now committing your bark to the sea, and they that go down to the sea in ships, and do business in great waters, these see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep. But this signifies not, if they know on whom they can reckon when brought to their wit's end; because, in dealing with things which we engage in, we find how inadequate we are; and when we do, if we have known what it is to reckon on God, we cry unto Him, and He maketh the storm a calm, and we are led into the desired haven. I do not say that it is not right for you to go down to the sea; but I desire that you should realise the gravity of your step; and no doubt God will then unfold to you the wonders of His love; in the company and support, and sympathy of your Captain.

When the gravity of a new position is not apprehended, there is an entering on it in that ease or indifference which is sure to fail; and there must of necessity be discipline, to correct the rashness which is not faith. Moses meant right, but he is corrected by the one he first served, for his presuming to enter on so great a work without counsel from God.

The diligent bird builds its nest before the leaves are on the tree; for it knows, if it be well sheltered and secured when there are no leaves, how well it will be when there are plenty. If you and your dear husband enter on the new course, depending on God, and not on leaves, or one's own feelings, you will find, that instead of this dependence, which the gravity of the step demands, hindering the leaves, or separating you, it will, on the contrary, enable you to enjoy them the more.

You can say, My nest is fixed in such a safe spot, that, leaves or no leaves, it must abide, because of His hand who has ordered and fixed it, and just so long as He likes; and when He sees fit to break it up, He will only remove us where joys will never fail, and sorrows will never enter.

So that, when He gives leaves, and fine bright days here, you can rejoice, not merely in them, but in Him who has prepared a city of habitation for you in the wilderness; who provides everything which enables you to go on well and truly through this desert land; and hence, the more you begin with Him, the more will you be able to enjoy all the mercies of the way, because not primarily dependent on them; and the better will you bear up if the storm should come and sweep away leaves, and nest, and all.

The Lord give you both to start in dependence on Him, a dependence that can stay your heart, either in joy or sorrow, and bless you very abundantly.

Self-judgment before Service.

“HE that watereth, shall be watered also himself.” The more you impart to others what you have received, the more will be committed to you. The lapidary increases his wealth, not only by acquiring diamonds, but in setting them to the best advantage. In the same way will you increase your possessions in Christ: the more you discover the value of each of His, and devote yourself to make them brilliant. It is not enough for you to loathe yourself. This is

the negative; and though always necessary to make room for the positive, yet it becomes a snare if the positive be not added; you will not have roasted that which you took in hunting. The more you abhor yourself *before God*, the more you will depend on Him, because you lose self-dependence. The loss of everything here does not, as we see in Job's case, lead to self-repudiation, but to self-justification. Not until he sees God does he feel the true state of his nature. When it is abhorred in His presence, in the light in which it is, you find, like Peter, the only One to cling to. A man might dwell for ever on his ruin and shame, and yet never reach the new ground, where God's favour could greet him in a way double to any he had ever known. The fact of condemning oneself where there is conscience is a relief, and occupation with it leads to morbidness and inaction, and consigns one to a kind of despair, expressing itself in useless regrets and repinings. But when you see yourself in the light of God's countenance, because Christ is the light, you at the *same* moment most utterly abhor yourself, and find the One to whom you can cleave. As the abhorrence of yourself increases, your dependence on Him increases. "Behold he prayeth" is the evidence of one really convicted of God. Now, if there is thorough self-repudiation because of what you are in God's presence, there is no dwelling on it, or reference to it; for the heart turns to Him in whom it rests, and who is the source of a new life, and a nature suited to God.

And here it finds itself interested in all His.

As Job prayed for his friends, so do you now shew that you not only abhor yourself, but that you have interests outside yourself, and as you do, lost favours are doubled. The lapidary augments his wealth by making the most of each precious stone. The part of greatness is not the faculty to see, but the power to give light. The sun that rules the day shines to impart light. The Creator on the earth was the light of the world. The true evidence that you abhor yourself before God is, that you are engrossed with Him who gives you a perfect place before Him, and is the source of every blessing to one otherwise so ruined. And then, nothing of yourself can interest you; the only thing here which attracts your heart is what belongs to Him, and to that, and that only, do you devote yourself; not to note where they are defective, but to see how you may most effectively serve them.

If it is thus with you, you will be the first ripe grape hasting to maturity, in order that it might minister to and refresh the weary; or, like the ear of ripe corn, declining downward, to supply the want of the needy; and as you are, your soul will be deepened in the perfection and resources in Christ; you will have confidence toward God, and whatsoever you ask you will receive of Him. Blessed of the Lord will be your land, "for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath." From the highest point to the lowest, you will be watered in your soul with the grace of Christ.

Feet-washing the Prelude to Testimony.

IF I am in fellowship with one immensely superior to me, whose interests surpass all other interests, and include my own highest interest, it is evident, that while I am in fellowship with Him, His interests must command my attention; but I could hardly say, that one who has not entered into this fellowship, knows nothing of the feet-washing. I think, if the washing were effected, there would be spiritual consciousness of having part with Him where He is now; and, in a degree, in company with His mind. I believe our Lord is ever ready to wash our feet, and that the delay, or the hindrance, is on our side. He is near us, and ready to do it, as He was when Peter interrupted Him by his objection; but He *was* interrupted, and the washing was suspended until there was subjection—a submitting of oneself to this blessed action. One's own thoughts and ideas about the ministry of the word (which is the washing) hinder the Spirit's action, and the washing is suspended.

Now Christ ever liveth to make intercession; this *never* is interrupted, nor does it ever cease; hence mercy flows uninterruptedly to us, even when we are walking in a careless way. The washing is the action of the word on myself, made known to my own heart and conscience, and which, if not made known, leaves me at a moral distance in my soul from Christ. Now it is not only forgiveness, or relief to my conscience, which the washing comprises, or expresses; but it is more; the forgiveness is

assured to me because of the intercession, and because of Jesus Christ the righteous. When I am washed, I am *cleansed*; all that which has caused distance is sensibly removed from me; and now, by this action, I am made conscious of being in unclouded nearness to Him. I require to be washed when I have no sense of sins on my conscience, as well as when I have, if there be any reserve between the Lord and me; that is, if I am out of communion.

The action of the word, as you see in Hebrews iv., is to lead the soul to have to do with God, before whom all things are naked and open; and then the High Priest is known in sympathy; but this is only the *beginning* of the action of the word. The perfection of its action is when we have "part" with Him.

Now souls often stop, or are satisfied with the beginning of the action of the word, which assures of a link with Christ, and the restored sense of it. This is great relief and joy to one at a distance, or walking carelessly, as Peter was; but it is not intimacy without reserve; and if this is not known, it is not sought; and if not known, there is no following the Lord in fellowship. And here it is where so many saints are. They seek the action of His ministry to comfort and assure their hearts of a living, unbroken link with Him; but the washing and the wiping, which would remove the last shade of reserve between them and Him, they enjoy not; nor do they seek it, though they do not feel entirely happy. How could they? They "go a-fishing," like Peter; and I believe that it is only as I get personally near the Lord, and

sit before Him, that I am divested by His word of every shade of reserve, and find it my whole joy to follow Him, and do as He enjoins. But then it is His presence I seek, and not the renewal of the link between Him and me. If it be only the latter that I seek, and not Himself, there may indeed be no doubt of the link, but I do not yet know Himself in unclouded intimacy, and this is immense loss.

Answer to "How to Know Our Special Line of Service?"

WALKING with the Lord, doing to Him whatever your hand findeth to do, would doubtless disclose to you your calling. . . . I think the true way is to see that all your acts are done to the Lord; and as love is inventive, as well as suggestive, you will find, that as soon as you have brought one piece of wood (see Hag. i. 8), there is, without pre-arrangement, an opportunity offered to you to go to the mountain again for another bit. I am afraid of any system in service. If you are full of love to Christ, you may rest assured that ways will open to you of expressing it, which you never could have reckoned on. But you must do everything in this spirit—watching and waiting how you may accord with His heart, which you know has blessed and is blessing you; and if you walk thus, you will soon learn to say a word to the weary. You know how He has served and blessed yourself, and the more artlessly you tell it, the more likely is it that the Lord will bless it.

The first great thing to get *fixed* in the soul is

that *I am Christ's*. To get up in the morning with the sense of this, that I absolutely belong to Him, and to judge myself when I do not act as His, and for Him. I do not mean that you should be dissatisfied or doubtful, because you were not satisfied with your service, or because it was not something so decisive that you could speak of it and exhibit it. But I think your conscience ought to be satisfied that you are filling that place in the body of Christ where it has pleased God to set you. . . .

Service is not to be estimated by the amount of injury which you could ward off by going right, or by that which you could inflict by going wrong; but by being in your appointed place. The more you walk in grace, the more must you take your right place; and therefore if you cannot find your place, the true way is to seek the Lord, and as you walk near Him, and are nurtured by His grace, so will you enter on the place He has appointed for you, and through the same grace keep it.

The Heart Settled.

THE heart is never fixed, or as Peter expresses it, "settled," until it has an object that controls it; not only one that it merely turns to and delights in, as a mother does to her child, or the miser to his riches, or the botanist to his garden. It is not enough that Christ should be your resource, but you must be detained by Him, captivated by Him in judgment and heart, and not merely as a necessity. Then you could not bear to see anything but as He sees it. You would be like

the moon, which has no light without the sun; and you would prefer to be an unmeaning body of barren soil to being anything which is not derived from Him.

Your mistake has been that you have been too much satisfied with turning *to* Him instead of coming from Him; being so with Him that you come into your daily circumstances as the angel of His presence. Of course we have to turn to Him, and it is most blessed to get what we need from Him; but when He controls me, I can enjoy nothing apart from Him, and the first thought of my heart about everything is, How does He like it? The heart likes to be controlled by an object worthy of controlling it. When you are thus controlled, you surrender your will and judgment to Him. You *follow* Him; you do not only seek Him. Surely you would find how differently you would encounter every question or case which would crop up, were you to come into the scene of them reflecting the light of Christ on them, as a moon in a dark night. Not merely submitting cases and questions to Him, but casting the light and mind of Christ, which are the cheer and sustainment of your own heart, upon them as they arise in your path. There is a great practical difference between going from darkness to get light, and coming from light into darkness. In the latter you are always safe yourself.

Self-Denial.—No. 1.

IF we want to advance in the knowledge of God's counsels, we must deny ourselves. The object

of Daniel and his fellows in refusing the king's meat was not directly to attain to God's counsel, but to keep themselves undefiled, and this in obedience to His law, which ran counter to the gratification of their nature; and the result of this self-denial was that God gave them knowledge, and skill, and wisdom. Moreover, instead of losing by it, they gained, even in the line in which this self-denial was imposed. They were fatter and fairer than all who ate of the king's meat. This is gaining a hundredfold more in this present time. If I deny the gratification of my nature on account of defilement, I not only have spiritual gain, but the very thing which such gratification would naturally have secured for me, I gain in a better and a higher way. Suppose it be the lust of the mind; naturally speaking this or that study might enrich it; but if such study be defiling, and I relinquish it, my mind will never be barren for the relinquishment, but the reverse; pulse and water will prove a greater gain to me than king's meat. King's meat might be any gratification of self; pulse and water, lawful sustainment; just what I need, and no more. God does not want to deprive me of what I really need, but as soon as ever it degenerates into self-gratification, it is defiling. Gideon's three hundred might drink of the water, but they must not go down on their knees to it. Teetotalism goes on a very different principle, and puts a veto on all; it is self-control and not self-denial. Self-control keeps the lust under for a moment, and when set free, returns to it again, perhaps with renewed zest. Self-denial is permanent and

moderate, and requires much more moral power ; for to deny yourself what you come in contact with is a greater thing than to avoid all contact. Pulse and water is the type of self-denial.

We need a fine perception to see what would defile us. Anything, even a good act, done for the object of gratifying self is defiling. There is a difference between choosing a path of self-denial and accepting it cheerfully from God. Both are valuable, but the former especially so.

Self-Denial.—No. 2.

WHEN one has to consider for others, as indeed we all have, the more we deny ourselves the better ; and when it is really done to the Lord, we are sure to be much more gainers than if, only thinking of ourselves, we had grasped at what apparently would help us.

To surrender a really good thing, in order that others may gain, is really grace. The Lord surrendered everything good in itself in order to bless us.

There is not enough of self-denial. Self-denial is where self is *most* felt, not where it is least felt, and all the light of scripture cannot promote growth without self-denial.

This is where we all fail, and in this day there is a great deal more zeal to acquire knowledge and intelligence in the wonders of revelation, than to deny the man that has no sympathy with it, no part in it, but condemnation.

The Work and the Gift.

THE greatness of grace is that we are not only saved, and that we shall never come into judgment, but on the very spot, so to speak, where once there was no escape, like Noah in the deluge, on the same spot, are we now, like him before the altar, in favour with God. (Gen. viii. 20.) Our *present* state is what I speak of. It is not merely to have no fear of judgment, great as that grace is; but the finish of grace is to set us in the very scene of our misery and alienation, in the Spirit of life in Him who, by His death, has saved us. To save us by undergoing what is due to us is amazing grace, but His love is not satisfied with saving us; He must put us in His own power here. David saved Jonathan, when at the risk of his own life he encountered and killed Goliath; but if Jonathan had clung to David, he would have shared in his royal glories. I mean that we are not only assured now of the perfection of Christ's work on our behalf, but we are set here in His power—the power in which He walked here. The work of salvation has been done, and, in proportion as we have entered into it, we know that we are in favour. But not only so; the Spirit has been given to us; so that it is not merely that we rejoice in what has been done for us, but we are in victory here, because of what has been given to us. Thus there is a twofold enjoyment—the enjoyment of the thing done, and the enjoyment of the thing given; we get both by the same Person—our Lord Jesus Christ; yet there is a difference in the enjoyment; it is the

difference between the sense of existence, and the activities and progress growing out of strength in the existence.

A tree or a flower not only lives, but it appropriates the soil, and utilises the climate in order to produce leaves and fruit. Now this last is quite another sense from existence. The existence is a permanent reality, the activities or producing power a series of victories. I was once here a blighted, noxious plant; but now through grace born again, I have a new life, eternal life; and in the power of the Spirit of God, I am to be here, in the scene of my deepest humiliation, consciously in divine exaltation.

Thus I have this twofold enjoyment: one, that I am a new creation; and the other, that I have been given a wondrous power—the Spirit; I can do all things through Him who gives me power. It is not only rescue or safety, it is victory; and that, not in heaven, but in the field of battle, in the valley of the slain, and in the very presence of the foe.

May you not only grow as a tree by the rivers of water, but may the Spirit of God lead you into present victory over every obstacle, so that you may have an increasing enjoyment through what has been given to you, as you have a most sure and perfect interest in that which has been done for you.

How our Aspirations are Realised.

If I am walking with my Lord as the Treasure and Resource of my heart, how can I have any large or valued possession down here? And

more than this, I do not want it, for He is both my Treasure and my Resource. We often say, and I doubt not at times truly, that we enjoy Him as our Treasure; and yet the moment part of our possession here is taken away from us, the poverty of our apprehension of our portion in Him is apparent.

God in His grace often takes us at our word—nay, I should say, at His word—when what we have expressed is the desire of His Spirit in our souls; and He says to us, as it were, You said your Treasure and Resource were in my Son. Well, then be it so! Surrender every other treasure and resource, and prove the great unbounded excellence of Him. The blessed God only does this to make good the true desires of His Spirit in us.

I am afraid, and yet *not* afraid, when I hear any one, even in prayer, expressing more than he has come up to; because I know if it be sincere, even in intention, God must put it to the test. The cross is not only to be taken up, but to be borne all the way through. It is well to cultivate and cherish high desires; but be assured the more genuine they are, the more they will be broken, in order to make room for the manifestation of them in living power. The light that is in the earthen pitcher does not shine forth until the pitcher is broken.

May you and I submit to be broken, that the true happy desires, which we at times have loved to give expression to, may find no impediment to their full manifestation; and thus that the life of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal flesh, to His praise and glory.

The Deeper the Exercise, the Greater the Deliverance.

THERE is an exercise of soul known only in the din and conflict of the battlefield. No one goes up high who has not gone down deep. "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord." The deliverance then is as great as the depths were great. "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep." It is no easy time with them. "They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end." But you will remark that when they are delivered, they have really gained more than those delivered from other trials, for it is said, "Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven." They are glad and their voyage is over.

I think saints are too little exercised before God about things that press on them. There is often a way of sliding over them after the manner of men, if there be any natural courage. If not, the mind and heart become embittered, everything is looked at through this dark haze, and everything done is unsatisfactory. One must either fall into one of these two states, or meet the trial fully and distinctly with God. It gives one's soul tone and strength to have waited on God, until there is the assurance as to His undertaking about it—such a sense of this that you would fear to ask Him again on the subject, lest you call in question the assurance of His seeing to it, which He had given you, and which is unmistakable.

It is not a promise that He will do exactly what you have expressed in words, but the assurance, as I might say to my child, "I will see to it." This exercise once known will never be forgotten; it remains in illustrated letters on the soul, and no time can ever erase them. And what is better, there is a knowledge of God as the source of help and strength, which not only imparts a quietness in every trouble, but surrounds the soul as with an atmosphere, in which it grows into the likeness of Christ and is enabled to "prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

Hence it is, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word." In fact our journey to heaven is through an avenue of monuments of this kind—Ebenezers on both sides of us; so that there ought to be thanksgivings for the past, and girded loins for what is to come.

What is the Wilderness?

THE longer you are in the wilderness as a Caleb, with an actual acquaintance with Hebron, the better you know the marvellous unchanging nature of His care and ways with you; your garments wax not old, neither does your foot swell, and yet your heart is made more ready for dwelling in heaven. The wilderness is more to you, and heaven is nearer to you. The wilderness was immensely different to Caleb from what it was to the rest of Israel. At Eshcol you can fully say "all my springs are in thee," and there everything co-operates to give them full effect.

In the wilderness it is the same springs, but then everything hinders by temptation and distractions. If you know, and as you know, the joys of God, where everything divine contributes, so do you seek those joys where Satan in every way obstructs and hinders. The wilderness is having all our springs in God *while we are on earth*. If I love the things that are in the world, I turn away from the wilderness. I might retire from the world politically and positionally, and yet enjoy the things that are *in it*; and, inasmuch as I do so, I am not enjoying God's provision for me in the wilderness—"garments fresh and feet unwearied," or in other words, comfort and strength—one unfailing, the other unchanging. Whenever I seek outside of Him, I do not get from Him. The more you taste what heaven is, the more you accept the wilderness in its true sense, namely, *everything from God*. "They that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God." You are blessed with the upper springs and the nether springs, and they increase simultaneously, because they come from the one source.

But we must enjoy them in Canaan if we would trust God for them in the wilderness. We must come from heaven to earth; and as the springs which delighted us in the former, satisfy us in the latter, we learn God's provision for us in the wilderness.

What a fine moral aspect to be in the world as a wilderness, and in our spirits vigorous, fresh, and unwearied. May you be so more and more. But as our joys are not simply in and from God unless we accept the wilderness, neither can we

discern what is of God around us, except as we are sustained by Him in the wilderness. We must be out of the world, and sustained by God in it before we can see what is for God, and what is not. If we do not accept the wilderness, we have not the joys of God; and if we are not out of the world we cannot know what suits God or discern things that differ. As every animal recognises its own species, so does the spiritual recognise the spiritual. If I know the joys of God in heaven, I seek them in the wilderness. It is the same God in both. The corn of the land makes me more eager for the manna; it is the same life in different places. The more vividly heaven is enjoyed, the more do I appropriate God's provision for me in the wilderness; and the more I am able to discern what is really of Christ in this evil world, and to be proof against all that opposes it.

Wisdom and Folly.—No. 1.

It is very interesting, though humbling, to note carefully the history of each year. We are told "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God hath led thee these forty years in the wilderness." We are to remember how we have been constrained by wisdom, or turned aside by the world, for there are these two currents running side by side.

Wisdom (see Prov. ix.) is assiduous in inviting us to the festival where Christ is the centre of everything, and where there is joy unspeakable; the Hebron—the resting-place of His love—the only spot where the heart of God can be fully

satisfied, because there only could we be in full undistracted enjoyment of His presence. There they begin to be merry.

Love has reached us in the depth of misery, but it is not satisfied until it has seated us in the circle where wisdom orders everything. It has done its *most* in entering into death for us; and it has done its *best* in setting us in glory where every item is the perfection of wisdom. One cry (that of wisdom) is ever inviting us to regale ourselves in these supreme delights.

The Lord points out in Luke xiv. how natural mercies (the ground, the oxen, the wife), and natural ties, our relations, and even our own life, may draw us aside from the great supper—the festival of accomplished grace.

May you ever be accepting this constant, pressing invitation. It involves separation in a world of evil. The path of faith always begins with the evening, but breaks out into day. You must, when attending to the voice of wisdom, “forsake the foolish and live;” but in the end you will find “By me shall thy days be multiplied, and the grace of thy life shall be increased.” The other cry—the world, invites us, passengers who go right on their way, by something alluring, something pleasant, not righteously acquired: the very opposite to wisdom, which requires self-denial at first. May you be greatly entertained by wisdom this coming year. “Exalt her and she shall promote thee, she shall bring thee to honour when thou dost embrace her.” The two cries are ever sounding in our ears, and as we are in the light, and on the wing, we are preserved from the snare of the fowler.

Wisdom and Folly.—No. 2.

THE instruction which we get in Proverbs ix. as to the difference between wisdom and folly, will help you much in coming to a decision about anything. If you are unskilled in the word of righteousness, you are a babe. As I know Christ, He is the wisdom of God to me, and as the word of God is my only light, I can distinguish both good and evil.

Mark the difference in the way wisdom and folly invite the same people. Folly seeks those who go right on their way. Wisdom offers you bread and wine, to refresh and invigorate you. If you be wise, you shall be wise for yourself; but this always with the strict and unswerving rule, "Forsake the foolish, and live, and go in the way of understanding." You cannot be guided by wisdom and keep up association with the foolish, for light cannot blend with darkness. If your eye be single, your whole body will be full of light. But folly, on the contrary, always offers something to gratify, nothing that marks full age, distinguishing between the good and the evil. It invites too. "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." It is something you are selfishly to enjoy.

Now the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. Having God before you, in the sense of what is due to Him, is the *beginning*. The knowledge of the holy, the separate path, is the perfect application of wisdom, and therefore "understanding."

The Effect of the Practical Denial of the Presence of the Holy Ghost.

I AM glad you are so well, and working on so courageously. The Lord is as good as ever; no ones is discouraged but the sluggard. If I move, I know I *can* move. The very exercise of my strength makes me conscious that I have strength. A fool foldeth his arms, and eateth his own flesh; you must exercise a life in order to find out the good of it. It would be legal to try and get it, but it is only healthy to use and exercise what is mine. Effort ended with John the Baptist. It is all gift now, but I must use the gift. I find out the value of the gift as I turn it to good account. I do not *make* a fortune, but I spend the fortune that I have been given, wisely and well.

You would like to hear of things here. I trust there is steady progress, though the sifting, no doubt, has reduced us in numbers. I believe there is an awakening to the great truths which have been taught too superficially. I feel the real break-down with brethren has been in avowing the truth of the presence of the Holy Ghost, and at the same time using any and every means that any man would use in the work of the Lord. No one can read the Acts of the Apostles without observing that from Ananias and Sapphira (chap. v.) to the end, the one thing which declared failure was a denial of the presence of the Holy Spirit; and when with this dishonour to the Spirit there was preached a gospel that the believer was accepted in the Beloved, you can well see that this truth could

not be maintained in power in the soul without the Spirit; and the holders or acceptors of this great truth, while grieving or quenching the Spirit, must reduce it to a mere human dogma, which leaves them as much in the old man, or as worldly as ever they were; for if I am cleared of the old man by Christ's work, I must have the Spirit to keep me clear. If the old man be crucified, what power have I but the Spirit of God?

Now, if the Spirit be hindered, I must continue in the old man practically; and if I hold the truth that it has been set aside in the cross, I must deceive myself and thus allow myself to walk in it, and minister to it, as far as a mere legal conscience will allow me. There is really no true sense of the termination of the old man in the cross of Christ, if there be no Spirit to support my new nature against the flesh. I hope I make it plain to you. The Spirit being slighted, the highest truths must necessarily be reduced to human dogmas, placing the soul avowedly in an eminence, which it has really no power to retain. It is simply a grand title, without capacity or means to support it; and the consequence has been, that the holders of the grandest truth are found in the deepest mud of the world. There was, of course, no idea of crossing Jordan, or of doing battle for Christ in Canaan. They could assert that they were freed from the old man, and all judgment connected with him in the cross; but they never really entered by the Spirit into this *liberation*, which is not known in fulness until by a *spiritual* death-bed, one has, as risen with Christ, been led by the Spirit to enjoy Him *where He is*; and then to

become qualified and fitted for standing for Him here; and to this Gilgal introduces us, as in Colossians iii. and Philippians iii.

I believe the Lord is awakening many to their own failure, in not honouring the presence of the Spirit more.

Can a Believer Worship in Private?

No. I.

As to your question, can a believer worship God acceptably in private? there is a great deal more meant in that question than meets the ear. If it is sought to obtain warrant or authority for a person to be in private, worshipping apart, and isolated from other saints, it is simply impossible and groundless. No believer can separate himself from membership in the body of Christ, and neither can he surrender his place of responsibility and privilege in the house of God, to which he belongs, and in which, as a lively stone, he is built up. Nothing can be more plainly taught in scripture than that the believer now (sealed by the Spirit) can in no place be separated from, or indifferent to, the body of Christ, or it to him; for if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it. In the greatest retirement, and the most complete isolation, there can be no severance, or disconnection from the unity of the Spirit, though the one thus ostensibly apart may persist in breaking the uniting bond of peace. There can be no such thing now as there was in Job's time, a pious believer serving God for himself, apart and independently of all others; nay,

what he does most secretly offends and inflicts suffering on all; as Achan's most secret act, only known to himself, entailed judgment on the *nation*. And so does the most secret act of disrespect of, or disregard to, the Spirit, entail and inflict sorrow on the church now. See the case of Ananias and Sapphira.

Admit that nowhere, and under no circumstances, can a believer now be an independent worshipper; that is, worshipping independently of all saints or the church; then it is also plain enough in scripture, that each individual may have seasons of the deepest enjoyment and the greatest adoration in the presence of the Lord. "I believe, Lord; and he worshipped him." "To God I am beside myself." These are instances of individual worship.

It is a very interesting subject—the difference between individual and corporate blessings; but the former can never be independent of the latter; and the former only fits us the better for the latter; for the truer we are for the Lord individually, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part; not at meetings only, but everywhere, and at all times, the more each helps to the edifying of the body in love.

Can a Believer Worship in Private ?

No. II.

THERE is a great difference between worship in one's own room, by oneself, and worship in the assembly, or in company. It has been said that

there is the individual, the collective, and the corporate. Well, accepting these, then, I consider the first can enjoy God adoringly, but, if he confines himself to this, he never could enjoy the presence of the Lord in the midst of the "two and three." Hence the Hebrews are warned not to neglect the assembling of themselves together. Under Moses they were congregated as a nation to the house of God, most strictly insisted on, from one end of Palestine to the other. Surely the congregating together now in the house, or rather as the house of God, must be not less binding on us this day, seeing that, as it is morally greater, the obligation to avail oneself of it must be correspondingly greater. The Lord is in the midst, and the gifts are there too, to succour and minister to the company. I am not now speaking of the body. I confine myself to the book of Hebrews. They were to exhort one another when they congregated together; but they doubtless knew, or had to learn, that though they no longer had the Urim and Thummim of the old dispensation, they now had the presence of the Lord in their midst. A meeting of two or three must always surpass the individual worship, if the Lord be in the midst. At the same time there is a great deal of truth in the remark, that as you are in your own private worship, so will you be very much in the congregation. If a man cannot enjoy the Lord in private, he will not in the company.

The effect of going to a meeting may be to lead to healthy exercise, but you could hardly call that enjoyment in worship. If a man is unfit for worship privately, he is also unfit for it

in the company; and I believe any one who knows the blessing and grace of the Lord's presence in the midst of His gathered people, would never plead for private worship *only*. In any meeting in which He is present, there is a greater blessing than there could be in any private way; though the Lord may place one alone, or in prison, in order to fit and use one for some particular end or service.

Ministry, Negative and Positive

I HAVE laid my hand on your last letter, and have read it over again. I fully go with it. I agree that a negative ministry will not do, and truly the negative is only effective in proportion as the positive has been presented and accepted. The reason for presenting the negative so much in this day arises from the fact that the positive is supposed to be known. It has been accepted in terms. If really accepted, how can such and such things be retained? Here comes in the negative, as enjoining consistency with the positive, which is received and acknowledged.

I heartily wish for the ministry of Christ you speak of, but that cannot be unless one be fresh and full of the subject oneself. It generally marks a declining state to be more occupied with state; as when one's health is impaired; one is more occupied with it than with the course and vigour of life.

The ministry now, I feel, should be of a prophetic character, the secrets of the heart made known. Prophets came in to recall the people

to their privileges, which they had despised, and to interest them in the future; but no one is ready for the future who is defective in the present. The true effect of the future is to prepare for it in the present, or the future has no moral claim upon one. I am often afraid, in presenting positive truth, that one must have omitted some part of it, or there would have been a greater effect produced on every one hearing it and accepting it. Mr. D—— was commending John Newton the other day, because he was never pleased with a sermon unless it made the congregation angry. I feel the edge must be sometimes blunted, for souls do not seem to be much altered, though they admit they have seen and accepted some of the greatest truths in terms.

I believe, when the exposition of scripture appeals to the intelligence, instead of to the conscience, it tends to damage souls. The soul never imbibes the truth in living power but as it requires it.

I have come to one conclusion, and it is a humbling one—that my teaching can never produce an effect on any beyond the effect it has produced on myself. . . . I trust we may all be more vigorous on this great subject—ministering Christ.

Maintaining the Colours.

No. I.

There is a higher duty incumbent on the evangelist than his gift, and that is, maintaining “the testimony of the Lord, and of me his prisoner.”

You see, when everything was in order, the simple duty of the evangelist was service according to his gift. The testimony was supported, and as he worked at his gift, and captured, say a rebel, another was added to the Royal corps. But when the demoralisation was universal, and no one would stand to his colours, the duty of every true servant, be he evangelist or not, was plainly, first and foremost, to shew that he had recovered from the general defection, and that before he would charge the enemy, he must assume the Royal arms and standard; otherwise, the work and object would be to connect a rebel without any real interest or concern for the Lord.

Now the gift comes from the Lord; and seeing we are involved in the state of "Asia" (Paul says, "All they in Asia have turned away from me;") it is plain that the first duty of every servant is to maintain with the greatest distinctness, paramount to his gift, his allegiance and duty to the Lord; as not only the One who has been refused His rights here; but the One to be presented to the earth, by His own on the earth, The Man in heaven has His members on the earth. The Holy Ghost maintains Him in His Headship to His body here; and the earth, where He is not, is the place where He the Holy Ghost is testifying of Him; and to be in fellowship with the Holy Ghost, and in heart associated with the One who is in heaven, is plainly our highest calling.

What is due to the Lord should be more before us than the need of souls; and really it is incompatible to suppose that the latter would be

less wisely or truly considered for, because the servant who had, through divine favour (the greatest favour), learned what was due to the Lord here, where demoralisation is widespread, should make this primary. The evangelist should be for the body, not only seeking to get souls saved, and added to the table, but that they should stand openly and faithfully for Christ.

I hope you will not think that I depreciate an earnest love for souls, or disparage the labours of the evangelist; no, certainly not; but I do say that the evangelist in this day, when enlightened as to church truths (covered up for eighteen hundred years), must present what an evangelist ignorant of it could not be expected to do. He ought to be known the moment he appears by his regimentals, so to speak, maintaining the colours, different from all ordinary evangelists—in *modus operandi*, and everything, distinctly disowning and repudiating all the ways, inventions, and means, which have been adopted by evangelists of the great christian republic, which has been formed for the overthrow of Christ's kingdom.

Maintaining the Colours.

No. II.

WE have had a great deal of talk about maintaining the colours. I am often asked to define it. If I am living, not the man that is here, but the Man in heaven who is not here, that would, I doubt not, ensure the right colour. But this

could not be, unless I know that I am united to Him in heaven, and have entered into the fact that I am of His body on earth. Owning the unity of the body, without the heavenly colour, without maintaining the Man in heaven, on earth where He is not, is merely a skeleton, without life or muscle. It is faith without works, the body without the spirit. And you cannot be the heavenly man here without learning that you are in union and company with the glorified Man.

And here, I think, some have failed very much in this day. They have adopted the unity of the body as a doctrine, without the deepening sense that there can be no unity that has not its beginning with the Head; and that it is only as we realise our union with Christ, that we can truly be the practical expression of the unity of His body on earth. Any member of our bodies not in contact with the head because of paralysis, is really incapacitated to be of any use to the other members. The strength and value, as to all benefit, of our union with one another, is in the ratio of the strength and value of our union with Christ.

It is only as I realise my union with Christ, that I can live Christ; and as I do, I impart the benefits derived from this wondrous union to His body on the earth. But if the union which I assert as a fact does nothing for me, and I still walk as a man of the earth, then the unity of the body is only a theory with me, and no benefit, either to myself or to the saints.

Maintaining the Colours.

No. III.

I WAS speaking last night on the characteristics of the remnant,—unswerving devotedness to the chief interest of Christ; the colours, as it were, for the time. I was giving as examples, Anna the prophetess, who departed not from the temple, and the widow who gave her two mites. The former greeted Him on His first entry into the temple, and the latter who gave her all to it, was in heart, in company with Him, as He, for the last time, was in the temple.

Usefulness has usurped the place of devotedness. Men can recognise and commend the former, but the heart of Christ values the latter above everything. Separation from systems is only the first step to the testimony. The testimony is the maintenance by the Holy Ghost, and, through Christ's body, of the beauty, and ways, and works of Christ here on the earth, in spite of every adverse influence; the most novel, and the grandest morally, entirely unique, exceeding anything seen or expected among men, and therefore outside and apart from the politics and judgment of man, as to education, fashion, and everything.

God's Calling and our Apprehension of it.

SURELY we may look at the church as a great ship, moored to the heavenly port. The deep sea,—the Red Sea of scripture, crossed over, and also the Jordan—the river beside the land. Seats for

every believer in the great assembly are on the other side, in the land flowing with milk and honey. No one has entered into the full work of Christ, until he has sat down on his own seat, at the Passover feast; at, and after Gilgal. We are born of God for these seats; but we take a long time individually, until we have, as it were, sense enough to see that the seats in heaven are ours; and that each one always had his own. We are like born princes, only very gradually do we comprehend the greatness of our position.

The first great step in our history is, that Christ has triumphed gloriously, and that we are not only safe from judgment by His blood, but that through His resurrection, we are at the other side of judgment; we are in a new region, even in righteousness.

Our divine dignity is thus breaking in on us; we have got some sense now of our position. Very often we do not advance very rapidly from this. It has been said that a child learns more the first five years of his life, than he does in the following twenty. Be this as it may, there is more rapid growth to rest of conscience—even peace, than there is to the other stages; and to the full apprehension of God's calling.

The next great step is, that I learn that there is not only sin in me (Rom. vi.), but that there is no good in me. (Rom. vii.) I abandon myself now for Christ, "Not I, but Christ liveth in me," "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." I know my princely *state* now; that it is one really heavenly. Hence the next great advance is that I have left flesh and blood entirely behind. I find

that I have died with Christ, and that I am on heavenly land with Him. Here now at length I apprehend what was true of me from my birth; that I have a seat in the grandest circle ever to be in heaven or earth. Christ's work had acquired it all for me, though I only learn it by degrees. Hence, after Gilgal, we sit down and eat the passover in remembrance of Him. The corn of the land is now our proper food for serving Him, in keeping with our new, heavenly, royal, position. I am glad to think of you and — as two of these great royal personages. May you both daily enjoy more the seats that are yours in His glorious presence! How happy to know that we who have journeyed together so many years in the wilderness, are able to anticipate the day when we shall uninterruptedly commune together; the Lord one, and His name one. But the more our growth, or spiritual sense now, the more we enter into the greatness of His grace; and if we do not, we are slow and dull of hearing.

From Winter to Harvest.

SURELY the year has a very marked meaning in scripture. It seems to me, that it embraces figuratively every stage of our existence here. We may say, the winter, like the night of death in Exodus xii., where there was not a green thing in all the land of Egypt, was the time of our conversion. Long dark nights, short days, with little sunshine; the soul learning the emptiness of all human efforts. But the seed being sown in the heart, it day by day advances to spring, when

the blade appears—the new thing. The fruit of the grain of wheat, is quite a new stage. This I call acquaintance with Christ. It is the sense the woman in Luke vii. had when she was beside Him. The woman who touched the hem of His garment had passed through winter, but until she had fallen down before Him, and “told him all the truth,” she did not know Him; she was not in spring. Flowers and the singing of birds mark the spring. See Canticles ii. 12. It is a great thing to enjoy the spring. Many souls know the services of Christ without knowing Himself; just as Joseph’s brethren enjoyed Joseph’s bounty and care for seventeen years, and all that time had no intimacy with him, and really did not know his heart. The intimacy which marks the spring is what we get in John x. 14, 15: “I know my sheep, and am known of mine, even as the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father.” The acquaintance is of the same character as that which subsists between the Father and the Son.

Then follows the summer, which I call communion; sharing His mind; participating in His joys, and in His interests; while at the same time, I am perfectly assured of His care and interest in my affairs, as to my path here. Now the days are very long, and the nights very short. It is summer time. Spring or intimacy comes in with the newest, sweetest sentiment that could be revealed. He knows me, and I know Him. And then, the communion that follows, and the association with Him now, as to all His interests and glories, is indeed a feast of fat things—joy in the Holy Ghost.

One season remains—the harvest. He looks

for grapes. This I call testimony, being set for His name; adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. This is the full corn in the ear.

Personal Acquaintance with Christ.

THE nearer we are to Him, in personal acquaintance, the easier we shall pass from the sea to the shore. The woman in Luke vii. is a beautiful pattern. To get near Him was her simple purpose. Her conscience would have said, "How can you; you are a sinner." "Yes, truly," she might reply, "but He is my Saviour;" and the nearer a sinner is to the Saviour, the more assured is the conscience, and the truer the faith in Him. Her sensibility would have said, "You are not fit to go into a Pharisee's house." "Yes, truly," she might have replied, "but I am above my feelings, or what any one among men may say of me, because I seek One above all men. And as for self-consideration, I have found such an Object for my heart in Him, that I delight to devote to Him the thing I once prized most for myself." With what impressions, and stores of His untold love, must she have returned to her perhaps solitary home! She could say, I know Him, my heart is anchored in His heart.

How much more of it should *we* know who are united to Him by the Holy Ghost! Can we not say, though we may have to encounter storms and adverse currents, trials from without and within, before we reach Him, I know Him, He is on shore, He is in heaven. He is the Fore-

runner ; I am going to Him ; and the heavier the sea, and the more adverse the winds, which occur on the voyage, the more is my heart assured of the link which binds me to Him ? Stephen is an example of this. As the storm increased, and reached its height, he only knew the more deeply where his heart was anchored, and his soul increased in vigour and cheer.

Blessed Lord ! our first distinct acquaintance with Thee is only deepening all the way to Thee. The conscience is cleared ; sensibility supplanted ; self-consideration superseded ; and Thyself the eternal delight of our hearts.

Substitution and Advocacy.

It is clear that our Lord bore our sins in His own body on the tree, before we had committed one of them. . . . I do not like the expression “ past, present and future sins,” but it is true—“ your sins and iniquities will I remember no more. There is no imputing sin to me after I have believed. Jesus, the Substitute, has borne the penalty due to every one of my sins, and He was crucified for us. When I sin now, He is the Advocate that grace should still flow to me, or I should be cut off. My conscience is relieved, not by the mere fact that He bore all my sins in His own body on the tree ; but the ashes of the red heifer are brought before it by the Spirit—“ the running water.” It is not the offering itself, but the ashes of it—the evidence, and witness that it *has* been offered up ; but it is

necessary for my conscience to be purified by this living water on the third day, or I shall not be clean by the seventh day.

When we sin as unconverted, there is no advocacy; there is no sprinkling of the running water with the ashes in it. When the child of God sins, he has an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; but sin is no less sinful; and hence there must be exercise, and the sense of it too, as the seven days set forth. We are not only forgiven, but cleansed. The atonement was for our sins, but sin also was condemned in the flesh. I have no right, after I have received the atonement, to commit any more sins. If I were really dead I should not. I have died with Christ. Hence, when I act in the flesh, when the flesh in me revives, I have committed a double wrong; I have acted contrary to holiness, and I have revived the flesh, which through grace is now ended in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence true repentance is not only sorrow for the one wrong, but for the two; and therefore when I repent, I judge myself, I repudiate the flesh—its root, *as well as the work of the flesh*; and my conscience is cleansed by the purifying efficacy of the running water which bears the ashes of the red heifer. The Spirit brings home to my heart and conscience what it cost Christ to bear the judgment of, and put an end to, that flesh to which I have returned. I repudiate it in true repentance, and I am clean.

Walk in the Spirit.

I HAVE found, and have spoken of it here, that those who only see their sins put away through the blood of Christ, are often practically more separate from the old man, than those, who both accept and teach, that the old man as well as the sins, was put away in the cross. I ask, why is this? I believe because the Holy Ghost is not honoured by the latter, though they admit the truth about Him. This to me is the real cause of the brethren's break-down. . . .

The first thing for the soul, at all times, is to ascertain, "What is God's feeling about it?" That is, I want to know how *He* feels; and this is uppermost in my mind, and not how I feel even about Him. This the Prodigal learns—how the Father feels; and it is the first duty of light; as with the thief who says, "Dost thou not fear God?"—"against thee, thee only have I sinned." When I am occupied with my own feelings, I am seeking to commend myself; when I am occupied with His feelings towards me, I am learning His blessed grace; and how He has placed me through the work of His Son, according to His full pleasure—even as Christ is, beside Him. And if I were to live a thousand years, I should not be one whit better in His eyes.

Two things occurred at my conversion: one, that I was complete in Christ; you cannot add to what is complete; the other, that the body of sin was destroyed. You and I are only learning the truth of these two all our journey; and the better I learn them (they are only learned concurrently, and this is very important), the more

I am for Christ here; and the more I enjoy my birthright. Where you fail, and where I fail, is, that knowing the truth, we do not dread the flesh more; and rely on our only support or power to keep us in the ways of the new Man; that is, that we are not careful enough to walk in the Spirit. We have no power to act for Christ but in the Spirit. The attempt to utilise mind, feelings, or carnal strength of any kind for Christ is a delusion; and, like all delusions, diverts us from the true thing, more than if we had never tried to do anything. We are not sufficiently afraid of the flesh. For instance, if you talk politics with a man in the morning, you may think you are free of it in the evening, when you go to a meeting. No, you are not. You are like one who has swallowed a needle; it will work out somewhere; in the spot, possibly least expected. The poison of the flesh has been imbibed; communion interrupted. The Spirit has been slighted, and He will have you to learn that it is a very bitter thing to forsake the Lord for the pleasure of the mind. There is no remedy but to be more afraid of the flesh, and more separate from it. The Romanist uses penance, because he feels it ought to be *burnt* out. It cannot; and therefore you say, "It is there." But if I walk in the Spirit, I am preserved from its influence. The poison of the flesh never, I might say, betrays itself in any likeness to the way it had entered. If it came in by politics, it might expose itself by temper, and *vice versa*. . . .

The Two Lessons preparatory to Service.

THIS is the anniversary of the day when you first opened your eyes on this scene. From that hour to the end of your history here, your works will be reviewed at the judgment-seat of Christ. In the school of God, processes of instruction are adopted, to effect a desired end, which to the casual observer bear no relation to the end desired.

Moses was being fitted for leading a nation out of bondage, while for many a long and weary year he tended his flock, in the land of Midian; enjoying at the same time the comforts of private life. One could hardly see how that kind of common work would fit him for the great moral eminence of judge and ruler of the thousands of Israel. No doubt he was often chafed, worried, and at his wit's end; but the process continued, and he learned at last to think little of his own powers to effect any great revolution among men.

But though he had thoroughly learned this lesson, it is remarkable, that he lacked a correct sense of what was due to God, in neglecting to circumcise his son; so that though the forty years in the wilderness, with all the exercises connected therewith, had taught him to distrust himself; yet it had not taught him what was due to God in his children; who typically expressed his own works. Nearness to God alone acquaints us with this; and insists on it.

You cannot overlook, or annul, the purpose of the Lord in sending you into this world. You may not have ascertained it very distinctly, but this only makes your education the less interest-

ing, and in a way less successful. But if you have, you cannot fail to see that your present occupation in the wilderness is a necessary process, to convince you of the powerlessness of your own resources; so that you may emerge from your exile, distrustful of your own powers to accomplish, what you most desire or value; and at the same time, as you draw near to God, you will discover that everything derived from you must be circumcised, or divested of all that nature can boast in. "Whose praise is not of man, but of God." The Lord grant that you may seek from Him, and thus obtain, the double blessing vouchsafed to Moses.

How to Walk in New Circumstances.

You are not only entering on a new year, but the nature of the circumstances you are to move in is entirely new. It is not at once you will perceive, that circumstances which appear so extremely like those you were in six months ago, are so extremely different. I need hardly say to you, Start simply and absolutely for the Lord, and let your society be for the Lord. Keep the house for the Lord. If you act wisely, your acts will redound to the glory of Christ; like the wise woman (Prov. xxxi.), whose husband was known in the gates.

You have a fine field, or service, before you, in which you can be every way useful; not only in receiving the Lord's people, but, from your light and experience, able to contribute to their lasting blessing. You must be generally impartial.

I do not say you are not to have special friends ; but your aim must be to treat the Lord's servants and His people impartially, and as He would have you ; so that their blessing may be, after His glory, the object of your life. You will find the service often trying, because you should not merely be ready to serve, but to carry it on in patience. All this would redound greatly to your own blessing. The felt demand on you would so cast you on God, that you would be diverted from a scrutiny of your feelings to a self-judgment of your acts.

I believe the more the eye sees Him, and what was the manner of His life here, which is really ours, through grace, the more we are entranced with His excellency. As in the consecration-offering, not only was the one ram offered up whole—type of our acceptance before God in the acceptance of Christ ; but the act of consecration itself began with filling the hands—typically our *acts*, with the fat, the excellency of Christ ; contemplating Him as He was in the sight of God, in His walk and ways. This is the practical beginning. Then, like Peter, I walk on the water to go to Him. I see in Him my standard ; and if I sink, it is because the eye having drooped from Him, I have wavered in faith. When His walk is before the eye of my soul there is consequent self-judgment, when I am not in His footsteps ; but this is always marked by a deeper assurance of His power and goodness, a greater distrust of myself, and a greater eagerness, as well as confidence of heart, in following Him ;² whereas dwelling on my own state ends, at best, only in desires.

Self-judgment is like spring-time, casting off the dead leaves of winter. Desires with self-occupation are but winter longing for spring; the one stimulates, the other enervates. "The sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: the diligent soul shall be made fat."

Fellowship in God's Purpose under Discipline.

IF our hearts were in happy fellowship with God, and in co-operation with His wondrous ways and arrangements, which are all for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, we could not refuse or dissent from His calling on us for our quota to that great circle of His purpose, in which we should feel ourselves included.

If we were really and heartily interested in His purpose and ways, and carefully entering into them, and devoted to them, when we found that He considered it necessary that Lazarus, or even one much dearer to us should sleep, we should, though unable to see why we are so heavily taxed, bow our heads, and submit to any call on us, because reckoning on the wisdom of His will and counsel; and knowing that He is making all things to work together, not only for good to me, but for His own glory.

I must get to this high level, or I never can comprehend, or become resigned to the varied discipline by which our God is carrying out His own purpose, while severing us from self; practically setting flesh aside, that the life of Jesus may be made manifest in our body.

It is an exercise to our faith, until we get able

to rest in the assurance that His way is perfect ; and the only true and effectual way for subduing the particular kind of nature which each has. Faith in His ways is required before we have intelligence as to His ways. I must believe in the skill of a physician before I can confidently submit to, perhaps, very painful remedies. But when I come to understand his object, and the necessity for those remedies, it is not only faith in his skill, but approbation of his mode of treatment.

It is long with some of us before the approbation comes ; and it is plain that we should be miserable under the treatment if we had not faith ; or, in other words, confidence in the skill. If you have this confidence, you can cheerfully submit, even though, like Job, you may not approve ; but when you have real fellowship with His purpose, you will approve ; it will be grateful to your heart to bow, and you will find that what your God considers the right thing can be nothing else than the *best* thing for you.

How to Pass through Trial.

SINCE I heard of the many and divers trials which press upon you, I have wished to write to you. It is not easy to rejoice at such a time, and yet it is at such times, to which you are no stranger, that one is assured of the power of Christ on our behalf. The trying, or testing, of the faith worketh endurance. One wonders how one is borne up, so that the sense of His sustaining power supersedes, and even in its unex-

pected greatness, diverts the heart from the oppression to the succour vouchsafed. David might naturally feel how the odds were against him as he approached the giant ; but ere long the power of God, working in and by him, occupied and engaged him more than the trial. So also, when he was at Ziklag, he “ encouraged himself in the Lord his God,” and he soon was more interested in the way God succoured him than weighed down by the affliction which lay upon him.

I have learned a great thing lately. Do not keep your eye on your trial or difficulty, in order to see what God will do for you ; but keep your eye on Him, to see what is coming, as if there were no difficulty at all. The trials and difficulties are, I might say, always preparatory to some step in advance ; and if the eye be kept on Him, you will be ready for the onward step ; whereas, if the eye be only on the trials, though there will be a sense of mercy in the way He makes a way of escape out of them, there will not be, as with Abraham, the Jehovah-jireh. “ In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen ”—and a great blessing flowing from the trials. I mean the escape from the trial is the measure of the faith in the one case ; whereas, in the other, something never expected, or within the range of probability, is sure to be vouchsafed—as to Paul and Silas in the prison at Philippi. In the one case I limit God to my sense of suffering ; I prescribe, as it were, what He is to do for me ; in the other, I am leaving it all to Him, and He then astonishes me by the greatness and kindness of His heart for me. Instead of being engrossed with what afflicts me, I seek to find my

resources and rest more in Him; and as I do, the trials are distanced in the sense of His power and favour.

Thus our blessed Lord walked through this world. May He be your stay, and your delight too, and then all these trials will work for you increased blessing and comfort.

The Martha Service.

You ask me whether I have any thoughts on the Martha service. I know what you mean by the question. The way in which Martha served was not acceptable to the Lord. The snare with zealous, but unbroken hearts, is to do the right thing in a wrong way; that is, in a human way. It is not enough to know the right thing, but I must also know the right way of doing it. The latter is not easily learned; the former is the fruit of light; the latter is never acquired but as there is practical grace, charity—the activity of Christ's nature in me by the Spirit. Martha desired to minister to Christ, but instead of first waiting upon Him, and getting imbued with His mind and tastes, she essays to serve at her own dictation. This was her mistake. When I consult Christ's tastes instead of my own I am not the less ready to spend, and be spent, for Him; but I serve in quite a different way. It never occurs to me that what I am doing is a burden when I work in answer to His mind; on the contrary, I have the assured sense of pleasing Him, and this is the greatest gratification to my love for Him. I feel I cannot do enough. Instead

of being wearied by my doings for Him, I feel they are quite inadequate to express the delight which it gives me to do anything which would meet with His approbation. When I have the sense of pleasing Him, my only thought is to do more, and my study to follow on in the line which He likes.

Like a fruit-tree, I bud, and blossom, and bring forth fruit, encouraged at every step by the consciousness that I am answering to His mind, who planted me, and gave me grace to bring forth fruit to His pleasure.

It is a well-known fact that the richness of the soil is never drawn upon, never exhausted, until the fruit ripens. Green vegetables do not exhaust the ground. There can be a great deal of green service, which is not a strain, nor a tax, on the servant; but when there is real fruit, there is sure to be both. I call it green service when a person spends what he cannot otherwise use; but I call it ripe fruit when one, in order to please the Lord in serving His people, curtails his own liberty, and deprives himself of many little comforts which might be called needful. In fulfilling this service there is self-denial, but it is not felt to be a burden, like Martha's, because of the delight of the heart in meeting the Master's wishes.

The Christian is led of the Spirit to aspire to his proper service and calling; and the more genuinely he accepts this leading, and pursues it in faith—that is, in dependence on God, “who teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight”—the more surely and efficiently will he reach, and retain, the post assigned to him.

The tree that has the best fruit has always the best and most healthy leaves. It is the small things here which really constitute our testimony.

Faith, not Habit.

“AWAKE, O north wind, and come, thou south, blow on my garden, that the spices may flow out.” The north wind is the trying circumstances, and the south wind the pleasing ones. They are the very opposite, and their combined action causes the spices to flow out. The reality of faith is proved, not by one set of circumstances, but by many and opposite ones. A man might prepare himself for the north wind, as sheep by their fleeces are prepared for the winter, or by having them shorn off for the summer, This is habituating oneself to one’s circumstances, and no exercise of faith. Faith counts on God, and not on preparation. It is like the limestone, that absorbs the moisture in wet weather. In the day of supply it treasures up strength, and does not allow it to be evaporated; and therefore, in the day of drought, or of the north wind, it possesses its own resources, and gives forth the treasured moisture. It is not habit that is to sustain you, but “the water that I shall give him, shall be *in* him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.” Then you have learned how to abase, and how to abound; you are not overwhelmed by the one, nor overelated by the other; but you go through circumstances evenly, and the spices flow out, through the grace given to you.

What are You Set for?

You are in your own little kingdom again. What is the sum of it? What are you set for? When the Lord is the object before the heart, all goes right. He is ours, Christ is ours, and we receive of Him, as we look to Him. It is simply wonderful how we derive from Him. The only way to draw from Him is to look to Him. We possess what we see by faith. Doubtless there is always much to be overcome in order that we may see; the things that intervene must be removed. Jacob must halt before he can be an Israel for blessing; his eye must be simply on the Blesser.

The principle is the same always. "Take up thy cross, and come, follow me." There is no such thing as the flesh following Christ; and hence, to follow Him, we must cast away the old garment. In seeking the Lord I discover the things in my way. Long ago, in the country, we used to see what we called schooling. We would propose to reach a certain place in a straight line, not knowing the ditches, or rivers, or walls which lay between; but all the obstacles were to test the mettle of ourselves and of our horses. What are you set for? Are you ready for the schooling, in order to follow the Lord? He represents us before God, and He would enable us to represent Him before the world, if we had our eye simply upon Him. Have you purpose of heart to follow Him? Are you in the saddle? Do not waste your time in desiring; "the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing." One step is worth an age of

longing, or even praying; for sometimes prayers are made an excuse for not acting. It is a great comfort, that if your heart is set on coming to Christ, and you begin the race, it will surely lead to Him fully in the long run.

The God of Jacob.

I HAVE been interested by the magnificent way in which God ministered to Jacob, when his head was laid on a stone pillow, seeking repose after a weary day, and with a heart still more weary. His mother's care, and object, and delight, he had been compelled to break from her side and her love, and had become a wanderer, homeless and friendless, but God ministers to him; and how? With no less than a display of future glory on earth. What a wondrous way of cheering a weary heart in that lonely spot! What a contrast between his circumstances, and God's thoughts about him! Again when he was afraid of his brother Esau, twenty years afterwards on his return to the land, the same God ministers to him again. He wrestles with him till break of day, to prevail against his flesh; to cripple the hindering self; and all this to confer on him, with the dawn of a new day, the greatest name, even "Israel,"—a prince of God; for "as a prince thou hast power with God and with man, and hast prevailed."

If he is in sorrow of heart, and pillowed on the hard stone at night, God opens heavenly glory to him; and if he fears the ruthlessness of the enemy, He rebukes his flesh, but invests him with the best and highest dignity.

Such small occasions for such magnificent displays of His power and grace to us, not measured by our necessities, but by His own love! Hence His love not only meets the necessity, but it acts so that there shall be no room for want. 'Well, then, if you have sorrow, He will open heaven to you; and if you have fear, He will, while setting aside your flesh, assure you of your new name in Christ.

"Look not thou upon the Wine when it is Red."

MANY a day I have suffered and sorrowed in seeking to wean myself from the pleasures of the mind; and it was in vain, until I had received, through mercy, a taste of being with Christ where He is. This threw everything into the shade. I do not doubt that I could resuscitate those pleasures; but instead of wishing to do so, I fear to look upon the wine when it is red (Prov. xxiii. 31), because I know what is so superior.

If you have Christ as your Treasure, you must "sell all that you have, and give to the poor;" even the things in nature which God had given you must not interfere with Him. The son of the bond woman must not be heir with the one blessed One. When you know Him you find He surpasses all, and you take care that your natural surroundings are not such as will raise a question as to the fact of His pre-eminence; you have a treasure of another kind, and so find that the things in nature only hamper and hinder you; and the more your heart is occupied with Him, the more will you rejoice in the exchange, and

count all things but dross that Christ may be your gain.

Surely you admit the blessing of all this, but do you *fear* the wine? The wine is the stimulant to nature, the water is natural blessing. Gideon's three hundred men were proved at the water. The good soldier prefers Christ to natural blessing; but the true heart, the real Nazarite, fears even to look at the wine: the society or association where nature is ministered to and pleased. The one in Christ shrinks from, nay hates, the life for which Christ was judged. He rejoices in Christ his life, and walks here crucified in Christ's cross to all in him, and around him, which is not of God.

Spiritual Sleep.

YOUR case is not an uncommon one. The fifth of Canticles, "I sleep, but my heart waketh," I think describes your state. It is one of spiritual sleep, and this arises from indolence in walk; but though you might be able to trace the originating cause, the great matter with you is the remedy. I can only prescribe what the end of Canticles v. sets forth. Occupation with the Lord, personally, exclusively, and engrossingly; so that your own state may not be the object at all before your mind. The great thing for you is the light of His countenance; like a traveller on a dark night, the one single thing to be desired is the light. This must be the one thing sought, and the less reference in thought, or word, to others, about your own state, the better.

Medical men try to divert their patients from occupation with the suffering organs. How much more in order to obtain true moral cure must we be diverted from the darkness, or the cause of it, to the light, which only can relieve us. The more you speak of, or think of, the darkness, the more you aggravate it. Seek the Lord, seek His strength, seek His face evermore.

Exercise, a Preparation for Ministry.

I must say that the exercise through which you are passing indicates a preparation for ministry rather than the reverse.

Nothing conduces more to fit the minister for his work than a deep, real sense of the importance of the truth which he has to communicate; and when one is not deeply affected by it in oneself, then one cannot urge it effectually upon others. I do not think retirement from ministry would give good effect to this exercise. I feel it must come, as truth is apprehended in its divine greatness. It is ever the evening before the morning.

The sense of my moral distance from God deepens as I am made conscious of my nearness to Him. I should be overwhelmed by the former, only that in the light of the latter I know my deliverance from it.

Your exercise is nothing new. It may seem rather strange to you, because your naturally even way has preserved you from the sense of alternation. You have studied the word more than you have judged yourself by it. Had you been less

personally careful in your walk, had you been openly or deeply exposed to yourself, you would have known more of this exercise before this. I regard it as distinct blessing from the Lord that you should be so exercised; and while it is a voice to myself, I believe it to be His own blessed way of fitting you more for His service; and I find that with every one who is progressing there is exercise of this kind. It is like the three days when Paul was not able to see because of "the glory of that light," but he heard the blessed word, "Receive thy sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost"

There is another thing which this exercise imposes on us, and by which it is relieved, and that is, by answering at once to every demand the Lord may have on us. This is devotedness in some shape or form. In some it may entail the confession of a course of hidden worldliness or worse. In others a self-renunciation, or abnegation of any selfishness or covetousness, which the truth, when maintained in power, insists on. The highest truth asserts its claims in the lowest details. Hence if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God, and whatsoever we ask we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in His sight.

Things which would be passed over in one of less light are subjects of judicial inquiry with one of more light, or of the highest light. For instance, insuring one's life, or saving money, I have no doubt the Lord suffers in a man little enlightened, which I believe would become causes of darkness to the one well enlightened;

and the only way to obtain relief is by getting rid of the dark part.

I rejoice, beloved brother, and I am far from unfeeling when I say it, that you are subjected to this exercise. I have passed through much more trying ones myself, because I felt myself more self-condemned, and I often wonder how saints can adopt high truth without seeing deeper through "the hole in the wall."

If you give way to retirement you will shrink from the sword, or rather from the light, and you will not sing as in the days of your youth. I believe there is a new and blessed course before you. You are called upon now to fulfil what you started with, namely, to give up all for Christ.

The Threefold Experience of the Risen One.

THE retrospect of the past year cannot be without reflections of a deep and varied character, because the mercy of God has been gradually leading you nearer to Himself and further from man's things and ways. It has been one of the most peculiar mercy to you. There is a period in each of our histories where the reality of our life in Christ is tested and proved by the death and darkness to which we are subjected, some in one way and some in another, some only on their death-beds. But when the Lord would lead any one into His own path here, He leads him through the tunnel, or the valley of the shadow of death, in order that he may continue here in a new way.

The past year is one ever to be remembered by

you. In the hour of trial you have tasted of His life, which outlives the dissolution of everything here, imparting to you such a sense of its virtue that you, like Noah, enter anew on the earth; or, like Lazarus, you have been down to the sides of the grave, and you have come forth with this new and wonderful experience: "The Lord bringeth down to the grave, and he bringeth up." This is the first experience. But there have been three: first, you have proved the power and tenderness of His hand on your behalf; the second follows, and is conveyed in the words of our Lord, "Loose him, and let him go." Lazarus must be in the full, unfettered vigour of his position. He had experienced the favour of the Lord in bringing him up from the grave; now he must be freed from everything belonging to the grave, which would hinder his full enjoyment of the favour; even as the tiny bird not only bursts the shell and breathes freely, but ere long receives feathers and wings, to reach the shelter that suits it, or to escape the danger that threatens it—soaring in an elevation above everything of man.

Your third experience is fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, just as Lazarus "was one of them that sat at the table with him." In this fellowship, aware of, and partaker of His elevation—the most wondrous experience ever vouchsafed to the soul here, *He imparts to me the virtues of His own position*—ascended into glory. Oh, the favour when the Lord takes pains with us to lead us experimentally into this fellowship, which is His own calling for us; and where only, with enraptured eye and satisfied

heart, we can share in the things of the Lord Jesus Christ.

May you be deepened in this threefold experience, and may the Lord enrich your heart with the sense of His full perpetual love.

Two Ways of Relief for Sorrow.

THERE are two ways of relief for the sorrowing one here: one is present nearness to Christ, where whatever the heart needs is found in Him. The want indicates the supply, but there must be nearness to Him for this. It is touching Christ that draws out the needed virtue. Now this mode of relief, while it places me superior to the pressure of the hour, enables me to be, though "sorrowful, always rejoicing"—able to serve, without being incommoded by the strait-waistcoat of circumstances here. There are "songs in the night."

The other mode of relief is the one, I apprehend, you look for, and that is the immediate coming of our Lord. Surely this will be the perfect relief; but I fear that you are looking at the termination of incongruities more than seeking His present succour, so as to be "like a giant refreshed with wine," making moral space for Christ in the midst of the direst opposition to Him. I should like to see you like a rose breaking through the dense jungle, to shed its fragrance when there was no one, apparently, to appreciate it; made superior to the thorns and briars of the wilderness by the succour of His presence, who will speedily quash them in the day of His

coming, and perpetuate to you the joy, without a check, which has sustained you in the dreariest hour here; and not simply looking for the termination of everything adverse, in the brightness and joy of a day when all shadows will be dispersed for ever. Is it the termination of the incongruous and sorrowful that you look for? or is it the present succour of Christ to be superior now, knowing that if we suffer we shall also reign with Him? You are more a captive, waiting for and expecting the coming Deliverer, than the one "His heart doth safely trust in," delighting in His love and succour, and thinking of the joy and welcome He will have at His return.

The Wilderness History.

It is a great thing to know where you are historically. The wilderness journey is to teach us two things: one is "that men shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord shall man live." This is simply dependence upon God. The other is, "that he may do thee good in thy latter end." Once you have arrived at the first, you will rest assured of the second. When we are clear out of Egypt, the trials of the wilderness begin. Marah is the first; the natural inability to drink the water of the Red Sea, or death; but when we accept the cross of Christ, this is easy for us; the bitter water becomes sweet; we bear about in the body the dying of Jesus. On this follows historically the manna, and the rock that followed them; the life of Jesus, in the present

power of the Spirit. It is a great thing when you are thus far on the journey, though you have not overcome the adverse power, or Satan, in the wilderness until Amalek is overthrown; and this, though carried out by Joshua, who sets forth the Spirit of Christ, was really secured by Christ gone on high, as Moses supported by Aaron and Hur.

Now if Aaron had continued true to these experiences, they would have triumphed over the temptations of the wilderness. If you are daily bearing about in your body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in your body (which relates to yourself), and on the other hand, are in assured victory over Amalek, I believe you are proof to the four great temptations of the wilderness, as set forth in 1 Corinthians x. The first—idolatry—is enjoying oneself here without God; and if the first be not checked, the second ensues, which is meretricious union or association with the world. On this follows loathing the manna—Christ in humiliation, as insufficient to sustain the heart here. Hence literature, and Jabel, and Jubal, and Tubal Cain's fascinations are delighted in; and finally, the pleasant land is despised. I believe the one over whom Amalek prevails is one who like Peter (though he truly loved the One he denied) is not walking in the effect of the cross on himself, and therefore without its result—the manifestation of the life of Jesus. Simply, if I am not practically applying the cross in which I am really crucified with Christ, I am not in a state to encounter Amalek. I have the two forces to overcome: first, the one in myself, and then the one

outside myself. Peter had not overcome the first, which was his self-confidence in following the Lord; and then, when the enemy desired to sift him as wheat, he found him unprepared, and the ready victim of his malice. His carnal confidence even in his love for his Lord made him an easy prey for the enemy.

May the Lord increase more and more your love to Him; but as sure as you trust yourself, you have not learnt the life of Jesus, through His cross; and so surely will the enemy overcome you where you least expected to be overcome. Be careful to ensure the victory within, and then you will by the Spirit of Christ, and the effect of His intercession above, overcome Amalek; and then, as by one step, you will join Joshua again at Jordan, to cross over into the present heavenly joys with the Lord.

Three Orders of Affliction.

No doubt these afflictions, when accepted as sent by Him, effect great blessing, the blessing needed, and the blessing designed by Him. But afflictions affecting us personally must be either to promote our usefulness in service, as persecutions would, or governmental dealings, or chastening. If they are the first, which are the greatest morally, they are accompanied by distinct spiritual favour, what in military language I should call "decorations," medals—sensible marks of divine favour such as when Paul could say, "The Lord stood by me"; or like Stephen, looking up steadfastly into heaven, and seeing the glory of God and Jesus.

If your affliction is of this class, you are suffering as one of Christ's martyrs. "For the work of the Lord he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life."

Now if it is not of this class, it must be one of the other two. If it is governmental dealings—that is, a family judgment entailed, or inherited, because of the recklessness or carelessness of your progenitors—then, while there would be no special favour, no decoration, yet there is, if you are spiritual, such a sense of Christ's sympathy that your heart is deepening in the knowledge of His love. And thirdly, it may be chastening, which is His discipline, either to prevent a possible failure or to correct an incurred one. Paul, in 2 Corinthians xii., is an example of the former, Jonah or Peter of the latter. Paul was protected by the chastening, the thorn in the flesh against a possible failure; Jonah had rebelled against Him; Peter had transgressed. In the first case I learn what He is, but in either case, when I am brought low, He helps me and delivers me, if I seek Him. (See Psa. cvii.) In these cases there is a sense of His hand being on me, and a sense of being in prison, though He may prepare a whale for me, or come especially to comfort me; for as I am exercised, there is blessing. "Afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby." To sum up: In the first, or highest order of affliction, there is special favour to me. In the second, here is sympathy. In the third, there is correction and exercise. In the first only, it is for honour, though for profit in all.

Bereavement.

I AM sure it is not easy for you to catch the light of the morning, in the darkness that the death or removal of one so dear and near has plunged you.

Faith asserts what facts deny at the time; but it is a great thing to insist on the word of God to one's soul, when nothing around corroborates, but on the contrary tends to contradict it.

When the sun is eclipsed at noon day, one ordinarily waits in patience, assured that it will return. True the blank that you have sustained can never be repaired; yet you may say now in the depth of your sorrow, His ways are perfect. Perhaps you cannot see them perfect yet, but faith in His word says, that they *are* perfect; and faith will lead you soon into divine reality; and then, like Abraham on Mount Moriah, you will find Jehovah-Jireh—in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen. How his sad night ended in the brightest day! “The end of the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.” May He comfort you, and thus prove Himself to be the resource of your heart.

It is extremely interesting to me how He satisfies our hearts; not now by things as in the garden of Eden, but by Himself. He makes Himself known to the heart as the One nearest, and dearest, and most devoted to us, “Whose love is as great as his power, and neither knows measure nor end.”

Dependence the Proof of Progress.

ON every recurring anniversary we ought to be conscious of two things—one always fully, the second partially, and not so positively. The first, God's gracious ways, His favour to us during the past year, always abundant, if we are able to appreciate it; the second thing is that we are increasingly devoted to Him. The feast of tabernacles was of this character; it commemorated, in the ingathering, the full and bounteous way in which God has provided for them; and at the same moment they dwelt in booths, dependent on Him only, as they were when they came out of Egypt. They reverted to the hour when they were without anything, and entirely cast upon Him, while they reviewed the way in which He had crowned the year with blessing. Does your heart keep the feast in booths? "Booths" is the expression and evidence of dependence, and your growth is always marked by your dwelling in booths—that is, by your dependence.

I think the essential for progress is not the same as the mark of it. The essential is simply following Him—"Where thou goest I will go." There is no progress but as this is owned. Go one step out of His track, and you are not progressing, even though you have life. But the mark, or proof, that you are progressing is that you are more dependent on Him; you have an increasing sense of such personal helplessness, that you cannot get on without direct support from Him, like Peter when he walked on the water.

I should wish to see you like a forest tree—

the higher it grows the more do its branches, or extension, put forth the buds of life. I think you should be peculiarly striving together with the servants in this day in the gospel. I desire to see you so ingathering, that, while you are like the merchant ships, you rise also while it is yet night—you circumscribe your own ease, but your “candle goeth not out by night.” I should like to see you so largely identified with the interests of Christ on earth, that, while *He* takes care that down—the love of others—should line your nest here, yet that you are a servant of the church; a carrier-pigeon, bearing the need of His people to Himself; and, in His mercy, made instrumental in bringing them help. “The sleep of the labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much.” I believe a blessed mission has been given you, and I trust nothing may divert you from it; and that each year your ingathering may be more significant of the Lord’s present favour to you; and that you, while simply dwelling in booths, dependent on Him only, may rejoice with untiring joy before Him.

What am I Learning?

It is a great thing to be able to apprehend the particular lesson which the Lord is teaching us at the moment. If we are going on with Him, we must be learning something. It is not merely that spiritual health is preserved, though that is necessary, in order that one may the more effectually learn.

In the earlier stages of a Christian’s life it is

easy to note the lesson for the moment. Forgiveness, peace, liberty, and so on. But when we have arrived where Israel had in the days of Joshua, when "the land rested from war," when it is no longer the question whether the old man is to be heard, or Christ, but when what is before us is simply and exclusively the knowledge of Christ, the lesson is not so marked. And yet there must continually be some new lesson, if there is any advance. If a tree grows, there must be new buds. I find that there is one great mark of the lesson which, in His grace, He is teaching me; and that is, the way in which that particular line of things is presented to me, and pressed upon me in every scripture which I read or hear. It is ever recurring. The writing on the fleshy table of the heart is not done without digging deep. There is line upon line; here a little and there a little; but there is a deepening sense of light respecting the lesson or truth which the Lord is teaching me. It is always something of Christ—be it His sympathy, or how He suffered here, or how He enjoyed the love of the Father; and it practically reproduces in me the life of Jesus. I increase in the knowledge of Him; and as I do, I am discovering that greater things are yet to be learned, and therefore I am never proud of my learning; and as soon as one lesson is in a degree learned, I am led on to another; and every advance, like every fresh bud on a tree, only imparts tone and vigour to all the previous acquisitions.

I say all this that your reading of the word may not be formal. It is quite right to obtain a knowledge of scripture, as to its general meaning;

but the more I do so, the more am I helped in the formative power of the word, if my heart is really set on the Lord. A painter puts on colour after colour and thus forms his picture; he studies the nature and use of colours first, but it is the skilful adaptation of them that creates the picture. It is well to read and to get knowledge, but unless you are in communion, you will not grow in likeness to what you admire, as recorded in the word.

The Priesthood of Christ.

. . . . I DID not remember that I had not answered your question about the Priesthood. . . . A very wonderful subject. Christ having set us as Himself before the eye of the Father, His present service is to maintain us in our walk here. For our weakness He is the Priest, and for our sins, the Advocate. I am a weak creature, even when I am not perverse. The Lord learned the weakness of the creature, but He ever did His Father's pleasure. He now imparts grace to me in all need; mercy, because of my weakness, and grace to help me; mercy is consideration; grace is actual favour conferred. The word detects the motive that would influence me. I learn myself concurrently with learning the grace of my Priest, who understands all my weakness, though He never gave way to it, and therefore He imparts His grace, or manna. . . .

The blessed Lord enters into all I suffer from in spirit because of the weakness of the creature.

Supposing I could not stay awake at a meeting, or that I was so timid I could not speak as I wished; well, He would be merciful to me, and help me by His grace, if I looked to Him; and at the same time He would, by His word, expose the way my flesh would feel, act, and shelter itself under the trial. This is on my side when infirmity is in the ascendant; but the Priest before God has quite another service. It is the perfect and divine, so entirely unknown to me, and so beyond all human apprehension, which He conducts me into, and supports me in. I learn Him, blessed be His name, in the weakness of myself, and in the greatness and perfection of the blessed God; one is too little for me, and the other is infinitely too great for me. But our Saviour is for us in both; and I believe we are more attached to Him as the Priest than only as a Saviour. We learn the largeness and suitability of His interest in us, adapted to every turn of our lives here. One could write volumes on this interesting subject. He comes down to our fireside, and He conducts and sustains us consciously in the glorious scene where God is. As consecrated ones, we enter the holiest.

The Walk of Faith.

I FIND that our great lack daily is not living by faith. We may do what is imposed on us, whether it be a pleasure or a duty, and yet it may not be simply faith. Every step should be in faith; and faith does not imply that I shall be gratified, but that the Lord will sustain me.

And if we are true, and not deceived, there is not a day but that there is something ahead that we have to face, which we cannot find our way in, and which we are not able to bear up against, but in faith.

When I am in faith, my eye is outside this world, and fixed on Christ; and as it is, my steps here are those of a pilgrim and a stranger. The life of faith is the only true life, and the only wise one, because it is the only path in which Christ walked. We must be practised in it, to understand it, and persist in it. The more we walk by faith, the less can we, if conscientious, walk any other way. And then, wherever we are, we are always learning, deepening, in the knowledge of God. The one whose natural resources are exhausted, finds resources in Christ; and the one with abundance of natural resources finds how He surpasses them all, and that in Him only can he find help. This is the real learning of the wilderness.

Where and How is the Love of Christ most Enjoyed.

THERE is much interest in the thought pressed by — as to bridal affections, but I believe he is trying to reach it in the wrong way. I cannot get to London by flying; however right it may be to go there, I must go the only possible way. My great desire to get there will not make any change in the way to get there. I quite admit, “filled unto the fulness of God” is more than

union. "In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you," J. N. D. (see note) says is more than union, but surely it follows on union, and could not be enjoyed without union. It is enjoyed in heaven, and was not enjoyed while Christ was on earth. If I have to get to heaven to enjoy it, I must have union, for it is by union with Christ that I reach Him in heaven.

Now, every enjoyment I have of Christ is deeper in heaven, even though it be dwelling on the manner of His walk here on the earth. If I dwell on it, or on His death, while enjoying my union with Him in heaven, His love comes out to me in a much deeper way than it ever could before I knew that I am united to Him, and am with Him where He is. This the passover in the land typified; and in Ephesians, where we are seated in the heavenlies, the love comes out more deeply and fully than ever (chap. iii.), and there we are fitted to be filled into the fulness of God. There is the knowledge of His love, and of all that He did, when I am in heaven, and lying down in green pastures; I have a much deeper sense of His love there, when it has effected its desires for me, than I could have in any intermediate stage of it. I should feel very sensible of the Shepherd's love, when on His shoulders, where He placed me, rejoicing; but I should have a far deeper sense of it when He had brought me home, and placed me in the centre of rejoicings.

I quite admit the growth of affection, as I am drawn in heart to my Saviour, as the woman in Luke vii., or Jonathan to David, or Rebekah,

from all the steward had told her of Isaac; but surely the church's union with Christ has made all that complete and eternal; and it is after I know this, that I begin to know Christ in any deep way; and any advance I make is for the body, of which I am a member, for I can never lose my corporate responsibility.

“The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.” The bee always carries its acquisition to the hive; the wasp eats it. I really receive only to impart. Eternal life is common to all saints eventually, but to the church only “in that day.” If I had not the eternal life, I could not have the capacity to enjoy it. The saints of a former day could never enter into things as we can. We are led into things as united to Him, our Head. We are first united to Him, and then we learn Him; but all is for the body, and to help on its growth here, and this is the only sure way for having the bride ready for the Bridegroom.

The Use of Human Means in the Lord's Work.

YOUR body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, His residence and His vessel.

I am quite ready to accept anything the vessel may be led by Him to do. I may promise, in the fear of the Lord, and subject to Him, to come to a place or places. This is entirely between the vessel and the Owner of it. It is where one acts outside of the individual responsibility that I object.

A handbill is not the vessel. Oratory and the

sensational are not of the Spirit. If you asked every one in the town to come to hear the gospel preached, I could not object. You are the vessel of the Holy Ghost. A placard on a dead wall is not the vessel, and remember that the individual body is the only instrumental means the Spirit has here; for He is against the world in all its organisation and machinery. Confine yourself to the only instrumental means (the bodies of the saints), and I cannot object; but the moment you swerve from that, you attempt to enlist into the service of the Spirit that which is incongruous to Him, because it is of the world that rejected Christ. Now the Holy Ghost and the world can never coalesce; they are more distinct than fire and water. He has come to reside here in the individual temple, and in the collective temple. He wants no help from any one. He uses His temples for the glory of Christ.

I may not approve of what the individual does, but to his own Master he stands or falls. When I see him using the world to co-operate with him in the Lord's work, I am at issue with him, even though I might attend his meetings. The woman of divination seemed to be quite a help to Paul, but he refused it. I seek to have such confidence in the organisation and power of the Holy Ghost, and His wonderful machinery, as in charge of Christ's interests here, that I need not supplement it by men's organisations, but simply wait on Him, and learn from Him how to be in concert with Him.

The Two Experiences consequent on accepting Jordan.

IN the aspect of Christ's death, which the Red Sea sets forth, the blessed God was relieved of every atom of the offensive man; but in the Jordan aspect of His death, we are freed from every incumbrance connected with flesh and blood; and this is liberation. Now, if I accept Jordan—liberation, I have two great experiences: one, how Christ sustains me as a human being here, in my own circumstances, and this is very continual; and, secondly, that as I stand for Him here, His power, which I have learned in being associated with Him in heaven, makes me superior to human considerations. In one—the continual—He sustains me in my human condition, as He Himself lived here; in the other, I am for Him here, superhuman. A mother, with very small means and a large family, could enjoy His support and grace all the day long, which is the manna; but if a benefactor came to her, and offered her something worldly, which would be a gain to her humanly, but which would compromise Christ, she would, in Christ's power—a power hers, because united to Him by the Holy Ghost—refuse, at all cost and loss, the worldly offer; and thus she would be superhuman.

It is necessary that we should be kept in the simple reality of our position on the earth, though enjoying and able to act in consonance with our union with Christ in heaven. After Paul came down from the third heaven, he was, more than ever before, made sensible that he

needed hourly grace, because of his position here. It is true that it was the old corn of the land that he fed on above, but it reached down to the manna, the life of Jesus here on earth. Paul seems always to have begun at the top; we begin at the manna; but when we taste of the corn of the land, we do not lose the manna; on the contrary, we look for it all the more in our daily circumstances.

The External the Expression of the Internal.

HE that cannot fulfil, and walk in what is simply his duty, must be weak in everything. The greatness of any one is seen in the way in which he is able to meet all the claims on his time and temper.

Graciously and perfectly does the Lord teach us, and lead us on. His grace is not to enable us to do special things well, but to do everything well. It is the atoms that really constitute the globe; and in order to have the atoms of our daily life right, there must be full possession of our bodies by the Spirit for Christ.

We forget too much how the body is the index of the governing power, and that it is to answer to the place and service to which Christ has appointed it.

The idea of the "Friends" was so far right, that their appearance must be indicative of their separation from the world, and nonconformity to it. Their mistake is, that they assume the outward before the inward, and then it becomes Pharisaical.

Our mistake in general is, that we are too content with the conviction of what we possess, and the comfort flowing from it, and do not study sufficiently to make the external answer to the internal convictions. Old habits and tastes (or, if not tastes, the effect of them) too often remain unaltered, instead of the external man being the expression of the inner, or the new man. The light is in the pitcher, but the pitcher is opaque.

Human self-culture is directed to the habits—the external. It does not aim to impart a principle within; but the Lord's education of us is, that the external, the body, should be the expression of what He has put within—His own life; and we are not to be indifferent as to the outward because of the assured possession within; for unless I am governed by it, there cannot be testimony.

What a person is, is judged of by what he does. If he tells me what he is, I look to his ways, to see the marks about him of what he is. It is useless for a man to tell me he is humble in heart, if he is proud in manner. It is vain for a man to say that Christ is his one thought, if in words and acts he is ever seeking to gain distinction for himself.

It is true that there is the wish to be devoted, and to be like Christ, long before one's acts and manner corroborate the wish, and make it a fact; but the more the wishes which grace has generated in your heart are given a place, the sooner will they become facts; and the more Christ has His throne within you, the more you will rejoice in Him, and have no confidence in the flesh.

The Action of the Word of God.

THE word of God, when received, must be searching, for it is light; and we are naturally all in the dark as to what suits God. If it does not search you, it is not light to you, and if you walk in darkness after you have seen the light, you will have a bad conscience, and you will either have some grievous fall, or become very unhappy.

If I accept the word of God, I must walk by it, and as I walk by it, I have the virtue of the light itself; it is an armour to me. A man asleep is alive, but he does not enjoy life; but the man who exercises his life unimpeded, enjoys it, and knows what it is.

You must yield yourself to the claims of God's word, and as you do, you will be like the tree, which first bears leaves, then blossoms, and then fruit. It is enriched by its own products. The word of God feeds the life, and if there is not yielding to its claims, there will not be energy of life, and there will be no leaves, no blossoms, and no fruit.

Be subject to the word of God. Seek to be the practical exponent of it, as you receive it, and you will find that it not only searches you, but that, when it has its place in your heart, it greatly enriches you with its own divine virtues.

Real Service, not Human Amiability.

IF I can, I shall place before you the path of blessing with which, as I believe, the Lord has favoured you. The Lord must be your only true object and centre. You must not only refer everything to Him, but you must act from Him. This double movement you require for every service.

“If any man serve me, let him follow me.” This being admitted, you can test everything by the simple question, It is *to* as well as *from* Him, and *from* as well as *to* Him? One of these, by itself, would not be perfect. Christ is always the Centre and Object of the Spirit, and as I am led by the Spirit, each act has this double movement. With Him for my centre, my circumference is ever in relation to Him. Wherever I am, and do what I may, He is before me—the One I am thinking of. If I visit, I come from Him, and I think of Him there. I like my visitor one time, because I am able to bring my Object before him; at another time, because he brings my object before me; and if I really come from Him, He is still my Object, even if I find neither with my visitor. The more He is thus to me, the more communion have I with His own whenever I meet them. It is never what I am in a natural way which really binds the spiritual to me.

True, the gracious, self-denying ways which mark you do most favourably impress; but, after all, there is no real binding power in them beyond the measure of Christ that is in them; and you will find that, even where there is a dry,

hard bearing, if there is real devotedness to the Lord, there is more assured attraction and bond, than where there is much outwardly winning and serviceable, without the devotedness. I am not reprobating the grace of unselfishness, but I am endeavouring to shew that it is but a husk, unless the Lord be both the centre and the object; and that the one who makes Him the centre and the object, and yet who could not clothe their service in the beautiful garments I refer to, would, after all, make a more lasting, because a divine, impression than the one who had relied too much, or mainly, on the attractive way in which the service was done. The divine thing comes to the surface in the long run. One is greatly captivated by amiability, but one never builds on it. Amiability is beautiful, but it is not sensitive; that is, it is not select in its objects, and it is not in its nature capable of making a difference. It is not "love without dissimulation" which governs it—that is, love without putting on a greater appearance than the love would warrant. Amiability may be unselfish kindness, but it is never real service. The dress is beautiful, but it is a blossom which bears no fruit. The substance is the thing to cultivate, and then, though it come out in a very homely attire, it is sure to be appreciated for its genuine worth; and this, after all, is, in the long run, what the crucible of this life determines.

I do not see that there is any lack of favour to you, and the more single-eyed and devoted you are to the Lord, the more you will endear yourself effectively to each one loving Him.

The Lord lead you to be thankful, and appreciative of His favours to you, and give you to make Him so your Object and Centre, that you will not be thinking how *you* stand with any one, but how *He* stands; and that your one desire and labour may be, that He may stand higher and higher, each day: with all your friends.

School-time.

FAITH comes before assurance, and assurance before the answer. The Gentile woman (Matt. xv. 21) had faith in the Lord's power, before He gave her any assurance as to His intentions of relieving her; and even when He gave this, she did not actually get the answer to her prayer until she returned to her daughter, and found her whole. Real faith is always increased by opposition, while false confidence is damaged and discouraged by it.

It is a different thing to have confidence in God as to His doing anything for me on the ground of relationship—of my being His child, and to get a distinct promise and assurance from Him.

In the latter case, there is always the sentence of death put on the promise before the answer is given. The time of trial and suspense, while faith is in exercise, is the time of school. School is more preparing the mind for knowledge, and getting it into training, than actually acquiring knowledge. So with the soul. In trial it is learning to learn, more than getting any con-

scious acquisition. That comes afterwards, as with the pupil who wishes to continue the cultivation of his mind after he escapes from the toil of the school-room. Then only does he become fully conscious of what he has gained. While toiling, he was conscious of little advance, but he now finds that his mind has got into working order, and all that seemed dull and meaningless to him, as learnt by rote, assumes a new meaning and use to him. To the schoolboy everything is new, and he is hardly conscious of acquisition: but afterwards he makes use of his knowledge, to reach the science of things, and to acquire more.

The soul in trial is in its school-time, and should not be discouraged in being unable to discover at once distinct acquisition in its knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, from day to day. That will come by-and-by, when the trial is over, which is but preparing it for the consciousness of blessing and increased knowledge of Christ, and in this process self must be learnt and exposed, which is always painful.

But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, *after* that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

Sowing and Reaping.

I do trust this may prove to be a sowing time with you. He that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. If we really delight in receiving from the Lord, we shall bring forth the

fruit of it; we shall have the deep good of it ourselves, and out of our belly shall flow rivers of living water.

It is a wonderful thing to be so satisfied in the Lord's company, that we can be tranquil about everything. You will often find that it is the one of the most anxious temperament who finds most in the Lord, when such an one begins to learn Him. I remember when I used to think that I should be happy beyond conception if I were able to say, "I will fear no evil," "my heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." In order to reach this, you must find the Lord enough, without anything else. We all *say* that He is enough, but it is quite a different thing to know it practically. You can never prove the worth of any one, until you are absolutely dependent on him: and when that One is "greater than Solomon," it is no wonder that, when we are shut in to Him there should, like the queen of Sheba, be "no more spirit" in us. I like the *idea* that first gave place to a nun, absolute consecration of heart to the Lord; but that is putting the cart before the horse. The nun gives up *to find*; you and I are to give up, because we *have found*. May you daily find Him more and more to you, and prove the restfulness of this acquisition.

Grace and Practice.

I HOPE — is well, and daily entering more into the things that are ours, because of our alliance with "a greater than Solomon." The queen of Sheba was only a spectator, she had no right,

because of relationship, to anything she saw. The church is in the closest alliance to Christ.

Progress is only advancing in the knowledge, the spiritual knowledge, of what we really possess at the outset. It is like ascending a ladder. The ladder is grace. The first step is, we believe that Jesus was sent of God; second, that in the fulness of His work we are justified; third, we make His acquaintance; fourth, we come to see Him in heaven; we know our association with Him there, and His power here, where He is not; fifth, we learn the mystery, the great things we are entitled to because of being His body; sixth, that we are seated in heavenly places in Christ; seventh, lost in wonder and in praise in the knowledge of Himself.

There is practice accordingly. The ladder of practice begins at the third step in the ladder of grace. Devotedness is the practice consequent on acquaintance. The next is testimony. Next, renunciation of the tradition and the rudiments of the world. Next, the entering into the nature of the body and the house, as each is in God's sight. Lastly, coming down in power to act a heavenly man here in every circle.

The Effect of Looking unto the Lord.

THERE is, I am sure, a wonderful effect from looking to the Lord. "I will look unto the Lord" must be your watchword. There is plenty to be corrected in ourselves, and the more we are in the light, the more we are distressed by it; but there is less possibility of reforming oneself

than there is of taming the ocean ! Displacement is the only progress. The more the eye is on the Lord, and the more the heart is drawn out to Him, the more is there a looking after Him, as Elijah said to Elisha (2 Kings ii.), "If thou see me *taken*, it shall be so unto thee." Elijah there is the type of Christ glorified. It is the principle of faith, looking to what God accepts, and hence looking away from what is intolerable to Him—even oneself. The more He engages the heart, the more is the heart rewarded for its engagement. As one has said, "The draught which lulls our thirsting, awakes the thirst anew." There is a wearing out of the sight in continued looking at one object naturally, but when it is the eye of faith, the more you look the more you *can* look; and the more you gain, and become distanced from the old man, because of your conformity to what your heart delights in. Thus the transformation takes place.

The real gain of experience is, that I trust myself less, and because I do so, I look to the Lord more.

The Huma and the Divinē.

THE devotedness of one is a help to the whole church of God. What an encouragement and incentive to be devoted ! "If any man serve me, him will my Father honour." There is nothing so important for the church as personal devotedness. All the light of heaven will be in vain, without the fresh energy of the Spirit in

continued surrender. The sin of Canaan is more worldliness, that of the wilderness, earthliness.

Death comes in, in one form or another, and this is only right, for we have brought it on ourselves. In Christ all heaven and its eternal delights are thrown open to us, with capacities to enjoy them; but in the flesh I am entitled to nothing but death. Hence, every mercy is an instance of divine favour.

The danger of brethren is lest they should be satisfied with the creed, as I might call it, of the evangelicals—namely, gospel, good conduct, and good works. This never carries us beyond the earth. Christ's joys and hopes, His body on the earth, His ways ours here; this is spiritual, and is as remote from the former as heaven is from the earth.

There is no use in trying to make a man change his opinion, until he first changes his place. Is it from man's scene you view things, or is it from God's scene? If from man's, your view will be earthly and natural; if from God's, it will be spiritual and divine. You will see things as He sees them: "When I went into the sanctuary of God, then understood I their end." *PSA. 73. 17.*

The Father's House.

CERTAINLY every one enjoying his union with Christ where He is, has entered in spirit into the Father's house. The Father's house is the only resting-place for the prodigal.

There are but the two places—the "great way

off," where he received the kiss of reconciliation, and the Father's house; the first step from the one to the other is entrance into untold joy and blessedness. The right of entrance is not only assured, but enjoyed. Sitting in the heavenlies in Christ is our calling, together with all saints. Entering into and enjoying the Father's house now in the Spirit is the right of children brought nigh unto Him.

The holiest of all is the moral character of the Father's house; Jesus is there for us. He has entered into heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God for us. He is a great High Priest. He sustains us there, and He *is* there. The more you are in the holiest, where you worship, the more will your assurance of the Father's love deepen without any outward evidence of it. The perfect rest of heart found in the perfect acceptance vouchsafed to you there, will promote and enlarge in your heart the knowledge of the Father's love. When the love of the Father is in you (see 1 John ii. 19), you are sensibly enjoying that which could, and would, provide and procure anything for you, and the love of the world is not in you. It is not anything you see which detains or draws your heart, because it is already occupied with a love that has the command of everything, and is ready to use all for you.

The Lord sustain you in the unclouded light of His own presence, growing more and more into the pleasures that are at His right hand.

Christ Known in Glory.

CHRIST in humiliation wins our hearts, and Christ in glory satisfies them. We learn to be suitable to Him by being in His company.

If you are conversant with Christ in glory, you must be like Him in humiliation, because His life could not act differently in the same circumstances. It must act similarly in similar circumstances.

I am in the same circumstances in which Jesus was down here; and as I have Christ in me, *now* glorified, and able to communicate with me through the Holy Ghost, I am living here as He lived, and I have the enjoyment and resources which were known to Jesus here on earth: and my heart is consciously enjoying the love which He bore me, in treading the path of death and sorrow for me. I deepen in the sense of His love for me, while I live Him in the very circumstances which He passed through for me.

If I were not in His life, I could not comprehend how He walked and endured down here, and all to win us. "He loved the church, and gave himself for it." If I were only to follow Him, as Peter and John did here, in His humiliation, I should feel attracted to Him, but I should not know how He felt and suffered for me. I should still be in my own life, though quickened. But when I know that I have life in a risen Christ, and that He lives in me, I walk here as He walked; and I know and understand the nature of that love that made Him suffer for me here.

Company with Christ in His humiliation draws

the heart to Him, but there is in it no necessary, or indeed possible, relinquishment of man in this life. But when I am in His life by the Holy Ghost, I can understand, and feel as He felt, and the life of Him who here died for me is reproduced in me.

Christ in humiliation helped the man still in natural life, but the corn of wheat must fall into the ground, and die, to bear fruit. Now in Him I have resurrection life, so I can live as He lived here, and though I still have natural life, it is controlled, not by the will of man, but by the Spirit of God, in the life of Him who is risen and glorified.

The Holy Ghost is here for Christ, and not for the man on earth. The latter refused Him. The Holy Spirit maintains for Him in the place where He was refused.

Not only am I connected with my Saviour in glory, but He lives in me, and this is my start, not my attainment. It is really wonderful as simple grace.

Suffering Preparatory to Service.

I HAVE heard of the great sorrow you have been passing through; one would say insupportable, were there not an assured faith in the heart that the Lord has more a prospective meaning and purpose in these sore afflictions than a retrospective one. Affliction always precedes promotion, and according as one bears the first, one is proved truly qualified for the second. Joseph is in prison, David in Ziklag, before they are fitted, or

proved by their power of endurance to be fitted, for serving the Lord. If you will receive your great affliction at the hand of the Lord in this light, you will certainly find that they who sow in tears, reap in joy. The patience, the power to endure, measures the real amount of faith in God, and this is the groundwork of all service. When a man is impatient, when he chafes, then it is not God who is before him, but himself—he is hindered in his service, because the Lord cannot sustain him in it in that spirit. When one has got God for oneself, and He is simply and solely before one, everything one does reaches the spiritual, as of God. All His education and dealings with us are to bring us to this. The trying of your faith worketh patience. It is a very wondrous work that is going on in the Lord's education and preparation of us, for His own purposes as to us here, as well as for the place which each of us will hold in the holy temple of the Lord by-and-by. There is the wearing away of the outer man, and the renewing, day by day, of the inner man. There is a chiselling process going on, that the inner, the new man, may be more visible and prominent. It is only as it is, that we can be truly in His service, and the exercise of the soul, through the Spirit, as to all we have to pass through, is for this end. By-and-by the sound of the hammer will not be heard. Now we have the din of it on every side; and as we submit to it in our own hearts, there is the reaching to the "perfect and entire," wanting nothing, and this is real fitness for His service.

Take comfort in this deep affliction; talk it over with the Lord, and He will give you meat

out of the eater. It is a great help and cheer when one understands the intention of perfect love, in removing anything that interferes with my progress, or with my fitness to be used as a vessel for his purpose and pleasure.

Sow to the Spirit.

You must never expect to be without exercise, but the less you give way to the flesh, the more will it be displaced. There must be the distinct sense, that if I turn from Christ, I lose the Spirit's support, and I am practically in the flesh. When I am seeking to walk as Christ, my eye on Him, I may be assailed by the flesh, but I am entitled to say (and this is my safety) that I am free from it, because in Christ I am dead to sin; I am not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. I know the lion is there, and I know how fierce he is, but I am, through grace, free of him. I must not tamper with him, or give heed in any way to him, but I must not deny that he is there; and therefore I walk in fear, but consciously happy that my real place, through the gift of God, is in Christ, clear of him. All spiritual things are given to us, but we are responsible to retain them, at least the enjoyment of them, and this you never can, except in their own proper soil and climate. "To him that hath shall be given." You cannot retain spiritual things in carnal enjoyments; even the best of them are the old wine. You must sow to the Spirit, and then of the Spirit you reap everlasting life, never-ending life of perennial freshness and vigour. If you

come from a happy meeting or time with the Lord, and give yourself to carnal literature or gossip, you will lose the fragrance and value of the season with the Lord; but if you seek to abide more with the Lord, because of the happy time He has vouchsafed to you, you will be brighter and brighter; and as Christ gets increasingly His true place in your heart, all that is not of Him will be increasingly displaced.

How to Promote Devotedness.

THE true way to promote devotedness is to seek and cultivate closer acquaintance with Himself, which leads always to practical separation from that which is unsuited to Him; and this is devotedness. The more you are with Christ, the stronger you become in heart and taste to refuse what is contrary to Him, and without making any plan, you find yourself retiring from old and cherished associations, and seeking and loving only those which connect you with Him. It is not then a surrender to obtain a certain gain, but a surrender to preserve the gain in its full value.

When nearness to Him is really known, and the soul has been transformed by it, the conversation of the world becomes intolerable, and in seeking and securing the better things, the surrender of everything which stands in the way, however great, becomes secondary.

If you subject yourself to the society of the world, when there is no positive call of duty, you suppress and blight divine growths in your

soul ; but if you seek and cherish nearness to the Lord, you will grow too big for your shell, and you will burst it ere long, and find the surrender a positive relief. It is better that the shell should be broken from the inside, rather than from the outside. As I feed on Christ, the inner man is renewed and strengthened, and all that hinders its expression is displaced. What a relief it is ! What liberty the butterfly exhibits when it bursts from the chrysalis. Surely we ought even now to know, that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

May our gracious Lord lead you into simple nearness to Himself, and strengthen your heart to answer to the love of His heart for you.

True Desires.

It is a great comfort to me that failure in the thing which I most desire is no proof that I do not truly and genuinely desire it ; and that there is in me the nature that desires it. The failure is caused by the flesh, the evil will refusing to let me be the exponent personally of what in heart I seek ; and you will find that though for the moment your acts may deny your purpose, yet that your purpose does not go with your acts, but condemns them.

I make a distinction between light and desire. Light is the reception of any truth, but desire is more ; it is the heart set on maintaining it. Now circumstances test both. When it is only the former there is no power against a deliberate assault ; one acts in nature, and the excuse is,

that no other way was open. But with the latter, it is when the attack is open and palpable that he is victorious, though he often loses ground when he least expects it, and is, as we say, taken unawares. No open or deliberate attack could subdue Samson; his heart was right. Lot gave way before the first great attraction. The failure, contrary to your desire, only shews that you have not been drilled, broken enough; and therefore the breakdown occurs in order to shew you where your weak point is; and the truer your desire, the more will you watch and guard against it. It is the readiness and adroitness of your body (of which the tongue is the index), which proves that, like a horse well-mouthed, you are under complete control. If it be only light, and there be a departure, the conscience even will not be troubled, if there be a good excuse for the departure. When there is real love of the truth, it is quite different; one is always pained if one's acts do not declare plainly the ruling desire of the heart. In the former case temptations are allowed to occur, in order to expose to oneself how little really the love of the truth possesses one; in the latter, to shew one where the danger lies.

It is a wondrous and beautiful thing to see our bodies made to be accompaniments to the divine nature, as a harp to the voice—sanctified in spirit, soul and body.

The Wilderness Man and the Heavenly Man.

WHAT I have feared about you is not an uncommon fear about others—namely, What is the end and aim of your life? You have been like Samson; the Spirit of the Lord has moved you. You made, or rather you were led a step, but you dropped back again, like a bow that has lost its power. You have lost definiteness of aim. Every saint has a mission; I do not venture to say what yours is. I was long enough finding my own.

The believer now is in two positions: he is in the wilderness and in Canaan. In the wilderness he must drink death, Marah. To the Christian the world is a wilderness wide; but to the old man, still hanging about me, it is a scene of temptation, and therefore I must drink death, if I would “cease from sin;” and as Christ was in death for me, the tree in the bitter water, the bitter water is made sweet. I am myself in the same mind—I “cease from sin.” This is the wilderness man, correct, self-denying, and sustained by the Lord in every step of his daily life; in practical ways like the young man in the gospel; no infraction of the law—God’s requirement of a man. Love is the fulfilling of the law. There is also the Abraham separation from old and natural claims; and there is the Moses devotedness—counting the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. Reproach and persecution would be incurred because of the separate, devoted path, for there is a going outside the camp, where there is an organised system, with military pre-

cision, professedly for God. This is the wilderness man. There is, besides, the heavenly man. He properly is the servant of Christ. Be he evangelist or teacher, he is from heaven, not from the wilderness. Of course, he has the loveliness of the wilderness man, but he has much more; he comes from heaven. The first thing that marks him is, that it is Christ's mind—the unity of the Spirit, the direction of the Head for His body, which engages his unremitting attention. He is now a man of quite a new order; before he was helped, in divine grace, in his circumstances; he is now in the power of Christ here, for Christ.

Leaves and Fruit.

I BELIEVE we have little idea how our own self-government affects our companions. In 1 Corinthians xiii., "charity," the more excellent way to serve, is entirely taken up with the servant. The vessel, and its preparation for service, is the subject. We so often think of the people we are seeking to serve, and all their defects, instead of being so freed from self, that we are able, in real love, to serve them. Real love is full self-denial.

It is not what we *say* in the home circle that tells so much, as the way we control ourselves. With strangers we express our opinions; at home, among our own people, we testify in our own persons to the moral effect of our opinions.

The doctrine is the programme, the manner of life—the confirmation of it. I arrest or provoke

a person by the doctrine, but I silence him by patient continuance in well doing. The doctrine is like the leaves of a tree, they tell what the tree is. Every one knows the name of the tree by its leaf, but the value of the tree is known by its fruit—the natural activity of life. There is seldom much, if any, fruit where there are too many leaves. The strength is spent in the effort for outward testimony; and on the other hand if there are not leaves enough, the fruit will be indifferent. There must be leaves; they are the public avowed expression of the nature of the tree; but if one is too much taken up with the assertion of one's opinions, though all right in itself, there is no strength left for the fruit, of which, if good, no one can partake without the conviction, though it may be unexpressed, that *it is good*.

There must be a full, clear, unequivocal expression of the doctrine which is to govern my life; but this being stated, I devote my attention now, not to expressions or a creed, but to the way the doctrine I have received as the truth of God, influences and controls me; and even though those around me may not approve of my personal devotedness to Christ, yet it must command their respect and notice, for in proportion as it controls me, the house is filled with the odour of it.

“He shall Testify of Me.”

THE mission of the Holy Ghost, in John xiv. 26, the “Comforter whom the Father will send in

my name," is for the individual believer, but in chapter xvi. 26 He is sent by Christ to His own here on earth to testify of Him, as He says, "He shall testify of me." It is of the deepest importance to apprehend what this means, as to the mode and measure in which this testimony is to be effected. It does not say that the Spirit is to lend His aid in conjunction, or in co-operation, with all human means, but that He is to be the Testifier—"He shall testify of me." Thus He can use any of Christ's own as His vessel in effecting this work.

It is a very simple question, but fraught with great issues—what would be the difference between a believer who would use all natural means for the spreading of the gospel, not seeing that the Spirit is the Testifier, and the one who fully believes in His mission, and solely depends on Him to do His work. It is clear which of these would be right. When such a transcendent power as the Holy Ghost takes up His abode with us, who are so infinitely less, He, of necessity, takes the lead, and carries us with Him as His vassals. Lesser lights fade before the noon-day sun; how much more do we, and all our efforts, become insignificant before Him! He comes to do a great work, and He uses us as vehicles, as the atoms of the air are so many vehicles, or ways, of conveying the light of the sun to every corner of the earth. If the light of the sun be shut out in noon-day, there is no light, unless there be a resort to some artificial and lesser light; and this is just what has occurred in Christendom. The greatest Power and the greatest Light has been excluded by

unbelief; and hence human power, education, or some human means, has been resorted to, to supply the lack. The man who uses any human means outside of the Spirit, clearly has lost sight of the word, "He shall testify of me." The Spirit is the One to do it, and not the instrument, though He may use the instrument. I may speak the word, or write the word, but it is only in proportion as I do either in the Spirit, that the fruit of it will be the Spirit's work. It is an abnegation of man's power and means when we rely simply on the Spirit of God to testify of Christ; and this is but just and proper, seeing that man has rejected Christ. Satan's tool is man, and he has no place when man is completely excluded, and then it is that the Spirit has full sway.

The more ardent a man is, the more ready is he to rely on human means, or to enlist them in aid of the Lord's work: and when he does, he evidently has no practical belief in the Spirit of God, or he does not think Him enough for the occasion. Now this flaw in his faith betrays itself on every side. There is sure to be a defective apprehension of the Spirit's activities in himself individually. The dark part in him naturally is not detected and refused; a worldliness, corresponding to the defect, is always to be seen in the man who has not accepted in heart the complete rule of the Spirit in himself; and as he has not faith in Him for himself, he cannot have faith in Him for Christ. So, in seeking to testify of Christ, in preaching or otherwise, he uses human or worldly means, and he has never in his own soul a very distinct or joyous apprehension of "things above;" he is not heavenly. Thus truth

acts and reacts. The man who believes that a divine Person not only resides in him, to enrich his heart with Christ, but to lead him, as He pleases, to testify of Him, is sure to be found breaking from the world at the side where naturally he had been most held by it. It is always so when the subjection is real: the fortress, the spot in the heart where the will has centred gives way; and if the fortress be captured, the enemy has lost his footing.

The compensation assured to the witnesses of Christ here, led and supported by the Spirit of God, is, that while the world is utterly set aside and reproved, there is, through the Spirit, the glorifying of Christ, and "He shall take of mine, and shew it unto you;" heavenly things are their portion.

One word more. I am convinced that all our present weakness is traceable to disregard of the Spirit's presence. One of the fruits of this is, the use of secular means, placards, &c., and I am thankful to note that, as men of God advance in nearness to the Lord, and in the knowledge of His grace, they entirely refuse them; while, on the other hand, when workers are carnal or have declined, when there is often a desire for notoriety which passes for zeal, they turn more to these carnal means, and are, in my judgment, giving man a prominence that literally shuts out Christ and this is Laodicean in nature.

God's Heart and Eternal Purpose.

THERE is a flaw in your idea. God's great desire is to bless. His Son was ever His delight. No one knew the measure of the distance between God and man, but one Man—the Son of God; and no man ever knew what was in the heart of God for the sinner, but one Man—the Son of God. Adam was made in the image of God. He failed. Man failed after repeated trials. The brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His Person, came in then to do His will, to effect the blessing He desired; so that every family in heaven and earth can be named of the Father.

The Lord Jesus Christ is thus the One to carry out all the blessing in the heart of God; He is the one object of His delight, and in Him all things are headed up. How otherwise could the blessed God care for the dispersed of Israel? How else could He be the "Happy God"? His blessed Son needed no glory. He had the same glory as the Father, but then He came forth to fulfil the purpose of the heart of God, of blessing man, and His delights were with the sons of men. Then He justly called forth the love of the Father, as He did when He went down into death.

God's object now on the earth where Christ was rejected, is the fulness of Christ, surely for Christ's glory, but also for the blessing of those chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. God, in His own nature, loved the world, but the Son only could set forth that love. Hence

the Son, in His new place, commands and concentrates all the delight and satisfaction of God ; and all things will be headed up in a Man, and that Man the Son of the Father ; but in the eternal state still a Man, and not merely the Son with the Father, as He was before the world was. His glory is not greater, but He has carried out the heart of God so fully, that He has the pre-eminence of every creature ; and yet the glory He had with the Father before the world was is greater than any conferred or acquired glory, though the latter are testimonies to the perfection with which He has given true and full effect to the heart of God.

We must begin with the heart of God. He delighted to bless, and His Son only could do it effectually. Thus He enters on a new place, and with new glories ; and in one of these glories He receives His complement here, to the eternal and inconceivable blessing of those who compose it—the church. His body is His complement, which it is God's object now to form and maintain here on earth by the Holy Spirit.

I have fellowship with the Father and the Son in their purposes all round, and it is unspeakable blessing to enter into the Father's pleasure in the work and ways of His Son. Nothing can exceed His own blessedness. He delights in His own works. None could exceed them, but I must not lose the sense in my heart that He delights to bless me ; that it is not only to make me an appendage to the Son's glory, though, through grace, I am a member of His body, and thus I am for Him ; but I am also there for my own deep, eternal blessing, and God's heart decreed it

for me. Hence Christ loved me, and gave Himself for me, and He gave eternal life to as many as the Father has given Him. The Father had the electing love; this you leave out, as though He regards us only as a builder would regard stones in a quarry, instead of tracing your blessing to the heart of God. I am set for the church, *because* it is Christ's interest, and the Father's purpose for His Son; but at the same time, it is for the fullest blessing of His chosen ones. If there had not been in the heart of God a desire to bless, the Father and the Son could have gone on together in the excellent glory without us. But there *was* that desire in God's heart. The Son comes forth to carry it out, the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, hath declared Him. His complement we are. In answer to the love of God we are saved; but in answer to Christ's heart (for He loved the church) we are given to Him, to be His body and bride, which He will present to Himself, a glorious church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. The glory that the Son had with the Father before the world was, we shall see, but not be given, though members of the One who has received it as a Man.

Light and Conscience.

THE great subject of John's Epistle is light. The object of the epistle is that we may *know* that we have eternal life. (Chap. v. 13.)

Man at the fall got a conscience by doing evil, he had departed from an innocent state, to which

we never return. God knows evil, because it is the opposite to good. Every trace of God is new to the fallen man; hence, on conversion, he is made acquainted with God, the only One who is good. Up to this he had a standard of his own, according as conscience acted, which he seldom was quite up to, though, in some cases, as Saul of Tarsus, he might be able to say, "I have lived in all good conscience." The moment God comes in before the soul, the sense of the really good makes the sense of man's immeasurable distance from it almost intolerable. Saul of Tarsus falls on the ground. The thief on the cross "fears God," admits the justice of his sentence. Now henceforth, after God, the really good, is reached, the sense of my disparity and distance morally from Him is ever increasing. The bad is very bad, as the good becomes known as very good. If I turn to the bad, or incline to it, there is the sense in my soul that I have turned away from the good—from God; but as I walk as a child of light, I am sensibly distanced from the bad, and the Holy Ghost bears me witness in my conscience. Hence the danger of putting away conscience from faith. If you have faith, you require to keep a good conscience; that is, that you are up to your faith. The demand God has on you is really conscience, and the demand increases as the knowledge of His mind increases. If I do not keep up to this, I make shipwreck. I believe in what is revealed, but I do not see that it distances me from the bad that is in me. The good is accepted, without its claim or power on me being accepted. The virtue of the word is lost, I am like the deaf adder. This is the great

importance of speaking to the understanding, for otherwise the conscience cannot be reached.

When I am truly before God, every fresh ray of His light affects my conscience; I have a greater sense of good, and I am more sensibly distanced from the bad; not only that which is outside of me, but that which is in me. If not, the man with Ephesian truth will drop into the worst immoralities, because he can speak of what is highest without repudiating and rebuking what is of the old man. Hence, in John's epistle light is the polar star: light is for fellowship, light for brotherly love; and if your heart condemn you, in action towards your brother, God is greater than your heart. I suppose it is the heart in John, because the affections are under the control of the conscience. "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." God has more light than I have, but I act according to my light, and thus communion, or confidence, is not disturbed.

Believe me, it is very unsound teaching which does not touch the conscience, making me feel how good God is, and the consequent claim on me, if I am His; how evil man is, and what a distance there is between good and evil. By-and-by I shall know evil because I know good, and am for ever in it. The man who would save his conscience, will not long continue safe. The more conscientious any man is, the more carefully he investigates a new truth, because he feels that it, if accepted, must make a fresh demand on him. Man is to be more repudiated, and Christ maintained.

How Christ is Set Forth on Earth.

WHAT a magnificent being on the earth is a member of the heavenly Man in heaven! What an exotic; and what a joy to one's own heart to be united in heaven to the Object of the heart! As one is near Him, and really enters into this, there is, like the queen of Sheba, no more spirit left in one. How Paul walked about here, diminished and reduced in his old self, but with the deep, everlasting satisfaction in his heart, in the crippled vessel, of what was his as a man in Christ. If you could get all the Christians in the universe together as units, but with one purpose, you could not thereby effect the great desire of the true-hearted, namely, to set forth Christ here. The great object of the Holy Ghost is to reproduce Christ, the heavenly Man, on the earth. But no combination, or united purpose, with all Christians to effect this, could effect it, unless they were members of Christ's body. It is not the number of believers, but it is the relationship which each believer has to Christ, which constitutes, or qualifies each to be an effectual atom in setting forth Christ, because really part of Himself, in the closest union to Him. The work of all saints fails in reaching the real end and aim of their service here, if they are ignorant, or not aiming at what is incumbent on them as members of His body. How could any one be personated, or presented, or demonstrated, without his body?

I hope that, in the long leisure hours which you are given, you find great profit in dwelling

on what you have in heaven, though so much is not revealed to you as to Paul. He enjoyed it himself more than he could speak of it; and this sisters can do.

Worldly Associations.

THE Lord would not allow the walls of Jericho to stand, if you were surrounding it in complete armour. . . . You do not remain long enough in the company of the Lord to get impressed with it, and morally transformed, or common society would be intolerably irksome and unpalatable to you. You must learn to live in heaven, and only to be here for the one object of pleasing Him. As we know the holiness and purity of Christ's company, the trifling of our worldly relatives becomes more and more irksome to us. You must learn to be in your family like a diver in a diving-bell, and then with what joy you will return to your associations above, because you have been so dependent on Him who is there, while in the depths down here, and in an element quite incongruous to you.

Now you are only a frog! able to live in both elements. You lose weight by not being wholly a landsman. You know the gain of being on land, but, like the frog, you can jump into the water, without any loss, when it becomes convenient to do so. I want you to *fear* the water, and only to see a way through it into divine territory. I can propose nothing for you, but to be more with the Lord; this will so calm and influence you, that you will act rightly and

separately when you mix with your family, and you will go into their company prepared like a diver, drawing all your resources and sustenance from above, and nothing from what is around you.

Pisgah, or Possession ?

It is possible, in a way, to be tantalised by the beauty and perfectness of the glory, because there is nothing like it here ; and yet it may be as seen in the distance, as Moses saw the land from Pisgah ; admired and loved, but with no positive possession, no setting the sole of one's foot solidly on it. If I only see glory as Moses saw Canaan from Mount Pisgah, I have no sense of possession there ; on the contrary, I see a better thing, in which I not only have no possession, but I am myself actually separate from it, and outside of it. This tantalises, if I may so say. If I were to die then, with this view fully before me, I should be a Stephen, but if I have to live here with a glimpse of it, but without any sense of possession, it is only tantalising. We must know the place and glory into which Christ has entered as "our spirit's present home," an actual possession in which God has set us now, in order to be strangers here. When we know this, everything here is strange to us, because we are here *from* another place, a bright and a heavenly place. It is not only that we are looking for and expecting this place at the end. ☉ This will not make us strangers here ; for we may have this, and still be at home here, and though we

may wish to go to heaven, we are as yet strangers there, for we have never enjoyed possession there.

There is often this beholding afar off, and there may be a great deal of true admiration, the heart captivated with the view from Pisgah, which does not help one on in one's path down here, but, on the contrary, makes one only feel the contrast between what is here, and what one has had a glimpse of; and in this case one is more unfitted for remaining here, instead of being empowered, because of moral superiority and elevation, to meet everything here as Christ's witness on the earth. The fact is, we are not now as Moses on Mount Pisgah, nor even as Stephen; we do not see the glory from earth, we are placed in heaven, and there we see it. Thus we behold the Lord where He is in glory, and as we behold Him, we are transformed into the same image from glory to glory; we are transformed into the condition of the place in which He is, and we in Him; and then we can walk here, expecting nothing from the scene, but able to contribute to it, as a rich man can contribute when visiting the haunts of the destitute. If he were one of them, or even in expectation of the riches he should one day possess, surely he could not contribute.

The Lord grant that we may indeed traverse the haunts of the destitute down here, with hearts full of the unsearchable riches of Christ; not merely seeing a future of unbounded wealth, but in spirit there now, our cup running over, and therefore not seeking for anything here; but, as opportunity offers, contributing to each according to his need.

Contemplation of Christ and of Oneself.

THERE is nothing like retirement for the soul, if one is occupied with Christ, and not with oneself. Occupation with Christ results in my being more like Him, and more apart from myself. Occupation with myself is like the serpent's eye, that lures its victim to destruction. The more I am occupied with myself, the more important I make myself in my own eyes, and the more I am interrupting the growth of Christ in me. It is not that I am to be indifferent about my own state, but how am I to judge of it? Is it by feeling and fumbling over everything in the dark, examining the whole case of the patient, without either knowing the state of one in health, or how to produce it; or is it by bringing in One who is the true measure of everything, and who, as He gets place in me, displaces and condemns everything displeasing to Himself? In the latter case there are two things: there is the introduction of One who entirely and transcendently pre-occupies the heart, and who supplies to it, as He does, strength, and fulness of joy; the other is, He repels and rebukes all the lumber and selfishness which He finds in my heart.

Now, when I am occupied with myself, I never get rid of anything, however I may condemn it. All the lumber and incongruities remain as before. I may traverse them dolefully, as one does gravestones, but there they are, and there they remain, registers of sorrow and vexation. I may very truly mourn over them, and afflict

myself because of them, but that does not clear my heart of any of them ; they meet me at every turn ; nay, more, the more my eye rests on them, the more grievous and painful they become to me.

When the stronger comes in, he takes away the goods in which we naturally trusted. The true converse of the heart is with its object, and if I make my own heart the object of my heart, I am like the fool that foldeth his arms, and eateth his own flesh. But if I have Christ in His own place, then the more I am in converse with Him, the more I am capable of being in converse with Him, and the more do I seek to return to it, and to continue it ; whereas, in the other case, I am never drawn into it without sorrow.

I like contemplative souls, but the more contemplative we are, the more we betray what we are occupied with. Is it with myself, or with Him who imparts Himself to me, and exposes and drives away all the noxious weeds which would occupy and damage me ? Hence, while the contemplation is most desirable, it is of all-importance that there should be a true object before the mind, for whatever the object is will be disclosed in the act.

If Christ be the object of your contemplation, you will find that you really are made ready for acting *for Him* ; whereas, if it is yourself, you will be less and less ready ; your gun will be unloaded, and you without energy or inclination for action.

Contemplation with a true object gives a readiness and a power for action ; the gun is loaded

and ready. But when the object is oneself, one is enervated, inactive, and silenced, the gun is spiked, and the courage gone!

What Sets Aside Self.

How easily one becomes elated here, and consequently as easily disappointed! How we need to be exercised in the truth that He careth for us far more truly and wisely than we could care for ourselves.

Very few really know a Saviour in glory, a Saviour in death here, but in glory now. The evangelists in the Establishment preach Christ on the cross. Others go a step further, and preach Him risen, but they confine it too much to His resurrection from, or out of, death, and therefore still connect Him with our side of things, instead of setting Him forth as the Man in the amber spot (Ezek. i.) crowned with glory and honour. (Heb. ii.)

Nothing sets aside self but Christ; none of the graces or gifts of the Spirit do. When the queen of Sheba saw all Solomon's glory, and told him all her heart, "there was no more spirit in her." There was nothing in her heart not confided to him, and then she did not care to think any more about herself. So with us, when Christ's concerns so fill the released heart that there is no more room for self. The question with me, then, is, not what will please me, or suit me, or even serve me, but what will please Him; and one must be very near Him, with eyes closed and ears closed to all around, to know what that is.

This imparts solemn caution as to every word and action; it leads us to ponder everything, but because we believe, we do not make haste. Man grasps at every offer, because he has no faith. The man of faith can wait till the Lord bid him move.

The Lord keep us more practised in this holy watchfulness, walking before Him in all well pleasing.

Holding the Head.

How graciously the Lord has led you on for so many years, and made you a comfort to many! I find the great mark of growth is "holding the Head." If my knowledge of Christ is limited to knowing Him as my Saviour, I never rise from the earth, the scene of His wondrous work for me. If I only know Him as the one hourly interested about me, touched with the feeling of my infirmities, one necessary to my existence, "because I live, ye shall live also," I am more and more drawn to Him, longing to be with Him. But when I know that I am a member of His body, and that He is the Head, I know that His place is my place, because as He the Head is in heaven, that is the body's place also. Then I begin to learn Him in that place.

Now a new day opens on the soul when there is any intimacy with Him as the Head. I feel we can hardly estimate the blessed effects of knowing Him as Head. You may for a long time have known Him in His perfect love; in fact, fear disappeared when the glorious light of His

perfect love burst in on you. And in all your wilderness journey you could turn to Him as the One whose "love is as great as His power, and neither knows measure nor end." "A friend loveth at all times;" but when you come to know Him as Head, you literally suggest nothing; you open out your heart fully; you submit to perfect Wisdom every question and thought in your heart. You do not ask anything to be done for you; you submit your case, as you would in ordinary matters to a great Counsellor. You learn from Him how you are to be, rather than what is to be done. You are the one affected, and not the things you have to do with, which necessitate and call for an arrangement or provision on your part. It is not so much that you learn what you have to do, as that you are divested of your own prepossessions, and entranced with entirely new ones. You will feel the marvellous effect on your returning to the old circumstances, because you have been engrossed with inconceivably superior ones, which you feel are really your *own*, through your relationship with the Owner; so that the old ones have lost their preponderating influence over you, and you regard them in quite a new way. In a word, they are so diminished in every feature that you wonder how they could have been of so much importance; and while you attend carefully to each of them in every detail, you can say with the apostle, "When I became a man, I put away childish things." Now the power of Christ rests upon you, and you bring the strength of the glorified Man to bear upon the disappointments, the fears, and the sorrows of the child, who has had bitter

sorrow when the shelter of a loving heart has been removed; whose anguish has been great when a flower of hope has passed away, and to whom the gloomy cloud of impending loss or suffering caused unceasing anxiety. All these, the real misery of the natural man, will be now viewed by you in quite a new way. You will see all your circumstances not merely in the light of His presence; but because a wondrous change has been effected in yourself, they will appear altered in every way, and very diminished, simply because you have been so morally elevated—strengthened with all power according to the might of His glory.

According to your spiritual prepossessions will the natural or carnal dwindle in size and importance; and yet you will attend to each better, because your ability will be greater. There will be no forecasting, no pre-arrangement, which always indicates an absence of resource, but at the same time, a confidence in one's own plans, very like the hunted ostrich which hides its head in the sand, and because it cannot see itself, it thinks that its pursuers cannot see it.

The Lord bless you much, and may you abide with your Solomon, and there learn how He, in an unsuspected and marvellous way, will fit you for everything.

